URBAN POLITICS REVISITED: A POLICY-CENTERED LOOK AT LOCAL POLITICAL ECOLOGIES

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Abstract: This paper elaborates the policy-centered research program proposed by Hacker and Pierson (2014) by exploring how policy-centered research contributes to an understanding of urban politics and how the urban subfield contributes to a policy-centered research program. Using a bilevel analysis of the drug war and local union organizing, we highlight the local consequences of national policies and show that the consequences of national initiatives vary substantially, particularly for marginalized groups.

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*"People live locally" (*Mary Pattillo)

From its salad days in the 1960s the urban subfield today has become a virtual stepchild in political science. One trio of scholars (Sapotichne, Jones, and Wolfe 2007) tracked the detachment of urban analysis from the mainstream of American politics and called for a return to the days of close connection, when pluralism flourished, agenda setting became a focus of research, and rational choice lent new energy to the discipline.[1] But, far from being a lifeline for the urban field, the mainstream study of American politics has itself come under telling criticism. Recent authors have found pluralism hard to reconcile with growing inequality (Gilens and Page 2014), and a one-time bastion of mainstream analysis, the median-voter theorem, has met a weighty challenge from Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, who propose a rebirth of "policy-focused" research in American politics (2014).[2] In that light this article explores how policy-centered research contributes to an understanding of urban politics and how the urban subfield contributes to a policy-centered research program. In its policy focus, the analysis pursued here relies on a bilevel approach in order to capture the interplay between local and national actions. Instead of treating local and national politics as if they were separate arenas, we suggest that at least for some key policy domains much can be learned through looking at bilevel interactions. But how? Through what lens?

A key point for Hacker and Pierson is that "policy regimes create political 'ecosystems' that allow some actors and activities to flourish while others wither" (2014, 646). By focusing on political ecology, policy-centered analysis draws attention to relationships to show how policies shape or reshape the political terrain and the groups within it. Further, in contrast to the median-voter theorem, which treats the populace as an atomized mass co-existing

passively in the equality of one-person, one-vote, the alternative we embrace consists of an arena in which actors respond to and operate from perceived differences among groups. In this context, reshaping preferences and their perceived feasibility is part of the policy process and the group politics that accompany it. Alliances and lines of opposition reflect the resources and resourcefulness of contending groups. With the idea of political ecology we underscore that relationships and interactions create a dynamic process, not something that can be simply read off an aggregation of preferences.

In understanding the formation and modification of political ecologies, the interaction between the national and local levels of political activity and what each brings to that interaction has special importance. In this broad scope of politics, policy action is not a static phenomenon to be explained at one moment frozen in time; rather analysis seeks to explain what can be learned by observing over time a trajectory of policy action. As policy feedback and policy drift vary at the local and community levels, so does the status of local and community-based problems and the capacity of local and community-based groups to respond to them. Thus, the urban narrative is incomplete without an understanding of how local political ecology is constantly shaped and re-shaped by the interaction of national policies with changing local- and community-level conditions.

Below we offer two contrasting cases to demonstrate: (1) the importance of a bilevel scope to policy-centered analysis, (2) how national initiatives can reconfigure local political domains, and (3) the ways in which the character of such national initiatives can deepen the marginality of the disadvantaged or ameliorate that marginality. We begin with President Reagan's war on drugs and follow with the Service Workers International Union (SEIU)

campaign to organize low-wage workers. Seen through a local-political- ecology- lens, these

contrasting experiences show that, though often on tenuous grounds, grassroots support for

equity-serving practices can be cultivated.

The Drug War

While both national and city politics display a tendency toward organizing into policy

subsystems, this pattern is weaker at the local level. Because place matters (Dreier,

Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004), policy issues intersect one another locally in important

ways. The problems cities face are intertwined, and, if anything, the relationships between

problems have recently grown stronger. For a time the urban crisis seemed to anchor itself in

the transition from the outdated land uses of an industrial economy to a postindustrial

economy and its less dense form of local living—what one author referred to as the end of

urbanism (Rae 2003). The imperative to seek economic growth appeared dominant, and local

political ecologies bore strong markings of this dynamic, though recent trends have shown this

model of the urban condition to be outdated (Stone, Stoker et al. 2015). Although the local

push for economic growth remains robust, cross-cutting policy concerns have gained

prominence.

Nowhere is the interaction between policy concerns more evident than in President

Reagan's "war on drugs," with its contribution to mass incarceration and accompanying

devastation among the less well-off neighborhoods of the inner city (Clear 2009; Burch 2013).[3]

The window of local political ecology provides a needed view of how the urban condition

evolved in response to the drug war. Traci Burch adds a needed reminder for political scientists

when she observes, "most studies ignore just how prominently corrections (and most other

aspects of the criminal justice system) feature in the everyday lives of disadvantaged citizens"

(2013, 12). Michelle Alexander's best-selling *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age*

of Color blindness (2010) brought the Reagan era upsurge in imprisonment to a high level of

public attention missing during its nearly 30-year buildup.[4]

With its devastating consequences for city neighborhoods, from whence did Reagan's

war on drugs come? By launching the drug war, the Reagan administration built on concern

about drug abuse that had emerged initially in the Nixon administration. Reagan's

administration framed drug use as deviancy and criminality, a frame that emphasized the need

for punishment and social control. Urban scholarship linked drug abuse to crime, violence,

joblessness, homelessness, and corruption (Macdonald 1984; Euchner and McGovern 2003).

Eventually even members of the Congressional Black Caucus, such as Representative Charles

Rangel, became long-standing supporters of federal efforts to combat the drug trade (Mann

2013). However, Reagan did not bring into the presidency any apparent worry about an urban

crisis or deteriorating city conditions; indeed, federal aid to cities was a prime target for the

budget knife during the 1980s.

Nor was there a high level of public concern about crime and drugs as the drug war was

launched. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, drug use did not register as a key concern in

the periodic Gallup survey of the American public about the nation's most pressing problems.

However, during the 1980s, this concern grew in response to attention from media and political

elites, until in 1989 drug use was cited as the most pressing national problem by 64 percent of

respondents (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). It is also noteworthy that the use of crack cocaine

rose and became a matter of concern after and not before the Reagan administration launched its drug war.

Despite bipartisan displays of concern about the scourge of drug abuse, the origins of Reagan's anti-drug campaign lay in partisan struggles and the backlash against the civil rights movement,[5] anti-war demonstrations, and what conservatives characterized as rampant permissiveness.[6] During the 1960s in reaction to protests and direct action tactics of the civil rights movement, southern elected and law-enforcement officials sounded the theme of "law and order" as a response to "crime in the streets." These themes were embraced by Barry Goldwater, employed by Nixon, and refined under Reagan, all aiming to depict demands for social change as criminal behavior, not political acts. In Reagan's treatment crime, drugs, and urban violence served as signs of national "dysfunctionalism" (Beckett 1997, 33).[7] Welfare was woven into the picture as additional indication that "excessive lenience" rather than "social conditions" generate poverty and crime.[8] What later came to be labeled as culture wars did not spring from isolated forms of single-issue politics; rather, culture war themes were skillfully crafted by conservatives who asserted that America was on the wrong path, the path of liberal permissiveness (Reeves and Campbell 1994, 3).

Without explicit reference to race, conservatives employed a racial subtext as part of a southern strategy to bring the white South into the GOP and appeal to "Reagan Democrats."[9] Being "tough on crime" easily linked to stereotyping of and hostility to African Americans.[10] As Katherine Beckett observes: "Ironically, it was the success of the civil rights movement in discrediting more explicit expressions of racist sentiment that led politicians to attempt to appeal to the public with such 'subliminally' racist messages" (1997, 32; see also Bobo and

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Smith 1998).[11] The New Deal alignment of haves versus have-nots gave way to social-issue messaging and a "get tough" stance. This appeal was stronger among men than women, in the white South especially and more generally to those with unfavorable views of blacks.[12]

The drug war also had a very particular geographic imprint. The Reagan White House chose to wage the war on inner-city terrain. Drug use was essentially the same among blacks and whites, and the illicit use of drugs was not something that differentiated city dwellers from suburbanites. Yet enforcement efforts were concentrated in neighborhoods populated by African American and Latino residents (Reinarman and Levine 1997). A fact sheet of the NAACP[13] shows how racially biased the "war" was in cumulative stages of enforcement: African Americans composed only 12% of drug users, but 38% of those arrested, and 59% of those in state prison for drug offenses.[14] According to Human Rights Watch, drug-related arrests are predominantly for possession rather than trafficking (between 1999-2007, possession arrests accounted for 80% of drug-related arrests): "Relatively few arrests made in the war on drugs involve drug importing, manufacturers, major dealers, or even minor dealers" (see Fellner 2009, 1). Enforcement focused not on transaction points, but on simple possession of the kind that would turn up from street sweeps or stop-and-frisk policing. As Beckett observes: "if the drug war had been waged on college campuses (where use was widespread), its consequences would have been quite different" (1997, 97).[15]

In their appeal for a policy-focused study of politics, Hacker and Pierson posit that in politics, "the key struggle is not over gaining office but over reshaping governance in enduring ways" (2014, 644). The drug war fits this scenario. Particular moves became part of a broader strategy that altered public understanding of the purpose of government and the nature of the

problems to be taken up. As Beckett points out, when Reagan became president

unemployment was regarded as the main source of crime (1997, 52). Indeed, studies showed

that, while sentiments are complex, given a choice "most Americans still believe that spending

money on educational and job training programs is a more effective crime-fighting measure

than building prisons" (Beckett 1997, 4). Tactically, political conservatives responded by

depicting the poor (and especially, poor people of color) as an "undeserving" and "dangerous"

underclass that did not share mainstream American values (Beckett 1997, 45). The political

right charged that liberals mistakenly attributed crime to social conditions rather than seeing it

as a matter of personal choice and responsibility.[16] Because drug use was characterized as

irresponsible behavior by the underclass, it was treated as "a social control rather than public

health or socioeconomic problem" (Beckett 1997, 44).[17]

From Goldwater through Reagan the right grasped the insight that structuring political

choice is, as Schattschneider put it, "the supreme instrument of power" (quoted in Hacker and

Pierson 2014, 650). From the civil rights movement forward, conservatives took the tack of

"discrediting state policies and programs aimed at minimizing racial, class, and gender

inequalities and strengthening those that enhance the state's control of the troublesome"

(Beckett 1997, 42-43). Further, Beckett argues that the broad project aimed "to replace social

welfare with social control as the principle of state policy" (1997, 106; see also Garland 2001).

At its launch the drug war did not reflect the public's concern about a problem spiraling out of

control;[18] the drug war was a tactic to gain advantage for a partisan coalition playing backlash

politics in order to shift the terms of governance toward order maintenance.

The drug war ecosystem

Hacker and Pierson's policy-centered approach invites us to think about how and why "policy regimes create political 'ecosystems' that allow some actors and activists to flourish while others wither" (2014, 646). Reagan's drug war provides a clear example of how this process operates.[19] Consider that, as a way of reshaping governance, attacking federal welfare policy is one thing, but linking this attack to crime and criminal justice is quite another. After all, in the American context, law enforcement has long standing as a matter for local and state governments. How could a federal initiative nurture local and state actions in such a way as to reconfigure the subnational political landscape? Several steps were involved.

When Reagan came into the presidency, the Justice Department under Jimmy Carter was criticized for its "preoccupation with white-collar crime."[20] An early task force created by Reagan's Attorney General, William French Smith, called for emphasizing street crime and embracing a different staffing pattern in the Justice Department.[21] Historically, state and local law enforcement officials were apprehensive about federal intrusion into their policy domain. For instance, in 1965 the International Association of Police Chiefs had adopted a resolution opposing federal "encroachment" into state and local law enforcement (Beckett 1997, 98).

While the bully pulpit during the twelve successive years of the Reagan and George H. W. Bush presidencies served to hype the war on drugs,[22] rhetoric alone is too perishable to alter much about a local political ecology.[23] However, having officials tout an issue and frame its definition can become an asset. When crack cocaine emerged as a visible problem, the Reagan administration seized on it and charged the DEA's New York City office with promoting it as a threat. The director developed an elaborate media strategy (and through it signaled the DEA staff that they should follow) for attacking crack as a scourge. Success followed with such

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events as *Newsweek*'s 1986 declaration that crack was "the biggest story since Vietnam/Watergate" and *Time* labeled crack as "the issue of the year" (Alexander 2010, 52; see also Reeves and Campbell 1994). Stories about "crack babies" and gangbangers soon proliferated.[24]

More lasting consequences came from internal government moves such as the Justice Department's shift of staffing and spending away from white-collar crime to drugs and street crime.[25] Money for treatment programs and prevention shrank (Alexander 2010, 49-50). Federally created task forces, grants, and an open-ended source of funding through asset seizure (a process in which assets are seized by law-enforcement authorities upon *suspicion* of criminality, which quickly spread from federal to state and local law enforcement agencies). Asset seizure altered thinking about enforcement and punishment by introducing financial incentives for police to engage in aggressive, pro-active enforcement while avoiding the hassle of actually proving criminality.

Federal efforts to advance the drug war also reached into cities through federal grants in aid which encouraged local law enforcement institutions to play along. For example, to qualify for federal support from Operation Weed and Seed, local law enforcement agencies worked in coordination with the U.S. Attorney, who was charged with responsibility for organizing a Weed and Seed steering committee to enhance efforts to "identify, arrest, and prosecute criminals, especially those engaging in drug trafficking and violent crime" (Dunworth and Mills 1999, 4). Even as other forms of urban assistance were cut, federal grants to prosecute drug offenses grew.

As the drug war led to mass arrests in inner city neighborhoods, other important national and local policy changes were helping to create conditions ripe for mass incarceration. At the same time the Reagan administration declared war on drugs, it was also moving to eliminate funding for legal aid provided by grants through the Legal Services Corporation. Although Congress did not eliminate legal aid all together, it did slash funding, which strained resources and resulted in hundreds of legal aid office closures. Alexander (2010) details how the racial disparity in incarceration reflected not only differences in the initial arrest rates, but also plea bargaining in an overwhelmed system of public defenders struggling to assist defendants facing mandatory sentences and long prison terms. At the same time, many large city police departments dealt aggressively with minority populations by "stop and frisk" tactics that often resulted in drug possession arrests. Thus, as more and more drug-related arrestees were entering the criminal justice system, fewer and fewer resources were available to handle the caseload.[26] Beyond this, the Reagan era was also a time in which public functions were increasingly privatized. One such initiative resulted in the creation of a for-profit prison industry; the prison industrial complex emerged as the source of a coalesced lobbying force, in pursuit of increased staffing, new and enlarged career paths, contracts, and expanded facilities (Alexander 2010, 230-33; and Beckett 1997, 97-101).[27] For many rural/small town areas faced with population loss and related economic decline, correctional institutions became employment centers that were an integral part of local economic development efforts.[28]

It may now seem implausible that as recently as the mid-1970s top criminologists were predicting that prisons would (and should) fade away. In 1973 the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals recommended that "no new institutions

for adults should be built and existing institutions for juveniles should be closed" (Alexander 2010, 8). However, when the Reagan presidency got underway, it was not prisons, but rather the advice of experts that faded away. Thirty years later, the U.S. has the world's highest incarceration rate, six to ten times the rate of other advanced industrial nations (Alexander 2010, 8). According to The Sentencing Project, the third of a century from 1980 to 2013 saw the U.S. prison population (not including jails) grow from 320,000 to over 1.5 million. In 1980 the number of people in state prison for drug offenses was 19,000. In 2013 the number had grown to 210,000. The federal prison numbers for drug offenses also increased dramatically, from 4,700 in 1980 to 98,200 in 2013. Jails reflected the same pattern, up from 17,200 in 1980 to 180,600 in 2013. Longer prison terms also became part of the shift to "toughness" on crime. The Sentencing Reform Act of 1984 produced new sentencing guidelines; within five years these "reform" guidelines "*doubled* the average time spent in federal prison and *halved* the percentage of offenders punished with probation rather than prison" (Murakawa 2014, 91, emphasis in original). The war on drugs is thus at the heart of a sudden and massive upsurge in incarceration.

The drug war was fought in city neighborhoods using a flawed strategy that relied heavily on arrests for possession. Targeting cities and possession for enforcement, along with such police practices as stop and frisk, gave the drug war an obvious racial consequence.[29] Moreover, even after the U.S. Sentencing Commission spotlighted the racial tilt in enforcement, its efforts to modify harsh and mandatory sentences and the inequitable treatment of crack over powder cocaine were rejected by Congress (Provine 2007).[30] Many observers now see the

drug war as a failure. To put the matter as a Reaganesque one-liner, the nation fought a war

against drugs and drugs won.

Feedback

The policy-centered research program proposed by Hacker and Pierson (2014) helps us

to see how the drug war reconfigured the political landscape. It did so in significant part by

activating interest groups. Due to the historic role of state governments in public safety issues,

activation often took place at the state level. According to a research brief from the Center on

Juvenile and Criminal Justice (Sheldon 2011) lawyers' groups, police and corrections unions, and

for-profit prison corporations were leading interest groups engaged on public safety issues.

However, national and cross-state organizations also were activated by the drug war. During

the 1990s the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), an organization that facilitates

relationships between lobbyists and legislators (including corporate lobbyists for the prison

industry) advocated mandatory minimum sentencing and truth-in-sentencing laws that limited

parole and early release programs (Sellman and Leighton 2010).[31] At that time the model

legislation ALEC called for mandatory minimum sentences and not to distinguish possession

from the manufacture, sale, or distribution" of drugs.[32] This approach maximizes incarceration

and harshness in sentencing (Gottschalk 2015, 17).

The privatization movement in corrections also was a factor in interest group activation.

The profit motive, a new concern for the public safety subsystem, was introduced by

corrections-oriented corporations (Stolz 1997). The Corrections Corporation of America has

explicitly taken note of how drug-related reforms could impact profitability in a 2010 Annual

Report filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission:

The demand for our facilities and services could be adversely affected by the

relaxation of enforcement efforts, leniency in conviction or parole standards and

sentencing practices or through the decriminalization of certain activities that

are currently proscribed by our criminal laws. For instance, **any changes with**

respect to drugs and controlled substances or illegal immigration could affect

the number of persons arrested, convicted, and sentenced, thereby potentially

reducing demand for correctional facilities to house them (quoted in ACLU

2011).

The political scene continues to evolve, however. After decades of mass incarceration,

voices calling for a different approach can once again be heard.[33] President Obama's Director

of National Drug Control Policy, Michael Botticelli, is a staunch advocate of a medicalization

approach to drugs as an addiction problem.[34] As well, the high cost of mass incarceration

combined with a libertarian strand of the political right has opened the possibility of a

bipartisan coalition around criminal justice reform.[35] Yet, as Alexander acknowledges, a mass

incarceration arrangement is now deeply entrenched. Incremental change and scattered

victories hold little promise of turning around the present pattern (2010, 236; see also Provine

2007). And the damage done to several generations of inner-city minority youths cannot be so

easily undone.

<u>The path not taken</u>

Although the Reagan White House could find precedent in the Federal Narcotics Bureau

for drug criminalization, the 1982 declaration of war ran counter to a nascent move toward

medicalization in the U.S. and in several European countries (Provine 2007, 92-93). Treatment

had made a significant appearance. One scholar observed: "By the mid-1960s most cities had

methadone clinics for heroin addicts" (Provine 2007, 94). While Nixon was personally inclined

toward a hard-line policy, his presidency saw significant funding to combat drugs directed to

prevention and treatment (Provine 2007, 93).[36] Even after Reagan boosted the criminalized

approach, local actors, especially in public health, pushed for medicalization. Moreover in the

late 1980s Baltimore's Kurt Schmoke—that city's first popularly elected black mayor—called for

decriminalization (Beilenson and McGuire 2012). Though his position was controversial and

received little support at large, Schmoke did what he could through the city's health

department, and he continued to express the view that criminalization was counterproductive,

that money used for enforcement could be better spent on treatment, and that

decriminalization would bring down the rate of crime and violence.[37] An alternative to "war"

was not only imaginable, but had significant players in place to pursue an alternative had

federal support brought them together and given backing.[38]

President Reagan's war on drugs shows how a federal initiative buttressed by executive

power, complete with grants and funding (in this case often by means of the federally

pioneered procedure of asset forfeiture) as well as task forces that incorporated local actors,

can divert policy from one direction to its opposite. The reshaping of subnational

constituencies in law enforcement and corrections was strategic, and the federal initiative

preempted policy space that might have developed differently and given rise to a radically

different constellation of groups. Had federal authority and resources gone into prevention

and treatment the local political ecology surrounding crime and drugs might well have

developed along a different path. And, without mass incarceration, urban neighborhoods

might have followed an alternative path of political development (Weaver and Lerman 2010; Burch 2013). We turn now to a quite different pattern of local-national interaction, one in which the federal government is largely a passive factor, though past federal enactments have an impact not to be ignored.

Counteracting Federal Inaction and Drift

From the New Deal through the 1960s national policies to address low wages rested mainly on federal support for collective bargaining [39]and a periodically updated national minimum wage.[40] In recent times both efforts have gone soft. Unlike the war on drugs in which a federal initiative became the dominant factor, the issue of low wages occurs in a context of inaction and drift by the federal government. The problem is further complicated by the presence of a large population of undocumented immigrants. At this writing, federal inaction prevails here as well.

In the face of federal inattention to low-wage work, significant action has come from organized labor, in particular the SEIU.[41] As a further examination of national-local interaction and the consequences of that relationship for local political ecologies, this section looks at two cases of SEIU activity: one involving office-cleaning workers in Los Angeles and the other nursing home workers in the Pittsburgh area. Both cases show that, like President Reagan's war on drugs, they are best understood as *interactive* relationships between national and local levels and not as autonomously operating spheres of policy action. In order to fully comprehend the policy and political impact, it is necessary not simply to have a bilevel view of action but to see that consequences come from the *interaction* of and how local political ecologies come out of the interplay between levels. Either a national-only or a local-only look is

insufficient, and downplaying the part that local political ecologies play is a serious misreading

of the American polity.

Consider context and how it plays out politically The postindustrial economy has

brought a restructuring of employment, now characterized by outsourcing, fragmented work

arrangements, multi-layering in business enterprises, the extensive use of contracts with short-

term cancellation provisos, and related measures that heighten job insecurity.[42] These changes

(in which permanent and full-time jobs have become increasingly scarce and precarious) have

led to de-unionization, declining wages and benefits, and deteriorating working conditions. In

many employment sectors a contract negotiated through collective bargaining can be negated

simply by abandoning one contracting relationship and signing another contract with a

different company. Add to this an anti-union climate in employer circles[43] and the reluctance of

some businesses to actively engage in contract negotiations should union recognition be

formally achieved, and it becomes clear that times have changed. A sharp decline in union

membership confirms the shift. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015) estimated that 11.1

percent of wage and salary employees were unionized in 2014. Union membership is

concentrated in the public sector, where the membership rate is five times the private sector

rate.[44]

The postindustrial picture was further complicated by large-scale immigration. In places

like southern California black and white labor pools, especially for less-skilled jobs, gave way to

those increasingly re-supplied with Latinos and other immigrants, many of whom were

undocumented. To be noted, however, is Ruth Milkman's Los Angeles study (2006) showing

that the massive inflow of immigrants into the area did *not* precede job restructuring, but

instead followed it. The pattern was one of native-born workers exiting once union-protected

jobs as they became less attractive. Notably, however, contrary to the conventional wisdom,

immigrants are not a liability to labor organizing. As shown below, in several regards the

opposite holds.

Labor Organizing in Los Angeles

Southern California's rapidly expanding economy became what Milkman calls "an early

testing ground for the low-road managerial strategies that sprouted up all across the United

States in the 1970s and 1980s" (2006, 7-8). For those with limited education credentials, a

"frightened worker" climate took hold, and union officials often found themselves making

concessions and losing ground. Blue-collar work no longer promised middle-class prosperity.

For some in the labor movement, immigration added to the growing pessimism about the

future. At a time when deregulation was in full ascendance, a variety of legally dubious

practices came into use—from "all-cash wages, lack of overtime compensation, substandard

pay for 'training periods,'" and in some occupations "sweatshop-like employment" (Milkman

2006, 8).[45] Executive pay surged even as worker pay and benefits nosedived.

Given the downward turn in work compensation and the weakening of unions, one

would expect hopelessness to have a stranglehold among organized labor. Yet, though it had

once been regarded as a union backwater, during the 1980s and 90s southern California

experienced a surge of organizing low-wage workers. One observer cited San Jose as a case in

which "a labor movement turned a city around," and another called the region "the major R &

D center for 21st century trade unionism."[46] While the change was far from revolutionary in

scope, it did engender renewed attention to organizing and form a new phase of unionization and improved benefits for workers.

One attention-grabbing event was the successful Justice for Janitors campaign (JfJ) in Los Angeles, and as an illustration of change in local political ecology, this subsection concentrates on this effort among office-cleaning workers.[47] The campaign involved both the national level of SEIU leadership and a multifaceted mobilization at the grassroots level. The JfJ campaign also served as a clear marker of the AFL-CIO reversal in immigration policy; that is, organized labor became a supporter of immigration reform and sponsor of the notable 2003 Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride (Voss and Bloemraad 2011).[48] Local political ecology serves as a window on this episode of political change, and it is one that stands in sharp contrast with the drug war and its consequences.

The central national player in the narrative about low-wage organizing is a labor federation as a source of leadership, resources, and expertise. Instead of an initiative in which a local population was essentially victimized (as through mass incarceration and its consequences), JfJ's labor organizing in Los Angeles is a narrative about empowerment. Whereas the war on drugs left inner-city neighborhoods devastated and with few political champions, low-wage organizing involved enhancing the political capacity of the worker population and enlisting allies in the struggle over employment compensation. The national-local interaction combined with grassroots mobilization yielded an enrichment of the local political ecology through the creation of new or renovated entities. Unlike Reagan's drug war, labor organizing included efforts to strengthen the civic and political capacity of inner-city residents.[49]

What did local empowerment look like in L.A. and with what obstacles did it contend?

Contrary to the conventional wisdom, it proved quite possible to organize immigrant workers,

even though many lacked documented standing. What did the conventional wisdom overlook?

In various accounts two factors stand out. Compared to native-born, white workers,

immigrants in southern California were more amenable to collective action. Milkman cites

"survey research suggesting that Latinos generally, and immigrants in particular, have more

favorable attitudes toward unions than most other workers do" (2006, 136-7).[50] She points out

that many recent migrants, especially those from Central America, had previous experience

with unions, liberation movements, and other forms of collective action. Their mindset was

less individualistic, and some of the grassroots leaders had significant past experience in labor

struggles. Within California the recent United Farm Workers (UFW) organizing effort also

yielded a scattering of organizers and a legacy of successful collective action. Some veterans of

the UFW strike and boycott resurfaced as players in the battle over low-wages. Class struggle

was thus not an unfamiliar notion, and perhaps was given fresh meaning by the shared

experience of stigmatization within the immigrant community. California's anti-immigrant

referenda undoubtedly heightened a shared sense of stigma and vulnerability.

The strength of immigrant social networks was another factor that facilitated

organization and promoted solidarity. Milkman observes that strong networks "are relatively

unusual among the native-born in the United States today, especially in southern California,

where the conspicuous absence of any sense of community in daily life is a long-standing

cliché" (2006, 134). For immigrants, however, living in the same neighborhood, commuting on

the same bus, and referral hiring are reinforcing bonds (Waldinger et al. 1996, 12).

Building from its immigrant base, JfJ's approach rested on a combination of varied resources from the national SEIU and a wide array of tactics deployed locally. Unionization was holding up in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, but few other places. As part of a multicity campaign, JfJ originated in a "fight back" campaign in Pittsburgh (Waldinger et al 1996), but the significant move from defense to offense took place in Denver. In Denver the strategy was industry focused, not aimed at individual hotels.[51] This approach bypassed the complications of multiple levels, an organizational form achieved by using contracts to separate management from ownership.

In 1988, when JfJ came to Los Angeles, unionization was already in steep decline, and concurrently the black-white employment pool was giving way to an increasingly Latino presence. Restructuring the organization of work meant that "the employer was little more than a straw boss" (Waldinger et al. 1996, 11). Real power rested with ownership. The National Labor Relations Board election process was futile. A union organizer explains:

> We can have an election with cleaning contractors, and the building owner has a right to change cleaning contractor at any time. And you can't file a ULP [unfair labor practice complaint] against a building owner, since he's not the employer... so there's nothing about a [NLRB] decision that allows us to go after the people who have power in the market (quoted in Waldinger et al. 1996, 11-12).

As it had in Denver, JfJ in Los Angeles pursued its tactic of confrontational protest, aiming to harass through such actions as sending in a group of workers to protest at an owner's country club golf course where, explained one participant, cleaning workers "raised a ruckus, chanting and screaming. They got all freaked out, of course, it's not what they're used to at the

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country club" (quoted in Waldinger et al. 1996, 12).[52] In another instance, "whistle-blowing

demonstrators refused to leave [the lobby of an office tower] until a building management

representative agreed to address them" (Bridges 2011, 83). The motto became "attack, attack,

attack" (Milkman 2006, 156). Another tactic was to activate state agencies charged with

worker protection—for example, bringing OSHA inspectors in to address complaints, including

complaints from workers not covered by a union contract. Such moves were feasible because

SEIU invested staff, resources, and training in the campaign, and workers locally maintained

their militancy even in the face of a vehement anti-union response from owners and managers.

For its part the union was willing to draw a wide circle of conflict. One of the major companies

was ISS, an international firm based in Denmark. The union arranged for a visiting delegation of

Danish trade unionists to meet workers in the L.A. campaign and observe the company's

resistance.

    With the campaign and its disruptive protests continuing, building tenants complained

about JfJ actions, but protests continued and brought unwanted publicity to both building

owners and contractors. Emphasizing the justice theme and highlighting disparities in

compensation, one protest contrasted the $30 a night office cleaners received with the $300 an

hour lawyers were charging their clients. Amy Bridges explains that such actions "were public

confrontations that shamed and embarrassed both building owners and cleaning contractors"

(2011, 91). Publicity thus played an important role, and a misstep by the LAPD provided an

invaluable bonus to JfJ. On June 15, 1990, when workers and supporters walked from nearby

Beverly Hills to Century City (a pricey area in Los Angeles and a focal point of protests), LA

police—apparently misreading the balance of expectations in the wider public—launched an

assault. As reported by Waldinger et al. (1996, 14): "In full view of the media, and recorded on videotape, the police charged the crowd, injuring many including children and pregnant women."

The event echoed earlier civil rights protests. Like Birmingham and Selma, protesters were not intimidated and quickly vowed to return. The response was: "Let's go back on Monday. Put the word out, we're going back on Monday, and we're going to be bigger, we're going to be badder! You can't scare us out of Century City" (quoted in Waldinger et al. 1996, 14). Observers reported: "This was not the organizers' message to the workers, this was the workers' message to the union" (Waldinger et al. 1996, 14).

Media coverage and videotape circulation resulted in wide outrage and made the demonstration into a public relations triumph for the workers, putting pressure on Mayor Tom Bradley, who then contacted Century City owners to voice his concerns (Milkman 2006, 158). The tape of police beating strikers also helped swing into action Gus Bevona, the influential president of the SEIU New York City local. The firm, ISS, was unionized in New York City, and, after seeing the tape, Bevona told the head of the firm that, if the company did not recognize the LA union "… all hell would break loose" (Milkman 2006, 158). The contract was signed that day. Milkman also notes that pension fund leverage was part of the scenario.

Feedback in Local and State Politics

Other successes followed in Los Angeles, and the demonstration of strength there boosted successes in other cities. Spillover occurred more widely. Combined with the success by the Los Angles Alliance for a New Economy[53] on living wage agreements, the JfJ victory had a statewide effect and beyond. "A variety of other CBOs [community-based organizations] took

shape around the state with a focus on advocacy for low-wage workers—most of whom turned

out to be foreign born" (Milkman 2006, 31). "In 1994, the same year Proposition 187 was

placed on the ballot, the L.A. County Federation of Labor underwent a metamorphosis from an

inside ally of the city's Democratic Party establishment to an independent force with extensive

capacity for grassroots mobilization" (Wong and Viola 2009; Milkman 2006, 131).[54] And the

labor federation was soon engaged in aiding eligible immigrants with naturalization (thereby

eligibility to vote). The key figure in this transformation was Miguel Contreras (Meyerson 2005;

Wong and Viola 2009; Meyerson 2014), a former UFW organizer who subsequently served on

the staff of HERE, the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union.

Activism thus soon brought into alignment the city's large and growing immigrant

population and labor organizing with the county's central labor council as a key factor in

altering the electoral landscape. With far-reaching consequences the result was what Harold

Myerson has called "the most astonishing and significant civic transformation in recent

American history" (2005; see also Meyerson 2014). The politics of the city, the state, and the

nation were permanently altered.

No single factor accounts for the success of the JfJ campaign and the wider flourishing of

support for addressing the problem of low-wage work. However, it is certainly not a bottom-up

story; the national SEIU was an essential player in forming strategy, devoting resources to

organizing, providing multiple kinds of expertise,[55] and, not least of all, sometimes bypassing

recalcitrant local union officials (Bridges 2011, 87; Waldinger et al. 1996). One union source,

reflecting on experience in several cities, points out that "local staff and leaders were

frequently resistant to the JfJ model, and often threw up roadblocks to [new member]

organizing" (Waldinger et al. 1996, 16). As the Waldinger team points out, "it is not difficult to imagine that an incumbent leadership will opt for the status quo in light of the [internal] political ramifications of a sudden infusion of new, possibly ethnically distinctive members" (1996, 16).[56]

A second element involves alliance formation both locally and extra-locally. SEUI had "built coalitions with community-based organizations, targeted key politicians, and developed sophisticated means of attracting media attention and public sympathy" (Milkman 2006, 23).[57] Catholic officials were among those successfully sought as allies,[58] and during a building boom the city's Community Redevelopment Authority was also a powerful ally (Milkman 2006, 157-8).[59] Not to be overlooked in how various pieces fit together is the mainspring ability of JfJ to mobilize the rank and file and to sustain needed mobilizations over time and circumstance.

Taking into account the multidimensional character of the JfJ campaign, we can appreciate the kind of change that it brought to the local political ecology in the Los Angeles area. Consider the changing context beginning in 1950 when an earlier stage of unionization was at a high point, to 1975 when the neoliberal restructuring of work and the corporate use of anti-union experts came full force to put organized labor into broad retreat and catastrophic decline, and then to the 1990s on when the forces of organized labor and immigrant rights came together. In the latter time, organizing low-wage workers gained a vitality not expected just a few years earlier. In the new climate of "Si, se puede" (yes, we can)[60] low-wage organizing took many forms in southern California and elsewhere—to name a few, the drywallers strike (Milkman 2006, 170-77), carwash unions (Garea and Stern 2010) by CLEAN (the Community-Labor-Environmental Action Network), the security workers campaign by SEIU

in alliance with black community leaders (Bloom 2010), Arizona's Justice for Roofers (Adler and

Cornfield 2014, 44-47), worker centers such as UNITE's for garment workers, the ethnic-based

Pilipino Workers' Center (Ghandnoosh 2010) and more generally on worker centers (Fine 2006).

JfJ continued to register significant advances over time, most notably in a strike

settlement in the year 2000, which, in addition to a significant raise in pay, brought five

thousand previously nonunion workers into the region's SEIU membership (Milkman 2006,

160). However, despite significant victories, it is important not to overstate the

accomplishments of JfJ (and kindred efforts). As Milkman (2006, 189) observed, though the L.A.

region has seen gains beyond those achieved in most other places, "the scale of organizing

success has been modest, measured in thousands of workers, not millions."

Organizing nursing home workers in the Rustbelt

We turn now to SEIU's effort to unionize nursing home workers in and around

Pittsburgh, where population loss and economic decline are cause for worry.[61] The timing is

the late 1990s, shortly after John Sweeney and his slate won control of the top positions in the

AFL-CIO.[62] Entrenched practices were in place, but Sweeney represented a subgroup of new

labor leaders willing to invest in organizing and determined to bring about change. The struggle

was twofold: (1) bringing new thinking and practices into places tied to a no-longer relevant

past, and (2) confronting dogged antiunion employers.

In addition to low pay and workplace hazards, the nursing home industry presented a

challenge due to its high employee turnover rate and the employees' often unfavorable view of

unions that could be readily played upon by experienced purveyors of antiunion messages. As

a region especially hard hit by deindustrialization, the Pittsburgh area was disenchanted with

unions and what they could accomplish. Many workers harbored anti-union sentiments,

viewing unions as narrowly self-serving organizations. The legacy of labor movement struggle

from the 1930s had long since worn away. In its place were scattered stories about corruption,

strong-arm methods, and ruthless disregard for ordinary workers.

Chronicler of Rust Belt organizing Stephen Lopez (2004) identifies overcoming "working-

class anti-unionism" as one of the toughest challenges facing an organizing campaign, especially

in economically besieged places like southwest Pennsylvania. A related challenge comes from

entrenched local leaders who are risk averse and fearful that new members might pose an

internal political threat. In the area, prevailing practice had fallen into what Lopez describes as

"a bureaucratic-service model of unionism in which paid union staff, rather than rank-and-file

leaders played the most important role" (2004, 110).[63] Grievances, for example, went directly

from worker to staff, not through work-site stewards. According to Lopez, several work places

had not even taken the step of electing stewards. Union staff typically made little effort to

educate workers about the provisions of their contract, and many workers had not joined the

union. For workers, "the grievance process consisted of calling the union representative,

relating the problem, and waiting to hear back about how or whether the grievance was

resolved" (Lopez 2004, 110). With a lack of information, many such member calls were about

matters not within the scope of grievances covered by the union's contract. The process

inspired little confidence, and, given such poor communications, disuse of the procedure came

about even though there were in fact many serious grievances. In a climate of futility, anti-

unionism could easily gain strength from a skillful management campaign.

However, not everything fell on the pessimistic side of the ledger. Nursing home

organizing does enjoy one advantage not present in the janitorial sector. Residents, their

families, and their capacity to evoke a sympathetic response from the community provided a

context that could be tapped in a struggle with management.[64] Thus nothing was a given; all

required construction.

The task facing SEIU organizers involved not only overcoming anti-union proclivities

among workers, but a need to create worker-oriented social ties and bonds, networks, and

allies in the community—in particular, allies durably organized for that role. Lopez observes

that "labor-community coalitions are usually ad hoc creations forged in crisis rather than

ongoing alliances" (2004, 118-19). Faced with deep-seated opposition from management,

unions in the nursing home battle found themselves in a search for community allies capable of

engaging for the long haul.

Mobilizing changes in the Local Political Ecology

Policy-focused research is attentive to the actions of groups. Hacker and Pierson (2014),

contend that organizational capacity is a key group characteristic. In the Pittsburgh region,

changes in the local political ecology were brought about in four phases, all of which were parts

of a larger process of organizing and creating group capacity. Hacker and Pierson contend that

from the perspective of policy-focused research, nothing is as important as the distinction

between organized and unorganized groups. From the perspective of local political ecology,

without organization political agency is a faint dream.

The first phase of organizing was to confront management hostility toward unionization,

including management's willingness to bend and break the law. Hostility was not easily

challenged. The strike was once considered the unions' most powerful weapon, but the Taft-Hartley ban on secondary strikes and boycotts had crimped its use. Reagan's replacement of striking air controllers exposed an even deeper weakness. Unless the strike was about unfair labor practices (a strategically important exception labor learned), management was free to replace striking employees. However, dismissing workers for union activity constituted an unfair labor practice (ULP) that could serve as grounds for a protected strike.

Generally, nursing home managers showed little reluctance to disfavor and even dismiss pro-union employees, and the legal punishments for such actions were non-existent. Under American labor law: "There are no punitive damages for committing unfair labor practices" (Lopez 2004, 154). However, if such practices become the grievance around which a strike is organized, then striking workers cannot be replaced legally. Otherwise management has little disincentive to avoid harassing "union sympathizers."[65] For its part management is free, as part of a campaign of persuasion, to hold mandatory meetings in which workers are exposed to anti-union movies and management speakers (Lopez 2004, 69). Phase one, then, consists of encountering the reality of deep-seated management resistance to unionization.

Phase two was a matter of finding and training a cadre of committed and dedicated workers who are willing to begin building union support in a very hostile environment. Given the difficulty of the situation, highly useful leadership training and development depends greatly on union organizers and support from the national union. John Sweeney's rise in the labor movement is tied closely to his willingness to commit resources from the top to organizing at the grassroots level this was a significant change that had ripple effects on the political efficacy of union locals struggling to organize.

To withstand management's counter-campaign, organizing called for a third phase to build solidarity among workers. What immigrant bonds and experiences provided among building cleaners in southern California, in southwestern Pennsylvania union organizers had to build more or less from scratch. Their approach drew heavily from practices long in use among community organizers. Since mass mailings and union meetings offer little lift off, SEIU organizers turned to home visits, akin to one-on-ones used in community organizing. The aim was to find potential union sympathizers and recruit them into organizing committees that could work face-to-face with other workers. Grievances abounded, with short staffing at the top of the list. When a shortage of staff received notice as a violation of state regulations, one management response was to hire temporary workers (adding to turnover) often paid at a higher rate than permanent employees (and thereby fueling worker resentment). The challenge was to go from grievance to action, but an obstacle to that move was "workers' negative perceptions and experiences of unions" (Lopez 2004, 92). It took intensive face-to-face efforts to replace such negatives with a positive view of unions as a worthwhile affiliation (Lopez 2004, 92). One of the ways of instilling a pro-union mindset was to engage in actions.[66] Such consciousness raising did not start with a blank slate, but had to overcome a negative image that management was promoting in its effort to block unionization.

Because unions are subject to labeling by antagonists as self-serving organizations, phase four involved pursuing favorable public relations and enlisting community allies. In Los Angeles the 1990 police assault on Century City marchers proved to be a media bonanza for JfJ. When Pennsylvania's Allegheny County made a move toward privatization of its four (Kane, PA) nursing homes (and the likelihood of staff cuts in a sector where understaffing was a persistent

problem), the union local turned for support to the Alliance for Progressive Action, a body

formed within the area's religious community and to which the union had an existing tie. The

coalition coming out of this connection, the Committee to Save Kane, framed the issue as one

of social justice, not a simple matter of internal agency organization. The Committee to Save

Kane took on the task of organizing the families of Kane residents, and they, in turn, joined

protests against the proposed move by the county commissioners, publicly calling out the

commissioners and signposting such messages as: "Shame on you! How can you do this to my

mother?" (Lopez 2004, 121). The committee also advanced the union cause when it discovered

and publicized that, in order to hide understaffing managers were busing nurses' aides from

one facility to another during a state inspection (Lopez 2004, 121). Church involvement

fortified the moral authority of the protests and heightened the credibility of the union claim

that social justice was on its side.[67]

In a subsequent struggle SEIU found that contending with a large multinational

corporation was a different order of challenge from fighting privatization by the Allegheny

County Council. With existing contracts reaching expiration, the firm showed no signs of a

willingness to bargain. Lopez believes the company's strategy was to provoke a strike, for

which its scope and size gave it a decided advantage. In Lopez's assessment, the firm was

"capable of financially withstanding even a successful strike involving 20 of its Pennsylvania

nursing homes" (2004, 163**)** and, unlike Allegheny County, the company "had a long history of

unlawful antiunion activities and was clearly willing to bend and break the law in order to

intimidate workers and break their union" (2004, 164-5). Moreover, workers had a potentially

fatal weakness: Seeking leverage in a contest over contract terms, strikers could be replaced.

The union's counter strategy was to provoke and document unfair labor practices. Under labor

law as it had evolved, strikers against ULPs could not be legally fired and replaced.

The union tried to strengthen its position with a statewide organizing blitz, but that

maneuver failed to yield any new organizing committees. However, it did help bring new

individual members into the ongoing campaign. Longer term success came from a broader

mobilizing effort of, while keeping workers engaged, enlisting allies in the struggle, including

strategically vital political support. Overall, as in the Allegheny County battle, the strategy was

to turn the conflict into "a social-justice issue that workers and community allies could rally

around" (Lopez 2004, 166).

An important step in the struggle was to provoke the company into unfair labor

practices that could then become grievances against which a three-day strike was directed.

Lopez reports "nearly 1,000 SEIU members walked off the job at 18 Megacorps nursing homes

across the state of Pennsylvania to protest Megacorp's labor practices" (2004, 184). The

company reacted by dismissing 400 workers, and after the strike others saw their work hours

reduced. In addition, "the company escalated its efforts to punish, harass, and surveil those

who had participated in the strike and rank-and-file union leaders in particular" (Lopez 2004,

189). Regaining jobs for the dismissed workers turned into a thirteen-month legal ordeal. The

firm's litigation strategy was to delay resolution of the case in order to force the union to

expend six-figure dollars in order to secure what the workers were legally entitled to.

The clash became a war of attrition. The company sought "to prolong the resolution of

the unfair labor practices charges in order to demoralize workers, wear them down, and

destroy their will to fight on" (Lopez 2004, 191). The risk was real. Lopez observed that as the

process went on "a good number of workers were exhausted by the struggle and just wanted the whole thing to go away" (2004, 198). Without strong backing from the national, workers did not stand a chance.[68] Even winning the legal issue would not by itself prevent losing the war.

Instead of passivity the union widened the struggle, and built in-depth links to the community. With the assistance of union staff each nursing home formed a set of committees: a Fundraising Committee, a Hardship Committee, a Media Committee, and an Outreach Committee. Members of these committees variously solicited donations, made speeches to community groups, distributed printed materials (professionally done by researchers from the national staff), held news conferences, and made every effort to inform the public about their situation and needs, but also to call repeated attention to the firm's record of perpetrating unfair labor practices. In addition, the union materials and speeches highlighted the record of the firm as a poor service provider, its health and safety violations, and failures to meet regulations. As part of the campaign, people from the community were invited to join vigils, protests, and picketing. As Lopez explains, these activities boosted worker morale as well as gained community support. Hence the various committee events "not only were good ways to keep the visibility of the struggle high throughout the campaign but also generated a tangible sense of pride and achievement for the rank-and-file workers" who organized and conducted diverse events (Lopez 2004, 200).

As part of its "no stone unturned" approach to the struggle with the company, the union made use of a working relationship with OSHA. One effort was to pressure the company to purchase more lifts and increase staffing to bring the injury rate down. But the union also

documented health and safety problems in every department of nursing home care. "The

union put together an exhaustive checklist of items for workers to investigate tailored to each

department" (Lopez 2004, 194-195). The list covered everything from call bells and night lights

to frayed electric cords and included whether each home had disaster preparedness plans in a

written version. The union's research department discovered that the company, working

through a subsidiary, was purchasing prescription drugs at a price not competitive with many

local pharmacies, thereby enabling the firm to make added money (Lopez 2004, 201). When

this was publicized by the union, it was a public relations setback for the firm. Adding to the

company's woes on this front, the U.S. Government Accountability Office cited it as "one of the

nation's worst labor law violators" (quoted in Lopez 2004, 204).

Such information brought the union a number of congressional allies from both parties

and (after initial hesitation) the state's Republican governor who also put pressure on the

company. In view of the fact that a high proportion of nursing-home revenue comes from

federal and state governments, the private nature of the company gave it only limited

insulation from complaints voiced through political channels. Since the company held VA

contracts, local veterans' organizations were also brought in as sources of pressure. As state

and federal legislation began to take shape, the company's unlawful behavior was a prime

target. In this flow of events once the court decision was issued, finding that the company "had

acted unlawfully in replacing the strikers," the company had little choice but to work with the

union on a collective-bargaining agreement. After a drawn-out struggle, in July 1997, a new

four-year contact was ratified.[69]

Union officials regarded their victory as the combined effect from "multiple, mutually reinforcing sources of leverage" (Lopez 2004, 208). No one source, they believed, could come close to carrying the day. And the joined efforts rested on essential contributions from both the top and the grassroots level. Organizing is labor intensive (no pun intended), but also benefits in crucial ways from expertise in the national organization in such areas as law and research.

<u>Union Organizing and Local Political Ecology</u>

Local political ecologies are complex and vary in important particulars, but several lessons hold for organizing nursing homes in Pennsylvania as well as they do for office-cleaning workers in California. Both cases illustrate how organizing can alter local politics. Yet organizing is no narrowly bounded struggle; would-be organizers often find that they face a challenge of framing and need to take on sometimes competing and contradictory views among the wider public. Resources and expertise are vital as are the fostering of favorable perceptions and the recruitment of allies. Bringing these assets together is frequently a bilevel process.

While the two cases may differ to a degree, both show that local ecologies are not places of peace and harmony. The Pennsylvania battle underscores the depth of conflict that can be involved and the necessity of mobilizing action in multiple venues and sustaining that capacity over time. In an arena of deep conflict, no victory is permanent. A settlement came in Pennsylvania only because the union demonstrated a capacity to engage in sustained struggle on multiple fronts. There may be times in some conflicts when mutual understanding breaks through and holds. Labor-management conflict shows scant promise of such breakthroughs. This is a reason low-wage work is a persisting problem. Like JfJ's southern California initiative,

nursing-home organizing produced a remarkable achievement, but, in the cold light of morning, one that was limited. Though the structural upper hand of capital over labor got some mitigation, it was not ended. Even so, level of mitigation is a matter of great import in the lives of workers contending with their marginality. In the struggle over low-wage work we can see that degree and detail make a difference. Observing local political ecologies evolve over time enables us to grasp the many ways in which local-national interaction forms a crucial relationship, with spillover effects at both levels. Local political ecologies provide a window for viewing a dimension of politics far too important to overlook.

Conclusion

Drawing on Schattschneider, Hacker and Pierson (2014) emphasize the importance of groups and how policy initiatives give rise to their reconfiguration and altered relationships. In the governance process policies help some groups gain ground while others lose. Given the illustrations they discuss—tariffs, airline deregulation, federal tax reform, and social security, Hacker and Pierson appear to have the national arena mainly in mind. Through a bilevel scan our effort here brings into view a wider set of policies in order to highlight the local context and its interaction with national level players and initiatives as an important dimension in the politics of marginal groups—marginality that can be magnified as in the drug war or mitigated as in low-wage organizing. Of course, the drug war and low-wage organizing are only two instances in a large body of bilevel processes of policy making; there are many more.

However, the two initiatives examined here illustrate the complex intertwining that often characterizes policy efforts. The issue is not simply what groups are affected or even activated, but how they are arranged as part of a governing constellation. In such an

arrangement what assets can they draw on and defenses can they sustain? With its street-crime emphasis Reagan's drug war filled policy space with a destructive targeting of inner-city residents at the very time they were highly vulnerable. An alternative decriminalization approach could have opened a different path.

The range of relevant policy issues is wide, and federal actions and inactions are often crucial. Whereas much of the writing about the urban crisis has highlighted freeway construction, urban renewal, housing discrimination, and segregated schools, a bilevel look at the war on drugs exposes an additional dimension with its profound impact on the local political ecology. Imagine how city neighborhoods might have developed if medicalization and service provision had been the central thrust for addressing urban disorders. In the case of SEIU organizing, we can see that, despite federal government drift on the problem of low wages, a national-led intervention could mitigate the marginality of an urban population. This initiative also underscores the character of the grassroots, its potential for mobilization, and how agency by non-elites can play a crucial part. As a concept, local political ecology thus brings an important dimension of the governing process into plain view.

While the configuration of local groups and relationships can be greatly influenced by national initiatives, the potency of local relationships also hinges on their capacity for enhancement and their vulnerability to being undermined. Reagan's drug war targeted inner-city neighborhoods and did so at a point of significant weakness. Years of socially disruptive redevelopment (Fullilove 2005) were interwoven with deindustrialization and a loss of manufacturing jobs that were the economic foundation of many urban neighborhoods. The vacuum was widely filled by relationships built around illicit drug trafficking, hence inner-city

residents had maximum susceptibility to an enforcement-oriented drug policy. Particularly in

the absence of a treatment-centered federal policy, opponents of criminalization had little to

build on. In the case of low-wage organizing, although JfJ was sparked and supported by and

through resources from the national union, the campaign also benefitted from local immigrant

solidarity in the Los Angeles area. For nursing-home organizing, the families of those in care

could be mobilized as an accessible supporting constituency, and through social-justice appeals

faith groups could also be enlisted as local allies in the campaign.[70]

The drug war and SEIU low-wage organizing are only two instances of bilevel policy

making, but others could be examined through a local political ecology lens. President

Johnson's War on Poverty was also by design a two-way initiative. Although it met resistance at

the local and national levels and had only a limited run with uneven success, Johnson's initiative

also opened up political space for less affluent communities of color and provided a boost for

political transition in places as different as Oakland (Self 2003) and Phoenix (Dantico and Svara

2015).[71]

In contrast, the urban renewal program of the Eisenhower era,[72] though it had some

vague provisions for "citizen participation," became essentially an elite-driven policy, widely

insulated from popular pressures (see, for example, the overview in Friedland and Palmer

1984). On the current scene, urban school reform has all the markings of a top-down initiative

with little support for community-based reform, hence with more affinity to the drug war and

urban renewal than President Johnson's Great Society agenda.[73]

The concept of local political ecology thus gives us a fresh way of looking at the urban

condition. Much of the existing urban literature focuses on the politics of land use and the

assumed hegemony of growth coalitions. The urban crisis has typically been understood as

about the decline of the industrial city (Rae 2003), and the assorted ill consequences of

suburban sprawl with poverty concentrated in the central city. Although a post-industrial "back

to the city" movement is giving us a more complex pattern to observe (Hyra 2015), racial and

especially class segregation remains firm and consequential (Chetty and Hendren 2015). Yet,

though land use is fundamental in the urban condition, the policy domains covered in our case

studies tell us that more is involved. As Traci Burch (2013) argues so convincingly, the workings

of a racially infused criminal justice system have had their own profound impact. By contrast,

SEIU's successes in organizing low-wage workers has helped spark a diffuse movement to

address the bottom tier of wage-earners, indicating that local efforts can have an impact even

in the face of global trends and federal inaction.[74]

Both of our cases involve initiatives on the national level, but their contrasting

experiences show that bilevel policies can be structured in contrasting ways with sharply

different consequences for society's lower strata. Of course, policy initiatives need not start at

the national level. Much of the energy of the civil rights movement emanated from local

actions, even though national legislation and enforcement were ultimate aims. Moreover, as

Lisa Miller (2008) shows in her work on the politics of crime control, the local level can provide

a scope of representation and richness of ideas unmatched in hearings at the national and state

levels. In work on education reforms, Douglas Reed (2014) offers a somewhat different

scenario in which "operational localism" has often been a force to be overcome in national-

level quests for expanded opportunity. Limitations can also run the other way. As was the case

with Mayor Kurt Schmoke's effort to promote medicalization over criminalization in response to the drug problem, local efforts can be stymied by a failure to enlist national support. [75]

Local political ecology is a concept tacitly recognized in significant current work. Making it explicit and underscoring its place in national-local interaction provides a deeper understanding of federalism and its workings as a source of change (though not always change for the better). More generally, as an element on policy-focused research, local political ecology offers a way of reconciling the study of urban politics with main line work in American national politics to the benefit of both. In particular, local political ecology provides a fresh insight into the politics behind the intractability of urban poverty and why, despite many policy initiatives, the condition persists.

From the earlier period of urban renewal through the drug war and on to the current campaign to reform urban schools, we can see that less well-off city populations are vulnerable to policies that, despite an initial rhetoric of upbeat promises, often worsen the lives and prospects of marginal groups. Those with a limited ability to challenge or alter top-level policy initiatives can find that announced goals of serving their well-being are displaced as the local ecology comes to be populated by groups pursuing alternative aims: developers pursuing up-scale redevelopment projects rather than housing for people of low and moderate income; profit-minded suppliers of tests, data analysis, and management services (Burch 2009) and entrepreneurial designers of charter franchises (Ravitch 2014) instead of comprehensive community schools anchored in poor neighborhoods (Bryk et al. 2010); and in the drug war instead of providers of treatment services, law-enforcement agencies attracted to asset seizures moved to the forefront while harsh sentencing fed a pattern in which backwater

communities with few alternatives came to see prison construction and operation as an economic-development strategy (Alexander 2010).

In key initiatives cited above, prime backers failed to bring into play low-income stakeholders and provide them with a voice in the all-important implementation stage. Sometimes such voicelessness was a deliberate tactic. In the case of urban renewal it was nearly two decades into the program before widespread civil disorder finally brought action addressing this issue. In the case of urban school reform philanthropic and other elite backers have typically seen popular participations as a hindrance, to be given a token nod, but in practice to be bypassed.[76] In President Reagan's war on drugs, despite its emphasis on enforcement, improving police community relations had no role. It fell to city police brass to make the point that it was not possible to use the power to arrest as a way of curbing the drug problem. In a "tough on crime" approach, the drug war had its own distinct dynamic with no recognized need for building constructive police-community relations.[77]

The SEIU campaign to organize low-wage workers stands as an exceptional case in that it illustrates the place that local political ecology can hold as a facet of city politics through the contribution it can make as a source of an enhanced voice for otherwise marginal groups. The drug war shows how that ecology can be reshaped to weaken that voice. When political-development scholars pose the issue of the nature of the American polity, local political ecology has a claim in the answer to this question. The experiences examined here highlight the bilevel view of how local political ecology undergoes change and can modify the response to "What kind of country-is-this-anyway?" (Orren and Skowronek 2004, 185).

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Endnotes

[1] The trio never explicitly defines the mainstream, but cite as leading exemplars Robert Dahl's *Who Governs?* (1961) and John Kingdon's *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (1984, 1995). On rational choice as under-appreciated work in the urban field, they cite Elinor Ostrom (1990) on collective multiplicity and Mark Schneider (1995) on entrepreneurs in the policy process.

[2] Hacker and Pierson find especially off the mark the assertion by Anthony Downs that politicians "formulate policies in order to win elections, rather than win elections to formulate policies" (2014, 644).

[3] Weaver and Lerman also cite consequences from poor health to family destabilization (2010, 831). Politically they note negative results of "criminal justice contact for several aspects of political life—turning out to vote, involvement in civic groups, and trusting the government" (2010, 827).

[4] As scholarly attention has caught up with what is now often referred to as the carceral state, at least three schools of thought about mass incarceration are identifiable. Alexander explains that in her usage mass incarceration reaches beyond the criminal justice system "to the larger web of laws, rules, policies, and customs that control those labeled criminals both in and out of prison. Once released, former prisoners enter into a hidden underworld of legalized discrimination and permanent social exclusion" (2010, 13). Alexander and sociologist Katherine Beckett (1997) emphasize the agency of the political right in pursuing a politics of backlash in response to the civil rights movement and other challenges to established hierarchies and privileges. Here the focus is on the sharp upturn in incarceration that occurred with the drug war and the specific consequences that flowed from that move. Exemplified in the work of Marie Gottschalk (2015), one school of thought emphasizes the long and wide-reaching historical context within which President Reagan's drug war fits. She offers the view that explanations like those of Alexander and Beckett miss historical complexity and the broader place of what she terms the "permission to dislike" and the "varied, shifting, and subtle form that [it] has taken in the development of the carceral state" (2015, 139). For her part, Naomi Murakawa (2014) takes a different path toward explaining the carceral state, emphasizing not only its growth but also the shift in the racial character of the prison population

that occurred from mid-20th century on as a mostly white population to one predominantly composed of people

of color. A special wrinkle she provides is to implicate liberals by way of their drive to enforce meritocratic

principles of racial neutrality. Despite their different end points the varying schools of thought have significant

overlap. With Beckett and Alexander, Gottschalk recognizes the importance of the particulars of context and the

role that intentional political agency can play. Like Beckett and Alexander, Murakawa stresses the profound turn

in the racial composition of the prison population, but she allocates special attention to the impact of abstract

principles whereas the other three authors are more heedful of the powerful role of reference goals—who over

principles of how. Perhaps it is noteworthy that all four authors cited here (and Trace Burch as well) are female

with an implicit understanding of the urban crisis as one characterized by exclusion, whereas the earlier

understanding of the urban crisis, usually articulated as at its center about the political economy of land use.

[5] One historian described Reagan as perhaps "the most successful white backlash politician in American history"

(Rossinow 2015, 8).

[6] While Michelle Alexander offers this interpretation of political developments, years earlier scholars such as

Kathleen Beckett (1997) traced the connection from the Goldwater candidacy of 1964 through Nixon's presidency

and after a break under presidents Ford and Carter on to the Reagan-Bush years.   Alexander provides the ins and

outs of how discretion in the criminal justice system had such powerful racial consequences under the surface

cover of formal "colorblindness."

[7] For an overview of Reagan's presidential years, see Rossinow (2015).

[8] Beckett (1987, 34). Reagan's verbal targets included a "legendary" welfare queen defrauding taxpayers

(Rossinow (2015, 8).

[9] There is now considerable literature on colorblind racism. On the changing form of race, see Omi and Winant

(2014).

[10] In commenting on "deep racial disparities in punishment" Gottschalk calls for a wider understanding of the

carceral state but adds that we "cannot ignore the persistence of hostile white attitudes around questions of race

and punishment" (2015, 138). See also Muhammad (2010). Speaking more broadly than President Reagan's drug war, Murakawa offers the view that the U.S. "did not face a crime problem that was racialized; it faced a race problem that was criminalized" (2014, 3).   Though both Gottschalk and Murakawa accord race an important role in the carceral state, they differ over its centrality. As the preceding quote makes clear, Murakawa views race as central while Gottschalk gives greater attention to multiple factors, arguing that political figures "recalibrate their strategies and rhetoric in light of changing political, economic, social, , and demographic circumstances" (2015, 139).

[11] In examining "laissez-faire racism" as "a new racialized social order with a new racial order" Bobo and Smith explain: "Under this regime, blacks are blamed as the cultural architects of their own disadvantaged status. The deeply entrenched cultural pattern of denying societal responsibility for conditions in many black communities continues to foster opposition to affirmative action and other social policies that might alleviate race-based inequalities" (1998, 212-213). Reagan's speeches consistently echoed this new ideology.

[12] A recent look at racial attitudes by party shows that many differences are small, often within the margin of sampling error (Silver and McCann 2014). Party differences are largest on items that coincide with the concept of laissez-faire racism (see note 8 above). On the item "'Too Much' Money Is Spent on Improving Conditions for Blacks," in 1980 (Reagan's election year) 38% of white Republicans agreed, 28% of white Democrats agreed. In 2012, 32% of white Republicans agreed, white Democrats agreed only at 10%   On the item "Blacks 'Lack the Motivation to Pull Themselves Out of Poverty,'" in 1980 white Republicans agreed at a level of 67%, white Democrats at 65%. In 2012, the differences were larger: white Republicans 58%, white Democrats 40%. As Silver and McCann point out, differences over time are likely to represent in significant part differences in who has become a Democrat or Republican, and not necessarily changes by steady party identifiers.

[13] See: http//www.naacp.org/pages/criminal-justice-fact-sheet

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[14] On the point that racial disparities in punishment are highest in drug offenses, see Gottschalk (2015, 126, 262n. For her part Murakawa observes that the black-to-white incarceration rate was steady at 3-to-one from 1925 to 1973 but jumped to eight-to-one by 2000 (2014, 6).

[15] On the shift in class focus and media complicity, see Reeves and Campbell (1994, 129-136).

[16] Reagan offered this view: "Choosing a career in crime is not the result of poverty or of an unhappy childhood or of a misunderstood adolescence; it is the result of a conscious, willful choice by some who consider themselves above the law." (Quoted in Beckett 1997, 49).

[17] Gottschalk gives special attention to the consequences that flow from the occasions "when public figures give their permission 'to dislike others'" (2015, 139).

[18] Murakawa observes that the weight of evidence disconfirms a connection between punitiveness and crime victimization (2014, 213, n. 10).

[19] For details of this process and how it cumulatively led to a massive and disproportionate impact on African Americans, see especially Alexander (2010) and on the sentencing component Provine (2007).

[20] The quote is from an advisor to the Reagan transition team (quoted in Beckett 1997, 47).

[21] According to a member of the Attorney General's task force, domestic violence was rejected as part of the new focus as "not the kind of street violence about which the Task Force was organized" (Beckett 1997, 47).

[22] On President Bush's continuity as a drug warrior, including the constructed event about a drug dealer across from the White House, see Rossinow (2015, 259). See also Western (2006, 60).

[23] Yet it seems all too easy to heighten anti-black sentiments. By the time Nixon took presidential office there was strong support for the view that law and order had broken down, and a majority directed blame on "Negroes who start riots," along with Communists (Beckett 1997, 38). In the form of "law and order" coded anti-black campaign rhetoric is widely credited with a significant role in Nixon's 1968 electoral victory.

[24] One pair of sociologists offered the assessment that in the 1980s: "By and large, the media and politicians' pronouncements about drugs spread exaggerations, misinformation, and simplistic theories of cause and effect. They taught bad pharmacology, bad sociology, bad criminology, bad urban anthropology, and even bad history" (Reinarman and Levine 1997, 4). In this climate, Democrats such as candidate and then President Bill Clinton seemed determined not to be perceived as soft on crime. Items such as Willie Horton ad in the 1988 presidential campaign did much subsequently to encourage a bipartisan base of support for "the need to expand the size, scope, and resources of the crime control apparatus" (Beckett 1997, 45). Note, however, what a Bush campaign official said of the episode: "It's a wonderful mix of liberalism and a big black rapist" quoted in Rossinow (2015, 247).

[25] On street crime President Reagan saw the nation's cities as "lawless jungle" (Rossinow 2015, 8).

[26] See the history of the National Legal Aid & Defender Association

(http://www.nlada.org/About/About_HistoryCivil)

[27] On President Clinton's turn to privatization in incarceration, see Gottschalk (2015, 315n. 134).

[28] Youngstown, Ohio is one example of a fading industrial area that has viewed prisons as an economic development tool: http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2000/05/steel-town-lockdown

[29] Beckett reported the racial pattern of the consequences of the drug war -- African Americans composed only 13% of drug users, but made up 35% of those arrested for drug possession, 55% of those convicted of drug possession, and 74% of those sentenced to prison for drug possession (1997, 97).

[30] Where is the robust counter mobilization that pluralist scholars might predict? Alexander puzzles over the slowness with which civil rights organizations came to recognize and respond to the racial character of mass incarceration (2010, 9-10). The thin veneer of "colorblindness" provides no plausible explanation for the slow reaction in the civil rights community; though Alexander does indicate that a "politics of respectability" could have been a factor because the "widespread aversion to advocacy on behalf of those labeled criminals reflects a certain political reality" (2010, 223-228).

[31] More recently ALEC abandoned its longstanding advocacy of minimum mandatory sentences. ALEC is currently promoting efforts to "ensure costly prison cells and strict penalties are reserved for violent and predatory offenders, while lessening the number of nonviolent offenders in prison." See ALEC's website, the Justice Performance Project (http://www.alec.org/task-forces/justice-performance-project/).

[32] Text of the act can be found at the "ALEC Exposed" website by the Center for Media and Democracy: http://alecexposed.org/w/images/e/eb/7D6-Minimum-Mandatory_Sentencing_Act_Exposed.pdf

[33] However, on the need for caution and careful analysis in criminal-justice reform, see Gottschalk (2015).

[34] See the White House's announcement of his appointment: https://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/botticelli-bio

[35] It should be noted that, even at the height of the drug war, a scattering of conservative commentators were critical of the anti-drug campaign, especially the call for an extended reach by the federal government. One voiced the sentiment that drug users are not an alien breed, but "People like us" Reeves and Campbell (1994, 223).l

[36] For a significant local initiative on prevention backed by federal funding, see Sirianni (2009) on Hampton, Virginia's youth development programs; also Stone and Worgs 2004.

[37] Schmoke's congressional testimony drew opposition from New York Mayor Koch (*New York Times* 9-30-88), but Schmoke maintained his position and amplified it with calls for needle-exchange programs (Kaufman 1989; Banisky 1993; Taylor 2014). However, by the time that Kurt Schmoke became mayor (first elected 1987) Reagan's war on drugs dominated the criminal justice policy domain; money and media attention entrenched the criminalization approach, and marginalized the medical alternative.

[38] As an Illustration of the potential, a notable event was a 1999 citywide Neighborhood Congress in Baltimore. On the short list of priorities recommended by the congress was a call for more and accessible drug treatment centers (Stoker, Stone, and Worgs 2015).

[39] On the decline of collective bargaining see Meyerson (2014a).

[40] The federal level is not indexed and has failed to keep up with the cost of living. The CBO estimates that the current figure of $7.25 per hour dollars is well below a constant dollar estimate based in 1968 for 2014 of $10.10. The first judicially approved federal minimum was enacted in 1938. Now a number of states and localities (several by referendum) have adopted minimums higher than the federally mandated level. The OECD estimated the unionization density in the U.S. workforce as 10.8%, and recently collective bargaining by public sector unions has encountered growing resistance, but no federal action in support.

[41] SEIU is an international labor organization with 2 million members operating in the U.S., Canada, and Puerto Rico. The primary employment categories of the membership are healthcare workers, property service workers, and public employees. The union has 150 self-governing, local affiliates and fifteen state councils (focusing on state-level political mobilization to represent the concerns SEIU members in particular states). On the important role of SEIU in revitalizing labor organizing, see Fletcher and Gapasin 2008.

[42] Multi-layering is especially significant in that the Taft-Hartley act of 1947 prohibits secondary strikes and boycotts.

[43] Hacker and Pierson (in their 2010 book, *Winner-Take-All Politics*) discuss the mobilization of business interests in response to the expansion of national regulatory power in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The Powell memo called on business to go on the offensive and resist demands that might limit the ability of corporations to pursue profitability. Text of the Powell memo can be found here:

http://law2.wlu.edu/deptimages/Powell%20Archives/PowellMemorandumTypescript.pdf

[44] At this writing a case before the Supreme Court, *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, puts at risk the ability of public-sector unions tom collective bargaining fees from non-members covered by collective bargaining.

[45] More generally on the challenge of "precarious" work, see Adler, Tapia, and Turner (2014).

[46] Harold Meyers in the Foreword to Dean and Reynolds (2009, ix, and quoted in Milkman 2006, 3).

[47] Important sources for details of the campaign are found in Waldinger et al. (1996); Bronfenbrenner et al. (1998); Milkman (2006); Bridges (2011); and Adler and Cornfield (2014). The large immigration from Mexico and Central

America altered the demographic landscape of southern California in a way matched by few other places.

Significant dates in the interweaving of worker organizing and the immigrant rights movement include:

1980 -- John Sweeney elected as president of SEIU

1990 -- L.A. JfJ gains contract for cleaning buildings in Century City area of the city

1993 – LAANE formed

1994 – California's anti-immigrant Proposition passes (was later overturned judicially)

1995 – John Sweeney elected president of AFL-CIO

2003 – Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride sponsored by AFL-CIO

2005 – With SEIU as a large and prominent member, the Change to Win Coalition split from AFL-CIO

2006 – Massive multicity protest for immigrant rights (on the latter see Voss and Bloemraad 2011).

[48] For an indication that JfJ was not an isolated instance of labor reawakening in southern California, see on San Jose *A New New Deal* by Dean and Reynolds (2009) and more generally Turner and Cornfield (2007) and Adler, Tapia, and Turner (2014).

[49] In addition to work on social movement unionism by Lopez (2004), see AFL-CIO adopted circa 1997; Moberg 2001; Working Partnerships USA circa 2006; Turner and Cornfield (2007); Dean and Reynolds 2010; Adler, Tapia, and Turner (2014).

[50] More generally on lifestyle politics and heightened individualism, see Bennett (1998).

[51] On the industry strategy, see also Bloom (2010).

[52] See also the quote in Milkman by another worker, who said of building owners that they "were not interested in having a bunch of Latino janitors screaming and yelling. It's fine for us to come in at night and clean their buildings, but they don't want to look us in the face during the daytime" (2006, 157).

[53] LAANE is the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (see Meyerson 2013).

[54] On central labor councils more generally, see Gapasin and Vial (1998).

[55] Two of SEIU's strategies involved research and legal expertise: for instance, research for understanding the industry as it understood itself, and use of legal moves—"guerrilla" legal tactics of filing complaints and keeping within the limits of what is allowed by way of demonstrations and protests (Waldinger et al. 1996, 17).

[56] On the use of trusteeships by SEIU, see Slaughter (1999, 55-56).

[57] Milkman cites as an example, the "LA Lawless" publicity around the fact that the popular show featured a building that research found was cleaned by a nonunion firm, and consequently was spotlighted for abuses of the rights of janitors. The building was labeled "the home of the LA Lawless" (2006, 157).

[58] For a related process of coalition building, see the account of People Acting in Common Together (PACT), a fait-based organization in Santa Clara County, and the South Bay Labor Council (SBLC) in Dean and Reynolds (2009).

[59] Such local agencies were later phased out by Governor Jerry Brown.

[60] Si, se puede (Spanish for yes, we can), was the motto of the UFW coined by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta during the 1972 hunger strike by Chavez.

[61] Our main source for this section is a widely cited study of social movement unionism based around the work of an organizing intern for SEIU, Stephen Lopez's *Reorganizing the Rust Belt* (2004).

[62] On this period, see Fletcher and Gapasin (2008).

[63] By contrast Lopez describes SEIU's "ideal of a more grassroots, member-driven, movement-oriented model of unionism" (2004, 52).

[64] To bring family members of residents and workers together one of the union locals organized for several facilities units of ABC, the Alliance for Better Care (Lopez 2004, 159).

[65] As Lopez puts it: "The current legal framework is an obstacle to new organizing, since the failure of the law to provide for any punitive damages encourages firms to illegally intimidate and fire workers when they attempt to organize" (2004, 21).

⁶⁶ One such incident involved workers collectively presenting a petition to their boss, who fled the scene rather than undergo an in-person meeting. Disappointing on its face, the event in Lopez's judgment was empowering. Subsequently workers were willing to use management's mandatory meetings as an opportunity to fight back by preparing a list of "awkward questions for management" (Lopez 2004, 90).

⁶⁷ At the time of the privatization battle, the Alliance for Progressive Action was already involved in organizing the Pittsburgh Area Religious Task Force on the Economy. This new task force was enlisted in the Kane privatization issue as a social justice voice (Lopez 2004, 122-125).

⁶⁸ With backing from the top, workers dismissed for striking were converted into organizers for the union, thus turning what the company intended as a punishment into an asset for the union.

⁶⁹ The union still fell short of the aims it sought at the beginning. Pensions are a conspicuous example of what the settlement did not include.

⁷⁰ On how variations in local factors can play an important part, see Turner and Cornfield (2007).

⁷¹ A 50th anniversary forum found a more positive assessment of Johnson's War on Poverty than is generally acknowledged (Bailey and Danziger 2013). Retrospective examinations give special credit to the initiative for promoting a new level of grassroots engagement. See, for example, Orleck and Hazirjian (2011).

⁷² Initially called the Slum Clearance provision of the 1949 Housing Act, the term "urban renewal" was introduced in 1954 with revisions which began to shift away from housing toward a broader redevelopment goal that included non-residential elements.

⁷³ Like urban renewal, high-stakes testing (as the core of corporate-style accountability) is top-down with little attention to building a grassroots foundation. While widely supported at the elite level, there are, as was the case for urban renewal, several voices sounding alarms over destructive consequences.

[74] Noteworthy is also the emergence of Local Progress, a cross-city alliance among progressive officials elected at the city level (Lydia DePillis, "The club behind a blitz of new laws in U.S. cities," Washington Post, Jan. 10, 2016). See also "Local Events" http://localprogress.org/event/2015-national-convening-in-los-angeles-october-26-27/.

[75] A revealing instance is the current effort of black clergy to bring about enhances support of Operation Ceasefire, a program of police-community cooperation to bring down the level of urban gun violence (Beckett 2015). For background on its origins in Boston in the 1990s, see Berrien and Winship (2002). Although the Justice Department list it as an effective program (Boston Strategy To Prevent Youth Violence –

http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/gun_violence/profile02.html) and the head of the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Policy and Research describes it as the strategy with "the most consistent positive response" (quoted in Beckett 2015), the program gets only modest and tenuous federal funding and no space in White House statements about gun violence. White House staffers explain to the program's backers that there is little national support for a program perceived to be of benefit only to African American city residents. [CDC estimates the number of black men killed by guns in 2012 was 5,947, way beyond the numbers killed in mass shootings (Beckett 2015)]. By contrast, in 2014 President Obama launched with high publicity My Brother's Keeper, a program to enhance opportunities for young men and boys of color. Although both initiatives involve partnership arrangements, Operation Ceasefire is regarded as a government program whereas My Brother's Keeper is seen as a creature of the voluntary sector, even though city governments are key partners in the program. In a highly partisan national political context, the standing of men and boys of color is radically different from their standing in the voluntary sector.

[76] See, for example, the detailed study of Newark's experience (2015).

[77] For his part President Clinton did direct federal money into community policing, but like Reagan he was a "tough on crime" proponent, including backing for harsh sentencing (Beckett 1997, 59-61Provine 2007, 131-137).