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Property, Community, Democracy:  
The Beliefs of San Francisco Neighborhood Leaders

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## ABSTRACT

### Property, Community, Democracy: The Beliefs of San Francisco Neighborhood Leaders

San Francisco neighborhood leaders are divided between those who believe private property ownership is the necessary basis for local community and those who believe universal rights are needed to protect the local community from private property owners. Both sides are concerned, however, that reform proposals which bring greater community control over major resources, whether through programs of economic democracy or of privatization, will lead to disruptive political conflict within the local community. I argue that this is not, as Bellah and associates suggest, because as Americans these leaders lack a language of civic concern. Rather their concerns reflect difficulties in reconciling two processes which are both important aspects of community politics - the search for consensus and the protection of vital but opposing interests.



Property, Community, Democracy: The Beliefs of San Francisco  
Neighborhood Leaders

Debate over the balance between private property rights and democratic government is central to the American political tradition. Through more than two centuries the debate has gone back and forth between those who emphasize the threat democracy can pose to private property, from the early "unruly mob" to today's "big government", and those who emphasize the threat certain forms of private property pose to democracy, from the "slave power" which was overthrown to the "soul-less corporation" which was not. The shared value of community plays an important role in these debates. Proponents of extended private property rights argue that private property ownership is the essential basis for stable communities and that local communities are disrupted by public programs and agencies. Proponents of extended democracy argue that communities are strengthened by citizens participation in the democratic process and disrupted by profit-maximizing private corporations.

Each side has a corresponding program for combatting external disruption of the community, one through privatization, reducing areas of public sector activity and strengthening the rights of ownership, and the other through economic democracy, expanding democratic control over private corporations and strengthening the rights of non-owners. Neighborhood associations play an important part in both programs. In the privatization scenario they provide services now provided by municipal agencies and exercise social control through private

covenants, rather than through government regulation (McClaughrey, 1980; Frazier, 1980). In the democratic community control scenario neighborhood organizations complement workplace organizations. They provide goods and services, such as housing, which are now provided by the private sector, exercise delegated regulatory powers over local property owners and exercise control over local delivery of public services (Boyte, 1980).

The focus on external disruption of community leads proponents of these reform programs to ignore internal difficulties in the kinds of community that would be required to sustain their respective programs. It is almost a universal assumption in the community organization literature that residents' sense of community will strengthen their ability to organize and control their own community (Barton, 1977; Berger & Neuhaus, 1977; Boyte, 1980; Hunter, 1974). The same assumption is made about the workplace community. John Witte (1980:168-9) is typical of proponents of economic democracy in his assertion that "the sense of community within the workplace" is a major potential source of opposition to the hierarchy created by the existing structure of private property rights. Yet in his thorough study of an experiment with worker participation in management and control of the work process he reports that a major source of worker opposition to participation was that "it would create conflict" among the workers (36-8). He also shows that interpersonal problems were a major reason for the failure of two experimental leaderless work groups (118-122). Thus workers opposed democratization of the workplace precisely to protect the existing sense of community and extensive voluntary

cooperation among the workers from the conflicts that shared responsibility for decision-making would bring.

Proponents of privatization, similarly, do not seem to realize that placing community responsibilities within a private framework, such as a condominium homeowners association, does not alter the necessity of a political decision-making process. Residents of such communities often have a difficult time reconciling their conception of individual private property rights with the reality of participation in the collective decision-making processes of a private government (Silverman & Barton, 1986).

Robert Bellah and associates (1985) have recently challenged the focus on external disruption of communities, and offered an explanation for American reluctance to support more participatory democracy which is based on the limitations of American culture. In their view American culture is so radically individualistic that Americans lack the internal resources necessary to create strong communities. Without a new culture of commitment to sustain a democratic society they argue that neither private corporations nor economic democracy can provide the basis for anything but alternative forms of technocratic despotism. They argue that the tradition of civic republicanism, which provides a language of civic commitment, concern for the common good, and obligations to others, must be revived to supplement the language of individual rights which is provided by the tradition of market liberalism. In a secondary argument they imply that, since the language of civic commitment stresses the obligations of private



property owners to the community as a whole, such a revival will strengthen the movement for economic democracy. They go on to suggest that although liberal individualism predominates there too, the seeds of such a revival are present in the "citizens movement", a loose network of progressive community activists working at the local level for greater equality and economic democracy.

In the following pages I will test the argument made by Bellah and associates against the views of San Francisco neighborhood leaders about private property rights, democracy, and community at the local level. I look at whether they generally lack a language of civic commitment and responsibility to the community, whether elements of such a language are to be found among some progressive leaders, and whether the use of a language of civic commitment strengthens leaders' belief in the greater importance of democracy over private property rights. I will argue that both conservative, private property oriented leaders and progressive, citizens rights oriented leaders use and have a clear understanding of the language and importance of civic commitment and believe that their preferred form of rights sustains such commitment. They also believe that the political process of collective decision-making at the level of the local community, whether it takes place within the public or private sectors, threatens to disrupt that community. There are cultural limitations on implementation of contemporary reform programs, but these limitations are in leaders' ability to integrate politics with community rather than in a lack of civic ideals.

San Francisco has a thirty-year history of progressive

neighborhood activism, dating back to the civil rights movement, and neighborhood organizations have played an important role in winning strong local controls on landlords and developers. At the same time it has substantial conservative neighborhoods, and neighborhood organizations can be found on all sides of local political conflicts (Barton, 1985b). During 1983 and 1984 I interviewed thirty neighborhood organization leaders in three neighborhoods for between one and three hours each, probing their views on recent issues chosen to bring out their beliefs about property rights, community, and local democracy. These leaders were chosen to provide a wide range of positions on local issues and a wide range of beliefs. The neighborhoods were radical, liberal, and conservative in voting patterns and reputation and they included multiple and often competing neighborhood associations, including neighborhood-wide associations, block clubs, merchants associations, and volunteer dispute resolution organizations. My respondents presented the full range of publicly expressed views on neighborhood issues in San Francisco. (For a discussion of the value of qualitative analysis of intensive interviews as a research method in a closely related subject see Hochschild, 1981).

In the discussion that follows I argue that my respondents are divided into opposing groups by their moral stance towards private property rights. Respondents with a shared understanding of the meaning of private property may vary in the specific policies they support, particularly because other concepts which are not shared also influence them, but the underlying moral

reasoning is similar within each group. Indeed respondents were often aware if they espoused variant positions for a member of their group and could explain the exceptional circumstances which led them to such a conclusion. In this article I examine the pattern of beliefs typical for each group and use representative quotations to illustrate these views rather than systematically canvassing the views of each respondent or the variations in beliefs within each group. (A fuller set of quotations, more detailed description of the respondents, and the interview schedule are available in Barton, 1985a). The purpose of this article is preliminary: to demonstrate the central role of beliefs about private property in community politics, to show that these beliefs are related to residents understanding of community and democracy, the terms in which community politics is usually examined, and to use my findings to test the relationships suggested by Bellah and associates.

#### Property Rights and Universal Rights in the Urban Community

My respondents, with only two exceptions, shared a common view of community in the neighborhood, characterized by respect for individuality and privacy combined with a commitment to the good of the neighborhood as a whole. This pattern, which one described as "uninterfering caring", is well adapted to maintaining a sense of community in a city whose neighborhoods are all at least somewhat racially and culturally diverse. Anne Luria, a real estate broker, homeowner and president of a conservative neighborhood association describes good neighbors as

"active and interested in the neighborhood... friendly... It's not necessary or desirable to be all buddy-buddy and entertain each other but there should be a sense of community. We should know each other by sight and look out for each other... have a sense of responsibility to each other just as people". Kaye Marshall, a renter active in a block club in a progressive neighborhood association uses similar terms: "I don't like to be so chummy we're in each others' houses all the time, but I really like that sense of security and community that people watching out for each other brings... What I like best (about the neighborhood) is its diversity and the sense of community within that diversity... There is conflict... but there is also... a great feeling of togetherness, and people seem to be able to organize around things like the library that are important to us and that's exciting."

Despite this shared conception of community my respondents divided into two groups with competing approaches to individual rights. The ten respondents I will call private property rights oriented shared a traditional conception of private property ownership as both the means by which people gain personal freedom and security and as the way in which people demonstrate that they have chosen to be responsible members of the community. They consider alternative means of achieving those ends to be illegitimate. The twenty I call universal rights oriented believed that personal freedom and security in the home and at the workplace should be universal rights held regardless of ownership status, that such freedom and security encourages people to be responsible members of the community, and that

government must limit the uses of private property to protect those rights. They did not wish to replace private property ownership but rather sought to redistribute some of the rights attached to property ownership to non-owners whose lives were affected by the use of that property.

The general support for private property ownership shows up in the universal desire for homeownership as a means to provide residential stability and freedom within the home. Richard Fine, a gay consulting engineer, block club leader and homeowner speaks for all my respondents in describing the benefits of homeownership: "I have a feeling of being somewhat permanent, especially in this neighborhood... I can do what I like with the house, the yard. I feel like I own part of the city." But Fine also supports rent control and a limit on condominium conversions in order to provide similar benefits to tenants, and makes no connection between ownership and personal character. In contrast James Stuart, a retired railroad worker, homeowner and neighborhood association president says: "If you don't want to put up with things such as (evictions) you buy your own property and then you can do as you please. You've got to make an effort to own your own home." And Ann Luria feels that rent control gives tenants control over property "that somebody else is responsible for". For these private property oriented leaders homeownership is a matter of personal choice which reveals willingness to invest oneself personally and financially in the responsibilities of ownership.

Universal rights oriented leaders supported measures to protect tenants because they believe everyone "has a right to a certain stability". They believe that most people will be responsible members of the community whether they own or not. Linda Castillo, a self-employed homeowner active in a neighborhood dispute resolution program explains that she does not mind a unit of public housing across the street because "people that are responsible tend to stay and those who are not don't stay too long".

Private property oriented leaders are aware that not all property owners are responsible, but they believe that such people are exceptional and that what they consider fair treatment of non-owners will be most profitable in the long run. Lawrence Clifford feels that large rent increases are not fair, but adds "however it is his property so if he wants more money it should be his prerogative". Such profit maximizing behavior is likely to backfire. "You're keeping up my property and then (I) go and rent it to somebody else for more money and... he'll run it down. Then what have you got." As a result, he feels, most landlords would be reluctant to displace good tenants.

Universal rights oriented leaders consider the profit motive a threat to the social fabric which requires public controls rather than private self-regulation. As Dennis Carey, a retired architect, renter and neighborhood association officer put it: "We live in a society of relationships and responsibilities. Some people don't want to admit it but I believe that's the very foundation of our society... you surrendering your right to be arbitrary to me." They blame the profit motive for the

insecurity of tenure and increasingly high housing costs which they see as sources of disruption and incivility. "Where the rents are \$1,500 a month and families have to go in together to rent it and they (are extremely angry about that)... you don't get quality neighbors" says Joan Thomas, a teacher, homeowner, and block club leader.

For universal rights oriented leaders the contributions of non-owners entitle them to equal rights with owners. For Richard Lipsky, a lawyer, block club leader and homeowner "San Francisco is a desirable city not because of private landlords and private owners but because of the character of the city" and this character is a public creation in which all members of the public have a right to share. This belief that all members of the public help create the valued character of the city extends even to groups with whom there is friction and hostility. Gay block club leader Richard Fine will not concede that "there's anything I don't like about the area because if I said (I wanted) a little less what you might call street activity (mostly Latino youth groups) then I don't think it would be Bancroft Park anymore". They too contribute to the character of the community.

Most private property oriented leaders also valued the diversity of peoples in San Francisco, and shared the belief that San Franciscans' ability to get along despite differences of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and culture provided a model for the rest of the United States. Fred Page, a gay accountant, homeowner, and block club leader argued eloquently that it is "a lot easier for everyone to get along and understand each other"

when neighborhoods contain "a combination of blue collar and white collar, gay and straight people". But he values that diversity in what he sees as a "single-family home, owner-occupied neighborhood" where people who are diverse in other ways share the responsibilities of homeownership. For Page tenants "have no particular interest in the property as a home" and are generally transients who "don't care about the quality of life in a neighborhood because they're there for a short time". He particularly opposes subsidized housing in his neighborhood, even subsidized homeownership, and led a protest against plans to build subsidized owner-occupied housing nearby. Lawrence Clifford, a black retired civil servant, block club leader and homeowner shares the feeling that subsidies, such as low interest mortgages for first time buyers destroy the element of personal responsibility and lead people to "act like regular welfare recipients, people in a ghetto type neighborhood".

The two groups readily extend their views from the residence to the workplace. Universal rights oriented leaders felt workers should have rights to security of employment and that property owners had obligations to their employees as well as rights. For Dennis Carey "a company does have a responsibility to its workers as much as to its stockholders". The universal rights oriented leaders felt that the incentive structure created by property rights should be changed to make plant relocations less profitable. They did not propose to do away with private property rights or the market but rather to restructure them, with suggestions ranging from "reimbursement or compensation otherwise you don't move" to "employee ownership". Private



property oriented leaders readily equated ownership at the home and at the workplace. Lawrence Clifford argued that the plant owner "should be able to do what he wants. That's like me doing what I want with my own property". And for Fred Page "those are the very kinds of disruptions you have to put up with to make sure you have an efficient marketplace... In the long run things will be a lot better off if you let people go where they can be most efficient".

Even when private property oriented leaders see apparently systematic activities of which they disapprove, their belief in private property rights limits their responses. James Stuart, a life-long union member, is quite upset by plant relocations, which he attributes to "the big corporate men" who "want more money at the expense of the laborers, people who have made them big." But he can only suggest that the President of the United States exercise the moral authority of his office to get the "big corporate men to talk it over." For Stuart, "If he owns a business, a piece of property... he has a right to close it down." Contribution without ownership creates no enforceable obligations. Since private ownership is essential to a stable community, restrictions on the rights of owners are believed to be a greater danger than a failure to protect non-owning members of the community from the abuse of power by owners.

It comes as no surprise that universal rights oriented leaders strongly support land use controls for the purpose of protecting neighborhood character. For them this is part of the general public right to stability and security. The private

property oriented leaders are equally strong supporters of land use controls. For them the neighborhood is in effect a corporate unit in which individual property owners have purchased membership and which no single owner has the right to change. (Hayek, 1960:341, is one of the few private property oriented intellectuals who has taken this approach, rather than insisting that only private covenants, explicitly agreed upon, can create obligations between an individual land owner and the surrounding neighborhood.) The free market, in these respondents' view, consists of choices between neighborhoods, not within them. As real estate broker Ann Luria says, "If you want to do something, buy a building where you can do it". The homeowner thus does not have to depend entirely on either the responsible character of other property owners or the long run profitability of fair behavior. The residential neighborhood receives an added measure of protection based on an expansive conception of the property rights of the owners of individual units or buildings over the neighborhood as a whole.

#### The Civic Tradition in Urban America

My respondents' two systematically different sets of beliefs about the moral valuation of private property and, consequently, about property related issues link them to a debate which is as old as the United States itself (Peterson, 1966, 59-67; Pocock, 1975). Their beliefs are rooted in the civic tradition of concern for the development of character, commitment to the community, and public responsibility as well as in the liberal tradition of concern for individual rights and the protection of

private life. For the private property oriented leaders, private property is an institution which helps create responsible people and communities as well as a source of economic freedom and prosperity, and must reflect both purposes. The universal rights oriented leaders support alternative rights which will provide non-owning families and individuals the security and stability available to owners in order to provide for civic as well as individual welfare.

My respondents' approach to rent control is particularly telling. Economists have achieved a remarkable consensus that rent control is an inefficient means of redistributing income because it gives major benefits to middle- and even upper-income tenants and singles out landlords as a class without concern for their income levels. For the universal rights oriented leaders this misses the point. Their interest is in supporting household stability, which they believe will strengthen the neighborhood social fabric. Their concerns are with civic culture, not welfare economics. Similarly private property owners oppose rent control because they feel tenants have not earned the right to such protection, not simply because they consider it inefficient. The disagreement between the two groups centers on whether such rights for non-owners encourage stability and personal responsibility or whether the process of earning property ownership is necessary in order to make people stable and responsible.

Robert Bellah and associates argue that their interviews with middle class Americans, many of them civic leaders and

activists, show that liberal individualism has so overwhelmed the older civic tradition that expressions of commitment to the public good exist only as a "second language" (Bellah et al, 1985). The language and theory of the civic tradition are a widespread and coherent part of the beliefs of San Francisco's neighborhood leaders. They are concerned both with personal freedom and privacy and with commitment to cooperative action to secure the local communities' quality of life. They felt that caring about ones home was normally accompanied by a sense of collective responsibility for ones neighborhood. The "languages and practises of commitment that shape character" which Bellah and associates (1985:251) see as the basis for public life in the civic republican tradition are as common a part of their thinking as the liberal language of individual rights, although they differ on whether private property ownership or universal rights provide the appropriate basis for this commitment.

There is evidence that this civic concern is not unique to neighborhood activists or to the city of San Francisco. Silverman (1983) found widespread recognition of "public interdependence" as part of the neighbor tie among people who were not leaders or activists in interviews with a random sample of residents in two San Francisco neighborhoods. On the basis of a survey covering the whole of Northern California, Silverman (1986) argues that a sense of connection and interdependence among neighbors is a widespread characteristic of urban neighboring styles. It is also clear that the language of civic commitment is as accessible to conservative proponents of extended private property rights as it is to progressive

reformers. The rhetoric linking homeownership to civic responsibility has been in continuous use for well over a century (deNeufville & Barton, 1986; Wright, 1983).

### The Dangers of Community Control

Universal rights oriented leaders generally wanted democratic community control over the future development of their neighborhood in addition to protective regulations which provide stability of tenure to tenants. Many of them supported efforts to create non-profit community controlled housing because they were aware that rent control could only slow the gentrification of the city and they wanted to preserve the economic diversity of its population. At the same time they were concerned about the impact of democratic politics on individual rights, on efficiency, and on the community itself.

Both universal rights oriented and private property oriented leaders regarded outright government ownership of housing as a disaster which created an unresponsive, insensitive and inefficient bureaucracy. In the words of William Blaine, a renter and neighborhood organization staff member: "It really creates interesting political possibilities when the landlord is a public agency, (which) makes it a political relationship, but the only cases I know are bad situations in public housing, an inefficient bureaucracy which is probably the locus of some of the major corruption in the city." Or as Ron Schmid, a neighborhood association officer, homeowner and city employee succinctly put it, "everything the city touches turns to (expletive deleted)".

Universal rights oriented respondents like William Blaine were "in favor of ownership and institutions that empower people and give us more control over our lives" and for them this generally meant cooperatives. They were concerned, however, that collective decision-making could intensify conflict within the local community. For example Anne Johnson, a secretary, homeowner and neighborhood association president worried about how cooperative residents would cope "if the other tenants were people you had huge problems with".

Consistently, when asked about a major aspect of cooperative management, tenant control over who would fill vacant apartments, respondents worried that the group who controlled the building might trample on the rights of others. "From a neighborhood organizational point of view it makes perfect sense," said Ron Schmid, but "from a political point of view it's a crock, it's racism." For Richard Fine, "On the surface it sounds nice but it could lead to a lot of discrimination." (Are tenants more likely to discriminate than landlords?) " Yes. They're the ones that live there. I don't think most landlords care as long as they get their money." Universal rights oriented respondents generally felt that the impersonality of the market, which they disliked for its heedlessness of neighborhood social fabric, was a valuable protection against discrimination. Only one person raised the possibility that tenant control would protect against widespread discrimination by landlords.

Universal rights oriented leaders were also concerned that participants in democratic control over buildings might make self-

interested use of the political process. Ron Schmid described a case where "the political hiring process for maintenance made sure nothing ever got done". Many universal rights oriented leaders supported non-profit neighborhood housing development corporations, which might offer an intermediate position between the bureaucracy of public housing and the intensive participatory control of the cooperative, but there was scepticism there too. According to neighborhood association staff member William Blaine "generally they're not managed very well, they're real political institutions". Nonetheless he and other universal rights oriented leaders continued to work to create a "third way" between the alternatives of government and business ownership that they found intolerable.

Private property oriented leaders sometimes supported cooperatives or condominiums as a means of bringing a form of property ownership to those who otherwise could not afford it, but they were even more strongly concerned with the possibilities of conflict among the residents. Dale Harris, who shared ownership and use of a single family house with a housemate described it this way: "As you get more on a peer relationship people get more difficult with their demands. Somehow with a landlord I don't take it so personally, but someone who's more your peer, like a fellow owner, I might not want them telling me stuff... Mostly when I've lived with people before it's been laissez faire, nobody interfered with anyone, but when people own things they get more strident."

Mary Claiborn, a universal rights oriented social worker active in a socialist housing group, is a homeowner who shares her

house out of a desire to live collectively. She argues that the fear of interpersonal conflict reflects a lack of experience with collective life. "I've been living collectively for some time... It's not something which is easy to do... It just takes skill and the desire to live with people you care about. I think there's real problems trying to live and work collectively with people you don't like, and that's one of the liberal mistakes that people have made is assuming that you'll be able to live happily and cooperatively with anyone." But part of what San Francisco's neighborhood leaders, including Mary Claiborn, are proud of is that they can live happily with virtually any sort of person in their neighborhood and can cooperate with them to maintain the quality of life there. Members of neighborhood associations often have differing views on property rights issues yet cooperate on improving local services, fighting crime, holding festivals and so on. The leader of a protest against subsidized housing sponsored by a neighborhood association, for example, saw nothing contradictory in his leadership role in an anti-crime block club sponsored by that same neighborhood association.

Both private property and universal rights oriented leaders have their own characteristic dilemmas. The private property oriented leaders are uncertain about the basis of community in a diverse setting where renters predominate and cooperative or condominium homeownership do not fit with their understandings of the appropriate structure for private property. The universal rights oriented leaders see a universal right to security as the basis for neighborhood community, but they are concerned that the



democratic control over resources necessary to make that right effective will not be accompanied by sufficient respect for individual rights. Both groups are concerned that local control, whether based on private ownership or citizens rights, will generate ranorous conflict in the local community rather than creating the mutual learning process described by advocates of participatory democracy or the harmonious pursuit of private ends described by advocates of privatization.

### Politics and Community

Both groups of neighborhood leaders lack a belief in democratic politics as a unifying rather than a divisive activity. They understand politics as, at best, a struggle to obtain equality and, more typically, a conflict over personal or group advantage. Recall neighborhood organizer William Blaine's remarks. In his view the advantage of public housing was that it created a political relationship between landlord and tenant, meaning that it allowed tenants a legitimate domain to influence those who owned their homes and thus carried an egalitarian potential. But he continued on to say that political institutions were poorly managed, implying that a domain of conflict was not compatible with constructive or creative activity.

Most of the people I interviewed lived in the city in 1979 when conservative ex-Supervisor Dan White assassinated liberal Mayor George Moscone and openly gay Supervisor Harvey Milk. They were acutely concerned that further eruptions of group and cultural hostilities could destroy the sense of community amidst

diversity that they value as a major part of life in San Francisco. Part of White's pattern of incivility before the murders lay in his understanding of politics. For him the routine vote trading and accommodation among elected officials separated by different ideologies and even personal animosities was "corrupt politics", a betrayal of principle (Shilts, 1982). Ironically this negative view of politics is only an extreme version of the view held by most of my respondents. They distinguished between corruption, in the sense of an official selling political influence for personal gain, and normal politics, a dismal proceeding in which interest groups contested with each other for their own advantage while agreeing to peacefully coexist. They had little faith that the political process could become actively unifying or creative. Few of my respondents would join with Bernard Crick (1982) in praising politics as the means by which civilized people resolve their differences.

My respondents clearly make the distinction described by Bellah and associates (1985:200) between the politics of community, with its search for consensus and common ends, and the politics of interest, based on conflict and compromise. They share the fear that "where the interests involved are incommensurable and therefore almost impossible to adjudicate, interest politics must inevitably break down into coercion or fraud" (203) as happened in the City Hall murders. But this concern is not, as Bellah and associates suggest (204), the result of the blinders of individualism, a failure to perceive interdependence, and an inability to deal meaningfully with

institutions. Rather it reflects real tensions between the local community and the process of government, between the search for consensus and the protection of vital interests (Barton, 1984).

Jane Mansbridge (1980) argues that a unitary, consensus-seeking form of democratic politics can flourish when "adversary democracy" is not needed to provide equal protection because vital interests are not at stake. My respondents have what they perceive as vital interests at stake almost constantly, as the political struggle to define and structure property rights and universal rights is fought out lot by lot and hearing after hearing before the Planning Commission, Rent Board and Board of Supervisors. These leaders can neither get "beyond" adversary democracy, nor accept a simple adversarial stance toward their neighbors. With the help of a shared commitment to the public good regardless of personal feelings about other members of that public, with loosely structured neighborhood organizations which allow shifting patterns of cooperation from issue to issue, and with the distancing provided by representative democracy, they try to build a community which contains both cooperation and conflict. The ability to lose decisions they consider to be vitally important and still maintain a commitment to each other and to the democratic process is a stance with which San Francisco neighborhood leaders are familiar, but it is not easy to sustain. San Francisco neighborhood leaders aspire to a society which combines individual freedom and civic virtue, but they are still trying to develop the understandings and the small-scale experiences which could make them confident that their ideal could become a reality.

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