

## Summary

### *“Leisten lokale Demokratiebewegungen einen Beitrag für die globale Krisensteuerung?”*

by Otfried Höffe

The manifold problems issuing from globalisation increasingly lead to feelings of powerlessness in individual citizens. The resulting political disappointment involves a remarkable increase in so-called local democratic movements. Commitment in local communities like these brings several benefits to individuals. Local communities are easy to identify with and they provide new chances for political participation. Furthermore, they have a positive influence on local integration and help to spread an atmosphere of “civic friendship”.

While this might account for an entirely positive view on local democratic movements, a closer look, however, reveals problematic aspects. Not only do these movements tend, like local communities in general, to exclusive behaviour towards strangers, they may also split existing communities internally. Moreover, some general structural problems of politics also hold for local democratic movements. Finally, local democratic movements are likely to deny global and national responsibilities of their members in a selective point of view often focusing all efforts on one single issue, e.g. a large construction project. Thus, they are often guided by a “not-in-my-backyard” attitude.

A fundamental diffidence towards political elites forms an important motivation for engaging in local democratic movements. However, close examination shows that this diffidence is only partly justified. In looking critically on what they consider as misguided decisions, people tend to forget about successful policies being run at the same time.

As a result, local democratic movements are unable to address truly global problems. Still, they may unfold indirect political power and thus contribute on a smaller scale to the solution of global problems. But in order to meet up with requirements of the future, democracy has to keep its ability of successfully completing large projects. The existence of local democratic movements should not generally endanger this ability. Thus, where democratic decision processes went through all stages, the use of further remedies to stop large projects should be dismissed.