

7 Conclusion: Relational Analysis, Democracy Promotion as Crucial Points

Black Lives Matter, initiated by three women, has over time made substantial contributions to better conditions for Black people in the United States. The thesis explained the particularities of the movement by specifying its origin, commitment, most prominent topics, and effect on American society. It was made clear that during the numerous urban protests, people have emphasized several aspects of daily life that haunt them: racism, police violence, and accessibility issues.

These three then, along with political representation, invoke thoughts simultaneously about geography and democracy. To highlight the elements and their linkages, this thesis first explained them in a general, yet detailed way to provide information about distinctive characteristics. The extensive elucidation showed that injustices, particularly if they are geographically significant, are most prominently observable in cities.

Thus, to apply the three elements actively, the thesis selected two example cities: Washington, DC and Minneapolis. Blacks are spatially confined in many neighborhoods of these two cities, with resulting limitations of their mobility and dignity of life. The neighborhoods are frequently marked by heavy police presence, and many officers strongly tend to meet Black residents with preconceived assumptions, disdain, and often violence. Further, Black local political representation opportunities are hampered by racialized thinking and stereotypes. Adequate healthcare acquisition still proves difficult – not only in the two example cities. Many Whites in both cities are not willing to pay close attention, out of fear for their powerful societal and political positions they allegedly occupy. However, to

fight against these circumstances constitutes an important task, since purposely depriving residents of a wide range of rights undermines a healthy democracy. Several programs and decisions constituted the topics in all subchapters, showing city governments and residents try to eradicate the detrimental practices. Besides demonstrating the elements in an empirical example, it was emphasized why exactly Washington and Minneapolis were selected as illustrations. In the case of Minneapolis, it was the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police, regarded as openly brutal and tragic, in Washington the criminalization and militarization of peaceful protesters in front of the White House. Out of these accounts and evidence, the two cities have been identified as catalysts for active resistance, a way to enhance democracy and to fight for equality.

Consequently, it was first asked how the BLM Movement can actively play a part in safeguarding, or even rescuing, a thoroughly troubled and apparently uneven American democracy – starting in cities like Washington and Minneapolis. The second question about supportive approaches was then also considered: The concept of the right to the city by Henri Lefebvre helped to group the aspects that BLM stands for into a significant assumption, although adherents themselves do not necessarily address their agenda in this explicit and typified way. However, the concept is generally useful, as some authors indeed present corroborating points that it could encourage thinking about democratic initiatives and promotion. Considering this, it became evident that both example cities play a significant role for the American democracy: Not only do the respective BLM chapters constitute a loud voice for social justice and human rights. More importantly, the events described drove up national and even international news coverage, sparking a wave of resistance and rejection of anti-Black brutality, racism, and systemic opportunity deprivation.

Hence, adequately addressing the threat of several actors willing to undermine democracy by racist attitudes demands broad evaluation and (re)consideration. American policymakers, scientists of different areas, and researchers alike must count on a relational approach to the three components integrated into this thesis. The introduction termed this the relational triangle of socio-geo-political analysis. While looking at a separate part of one topic might provide space for large-scale enriching elabora-

tion, resorting to purely ‘fragmented’ or ‘isolationist’ research and explanation does not prove helpful here, quite the contrary: It denies contextualization and explanatory interdependence, meaning that the several variables are all related to one another in different ways. Instead, looking at vice-versa-connections is a good strategy which supports developing plans to counteract injustices and other irregularities. It incorporates more possibilities that may not have been considered in advance. In so doing, researchers can contribute to societal, political, and economic discourses evolving around the three topics, and be the driving force for further projects and initiatives.

The described considerations and active academic contributions in this area certainly become relevant now that there is a political transition unfolding in the American capital. Joseph Robinette ‘Joe’ Biden Junior has been elected the 46th President of the US in November of 2020 and sworn in on January 20 of 2021. Kamala Harris simultaneously became the first female Vice President – notably the first woman of color, African American and South Asian American to hold that office. The two have from the start emphasized that their administration will be shaped by diversity, made visible in the announced office nominations. More prominently, however, Biden-Harris have underlined to reinvigorate American values, among which are not only life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but also democracy. They seek to strengthen a variable set of institutions, relationships, and political initiatives. Thereby, they wish to drive the democratic enterprise, operating from Washington – one of the example cities and a geographical space. This mission goes for the national, as well as the international level. It is about restoring trust, commitment, and empathy on both stages.

Thus, while Minneapolis is also still on the news in the US because of George Floyd’s death, Washington will at the same time gain significance for the American democracy during the new administration. This continuity does not only apply to these cities, however, but also goes for the BLM Movement: It will not disappear from the streets, the news, or social media platforms anytime soon, as the fight for a united and democratic America will be a task of perseverance. Because of this evident and undeniable future influence, not only Washington and Minneapolis but

each of the three variables black lives, geography, and democracy should certainly matter to America.