
What would a democracy of self-interested agents look like? If by *democracy* we mean “citizens’ prolonged equal access to their combined sources of well-being,” a sustainable democracy would require a government with exclusive capacity to distribute these benefits equally among its constituents. Government control could only be exclusive if severe costs would be incurred by anyone who attempted to gain the benefits in more expedient ways. Distribution could only be equal if the government is required to consult its self-interested citizens regarding its benefit-distribution procedures. Of course, the problem here is that individual agents are motivated to advantage themselves relative to others, making democratization an unlikely historical event. Yet occasionally “shocks” (not Weberian shocks from charismatic ideas, but coercive ones in the form of conquest, confrontation, colonization, revolution) have dislodged societies’ avenues for exploitation and opportunity hoarding, thereby allowing motion toward more democratic means of resource acquisition.