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**MULTILEVEL
GOVERNANCE ACROSS
THE STATE-SOCIETY
DIVIDE:
THREE MODELS**

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Abstract: This paper, by exploring the interplay between multilevel state institutions and the organization of civil society, seeks to lay the groundwork for a deeper understanding of multilevel governance. Institutions within the local state and at higher levels systematically shape patterns of local participation in politics and civic life. In turn, these institutions evolve in ways that patterns of power and influence at the local level help to shape. In settled democracies, these configuration of institutions and associations comprise an interrelated infrastructure that sets terms for collective problem-solving, power relations and participation. Institutional complementarities between forms of local states and patterns of civic organization have reinforced these systems. These differences account for major cross-national contrasts in policy-making and local democracy.

The emerging tradition of work on multilevel governance has demonstrated the need to disaggregate the state in order to better grasp the relations between its component parts. In this essay, I argue that a similarly disaggregated approach is needed for analysis of civil society and its relations with the multilevel state. Disaggregating both society and the state yields a better account of the relations between civil society and the state that have been a general theme of recent work on governance, and a better account of multilevel governance itself. The analysis focuses on the linkages between societal organization and the state at the local scale, where much of multilevel governance takes place. These linkages take place within an infrastructure shaped by state institutions, local government institutions, and organizational patterns within civil society at both local and supralocal scales. Institutional complementarities in the organization of both the state and civil society have fostered three divergent models of multilevel state society relations. These models capture major variations in the multilevel governance dynamics of settled democracies.

The focus of this analysis on the local level accords with a wide range of literature that has demonstrated the significance of politics and governance there. Systems of local government, defined as a level at the scale of communities or cities, have been a universal feature of contemporary democracies since the nineteenth century emergence of the modern nation-state. In the older democracies they are generally highly institutionalized instances for decision-making, policy implementation and political participation. Often anchored in constitutional guarantees as well as in legislation, these institutions usually build on long-established traditions (Hesse, 1991; Lidström, 2003; Page & Goldsmith, 1989; Pierre, 1999; Vetter, 2007). The frequent autonomy of local government itself could be sufficient to justify more focused comparative attention to the local level. Recent studies from a variety of perspectives have pointed to institutions and agents at the level of localities and regions as important elements of politics (John & Cole, 2000; Ostrom, 1990; Putnam et al., 1993; Sabel et al., 1989; Savitch et al., 2002; Sellers, 2002). Analytical frameworks that

take these subnational variations seriously invariably demonstrate that processes and conditions at the local and regional scales indeed make most of the difference, whether for social capital (Putnam, et al., 1993), for civic engagement (Varshney, 2002), or for economic productivity (Herrigel, 1996).

Local communities, understood as local societies as well as local political units, are also where much of politics takes place. Political parties and movements often organize down to the level of neighborhoods and communities. Economic organizations like firms and unions organize in the workplaces of manufacturing plants, offices and stores. Civic associations, from voluntary organizations of various kinds to neighborhood associations themselves, base what they do in communities. An analysis of multilevel governance that focuses solely on the state cannot capture how the organization of these societal forces systematically shape possibilities for governance and policymaking. Alternative models of the multilevel relations between the state and civil society demonstrate how this is so.

This article draws on results from a systematic empirical comparison of these local governance arrangements in forty-four countries (Sellers et al., 2013). The article outlines three alternative institutional configurations that have come to characterize institutions of local governance throughout the developed world. In transitional countries in the process of building states and deepening democracy, similar configurations are now emerging as well.

■ A LAYERED PERSPECTIVE ON STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS

To capture these local processes and their interaction with national ones requires a layered approach to the hierarchies that comprise both the state and society. Layering, or the superimposition of institutional systems on each other, is a crucial aspect of the institutional diversity characteristic of developed democracies (Schickler, 2001; Thelen, 2004). The territorial hierarchies of nation-states represent the most pervasive and universal instance of this institutional layering. An analysis of these hierarchies from the local level requires us to reverse the traditional top-down image of these hierarchies. In doing so, this approach enables us to capture entire realms of local and national processes that have remained invisible or obscured in cross-national studies of state-society relations.

The higher levels of governments of the national state remain a consistent presence in this analysis, but a layered account casts new light on their role. Local governments serve the interest of the wider state in what Mann has termed “infrastructural power” (Mann, 1984; Soifer, 2008). They provide the organizational personnel and the physical presence to carry out the ends of the state within each community. Alongside their purely functional capacity, they can work to build support within communities that reinforces the authority of the state. For the elites of democratic nation-states that depend on electoral support, support at the local level is crucial to maintenance of national power. In the democratic nation-states of the nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe and North America, localized governance was often much of what the wider state structures did. As programmatic national states emerged around welfare provision, economic development and the quality of life, the role of national and intermediate level governments expanded dramatically in most of these countries.

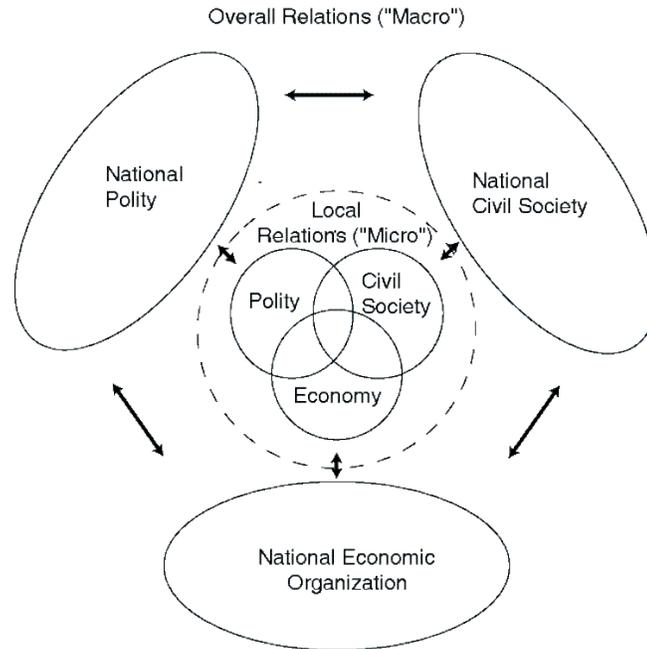
Work on local governments demonstrates that they participate in a variety of ways and to various degrees in this process. The ways that they do so are a consequence of their formal powers and fiscal resources, but also of factors beyond these. Growing mobilization among businesses and local activists, and the spread of activist styles of governing among local officials themselves have contributed to the growth of local governance. This local mobilization makes it increasingly difficult to relegate what goes on at this level to the will of state managers or hierarchical principals, or to view local politics simply in terms of relationships with a national “center”. To do full justice to its possibilities, local governance needs to be considered as one among multiple interrelated arenas.

Civil society and political organization also play out both within localities and in arenas at higher levels. For parties and social movements, local and regional organizing often comprises one element of building national organizations. Other parties and movements may focus on individual communities. Movements can also shift the scales of their mobilizing efforts with the levels of government they target. (Tarrow, 2005). Groups like the Sierra Club in the United States mobilize around national issues by means of local contestation and organizing. Others, like the German antinuclear movement, can turn local controversies into objects of mobilization at wider scales. Opportunities to shape policymaking at the multiple tiers of state institutions can decisively influence these choices (Skocpol, 2003).

By capturing this reality of both governmental institutions and civil society, a layered perspective raises new questions about the ways that local politics relates to politics at higher levels, and how to think about state-society relations in the aggregate. Earlier approaches to “central-local relations” privileged the relations of localities toward the center, and often focused on official institutions and policies handed down from above. In a layered account the aggregate of governance and state-society relations at the local level throughout a country is also an important component of the whole. The dynamics of scale within civil society and the political economy pose parallel, simultaneous questions of scale to those within the state itself. What happens at the local level throughout a society is a result both of national institutions and societal organizations, and of the uses local actors themselves make of national arrangements. Conversely, happens at the national level is only partly a product of what has sometimes been called high politics. It is also an aggregate result from the patterns of organization, interest intermediation and identification that have all too frequently been relegated to the category of low politics. This de-centered approach is necessary to bring these patterns of governance and state-society relations to light (Sellers 2005).

A traditional approach to the hierarchies of the state, or parties or labor organization, would consider the local components of these organizations simply as one element in a larger organization. To focus the analysis on local linkages requires us instead to disaggregate the local level of each of these institutions from other levels. This move enables us to analyze and compare several patterns of linkages: between organizations, institutions and other actors at the local scale itself; between the local state and the state at higher levels; and between other actors and institutions at the local scale and those at higher levels. The aim will be to assemble a re-aggregated view for each country of local state-society relations and its relation to the politics of state and society at higher levels. At the same time that this conceptualization disaggregates these territorial hierarchies within state and society, it also disaggregates between state and societal sectors (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. RELATION AMONG NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLITY, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE ECONOMY



First, consider the formal institutions of government and the associated institutions of the polity, such as political parties. Elements of what we will call the local state, consisting of the governmental and political institutions at the local level, may or may not operate autonomously from the state at higher levels. Even when this local state possesses substantial autonomy and resources of its own, it remains nested within the set of institutions that comprise the nation-state. The legal, administrative, fiscal and political resources that can give a local government autonomy are anchored in laws and institutionalized practices of a country or its constituent parts. These same components can operate as constraints on local governments and other actors at the local level. Governments and other actors at higher levels can also play an active role as agents in governance at the local level.

Alongside this vertical dimension of relations with higher echelons of state hierarchies, a cross-national literature consistently shows how governance at the local level also links the local state to society. In the United States, work on urban governance from various perspectives has consistently pointed to the dynamics of relations between civil society and local officials as decisive (Dahl, 1961; Hunter, 1953; Stone, 1989). Work on urban governance in Europe increasingly recognizes similar dynamics (Pierre, 1999; Sellers, 2002). Most of this work has focused on the dynamics of political power at the local level, and Stone's insight that power for local government depends on mobilization of support and other resources in local society. Accounts of institutions for management of common pool resources (Ostrom, 1990), or the governance of ecosystems (Mazmanian & Kraft, 1999) have shown that the participation of local actors and organizations beyond the state can be critical to realization of policy itself.

Work on political economy points to similar nested dynamics in the economies of developed countries, and increasingly among developing countries as well. Work on national varieties of capitalism in the developed world has developed a sophisticated account of how national systems of institutions depend upon, but also shape relationships of hiring contracts, shop floor relations and investment decisions within individual firms (Hall & Soskice, 2001). Culpepper, for instance, shows how local and regional cooperation can be critical to the functioning of national capitalist arrangements in a coordinated market economy (Culpepper, 2003). Authors who have subjected national capitalisms like that of Germany and the United States to disaggregated scrutiny have often found them to be composed of a variety of distinct

arrangements at the regional scale (Herrigel, 1996; Sabel, et al., 1989). Local economies also encompass important dimensions of the economy between the governance of capitalist firms. Markets for consumption, and assets like housing and real estate, and decisions about firm location are closely bound up with the physical features of communities and regions. Governments at the local and higher levels, for instance, frequently play a crucial role in securing local public goods for businesses in general, like infrastructure (Crouch, 2004) or the aggregation economies that can make a location profitable for local firms.

Intersecting with both of these other domains, civil society spans a variegated arena of social association and organization that is partly distinct from both the polity and the economy. Local professional and community groups, neighborhood associations, professional communities, religious organizations all belong to this domain. Perhaps even more than the others, civil society is embedded in the organization of local communities. As Skocpol has argued, however, it is just as capable of being organized primarily beyond the local level in order to play a role at the scale of the nation state (Skocpol, 2003). Even if some associations are purely local in character, organizations like political parties, professional associations and even many environmental activist groups are also national or even transnational in scope.

Those civil society associations that do organize at the local scale have as many reasons to pursue relations with the local polity as there are types of associations. Political parties and the many community associations often linked to them, from sports clubs to religious organizations, often exist largely for the purpose of influencing the local state. Associations like neighborhood or local public service organizations also seek benefits from local policies or particular decisions. Elected officials often depend on parties or constituencies of local civic associations to maintain their own position within the local state. Civic associations like Chambers of Commerce also frequently represent businesses or other economic interests in the polity, and can play an important role in developing coalitions around agendas for governance of the local economy.

Important as the distinctions among these sectors are, recent theories about the sources of power and effective local governance stress the dynamics of relations between them. A large portion of the relations between them take place at the local and regional scale. A nested approach focused on these relations at the local scale, and their role in wider patterns of state society relations, points to several alternative institutional relations between local and national patterns of state-society relations. These alternatives provide a useful lens to classify the main cross-national variations in systems of nested local governance.

■ INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURES OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE

What we know about the relations between politics at the national and the local level affirms that there are crucial connections between the two. Within the state itself, national policymaking often depends on, and can even ultimately be shaped by, the patterns of policy implementation and initiation at the local level. Within civil society and the political economy, local mobilization and organization are often critical as well. What is needed is a fuller sense of the different ways that state-society relations at different levels combine.

The analysis here focuses on the configurations of institutions I will term infrastructures of local governance. These configurations share the taken-for-grantedness that has been identified as the core of institutions (Immergut, 1998; March & Olsen, 1984). Beyond formal institutions, they encompass informal organizations and rules, and informal elements of formal organizations (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004). Crucially, they extend to institutions in civil society as well as the state. The final essential element in these infrastructures is that they operate at the scale of cities, communities and regions. These configurations institutionalize the actors, the rules of the game, the norms, the agendas and that cultural orientations for local governance.

To simplify the issue, it will be helpful to focus on alternative patterns in a system of only two nested levels, the local and the national. Consider the different configurations of institutions that link the local state, defined as those components of the state that are present within cities and communities, with elements of the

state at higher levels and wider scales. Infrastructures of local governance encompass institutions at both levels. At the local level itself, they include the formal institutions of local government, along with other informal or parapublic organizations that comprise part of the institutional means of governance at the local level. Although aspects of local government like a mayoral decision can be purely local, many of the rules of the game at the local level are not. Electoral laws and systems of local public administration, for instance, are anchored in national legislative or constitutional provisions and supported by other resources at wider scales. An infrastructure of local governance also extends to the policy functions that local governments exercise, the institutional, fiscal and political capacities they possess, the constraints they face, and the ways they are supervised or regulated. Beyond these administrative, fiscal and legal parameters, it encompasses the informal and formal cross-level linkages in policy and implementation that have often been characterized as “central-local relations” (Ansell & Di Palma, 2004; Tarrow, 1977)

To date, accounts of national institutions for local governance have begun and ended with these systems of governmental institutions. In neglecting the structure of civil society itself, these accounts have left open a conceptual vacuum. However useful a distinction of this sort between state and society may be, it flies in the face of overwhelming evidence about how civil society works. Political party systems vary widely in their patterns of organization, in ways that are closely linked to electoral laws and other national systems of institutions. The organization of business, labor and economic interests also differ systematically among countries. Work on civic engagement and social capital has highlighted national differences in a further sector of civil society that often mobilizes at the local level to influence policy (Putnam, 2002). As accounts of social movements and urban governance have both shown extensively, organization within society can also systematically influence national patterns of local governance. What has not been explored to date is how these variations in the organization and dynamics of civil society relate to the governmental infrastructure of local governance. Yet this relationship is frequently close, and runs both ways. The infrastructure of civic and political organization profoundly affects the operational reality of local governance, and the evolution of local government institutions. At the same time, organization within civil society is partly a product of the opportunities and resources that governmental institutions offer for societal action.

In the settled electoral democracies of developed countries, these infrastructures of local governance serve largely similar functions. We can think of these functions as alternative top-down and bottom up logics of local-national relations.

A top-down logic corresponds to the logic of infrastructural power, and the viewpoint of national elites. It also follows the lines of formal hierarchical authority that typify the legal and administrative structure of the nation-state. Following this logic, an infrastructure of local governance should enable effective, efficient implementation of decisions reached at higher levels of the nation-state by governments at the local level, and the carrying out of state ends within civil society. Seen through the lens of principal-agent theory, an efficiently functioning local government and civic infrastructure need not be directly under the control of higher level governments to be efficient from the top down. Properly monitored and sanctioned local governments could also be given the capacity to carry out tasks on behalf of the national state.

Work on governance at the local level itself has also given rise to a bottom-up perspective on what an efficient system of national-local relations would look like. From this perspective, an efficient infrastructure of local governance provides communities, movements and citizens with local empowerment. Mechanisms for empowerment encompass the means for communities to govern themselves at the local level, and for movements, groups and citizens within those communities to assert influence on decisions at the national level. Accounts of arrangements for common pool resource governance (Ostrom, 1990), or analyses of how urban regimes have brought together business with local political leaders (Stone, 1989), or the dynamics of exit and voice under the Tiebout model, each employ variants of the first of these logics. Influence at higher levels requires aggregation of local preferences and interests, and capacities to represent them in national decision-making. Both processes can occur through organized parties, interest groups, movement organizations, or even representative bureaucracies that come to assert the interests of the constituencies and clienteles they serve.

Whether seen from a top-down or a bottom –up perspective, infrastructures of local governance trace only partly to state-building and democratization at the national level. In addition to the building of the constitutional state, they also result from the construction and global diffusion of the policy state. As the policies the state pursues have expanded to promotion of local economic development, provision of welfare services, and protection of the environment, the demands for infrastructural power often necessitate a role for local governance. As the impact of these policies and the involvement of the local state have expanded, local mobilization has become more critical to infrastructural power. In older more settled democracies, these processes account for much of the development of local infrastructures of local governance.

An extensive literature on fiscal federalism has sought to reconcile top-down and bottom-up logics of efficiency and the relations between them (Boadway & Shah, 2009; Oates, 1999). For the present analysis, it is only necessary to assume that both logics are at work. Alternative infrastructures of local governance offer distinct institutional mechanisms to assure relatively efficient, effective national-local relations from either the top down or the bottom up.

■ ALTERNATIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE INFRASTRUCTURES

Alternatives infrastructures of local governance differ along two very general dimensions. One of these encompasses the vertical intergovernmental relationship between the local state and higher levels, in the manner typical of the “central-local relations” literature. At one end of the spectrum, local governments are responsible for carrying out or making national policy. At the same time that they receive responsibilities to carry out the programs of the wider state, they are endowed with the fiscal, administrative and legal capacities to do so. Local and national governments and their policies remain tightly integrated. At the other end of the same spectrum, local government takes on no national responsibilities and possesses minimal capacities. Instead of these intergovernmental sources of support, local officials build capacities through relations with nongovernmental actors. Here local governance proceeds independently and even in the opposite direction from national policies, and depends on support in local civil society and the local economy to govern.

A second dimension revolves around the incorporation of civil, political and economic society. On the one hand, incorporation requires a civil society that is engaged, or at least organized, in associations or organizations. These include political parties, economic interests, and society civic associations as voluntary groups, neighborhood groups, and cultural or service organizations. On the other hand, those associations or organizations must be integrated into the process of governance at some level. This is not only a matter of mobilization, but also of acceptance and even encouragement to civil society among governmental actors and institutions. When incorporation is limited or weak, whether the cause is limited participation or marginalization, governance remains confined to elite decision-making.

The possibilities that layered governance offers for relations between these two levels correspond to several broadly defined types (Table 1). In the lower left corner, a full-fledged Elitist system of local governance would be carried out essentially from above. Higher level officials would dictate local actions, and political and civic incorporation at the local level would be limited or even absent. Such arrangements are more characteristic of authoritarian regimes than of contemporary democracies. The emergence of local government institutions even in new democracies reflects a widespread understanding that local governance is critical to infrastructural power, on the one hand, and to local empowerment on the other. The development and global diffusion of the policy state, a form of state built around pursuit of variety of economic, social, and environmental objectives, has reinforced the critical place of local linkages for both of these purposes. Even in contemporary authoritarian regimes, such as the People’s Republic of China, the local state can play a critical role.

TABLE 1. ALTERNATIVE PATTERNS OF NATIONAL-LOCAL RELATIONS BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE STATE

Integration with national state	HIGH	LOW
Local participation, incorporation		
HIGH	Nationalized	Civic localist
LOW	Elitist	Local elitist

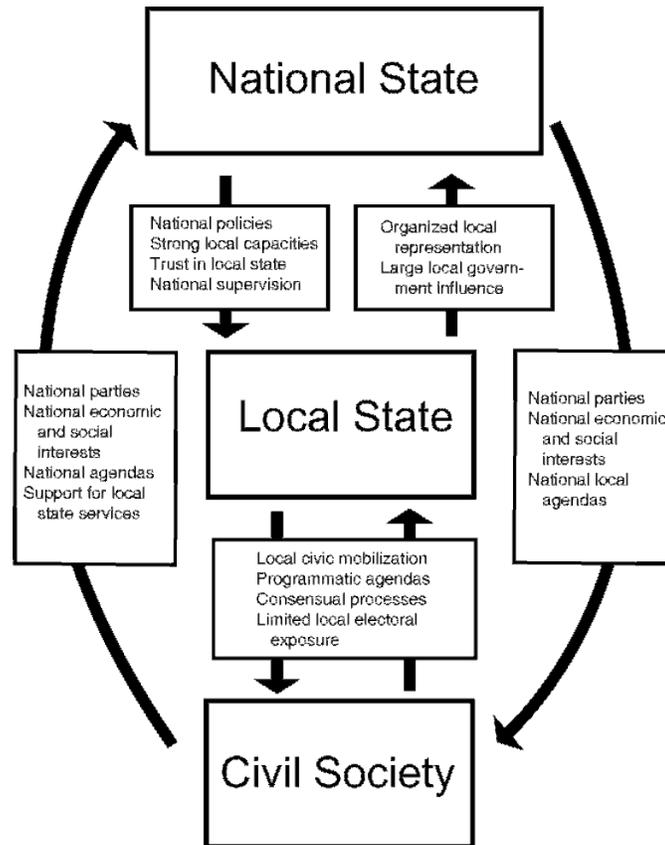
Among systems with local government, the table points to several broad types of divergence in patterns of local state-society relations exist. In a Local Elitist setting, local officials maintain important influence but local political and civic incorporation remains limited. In a Civic Localist setting, local civic and political incorporation is high, but the vertical integration of the local state with higher levels of the polity remains limited. In a Nationalized setting local political and social groups are also incorporated into the local state. But here the local state and local politics are integrated within those at higher levels.

These three correspond to distinctive varieties of local governance arrangements. Each favors a different set of mechanisms for assertion of infrastructural power from above, and for empowerment of communities from below. Each institutionalizes different interests in perpetuating existing arrangements among local government officials and in national local relations, and different organizational forms for parties, economic organization and civic associations. Each results from a distinctive historical trajectory.

Nationalized infrastructure

Imagine first an infrastructure in which local governance and politics are harnessed to policies and objectives on a national scale. Local governments are charged with carrying out policies formulated at the national level. Even where policies are local rather than national, different local governments carry out the same policies at lower levels throughout the country. Beyond governmental arrangements themselves, this infrastructure also relies on a system of highly organized national parties and interests (Figure 2). At the national level, these parties and organizations represent those interests within localities. At the local level these national organizations incorporate large proportions of the citizenry, and represent their interests within local decision-making processes. National organizations also aggregate local interests, translate them into advocacy for programmatic policies, and transmit these to the national levels as well as further adherence to them in local decision-making. In turn, because of the pervasive presence of these national organizations at the local level, national policymakers linked to them would entrust local decision-makers with greater independent authority to carry out national objectives locally

FIGURE 2. A NATIONALIZED INFRASTRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE



The Nationalized Infrastructure most closely follows traditional Weberian presumptions about the relations between national and local policymaking and politics. This system tends to link local public goods provision to national programs, and to apply policies in a similar way in localities throughout the country. The organization of civil society is also a national matter rather than simply a local one. At the local level, representatives of national parties and organized interests as well as governmental representatives from higher levels cooperate to apply these programs. These same organizations serve to represent the interests of localities in the national policymaking process. The dual national and local functions of both national parties, organized interests and local governments themselves favor integration of local and national policy.

Within the state, a nationalized infrastructure relies on the organizational integration of local and national levels to maintain infrastructural power. Higher level governments give strong capacities to local levels to carry out policy, and exercise supervision and regulatory control over how this is done. Trust enables the higher level governments to delegate major responsibilities to lower levels, and the local governments to accept intervention from higher levels. Beyond the state, encompassing, hierarchically organized, parties and interests reinforce this trust between levels. These organization help to mobilize local civil society around the policies that local and national governments jointly carry out, and channel civic participation into support for those policies. They also help to assure that national policies represent interests present at the local level.

As this last function shows, local empowerment under a nationalized infrastructure also follows a distinctive logic. At the national level, mechanisms for local representation provide the nationally organized parties and interests, but also local governments with an important role in policy. At the local level, the nationalized infrastructure incorporates parties, business, labor and civic organizations. The ways it does so,

however, remain constrained by the integration between national and local institutions. Local participatory institutions favor national parties and national systems of provision over particularistic, local movements. Local governance institutions provide for regular but limited choice in local elections, and foster consensual coalitions among parties rather than majoritarian governance.

The Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands correspond most closely to this type of local-national relations. Local governance in the Swedish case furnishes a well-documented example. Local governments there are among the most empowered in the developed world, and have primary responsibility for administering the welfare state as well as functions like urban planning (Sellers & Lidström, 2007). Civil society is highly participatory and extensively organized (Rothstein & Stolle, 2003). Organized business, unions, parties, and civic organizations have typically been ascribed an important role in local governance (Pierre, 1992; Sellers & Kwak, 2011)

A bottom up perspective highlights how the origins and development of this configuration are partly a product of civil society and local-central relations. Strong communal institutions, supported in the countryside by an independent property-owning peasantry, laid foundations for the development of the modern state (Nordstrom, 2000). At the same time, Scandinavia developed a strong national state apparatus during the early modern era (Knudsen & Rothstein, 1994). Faced with this combination of local and central power, parties and business and labor interests organized nationally but put down strong roots in communities (Kumlin & Rothstein, 2005). The egalitarian, universalistic welfare state, a determinative feature of this local government system, grew at the national level from early institutions at the local level (Sellers & Lidström, 2007).

Where a Nationalized infrastructure is in place, several distinctive logics of local-national relations serve to reproduce crucial elements. National officials, local officials and national political and interest associations each have interests in perpetuating the system. Strongly implanted in organizations mobilized at the local level, national parties and interests acquire the capacity to represent local communities at the national level. At the same time, because the local units of parties and other organized interests maintain strong roles in local politics, the national representatives of these organizations have more reason to entrust local governments with responsibility with carrying out national policies. National officials retain a strong interest in overseeing the elements of policy that have been delegated to the local level, but the local presence of national organizations gives them reason to trust localities as well. With a nationalized civil service at the local level, local governments themselves act as powerful advocates for the maintenance of local powers. The services local governments provide to their citizens give decentralized institutions an added bulwark of support. When reform takes place in this infrastructure, as in the consolidation of local government units, it has often reinforced nationalized dynamics of local representation.

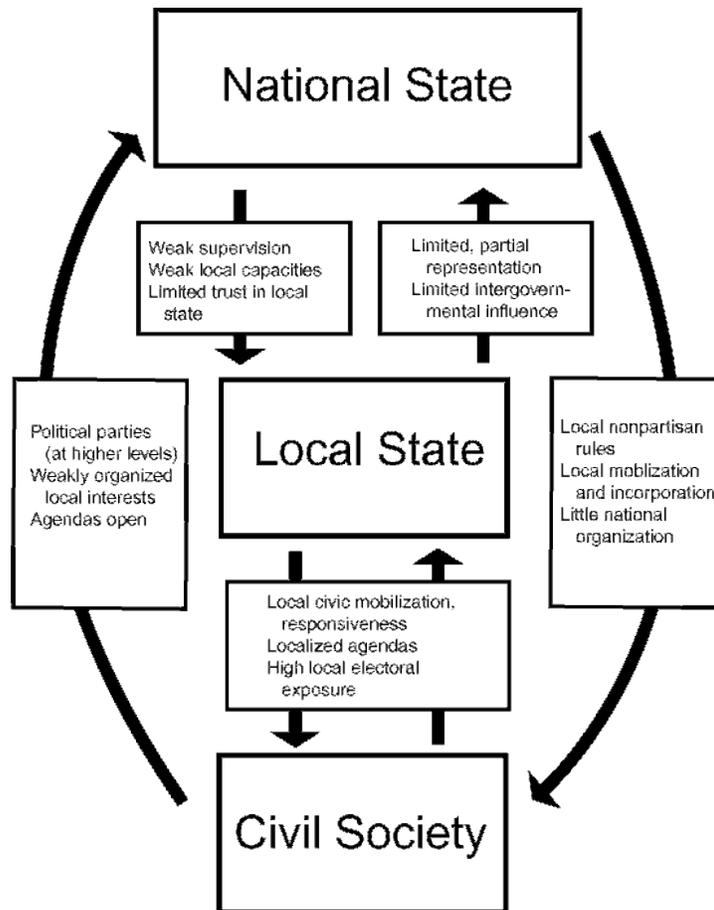
The Civic Localist Infrastructure

Contrast the Nationalized infrastructure with one built instead extensive, incorporated participation at the local level, but with minimal integration into state organization and policy at higher levels. Local government receives significant responsibilities, but only limited powers and capacities from higher level governments, and depends more on local society to generate political and policy resources. Civic associations within communities rather than nationally organized parties and interests set agendas for local governance. In contrast with the balanced national representation and consensual local governance that the nationalized infrastructure foster, the Civic Localist infrastructure fosters local responsiveness to the most mobilized, most powerful groups. Local government can also work at odds with national governance.

In this infrastructure, policy undertaken at the local level depends on the initiatives of individual local governments. The rules of the local political game encourage responsiveness to local civil society. At the national level, neither local governments themselves, nor local civic associations nor national parties and organized interests provide consistently reliable representation of the interests within localities. Instead, how local issues are treated at higher levels remains the product of shifting coalitions among a range of potential

interests. Between the national and the local level, this infrastructure provides no consistent linkages. Intergovernmental trust that might lay the groundwork for national officials to delegate powers to local ones remains limited (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. THE CIVIC LOCALIST INFRASTRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE



Infrastructural power in a Civic Localist infrastructure is generally distributed among localities and communities. Rather than integrate local governments into policymaking at higher levels, a Civic Localist infrastructure centers around the exercise of local authority for policy. Rather than supervision from above, the mechanisms of this infrastructure provide for accountability to local society, or limit local capacities. Civil society participates and is incorporated at the local level, through local associations. Political parties and organized interests at higher levels maintain little systematic relation to local politics. When higher level governments seek to act at the local level, their intervention is narrow in scope, and usually confined to a specific functional domain. With little institutional trust among levels, circumscribed forms of cross-level coordination predominate.

Local empowerment in a Civic Localist system occurs in the first instance at the local level, often through nonpartisan or loosely partisan groups and coalitions. There, participation is high and local groups or interests often exercise decisive influence. At higher levels, parties and organized interests have fewer roots in local political formations and aggregate local interests independently of local governance. Institutional representatives from local governments also lack established mechanisms for representation at higher levels.

Instead, local interest aggregation and influence take place through alternative channels, such as single member district representation in national legislatures or nationally organized movement organizations.

Like nationalized infrastructures, Civic Localist institutions have emerged in societies with strong, institutionalized cultures of political and civic participation. The countries that most clearly fit this type are the settler nations that transplanted English legacies to newly colonized areas of the globe. In each instance, self-governing communities of white property-owners set much of the terms for the institutional infrastructure that would follow. Expansive, sparsely settled territories encouraged forms of local administration that left more self-determination to local communities. The more fragmented federal form of central state that emerged in Australia, Canada and the U.S. grew out of similar influences. Throughout development of the policy state, institutional fragmentation at higher levels imposed obstacles to the growth and the influence of nationalized political parties, interest groups and ultimately intergovernmental structures such as the civil service (Silberman, 1993; Skowronek, 1982). Instead, local government and the participation of local civil society themselves, as Tocqueville famously observed in the United States, furnished the main foundation of territorial governance.

The infrastructure for local governance in the urban areas of the United States exemplifies the characteristic conditions of this type. Transatlantic comparative case studies have demonstrated how the local state in U.S. cities operates in a manner more autonomous from central state hierarchies, and more dependent on business and other civic organization than in Europe (Savitch, et al., 2002; Sellers, 2002). In one such study, focused on three U.S. cities, Sellers found local governance to be dominated by open-structured, shifting patterns of civic mobilization and coalition-building, and dependent on political and fiscal resources within local communities. Survey-based comparisons of power and influence in U.S. local governance have confirmed these tendencies (Sellers, 2007).

The quite different infrastructure that has resulted should be expected to generate distinctive dynamics of reproduction. In the absence of well-organized local interests at the heights of government, empowerment at the local level relies on provisions to assure local responsiveness. Lacking the trust that a national system of local political parties and organized interests could foster in local politics, national policymakers seek to secure accountability through limits to local capacities or requirements for local civic participation. Civic associations provide a further basis of support for institutions that reinforce their role and that of voters over those of political parties and other organized interests. With less local capacity and less power than in nationalized systems, local government interests are less able to counter challenges to their power at higher levels. In providing fewer services, local governments are less able to mobilize popular support. These dynamics help to perpetuate an institutionalized separation between national and local levels of government, and the reliance of this infrastructure on local civic participation.

The Local Elitist Infrastructure

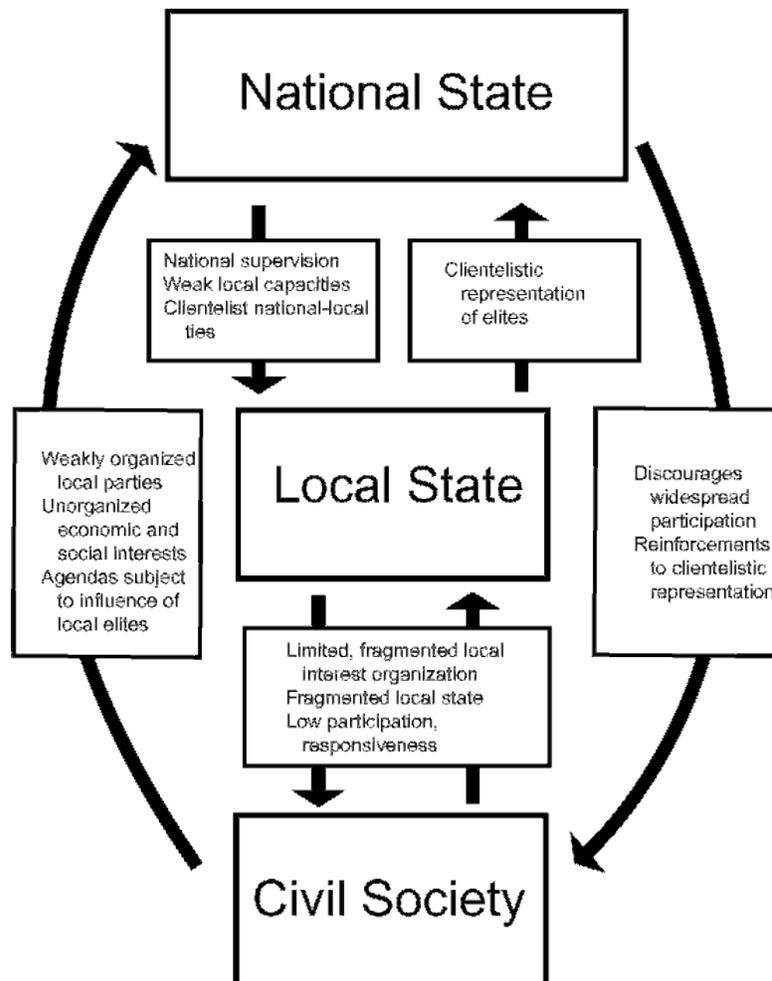
Now consider the third possible form of governance infrastructure. In this system, participation of any kinds of organized political or social interests at the local level remains limited. Rather than national parties, nationally organized interests or other types of civic association, the elites in local government and administration dominate local politics and policy. At the local level, limited opportunities for local electoral challenges, majoritarian local electoral systems, and local geopolitical fragmentation reinforce the position of these local elites and their networks in relation to citizens as well as wider organizational influences. Except among clientelist networks, or for local elites who manage to build legitimacy through machine politics or through brand appeals to local electorates, trust among citizens and between them and the local state remains low.

In this infrastructure, as in the Nationalized one, national legislation may pursue local public goods as well as those at wider scales. Here, however, higher level governments supplant local governments in much of local policymaking and public goods provision, and retain stronger supervisory capacities in others. Local governments possess limited capacities, and are hierarchically organized. As in the Civic Localist

infrastructure, generalized trust in local governments at higher levels remains low. Local government elites and hierarchies within the state operate as the leading mechanisms of national-local integration. Instead of the highly organized national parties and interests of a Nationalized infrastructure, national initiatives depend on the national and local influence of local elites themselves. Vertical networks of relations between local elites and national state officials provides the means for representation of local interests at higher levels of government, and of integration between national and local governments.

The resulting infrastructure combines legal-administrative centralization with political decentralization (Page & Goldsmith, 1989), and civic demobilization. In contrast with the Civic Localist infrastructure, local governments maintain denser networks with supervisory governments at higher levels. Unlike in the Nationalized infrastructure with its highly organized parties and civil service, these linkages take the form of personal or informally organized networks. In the absence of widespread citizen participation like that in the Nationalized and Civic Localist infrastructures, more individualized ties between official elites and societal groups have carried greater weight at the local level (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4. THE LOCAL ELITIST INFRASTRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE



Where this infrastructure is present, infrastructural power operates most according the terms put forth by Mann and generations of literature on the state. The example of French local governance, even in the wake of

decentralization in the 1980s, demonstrates how this infrastructure operates (Pinson, 2009; Savitch, et al., 2002; Sellers, 2002). State hierarchies themselves offer the main means available to national policymaking elites to bring about local results. Hierarchical authorities to carry out or supervise local policy provide important mechanisms of this sort. So do dynamics of bargaining and reciprocity between local and national elites, and vertical networks of relationships between levels. Low trust in local government among governments at higher levels reinforces the reliance on higher level governments to carry out policy. Within local society, civic participation and incorporation remain limited (Sellers, 2002). Lower levels of societal organization can limit effective opposition to policy initiatives, but also constrain mobilization of support for them. Effective action by the local state depends on resources from higher levels of government, on networks of informal or clientelistic relationships between local government and local elites, and on the success of local government elites establishing political legitimacy within communities.

Despite the limits to local civic incorporation in the Local Elitist infrastructure, it can provide mechanisms for local empowerment. Reciprocity in the local-national elite networks gives local elites an opportunity to obtain benefits for their local communities, either collectively or as individual pork. Supervisory administrative representatives of the national state, like the French prefect, often serve partly to communicate and represent local interests within the state. How far local officials empower communities, of course, depends partly on whether they represent interests from local society. The limits to organized civic incorporation can also preclude empowerment of communities. However, limited channels of incorporation need not preclude local movements from exercising influence at the national as well as the local level. In Local Elitist settings like France, informal but extensive protest aimed at national or local elites are a frequent occurrence (Sellers, 1995).

Both the origins of Local Elitist configurations and their dynamics of reproduction differ from those in either other configuration. Prior to democratization, a subordinated peasantry in the countryside and a weaker middle class in the cities helped create conditions for the state-building that laid foundations for Local Elitist institutions (Tilly, 1992). Since the establishment of democratic constitutional states, in the face of less sustained civic and political mobilization and incorporation, local political and administrative elites from the local government and the national administration have elaborated the policy state.

In doing so, these elite networks have perpetuated their central position. Local elites have relied on their popular bases of support in local communities and on delivery of state services from higher levels helps to maintain a base of support. Their power at the national level enables them to maintain local institutional infrastructures that enhance their position, such as hierarchies within local government, and that disable frequent challenges through elections or participatory requirements. Because national officials trust local governments less to carry out policy, they maintain strong supervision of local policy, and limit the capacities of local officials to take over policy. The prominent national and local positions of local elites nonetheless reinforces a convergence of interests between national and local officials that helps to perpetuate fundamental elements of the Local Elitist infrastructure (Figure 4).

These three patterns correspond to distinctive cultures as well as institutional configurations of state-society and intergovernmental relations. Each responds in distinctive ways to the common demands of local political representation, local policy and implementation, and local participation that have come to typify advanced industrial democracy. Within each infrastructure comes distinctive patterns of tensions and conflicts as well as institutional complementarities. Each possesses strengths and weaknesses as a model for connecting local to national democratic governance.

■ CONCLUSION

Analysis of these patterns reveals how local institutions and local national relations determine what decentralization in fact means in the multilevel systems that now represent the rule among advanced industrial societies (Table 2). It might be argued that these cross-national differences largely correspond to other institutional patterns that have received much more attention to date from comparative studies of national institutional arrangements, such as varieties of capitalism (Hall & Soskice, 2001). Yet the local-national interplay these comparative statics highlight encompasses dimensions of national political economies that are especially significant for policy, but are not present in other accounts.

TABLE 2. SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THREE TYPES IN THIS STUDY

	Nationalized	Civic Localist	Local Elitist
National government	Empowers but supervises localities	Neither empowers nor supervises localities	Supervises but doesn't empower localities
Local government	Consensual	Represents local civil society	Local elites
Political parties	Strong parties	Weak or nonexistent parties	Parties as local elite networks
Economic interests	National, functional representation	Business and civic interest representation	Local elite groups
Civil society	Mobilized, nationally organized	Mobilized local interests	Thinly mobilized, narrow interests
Local-national intergovernmental interest representation	Local governments, administrators, collective representation	Governments represent civic and business interests	Local government elites
Nongovernmental interests in institutions	Nationally organized parties, labor and business	Business interests, civic groups	Limited to client networks

The models also indicate that there are limits to the convergence that analysts from many quarters have predicted in infrastructures of multilevel governance. Developed countries, and many beyond them, have converged around such recommendations of the fiscal federalist literature as the local public provision of locally specific goods (Boadway & Shah, 2009). Local roads and local land use planning, for instance, have typically been assigned to local governments in all three types of national infrastructures. General trends toward “neoliberal” governance have introduced such reforms as privatization and decentralization (Peck & Tickell, 2002). Growing international competition among localities has driven an increasing widespread local pursuit of firms and high-value workers (Savitch, et al., 2002). Transnational movements are now widespread throughout advanced industrial societies, and local governments have moved to incorporate them into policymaking in partly convergent ways (Cf. Sellers 2002).

Even in the wake of global influences like these, divergent logics continue to reproduce distinctive infrastructures of institutions for local governance. These national variations depend not just on the differences at the national level that have preoccupied the comparative study of political institutions, but also on the cross-level relations of the three models, and the patterns of influence they have fostered.

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