

# Multilevel Democracy

*How Local Institutions and Civil Society  
Shape the Modern State*

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## Multilevel Democracy

This volume presents the first systematic comparative analysis of national traditions of local democracy across the developed world, as well as their origins and evolution. It reveals how inclusive local institutions that integrate national and local governance make democracy work better.

Across most of the developed world, early forms of the national state entrenched the local power of elites. In Anglo-American and Swiss democracies, state formation imposed enduring tensions with local civic governance. In contrast, inclusive, integrative local institutions in Northern Europe enabled close links with central government around common local and national agendas, producing better governance and fuller democracy to the present day.

Through comparative analysis, the authors demonstrate how institutions for local governance and the participation of civil society differ widely among developed democracies, and how local democracy relates to national democracy. The resulting insights fundamentally recast our understanding of how to build and maintain more effective democracies.

Without local institutions, a nation may give itself a free government but it has not got the spirit of liberty.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 1848

As long as people are people, democracy, in the full sense of the word, will always be no more than an ideal. One may approach it as one would the horizon in ways that may be better or worse, but it can never be fully attained. In this sense, you, too, are merely approaching democracy.

Czechoslovak President Vaclav Havel, address to the United States Congress, 1990

## Introduction

### *Taking Local Institutions Seriously*

In July of 1831, one year after the July Revolution established a constitutional monarchy in France, Alexis de Tocqueville and Gustave de Beaumont arrived in New York City on an official mission to investigate the US prison system. Over the next eight months their travels took them thousands of miles throughout the forty-year-old United States, from Canada to New Orleans. They spent only two weeks in the newly established national capital of Washington, DC. In the following decade, in a pivotal work that would become a touchstone of modern political science, Tocqueville expressed his admiration for a society where politics sprang from the many communities he visited rather than from the powerful hierarchies that still dominated Europe.

In its account of civic life in the emerging democratic society of the nineteenth century, *Democracy in America* framed what has become one of the most prevalent themes in the empirical study of democracy. The second volume abounds with observations about the “thousand different types” of association that Tocqueville discovered as he traveled throughout the United States (de Tocqueville, 1966). Political associations, Tocqueville contended, were essential to check despotism and arbitrary rule by the majority. Civil associations maintained social practices and norms that drew upon and reinforced political associations. The effects of participation in associations on “the morals and intelligence of a democratic people” made them essential to the operation of governance at all levels: “Feelings and ideas are renewed, the heart enlarged, and the understanding developed only by the reciprocal action of men one upon another.” A far-reaching agenda of empirical research on civic engagement and associational life has emerged around these contentions, from the first survey-based studies of democratic political culture following World War II to contemporary analyses of social capital. The study of political parties alone has become part of the traditional core of political science.

A second element that Tocqueville also portrayed as critical to the functioning of democracy has received considerably less contemporary attention. In the literature of professional political science since World War II, it is difficult to find anything approaching his defense of local institutions for their pivotal role in cultivating what he called “the spirit of liberty”:

Local institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science: they put it within the people’s reach; they teach people to appreciate its peaceful enjoyment and accustom them to make use of it.

Local institutions helped make the people “enlightened, awake to their own interests, and accustomed to take thought for them.” They provided a bulwark against “the excesses of despotism.” They created opportunities for initiatives to improve “social prosperity.” The civic life that Tocqueville embraced took place in the same communities where these institutions of local government held sway. Local government and associations thus worked together to support the robust functioning of democracy.<sup>1</sup>

As Tocqueville put forth these arguments, global shifts in political authority were permanently altering how students of politics think about the possibilities for local democracy. European and North American states of the early nineteenth century were in the process of fully realizing the centuries-old trend toward consolidation of political authority into territorial nation states. The ascendance of the nation state transformed an ancient tradition that identified democracy with cities and communities. For most of recorded history, from the Greek city states into the early modern era, democracy was considered fundamentally at odds with rule on a wide territorial scale. Representative democracy, present in Tocqueville’s day in only a small handful of countries, made a form of democratic rule possible for the first time on the scale of the nation state.

A generation earlier, as the disintegrating state of Prussia faced up to its defeat at the hands of Napoleonic armies, Baron von Stein had advanced an analogous case for local self-government within an autocratic regime. Tocqueville’s analysis framed for the first time what has become an enduring dilemma for democratic rule. Popular sovereignty on a national scale depends on the priority of national democratic decisions. Yet even within a nation state, institutions at the scale of cities, communities, and neighborhoods offer chances for participation and self-rule that a national government cannot. The possibilities for realizing the full potential of national democratic rule to bring more inclusive, better governance still depend in part on local democracy.

Over the nearly 200 years since Tocqueville arrived in the United States, a vastly expanded nation state has become established as the hegemonic form of political rule. In the early twentieth century, as agendas of public policy

<sup>1</sup> For a recent appreciation, see Gannett (2005).

proliferated, industrial capitalism grew, and democratic institutions spread, Max Weber was among the first social scientists to point to the “quantitative extension of administrative tasks” that increasingly shaped the state (Weber, 1978, p. 969). Since his time, the predominant social scientific view of national states has ascribed them basic attributes of his concept of modern bureaucracy (*ibid.*, pp. 956–70). Bureaucratic authority articulated state institutions around the end of carrying out policy. Modern public administration substituted formal systems of supervision, rules, and procedures for the undefined, personalized, or status-based relationships of older state hierarchies. Administrative hierarchies, duties of office, systems of jurisdiction, professional expertise, and rules focused the state on what has become known as policy implementation. From within the well-oiled machinery of this bureaucratic structure, it is easy to see local institutions as subordinate and secondary, and influences from civil society as unnecessary to carrying out state tasks (Scott, 1998a). Even political science research on the institutions that link civil society to the state, like systems of political parties and organized interest intermediation, has reinforced this top-down perspective with a focus on politics at the national level.

With growing precision, much of this same research has documented systemic deficiencies in democratic rule at the national level. Elites and powerful groups, particularly economic interests, exercise an unmistakable influence on the way democracy works in the United States and throughout developed democracies (Schattschneider, 1960, Lindblom, 1977, Culpepper, 2011, Hacker and Pierson, 2014). Observers of the political process itself point to a growing disengagement of both elites and citizens from national elections (Mair, 2013, Gilens and Page, 2014). Research on the realities of public policy and implementation has ascribed much of what gets done to complex governance networks beyond the reach of national lawmakers or the highest executives (Ansell, 2000, Mazmanian and Kraft, 2009). Particularly for the subordinate groups and classes who have long lacked full incorporation into political, social, and economic institutions, formal civic rights and inclusion in national elections have proven grossly inadequate (Young, 2002). Popular discontent with national governing elites has also become a recurrent theme in accounts of political behavior (Pharr and Putnam, 2000, Barr, 2009). It has helped spark successive generations of political and social movements in developed democracies, from the student revolts of the 1960s to the Occupy movement and the populist movements of the 2010s on the right and the left.

Positive research has thus reinforced persistent strands of normative political theory that point to the shortcomings of representative democracy at the national scale as a means to assure responsiveness and accountability to citizens (Dahl, 1973, Pateman, 1976, Barber, 2003). Contemporary advocates of “empowered participation” among citizens (Fung and Wright, 2001), or local self-sufficiency in a translocal economy (Williamson et al., 2003), have renewed calls to look to the scale of cities and communities that have long been held out

as most promising for strengthening democracy. At the same time, proliferating public policy imperatives continue to compound the demands of governance on contemporary nation states. Efforts to sustain economic prosperity, to manage growing socioeconomic inequality, to cope with the challenges of globalization, or to carry out the economy-wide transformations that are necessary to mitigate climate change impose expectations that neither the state nor civil society have consistently been able to meet. For citizens facing embedded disadvantages of class, race, gender, or national origin, as Young has argued, full inclusion demands not just the vote and civic rights, but effective political opportunities from the top to the bottom of state hierarchies, and throughout society.

In the new democracies of the developing world, efforts to develop more robust, effective, and responsive forms of rule have focused with growing intensity on many of the same decentralized institutions that Tocqueville portrayed as critical in the early United States (Faguet, 2014, Weingast, 2014). As frustrations over the performance of democracy in the Global South have mounted, local institutions and movements have often been on the front lines of struggles over the quality of policymaking and public services (Grindle, 2007, Banerjee and Duflo, 2011). In the summer of 2013, hundreds of thousands of urban protestors in disparate regions in the developing world took to the streets. Across Brazil, citizens demonstrated for lower transit fares and better schools; in South Africa, for access to water, electricity, and housing; in Istanbul, Turkey, against the demolition of an urban park for a commercial development. If the immediate aims of these protests might have startled Tocqueville, the municipal governments that the protestors targeted would not have surprised him at all.

Rule within cities and communities, as this volume will show, represents much more than a forgotten potential resource for democracy or an innovative new idea. In much of the developed world, it is one of the oldest and most persistent continuing political traditions. Any visitor to the fifteenth-century Hotel de Ville, in Brussels, the capital of Europe, or to the similar city halls of many older European cities, cannot fail to be impressed by the resilience these buildings reflect. Historical ruptures from total war, regime change, social revolution, industrialization, and urbanization have rarely displaced local institutions altogether, and have often ultimately strengthened them. Although no longer the primary focus of democratic theory itself, local institutions have persisted as inextricable components of national democratic political systems. The constraints as well as possibilities of democratic rule are impossible to understand without attention to how these institutions operate. A central aim of state building over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, rarely noted in recent treatments of the subject, was to extend state power and democratic processes to the local level. Already at the time Tocqueville wrote, national states throughout Europe and North America had begun to introduce formal institutions to address his concerns about local democracy.

Less than three months before Tocqueville set sail for the United States, France itself had introduced elections for local councils in municipalities throughout the country.

Today, in the developing world as well as in settled democracies, local government is the most pervasive form of decentralization and a near-universal feature of territorial states. In developed democracies it can occupy as much as a third of national gross domestic product (GDP). Its actions in numerous domains, from social services to regulation to personal security, pervade the lives of citizens. How local government works in these domains can be as decisive as what happens in the national political process for the performance of policy on the national scale. How local governance facilitates civic and political participation within cities and communities, and integrates local decisions with those at higher levels, shapes the possibilities of democracy at the national as well as the local scale. In countries where the state has been most dominant over society, shifts from formal government toward governance across the state–society divide, and from national capitals into cities and communities, have reinforced the importance of these local elements (Le Galès, 1995, Pinson, 2009). Scholarship on urban politics has long shown how powerful economic interests and market imperatives often restrict the possibilities for governance at the local scale (Stone, 1989, Peterson, 1981). The overall quality of democracy in a contemporary nation state nonetheless depends on local institutions that foster an effective citizen role in governance, and multi-level institutions that integrate local governance with democracy at wider scales.

For reformers and scholars concerned with how to deepen democracy – to extend its participatory opportunities and its capacities for substantive inclusion – a fuller understanding of the possibilities requires a deeper conception of democracy itself (Dunleavy, 1982, Bevir, 2006). Local institutions and the opportunities they offer for participation and self-governance remain indispensable to any such rethinking. It is all the more surprising how little attention post-World War II empirical political science of democracy has paid to local institutions. Even a growing recent body of work on decentralization has focused more on federalism and on intermediate units of government than on localities (e.g., Rodden, 2005, Hooghe et al., 2010a). After a long hiatus, a small cross-national literature on local institutions emerged in the 1980s (e.g., Hesse and Sharpe, 1991, Page and Goldsmith, 1987). Before the precursor to the present study, no systematic database of indicators existed to measure and compare local institutions (Sellers and Lidström, 2007).

In an era of nation states and growing transnational influences, democracy at the local scale can also no longer be understood in purely local terms. The scale of the issues that contemporary governance addresses, and the entrenched institutions, economic relations, and societal dynamics that now enmesh localities, mean that local democracy is rarely a solely local matter. A deepened understanding must also take account of the reach of local politics upward and



outward into the complex hierarchies of the contemporary nation state, its relationship to influences from above, and its potential to shape the powerful social and economic forces that also pervade everyday life. As scholars of politics at other subnational scales have recognized (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983, Gibson, 2013), politics at the local scale remains inextricably linked to national institutions and their politics.

Taking local institutions seriously in this way offers a fresh view of relationships between state and society in developed democracies, and a new perspective on how their contemporary forms emerged and evolved. In providing this perspective, our ultimate aim is to contribute to a fuller understanding of the potential for democratic governance.

### 1.1 MULTILEVEL DEMOCRACY AND THE LOCAL SCALE

Tocqueville's preoccupation with relations between state and society has furnished a recurrent theme in comparative politics. Since calls to bring the state back in swept through political science and related disciplines (Evans et al., 1985), the mutual dependence of state and society has emerged as one of the most consistent preoccupations in the comparative literature. The analysis of this volume focuses on what are broadly called *linkages* between the state and society. In the literature of empirical theories about politics, the concept may encompass practically any relationship or form of influence between the actors in society and in the state. It has most often focused on relationships that involve legal, administrative, or political responsibility of some kind (e.g., Bratton, 1989). The focus here centers on those linkages that connect the state and society within the cities and communities where citizens live, and local governance to the governance of a nation state. This multilevel dimension is indispensable to an account of how the micro-level actions of specific agents like citizens, officials, firms, and civic and political organizations aggregate to the national or macro scale. On the one hand, neighborhoods, cities, and communities comprise a prime site of political identification, organization, and mobilization. On the other, the state itself is organized partly at the local scale. The local arena is in turn a setting of political identity formation and mobilization, as well as contestation and influence.

In the formative era of the behaviorialist revolution in post-World War II US political science, local politics was central to debates over the nature of power in a democratic society. Sharply opposed analyses of cities in the United States each depicted the politics of influence and power at the local scale as a microcosm that revealed the fundamental workings and the structural conditions of a wider national political macrocosm. Accounts like Hunter's study of Atlanta (Hunter, 1953) pointed to stable structures of power – embedded in wider structures of corporate and governmental organization, property assets, status, and privilege – that secured the dominance of closed circles of local elites. Pluralist accounts like studies of New Haven by Dahl and his students (Dahl,

1961, Polsby, 1963) instead portrayed local decision-making as open to influence from ordinary citizens, and subject to the accumulated mobilization of political resources. Although the pluralists also emphasized that political resources tended to be unequally distributed, the pluralist account depicted them as widely available, and susceptible to “slack” when local agents chose not to engage in politics. Despite their differences, both elitist and pluralist accounts started from the assumption that the local politics of a city were fundamental to the realities of American democracy at the micro level.

Even these early accounts revealed the many ways in which local politics and society were embedded in wider orders of democratic institutions and market capitalism. For Hunter or Domhoff (2017), as for Gramscian accounts of civil society (Cohen and Arato, 1994), the organization of banks, corporate firms, unions, churches, and government maintained the power structure of elite rule. For Dahl and his students, federal grants and party organizations as well as elections furnished part of the political resources that Mayor Lee deployed. A recent generation of cross-national comparative studies of governance within cities demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt how much difference national systems of institutions make (DiGaetano and Klemanski, 1999, Savitch et al., 2002, Sellers, 2002a). Nor do institutions at the national level itself fully account for all the translocal institutional influences. Policies and governance innovations have diffused laterally among intermediate units of government, within countries as well as between them. Translocal markets for employment, production, and services, an influence on the possibilities of local governance since the spread of market capitalism, now regularly extend beyond and across national boundaries. Transnational migration and the proliferation of the internet and social media now embed localities even more deeply in wider social networks and their dynamics.

The modern state of the contemporary developed world is inherently a multilevel state. Its institutions provide for governance and policymaking at multiple scales. Each level of territorial units of the state itself, and also of organizations within society, presents a potentially distinct layer of contestation, power, and decision-making. Multilevel treatments of the interplay and relationships between these levels have become a staple of a growing literature on decentralization and its dynamics (Gerring et al., 2011, Falleti, 2010, Dickovick, 2007). In federal states, the constitutional allocation of independent decision-making authority to subnational units makes this multilevel dimension especially clear. The partial sovereignty of the European Union establishes an additional tier of authority above the member states. Supranational and intermediate tiers of decision-making authority like these have furnished the primary inspiration for a growing literature on multilevel governance (Hooghe and Marks, 2001, Cash et al., 2006, Kazepov, 2010).

Dahl and Hunter, like Tocqueville before them, saw state–society relations at the local scale as pivotal for multilevel governance. The overriding reason for this presumption was the greater proximity at the local scale between state and

society. Following along the lines of classical democratic theory that dated from Aristotle's studies of the polis, as well as Tocqueville himself, Dahl in particular focused on governance at the scale of the city as a critical determinant of the character of popular rule. Community power analyses focused only partly on what we will call the local state, or the governments and other state institutions that operate at the scale of cities and communities. The civic organizations and institutions of a city were just as essential to the functioning of democracy. Even in the internet age, cities and communities remain the scale where citizens are most likely to encounter the state and civil society directly. A full multilevel conception of democracy must therefore take account of how citizens (or potential citizens) participate and gain influence in local institutions, and how the local state responds to them.

In accordance with the imperatives of local governance in an era of translocal institutions and forces, the idea of *multilevel democracy* conceives of local democracy as one component in a nested configuration of democratic institutions. The concept builds on Dahl's suggestive conception of democratic processes at multiple scales as nested Chinese boxes, from the local to the metropolitan to the national (Dahl, 1967). Beyond this metaphor, it incorporates the institutions that link state activity at the local scale to processes at other levels. It thus recognizes the processes of multilevel governance that become more the rule than the exception in advanced industrial democracies (Bache and Flinders, 2004). The democratic properties of local institutions can only be fully analyzed in relation to this wider context.

Along with governance within the institutions of the state, and state–society relations at both the local and wider scales, the concept of multilevel democracy encompasses a further dimension that is less familiar from accounts of multilevel governance. The linkages between local and supralocal scales of organization within civil society beyond the state can be as critical to the practice of multilevel democracy as relations within the vertical hierarchies of the state itself. The politics of up-scaling and down-scaling agendas is often as important to mass political organizations like parties, interest groups, and social movements as it is to officials within the state (Termeer et al., 2010). Vertical linkages within and beyond the state, and between state and society at multiple scales, comprise the wider political context that is essential to understanding the operation and significance of local democracy in contemporary societies.

Analysis of multilevel democracy stands in a robust, decades-old line of comparative work on state–society relations. Whether conceived as embedded state autonomy (Evans, 1995), as the state in society (Migdal, 2001), as state–society synergies, or as state–society coproduction (Ostrom, 1996), diverse authors agree that state and societal dynamics cannot be fully understood without reference to each other. Their role acquires particular importance in democratic systems. Normative democratic theory places special emphasis on linkages of “accountability and responsibility” between the institutions of the state and societal actors (Kitschelt, 2000). For positive theories about the reality

of democracy, the question is to identify how accountability and responsibility work in actual practice.

Our analysis builds not only on accounts of multilevel governance as a system of relations within the hierarchies of governments, but also on a variety of literatures that have scrutinized the micro-level dimensions of mass political organization and the operation of multilevel democratic institutions. These literatures begin in the traditional political scientist's domain of electoral politics. Accounts of party organization have detailed how ordinary party members and local party organization relate to national party organizations (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1992, Saiz and Geser, 1999). Comparative analyses of capitalist economies have shown how the micro logics of organization and representation in governance within firms down to the shop floor have systematically shaped different varieties of capitalism (Hall and Soskice, 2001). Overarching empirical classificatory comparisons of democratic political systems implicitly incorporate distinct micro-level logics of representation into macro-level accounts of institutionalized systems of organized representation (e.g., Lijphart, 2012, Gerring et al., 2005, Gerring and Thacker, 2008). More general accounts of "governance" as the interplay between state and societal actors also frequently point to distinctive arrangements at the local level as elements in wider macro-level differences in these relationships (e.g., Pierre, 1999).

The concept of multilevel democracy recasts these and other elements as components of state–society relations at the scale of cities and communities that contribute to macro-level patterns of democratic rule. Despite growing recognition of these linkages, and increasing attempts to craft new institutions to mediate them, there remains little encompassing theory devoted to the linkages themselves (Sellers, 2010). The first step toward such a theory, undertaken in Chapters 2 and 3 of this volume, is a systematic account of how multilevel democratic institutions in fact compare across the universe of existing developed democracies. The following chapters explore their origins and evolution, and their consequences for the quality of democracy.

## 1.2 LAYERED INSTITUTIONS AND MULTILEVEL DEMOCRACY

The preoccupation of comparative politics with the nation state has affected even the way that social scientists conceive of the sources of local institutions. In standard textbook accounts of a national system of government, local democracy amounts to a creation of the nation state itself. The predominant narratives of state formation have often taken the consolidation of national states as the inevitable end to self-rule in cities and communities (Tilly, 1990, Anderson, 1979). Accounts of the creation of local institutions regularly portray them as acts of a centralized state that "unravels" or reconstructs itself (Hooghe and Marks, 2003, Falleti, 2010). Similarly, a widespread narrative among state theorists depicts the growth of governance at the local

scale in the late twentieth century as the replacement of centralized Keynesian welfare states with hollowed out and “rescaled” decentralized states (Jessop, 2008, Brenner, 2004). At best, top-down accounts like these reflect only one dimension of the politics of local institutions. At worst, they have left an entirely erroneous impression of the historical dynamics of local institutional development.

Presumptions that local institutions originate from above are difficult to square with the longstanding historical persistence of many local institutions. In much of the developed world, the origins of contemporary municipal governments go back to early modern state formation, or even predate it. The lineages of Dutch water boards or Swiss village governance institutions trace to the Middle Ages. Other local institutions have been the product of more recent introductions, or reflect the pervasive, repeated intervention of supralocal governments into local affairs. To account for the full variety of local institutions and their origins requires a differentiated account of the relationships between these institutions and the wider institutions of the state. The more nuanced conception of institutions that has emerged from historical institutionalism offers an approach to conceptualization that recognizes both the persistence of local institutions, and the complex, evolving nature of the national state itself.

A layered conception of institutions (e.g., Schickler, 2001, Thelen, 2004) presumes that new institutions need not supplant existing ones, but can operate alongside them. New layers of institutions can either complement or reinforce the effects of existing institutions (Orren and Skowronek, 1994). They can give rise to new dynamics that alter or even neutralize previous institutional effects. In historical institutionalist thought such a conception has enabled a more sophisticated analysis of the cumulative historical construction of institutions (e.g., Thelen, 2004, Schickler, 1997). A layered conception means that the other institutions of the nation state may relate in any number of ways to local ones, and their development may occur (or “intercur”) at different points in time in relation to local institutional development.

A layered perspective reveals how local institutions, and the multilevel politics that have shaped them, have been pivotal throughout the history of the modern state. From the beginning of modern state formation, institution at the national level reinforced local institutions with different patterns of incorporation within communities and cities. Even before the formal introduction of local government systems, these institutions and the power relations that shaped them figured in emerging national state traditions. At pivotal subsequent moments in the development of national states and democratic institutions, local arrangements and the relationships that embedded them in state orders shaped the creation of new layers of institutions.

The contemporary national state amalgamates numerous institutions that have been introduced on top of existing institutions without replacing them.

The constitutional foundations of competitive democracy at the national level, including mechanisms for lawmaking by elected representatives and the process of elections with mass suffrage, emerged only after a number of other institutions. Two of the first dimensions to be established in the early states of western Europe were the claim to monopoly of authority in a territory, and a hierarchy of legal authority with the national sovereign at the top (Linz and Stepan, 1996). Other layers of institutions that have mainly emerged since Tocqueville's time have grown to occupy an increasing proportion of the democratic state, and to dominate its relations with civil society. One is the administrative state of official roles, expert administrators, and rules that Max Weber highlighted in his analysis of bureaucracy (Skowronek, 1982, Silberman, 1993). Another consists of the many institutions that have established public policy and its implementation as primary components of both state activity and relations between the state and society. What we will call the *policy state* encompasses most of what the contemporary state does, especially in developed democracies: the myriad components of the welfare state, from education to welfare to old-age pensions; the levers of economic policy; the promotion of economic growth; the provision of public order and security; the regulation of the environment. A growing historical literature, largely focused on the United States, demonstrates how the policy state has transformed the overall character of the state (e.g., Carpenter, 2001).

In the complex institutions that these processes of layering have produced in the contemporary national state, institutions within communities have been critical in several ways. Since territorial states first began to take shape, institutions at this local level have mediated the relationship of the state to civil society. From early state formation, these local institutions comprised a layer of the state that often followed distinct dynamics from institutions at higher levels, and related to them in a variety of ways. The introduction of formal local government and administration, along with mechanisms for elections and civic incorporation within localities, reinforced this local arena. The elaboration of the policy state embedded a role for local institutions in the proliferating tasks that have emerged as the most salient responsibilities of the twenty-first century state.

Throughout these phases of local institutional development, relations with supralocal institutions have been critical to sustaining forms of local states and the political and societal forces that have depended on it. At the same time, local institutions and their political dynamics have repeatedly shaped alignments of power within national institutions, and the development of those institutions themselves. Local institutions thus not only comprise a critical, enduring feature of multilevel democracy that previous accounts of national institutions have thus far neglected. They have also played an indispensable role in the development of national states and civic traditions.

### 1.3 ALTERNATIVE TOPOGRAPHIES OF MULTILEVEL DEMOCRACY

In the established democracies of the contemporary developed world, multilevel democracy takes fundamentally different forms. Any casual observer who sets out to observe local governance in a French, a US, and a Swedish city will notice major contrasts in the ways locally elected leaders relate to their citizens, and in how local governments interact with the higher echelons of the state. The import of these differences is evident in the divergent ways the pursuit of policies, and especially policy toward disadvantaged communities, plays out at the local scale. These contrasts comprise part and parcel of wider national differences between multilevel democratic systems in the performance of policy and the quality of democracy itself.

#### 1.3.1 Local Elitism in France

Since the 1830s when Tocqueville wrote, French local politics have undergone massive transformations. Electoral democracy, industrialization, modern bureaucracy, the welfare state, and most recently decentralization and the digital revolution have brought profound changes. Through all these changes, especially in the south of France, local commentators have continued to refer to local elected officials with a term coined from the Assemblies of Notables created by the king in the prerevolutionary *ancien regime*. Over the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the term “local notables” identified a circumscribed elite of propertied citizens, officials, and clergy who dominated village and city politics (Briquet, 2012). In the twenty-first century, scholars who analyze shifts in the composition of these elites continue to point to the decisive role of top elected officials and administrators in local politics (Thoenig, 2005, Pinson, 2009).

Georges Frêche, the mayor of the southern city of Montpellier over most of the late twentieth century, exemplified this aspect of French politics. A university professor turned Socialist Party activist, Frêche dominated the politics of Montpellier and its surrounding region for twenty-seven years from his first election as mayor in 1977. Frêche’s electoral coalition of socialists, communists, and diverse moderate and radical leftists and (from the 1990s) ecologists easily won re-election four times. Within the local government, he and a small circle of trusted appointees marginalized the municipal council and excluded the local opposition altogether from a role in decision-making. With the national decentralization of the 1980s, newly acquired municipal planning authorities, a growing assembly of parapublic companies, and new bodies for interlocal cooperation enabled Frêche and his allies to decisively shape development in and around the city. Officials in small municipalities around the region lacked the clout to contest Frêche and his networks. Neighborhood and civic associations were coopted into serving the mayor’s agenda.

Frêche's penchant for periodic racist comments embarrassed the national leadership of the Socialist Party repeatedly, but had little effect on his commanding local position. Expelled from the party in 2007, he proceeded to run on an independent leftist slate in regional elections. His decisive victory there humiliated a competing socialist slate.

Prior to decentralization, the French national state had been the prime mover in local development politics. It had created massive new vacation villages along the Mediterranean coast, had placed a new scientific university campus in the city, and had cooperated with local authorities in Montpellier to lure IBM to the city and carry out new office and residential developments. Even as Frêche assumed more of the initiative for local economic development, links to Paris and national officials remained central. National subsidies continued to supply important proportions of the resources for local development projects, and the prefect and field offices of the national ministries retained a prominent role in local governance. National field offices also remained central to other policies, from education and social services to environmental regulation. As a deputy representing local districts in the National Assembly throughout most of his tenure as mayor, Frêche himself served as an advocate of Montpellier and his local agenda in Paris.

Despite all the political resources at its disposal, however, the Frêche administration met with mixed results in its efforts to marshal policy to address the growing, concentrated disadvantage in neighborhoods of unemployed citizens and disadvantaged immigrants. The largest such concentration, in La Paillade to the west of the downtown, emerged in a high-rise estate of some 14,500 units built through state initiatives during the urban expansion of the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1980s, La Paillade was already a center of unemployment and immigrant marginalization. Following eruptions of violence in immigrant neighborhoods around France in 1990 and 2005, a succession of national policies directed at La Paillade and similar neighborhoods around the country undertook to improve education, social services, security, and residential conditions. In Montpellier, the Frêche government implemented these programs in contradictory fashion. At the same time as prioritizing developmental strategies to attract businesses and middle-class residents, it also made efforts to integrate La Paillade more into public transit systems and carry out national programs for neighborhood renewal (Sellers, 2002a, pp. 224–7). The initiatives generally took place from the top down, with little participation from the residents and little improvement in neighborhood conditions (Chédiac, 2009). A short-lived reform in the 1990s, encouraged by national requirements for resident participation, secured fleeting improvements in a few buildings within the neighborhood. Subsequent initiatives of the city returned to a standardized, top-down approach with minimal consultation.

Although Georges Frêche himself was in some respects a distinctive, larger-than-life politician, Montpellier under his administration reflected a form of democracy that has long prevailed not just in France, but throughout most of



the developed world. In most of western Europe and Japan, a complex of institutions that we will denominate *local elitist* accords officials linked to the state and other elites the dominant influence in governance at the local scale. The historical lineages of these practices often trace their roots back to absolutist forms of early modern states. From the nineteenth into the late twentieth century, successive institutional changes perpetuated the power of local elites, and the limits to civic opportunities. Deficiencies in the performance of democracy and public policy, and limited trust among citizens, continue to reflect the consequences of these longstanding patterns of local rule.

### 1.3.2 Civic Localism in the United States

In contrast with France, opportunities for civic participation pervade local government institutions in the United States. In California, for instance, a typical municipality holds elections for city council, for mayor, for independent school boards, and for local judges, along with referenda on raising taxes or local bonds, and occasionally on other issues of local policy. Beyond electoral office, citizen appointments are pervasive. In metropolitan Los Angeles, thousands of citizen appointees sit on hundreds of boards and commissions – 325 on some fifty-one boards and commissions in the central city alone. For the majority of Americans, who live in the suburbs, local governance is an uncontentious process of small-scale local problem-solving in a proliferation of local government units (Oliver et al., 2012). Even scholars of big city politics in the United States have argued for decades over how much it reflects an elite power structure (Hunter, 1953), forces beyond local control (Peterson, 1981, Hackworth, 2007), or an open, pluralistic arena for the deployment of political resources (Dahl, 1961). Accounts of contemporary politics in Los Angeles, the nation's second largest city, point to the reliance of leaders on shifting electoral coalitions among diverse racial, ethnic, and class constituencies (Sonenshein, 1993), and the interplay of powerful economic and political actors with a variety of less powerful groups (Stone et al., 2015). Although such accounts consistently demonstrate unequal outcomes and patterns of influence, they emphasize the give and take between officials and a variety of groups and interests.

One of the most striking contrasts that has contributed to these tendencies is the limited role of the national political parties in local politics. Restricted from formal participation in local elections across most of the country, the Republican and Democratic parties focus their organization and campaigns on state and national elections. In the local political scene, shifting coalitions around individual political entrepreneurs have often maintained volatile or attenuated relations to politics at higher levels. In Los Angeles during the 1990s, this environment made it possible for Richard Riordan, a white, registered Republican, to twice win election as mayor in a multiethnic, overwhelmingly Democratic city. A trained attorney, lawyer, and venture capitalist who came to

power in the wake of the violent uprising that followed the exoneration of Los Angeles police officers in the beating of Rodney King, he campaigned as a businessman “tough enough to turn LA around.” His bipartisan policy agenda extended to education reform, a new subway line, and a new system of neighborhood councils alongside economic development. In 2000, in an initiative he argued was crucial for the local economy, he even contributed \$1 million of his personal funds to bring the National Democratic Convention to the city.

In California, relations with the state and federal governments also stand more in the background of everyday local policymaking than in France. Municipal autonomy leaves general purpose local governments free to make their own choices about local service and revenue priorities, but in thrall to their capacity to raise sufficient revenues themselves. Since the heyday of national urban policy from the 1940s to the 1970s, state and federal policy has seldom taken center stage in municipal elections. In a variety of often narrowly delimited domains, from environmental regulation to education and welfare services, local or regional governmental agencies have been charged with carrying out national and state policies. In domains of multilevel governance like these, conflicts or limited cooperation among localities often hampered policy and its implementation. Local governments have challenged mandatory regional programs to reduce urban stormwater regulation; contributed unevenly to voluntary regional programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through local regulation and planning; diverged widely in the performance of local schools; and implemented an irregular patchwork of local programs to address the needs of the region’s large, persistent homeless population.

The constrained scope of policies from above, and the limited vertical linkages through political parties or other organized interests, have also left local disadvantaged neighborhoods and groups in the Los Angeles region with limited political resources to influence policy. The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), an organized coalition of union representatives and community organizers, exemplifies the community-based movement politics that has emerged in many cities. LAANE first garnered attention in 1993 with one of the first successful local campaigns in the country for a living wage ordinance. Since then, it has focused on a series of targeted campaigns: for “community benefits agreements” to guarantee neighborhood jobs and improvements linked to economic development projects, for a plan to cut diesel pollution at the nation’s largest port, for agreements to limit the introduction of big box stores. Although academics often point to LAANE as a model for social justice organizing (Soja, 2010, Pastor Jr. et al., 2009), these successful campaigns remained limited in scope. Restricted in organizational reach and focused on circumscribed local policy gains, LAANE also demonstrates the limits of recent movements to represent disadvantaged groups at the local level in the USA.

In each of these areas, local governance in Los Angeles follows an opposed model of multilevel institutions and local participation to that of Montpellier.

Even as local governance there reflects power asymmetries and systemic disparities, citizens and civic groups on all sides find opportunities to mobilize and exert influence. Whatever resources local officials possess within the local state, they depend on organizations and constituencies in the community to get things done. The vertical hierarchies of the wider state stand more in the background, and parties and organized interests at higher levels maintain limited connections to local governance. This form of multilevel democracy, which we will call *civic localist*, predominates in Switzerland as well as among the Anglo-American democracies. It has developed over a long history of parliamentary or democratic rule at the national level alongside longstanding local participatory institutions. Contemporary citizens in such settings share comparatively high levels of trust in democratic institutions. Measures of the quality of democracy or the performance of policy offer a more mixed picture of how well those institutions actually work.

### 1.3.3 Nationalized Local Governance in Sweden

Swedish local governance contrasts unmistakably with both French and US practices. There, nationally organized political parties with a relatively strong membership base dominate the politics of both cities and smaller communities. Party labels are compulsory. The administration of Hjalmar Mehr, a committed social democrat and the leading local politician in the city of Stockholm during the 1960s, demonstrates how essential they have been. A strong-willed, determined, and consequential local politician, he is perhaps most famous for presiding over the sometimes brutal redevelopment of the Norrmalm area in central Stockholm during the 1960s. Later generations have regretted its insensitivity to aesthetical and cultural values. Mehr may seem to fit the profile of a mayor with strong independent institutional powers. He would have been powerless to carry out this agenda without the full support of his party, along with solid majorities in the multiparty council and executive board (Elmbrant, 2010). More recently, as social movements and robust media debates have figured increasingly in Stockholm, political parties remain the main organizational vehicles for the expression of public opinion within the local policy-making process.

Political parties also play an important role in the relationship between local and central levels of government. One of the foundations of this relationship is the key role that local governments play in a variety of national policies, especially social welfare policies. Rather than channel policy implementation to other agencies, the national government typically entrusts it to local government itself. The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), arguably the strongest local government association in the world with about 400 employees, also plays a critical role in the relationship (Callanan, 2012). Beyond its many member services and its function as an employer association in negotiations with local government trade unions, SALAR is

charged with safeguarding the interests of local government in national decision-making. It negotiates the formal division of tasks between central and local government in such areas as health and elder care, provides formal opinions to the national government on other questions (the “remiss” system), and arranges meetings between local government representatives and relevant ministers (Feltenius, 2014). The national political parties govern SALAR, and 95 percent of all local councilors belong to those same parties. Vertical networks of party relationships as well as relations within SALAR reinforce the trust between central and local levels of government that is necessary for the tightly imbricated intergovernmental relations of Sweden to work.

Despite the relative equality of Swedish society, disparities in wealth between individuals and among places have recently grown. In a nationalized local governance like that of Sweden, disadvantaged neighborhoods and groups are the combined responsibility of the central government, and regional and local authorities. A case in point is the Botkyrka municipality in south-western greater Stockholm. As of 2013, 56 percent of residents there were born abroad themselves, or had a parent who was. The median income and level of education are low, and unemployment high. In northern Botkyrka, a focus of high-rise residential construction during the 1960s and 1970s, the concentration of disadvantage is even greater.

Concerted national, regional, and municipal policies have aimed to improve living conditions in northern Botkyrka (Dymén and Reardon, 2013). Most of these measures have been national in scope. National welfare policies guarantee equal rights for everybody, such as the right to education and a minimum living standard. The system of tax redistribution supports local government taxation to ensure sufficient resources for even the most socially challenged local authorities. More specific urban policies have also been implemented, such as a national program to renew the housing stock. The municipality itself has prioritized reaching those in most need. Regional planning, carried out by the county council, has sought to promote a more diverse labor market, better transit connections for the troubled areas, and a more polycentric metropolitan region. The municipality has also supported local facilities for immigrants, such as a Women’s Resource Centre, a new public library, and sports installations. Local residents themselves also contributed to efforts to improve conditions. In 2013, when riots broke out in several suburbs around Stockholm, citizens organized nightly walks around the municipality to discourage further vandalism and diffuse local tensions. Local teenagers, organized by their school teachers, cleaned up a vandalized subway station. Initiatives like these helped to keep the unrest “minimal” in greater Stockholm’s poorest community (Dymén and Reardon, 2013, p. 7).

Governance in Botkyrka and greater Stockholm offers glimpses of what we will call a *nationalized* form of multilevel democracy. Local governments are tightly integrated into the making of policy at the national level, and play a critical role in carrying out national policies. Organizations integrated into

decision-making at both the local and the national levels, including the local government association as well as the political parties, unions, and organized business associations, mediate this integration. An engaged citizenry participates in civic and political life, but often as part of a mass membership rather than as activists themselves. Most characteristic of the Nordic democracies, but evident to varying degrees in other advanced industrial democracies, the nationalized variety of multilevel democracy also grows out of a distinctive long-run trajectory of institution-building. Even in predemocratic regimes, groups beyond elites shaped the early formation of state hierarchies. The national policy state, constructed under the influence of parties and associations organized at both levels, integrated local institutions. Along with some of the highest ratings of democracy among citizens, the result has been high levels of policy performance in diverse domains, and the best average overall ratings of governance in global surveys.

Each of these examples reveals the workings of a different model of local governance. Within each setting, how local political leaders relate to each other and their constituents, how citizens engage with local institutions, how local governance interacts with the vertical hierarchies of the state, and ultimately how policy is pursued within localities differ in interrelated ways. In this book, we show how these three models reflect the main alternative ways that democracy works at the local level in the contemporary developed world. Each model is the product of successive efforts to design a different matrix of institutions for carrying out many of the same policies, and incorporating many of the same influences from citizens and communities.

#### 1.4 AN OUTLINE OF THIS BOOK

An essential foundation for making local comparisons between settings like Montpellier, Los Angeles, and Stockholm is an account of the wider infrastructures of institutions within the state and civil society that shape the possibilities of local governance. This book aims to provide such an account. Its focus on the operational realities of state–society linkages and governance at the local level in different countries offers a radically different view of national institutional realities from the top-down perspective that persists among macro-level accounts of state–society relations. Our classifications seek to capture national tendencies in local practices, or at least to aggregate and systematically compare variations between countries. This focus on macro-scale generalization about local patterns has required protocols to aggregate subnational variations in the institutions of some countries, and evidence from national surveys to ascertain overarching tendencies. Where systematic data remain unavailable, as in much of the historical analysis, we employ the best available evidence. Throughout this volume, we will take local practices as just as crucial to the overall character of the state and civic organization as offices and organized interests at the commanding heights of state hierarchies.

The analysis will begin with an examination of the contemporary variations among developed countries in national institutions for local government and governance, and in the organization of civil society. Chapter 2 outlines the alternative models of multilevel relations between national and local governance evident in the three examples covered in this chapter. Each model, we will argue, embodies a distinctive form of democracy at the local scale, and a different relationship between local and national democracy. Each sets the terms for an alternative logic of policy implementation, and of influence from local society.

In Chapter 3 we draw on an original dataset of systematic indicators to compare contemporary multilevel infrastructures of democracy in twenty-one advanced industrial countries. This analysis employs the first comprehensive comparative national dataset of indicators to compare multilevel democratic institutions at the local level. The comparison demonstrates a remarkable correspondence between contemporary local government institutions and patterns of civic, political, and economic organization. The variations correspond to what the nationalized, civic localist, and local elitist models of multilevel democracy predict. This comparison poses the central historical puzzle this volume will address: How and why did these contemporary correspondences emerge?

The next three chapters demonstrate that the contemporary variations in multilevel democratic infrastructures are the product of endogenous trajectories that trace back to the early history of state formation. In Chapter 4, revising predominant accounts of modern state formation, we show how the creation of local states reflected the outcomes from successive struggles within the wider state to build and maintain institutions at the local scale. Feudal societies and early modern states had already integrated varieties of local institutions that served as precursors to modern local government systems. Those systems themselves emerged over the long nineteenth century between the French Revolution and World War I. Multilevel democratic institutions developed in tandem with constitutional orders, electoral democracy, and the wider administrative state, and helped shape divergent institutions at the national level. Chapter 5 analyses how different national patterns of civic, political, and economic organization emerged over this period, and how differences in the local state and other institutional influences shaped these divergences. Chapter 6 focuses on the emergence and elaboration of public policy over the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a central component of the state, through comparison of local institutions for urban planning, infrastructure policy, primary education, and social insurance. This demonstrates how many of the national contrasts in local governance infrastructures had already emerged before World War I. Over the twentieth century, the maturation of the welfare state and other policies consolidated nationalized local democracy, and gave rise to new tensions in the civic localist and local elitist models. These dynamics help to account for the divergent forms of welfare states, national capitalism,

and policymaking institutions across the developed world of the twenty-first century. In Chapter 7, we examine how these divergences account for enduring cross-national differences in policy performance and the quality of democracy.

The concluding postscript summarizes the argument, and surveys recent trends. It concludes by widening the focus to contemporary efforts to construct multilevel democracy in developing and transitional democracies. Understanding the variations across the developed world and their origins, we argue, illuminates both the current shortcomings of democracy in the contemporary developing world, and the pathways toward remedies for them.

## Multilevel Democracy and the Modern State

In the contemporary world of nation states and globalizing forces, institutions and governance arrangements at the scale of cities and communities remain a persistent fact of political life. Systems of local government addressed to this scale are a near-universal feature of contemporary democracies. In older democracies they grow out of long-established traditions, and take the form of highly institutionalized instances for decision-making, policy implementation, and political participation (Page and Goldsmith, 1987, Hesse and Sharpe, 1991, Pierre, 1999, Vetter, 2007, Lidström, 2003). The reasons governance at the local scale has persisted go well beyond the case that Tocqueville made for local institutions. Since long before he wrote, the scale of communities and cities was regarded in Western political theory as the most critical site of linkages between society and the state. Contemporary democracies, along with other states, still rely systematically on local institutions. Democracy at the local and the national scale, and the continued efforts of nation states to shape society through policy, have compounded this reliance.

This chapter outlines our understanding of local institutions, and sets out the core argument about how those institutions affect the quality of democracy even at the national scale. Although many accounts have pointed to the systematic interdependence between state and society (Evans, 2002, Ostrom, 1996, Migdal, 2001), the local scale and its relationship to national institutions has rarely figured explicitly in this literature. Building on the examples already introduced in Chapter 1, we show how the multilevel institutions of contemporary developed democracies follow three characteristic patterns of linkages between state and society. Each variety reflects a different resolution to the fundamental problem of integrating local institutions and decision-making into the territorial state. Each incorporates citizens and local communities in distinctive ways as participants in mass democracy. The differences between the three types, we will posit, have far-reaching implications for the quality of democracy.



## 2.1 LOCAL INSTITUTIONS IN A MULTILEVEL INFRASTRUCTURE OF STATE–SOCIETY RELATIONS

This study focuses on two levels of institutionalized relations between the state and society. At one level, we consider elements of both state and society at the scale of the communities or cities where the inhabitants of any society, democratic or not, go about their lives. At the other level we classify institutional arrangements and processes at wider scales. The latter encompass both intermediate and national levels of governing processes, including the vast majority of federal and provincial units, along with supranational or international ones. This analytical focus on the local scale itself departs from most previous studies of decentralization. When the local level enters at all into such accounts, it is usually as one among several levels of subnational authority (Treisman, 2007, Falleti, 2010).

Although our analysis takes decentralization at wider scales into account, there are a number of reasons why institutions at the local scale can hold distinctive importance for state–society relations in general, and democracy in particular. The cities and communities where local institutions operate are, after all, where much of politics takes place. If the realities of the nation state make it impossible to identify regime types with types of cities as Aristotle once did, the study of urban power in the United States, now extended to a growing circle of international and comparative studies (Stone, 1989, Sellers and Kwak, 2011), points to patterns of influence and decision-making at the local scale that have broad national implications. From education to economic development to environmental regulation, the local scale is where policies formulated at all levels of the state are carried out. Political and economic power relations within cities and communities often operate as a microcosm of power relations at wider scales, as well as a distinct arena where those relations play out. Localities furnish essential contexts for much of political and civic organization, from social capital (Putnam et al., 1993), civic engagement (Varshney, 2002), and political engagement (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1992) to workplace institutions (Herrigel, 1996). Normative analyses frequently point to local state–society relations as the best site for collective self-governance (Ostrom, 1990), for more effective, responsive public policy implementation (Mazmanian and Kraft, 2009), and for the most robust forms of direct democratic participation (Pateman, 1976, Fung and Wright, 2001). Separating out local institutions as an element in multilevel democracy will enable us to analyze how these institutions have shaped wider divergences in state–society relations, and the consequences for the quality of democracy at the national level.

The multilevel linkages that pass through the local scale in contemporary advanced industrial democracies take place within a diverse set of institutions, both formal and informal. From the first enactments of national local government systems in Sweden and France, and equivalent systems in US states, national- or intermediate-level legislation has established many of the

foundations for local governance. Accounts of governance analyze institutional arrangements like these as second- and third-order governance arrangements (Kooiman, 2003), or as norms and practices of “metagovernance” (Jessop, 2004). From the perspective of the local scale itself, the local state, the organization of civil society, and the organized linkages between these local institutions and those at wider scales operate as an *institutional infrastructure* of multilevel and local linkages. Analyzing institutions in this way distinguishes them from the agents who draw upon and use them, and the behavioral regularities of the linkages themselves. Rather than an encompassing model or mode of governance, an infrastructure consists of those institutions that set parameters for agency and action. In a manner similar to the way physical infrastructure like transportation systems, electric grids, and buildings shape economic activity, an institutional infrastructure provides resources, constraints, and organizational mechanisms that make governance possible. It establishes terms for the identities, interests, and motives of actors. It imposes constraints, provides resources, and mediates cooperation and conflict (Hall, 1997).

A wide variety of formal and informal institutions play roles in these infrastructures:

- The institutions of local government;
- The local administrative institutions of the wider territorial state;
- Informal or parapublic organizations that participate in governance at the local level;
- The administrative, fiscal, and legal parameters imposed by governments at supralocal levels on local institutions;
- The established informal and formal political interchange between levels in policy and implementation that have often been characterized as “central–local relations” (Tarrow, 1977, Ansell and Di Palma, 2004);
- Political parties and other political organizations;
- Organized economic interests, including employer and labor organizations and professional associations;
- Social movement organizations, such as environmental groups;
- Religious and community groups, such as sports clubs, charitable associations, and neighborhood associations;
- The vertical organizations that link local civil society to arenas of politics and policy at the supralocal level;
- Wider supralocal and local institutions that set parameters for civil society organizations and their linkages with the state, such as tax and property laws or participatory requirements.

Despite the diversity of the institutions that make up an institutional infrastructure of multilevel democracy, there is ample reason to think that it will follow common, empirically discernible patterns. As elements in an *institutional complex* (Greif, 2006, p. 205), the components of an institutional infrastructure “complement one

another, reflect the influences of the same coordinating factors, or share the same institutional influences.” Complementarities among institutions can take place, for instance, around a common logic of carrying out a policy, or common relations between a powerful patron like Mayor Frêche and the voters and civic organizations that exchanged support for him with influence. Coordination can occur through an organization that handles central–local relationships in multiple policy sectors, like the French prefect, or through bargaining and mutual adjustment among local governments and organized interests. Common institutions such as constitutional orders, legal systems, local government legislation, and budgets, often exercise pervasive influences on these infrastructures. To an extent that has rarely been mentioned in top-down accounts, they are also embedded at the local scale. Local property relations, everyday practices within communities and cities, and cultural beliefs and expectations embed these infrastructures in the life of a society (Valverde, 2012). Even physical structures like government facilities, church buildings, community institutions, and urban settlement patterns can reinforce their main features and the linkages they foster.

In the state–society relations of a multilevel democracy, these infrastructures of institutions shape several characteristic dimensions of linkages between the state and society, and between local and supralocal scales. One type links organizations, institutions, and other actors within local society to the local state, and diverse state actors at the local level. Another type links the local state with the wider state. A third connects actors and institutions within local society to organized interests and movements at the local scale. Another, sometimes linked to the third, connects local society to policymaking and politics at the wider scales and higher levels of state hierarchies. Even many nondemocratic regimes share these classes of state–society linkages. Understanding the variations in each of these sets of linkages is critical to a macro perspective on local state–society relations, and to a full account of its relationship to the wider politics of state and society (Figure 2.1).

Vertical linkages between the local state and society and institutions and processes at higher levels can follow top-down or bottom-up logics. The paradigmatic top-down vertical linkage occurs when the central state pursues local implementation of decisions reached at higher levels, through implementation by local officials or the carrying out of state ends within civil society. When the French state undertook local initiatives for economic development like the vacation village of La Paillade, it carried out precisely this sort of top-down linkage. So, in distinctive ways, did the Swedish state in its massive Social Democratic Party housing program, and the federal state of California when it undertook to mobilize local governments around climate policy. State elites, or other national elites, often play the dominant role in these linkages. In a democratic state, however, vertical linkages often reflect the agenda of mass electoral coalitions to promote growth, provide better housing, or build a sustainable society. Top-down linkages can also take place within civil society as well as within the state. The Stockholm Social Democratic Party under Mehr

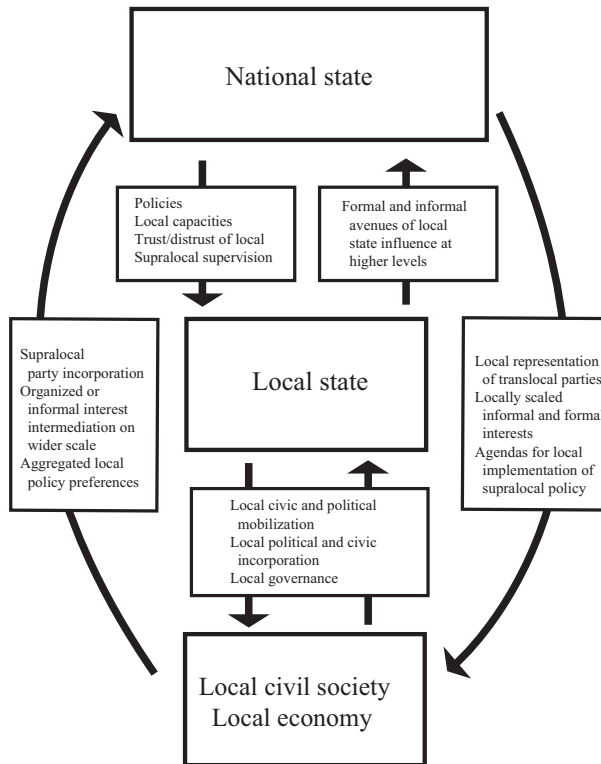


FIGURE 2.1 Dimensions of local and supralocal state–society linkages

exemplifies how a political party that dominates local government can carry out local agendas in support of its national policy agendas.

Bottom-up logics can be understood as the empowerment of local elites, civic actors, movements, and citizens within communities and cities to govern themselves. Beyond this relative local autonomy from top-down linkages, however, local empowerment can also emerge from the influence that local elites, civic actors, movements, and citizens can assert in vertical relationships with higher levels of decision-making: for example, SALAR in Sweden and the lobbying of Mayor Frêche and other regional officials for national subsidies for local facilities in Montpellier. Pluralist analyses of New Haven, set during the heyday of federal urban renewal policy in the United States of the 1950s and 1960s, also pointed to federal grantsmanship as a primary resource for local politicians. Even in the contemporary USA, mayors like Richard Riordan and his successors have continued to seek federal and state funds in support of local development and infrastructure initiatives.

Work on forms of interest intermediation like corporatism as well as political parties show that bottom-up linkages within civil society are also critical. Among

the developed democracies of the contemporary world, institutions such as corporatist interest representation and strong parties have generally been assumed to aggregate local interests throughout society (Gerring et al., 2005, Gerring and Thacker, 2008, Lijphart, 2012, Scruggs, 2003). In a state with both local and national democratic institutions, societal actors like these mediate shifts in the scale of political organization, advocacy, and linkages with the state between the local and wider scales (Tilly et al., 2001). Shifts in scale from local to national aims engage higher levels of the state, and aggregate interests from diverse local contexts. Often even more than elsewhere, scaling up movements for policy change presents a challenge for US reformist groups (Pastor Jr. et al., 2009). Accounts of this process in corporatist settings have frequently questioned how much it favors the interests of disadvantaged groups there (Offe and Wiesenthal, 1980). A converse scale shift can take place as movements like environmentalist groups organize locally around the carrying out of national agendas within communities. Vertical linkages within civil society can also take more particularistic forms. Networks of powerful patrons and local clients, for instance, can also link supralocal scales to local actors and interests.

The literature on intergovernmental relations, including a growing body of work on “governance” or “network governance” (e.g., Rhodes, 1997, Pierre, 2000) and its multilevel dimensions, has increasingly emphasized the complex ways that top-down and bottom-up processes often combine. Supralocal governments provide much of the resources for local governments to act, including functional authority, legal powers, administrative capacity, and fiscal resources, and supervise local government and administration. Yet local state actors deploy policy and implementation to serve their own ends, and local actors frequently pursue influence on decision-making at multiple levels. As interactions and influence at all levels cross the divide between state and society, linkages at both the national and local levels are often critical to these vertical relationships.

The relationship between the state and society, although present in any territorial state, is especially crucial to multilevel democracy. Some role for societal influencers and actors in governance at one level or the other is intrinsic to the democratic assertion of popular rule. These include political parties, economic interests, and such civic associations as voluntary groups, neighborhood groups, and cultural or service organizations. Where the role of these actors remains limited or weak, or the state itself carries out policy solely from the top down, local governance remains centered around elites and their decisions.

## 2.2 MULTILEVEL DEMOCRACY: THE DIMENSIONS OF VARIATION

The alternative institutional infrastructures for multilevel democratic governance differ along two overarching dimensions. One of these encompasses the vertical intergovernmental relationship between the local state and higher levels. The second encompasses the engagement and inclusion of citizens through

political, economic, and civic interests and associations. The national regime for each of the main alternatives possesses sufficient elements of popular rule to qualify as a democracy under the standard international indexes. Among settled regimes generally regarded as democratic, however, the forms of multilevel democratic inclusion can differ widely. Rather than contest minimal criteria for national democracy, our analysis aims to delineate the main lines of variations in these forms, and their implications for the quality of democracy.

To denominate a country as a democracy, we employ a minimal definition that Dahl identified as “polyarchy” to distinguish it from full democracy (Dahl, 1973). The standard Polity IV index, employed in Chapter 4, takes as criteria the competitiveness and regulation of political competition for national office, the openness and competitiveness of the national executive, and the constraints on national executive powers. Chapter 5 will also consider separately the national guarantees of civil and political freedoms that indexes like Freedom House have taken as essential for democracy to function (Munck, 2014). The aim here is to reconceive democratic rule as a multilevel regime rooted in institutions and state–society relations at the local scale. Up until the recent Varieties of Democracy project, which added indicators of free and fair local elections (Knutsen et al., 2016), national measures of democratic regimes had essentially ignored local institutions as a component of national democracy. Taking them fully into account enables a more nuanced and deeper conceptualization of how national democratic regimes in fact work, and a clearer view of the possibilities for democratic inclusion. In nondemocratic regimes as well, as our historical analysis will show, more limited forms of political incorporation have also depended on distinct local dynamics.

Two basic dimensions of variation delineate the basic types of multilevel democracy (Table 2.1). One dimension, discussed in the longstanding literature on “central–local relations” (e.g., Tarrow, 1977), captures variations in the local state and its relationship to the national state. At one end of a broad spectrum, local governments are responsible for carrying out or making national policy. At the other end, local government takes on no national responsibilities and possesses minimal capacities. The other dimension encompasses overall levels of participation and inclusion by citizens and the societal interests that represent them. Although participation and inclusion (represented by the vertical dimension in Table 2.1) are central to the character of multilevel democracy, the forms they take differ fundamentally with the structure of the multilevel state (the horizontal dimension). Each of the four principal variations in a multilevel democratic infrastructure relies on characteristically different mechanisms to assure accountability to citizens.<sup>1</sup> Each also structures arenas for contestation and influence over policy in divergent ways.

<sup>1</sup> Principal–agent theory, first developed as a theory of organization and fiduciary obligation (Shavell, 1979), offers one way to capture these relationships of accountability in a democracy (e.g., Gailmard, 2012, Ferejohn, 1986).

TABLE 2.1 *Alternative patterns of national–local relations between civil society and the state*

Local integration with national state:	HIGH	LOW
Local participation, incorporation:		
HIGH	Nationalized democracy (national and local accountability) (interrelated national and local contestation)	Civic localist democracy (local accountability)  (local contestation independent from national contestation)
LIMITED	Elitist democracy (national accountability for local elites) (national contestation only)	Local elitist democracy (local elite with limited local accountability) (limited local contestation)

As democratic theorists have long insisted, mechanisms of democratic accountability vary widely in depth and quality (Pateman, 1976, Barber, 2003). Pateman and Barber contrast an “elitist” or “thin” account of democracy, with limited opportunities for participation and low responsiveness, to “participatory” or “thick” forms. In a territorial state, a multilevel democracy could ascribe responsibility for assuring accountability to democratic mechanisms at the national level alone. National parties and interests would aggregate the interests of communities and the concerns of local citizens. State elites would be responsible for carrying out policy and the will of the electorate from the top down. Higher-level officials would dictate local actions. Local elites within communities and cities would be integrated into a national system of elite rule. Political and civic opportunities to contest the rule of those elites at the local level would be confined to challenges at the national scale. It is possible to find historical examples, such as Gaullist France, that resemble this configuration. Contemporary developing country democracies with weak local governments and powerful state apparatuses, such as Kenya, might also qualify. It would be more difficult to ascribe a pure elitist infrastructure to any contemporary developed democracy. Local governance institutions have become too widespread a fixture of state–society relations there.

When a local government is present, and meaningful opportunities exist to hold it accountable through elections and other mechanisms, accountability becomes the consequence of a multilevel relationship between the state and society. In this event, alternative local mechanisms are present to hold central state representatives as well as local officials accountable. Although fiscal federalist models of this relationship often presume that decisions in a municipality reflect the needs and ultimately the choices of the local median voter

(Boadway and Shah, 2009, Oates, 1999), studies of urban power from the postwar era in the United States demonstrate that democracy at the local scale can also take the form of rule by local elites. In such a local elitist setting, elites within communities prevail, sometimes along with national state or other elites, as the decisive influence in local decision-making. Especially at the height of his local power, Mayor Frêche of Montpellier and his allies operated within such an infrastructure, and helped to maintain it. His influence in relations with the central state helped him to maintain independence from the vertical hierarchies of his party and national officials. Within the city, the mayor and his allies succeeded in marginalizing opposition. Minimal accountability to the local electorate reinforced their claims to speak for the community in relationships with the central state.

In both of the other types represented in Table 2.1, citizens and civic actors possess the means to assure accountability at the local scale. Since opportunities to participate in a meaningful way at the local level extend beyond elites, citizens or societal organizations can win influence within the local state. The nature of this relationship differs with the way that governance at the local scale is integrated with governance at the national scale.

In a civic localist infrastructure of multilevel democracy, recognizable in the distinctive features of local institutions of the United States, the onus for securing accountability lies with local civil society. Civic engagement takes place at the local scale, and locally organized civic constituencies exercise the decisive influence on the state. Local autonomy limits how far vertical mechanisms can secure local accountability from above. At higher levels of the state, policymaking, party competition, and interest representation take place independently from the local state and local engagement. As a result, policy agendas, contestation, and even political and civic participation at the local level often follow distinct dynamics from those at the national level.

A nationalized form of local democracy, most evident in a country like Sweden, also secures democratic accountability through a mobilized and organized local citizenry. In this infrastructure, however, the local state and local politics are integrated with policymaking at higher levels. Vertical mechanisms as well as horizontal ones help to secure accountability in the local state. The integration of local and national politics shapes the course of political contestation and influence. Policy agendas at the local level are closely linked to policy at the heights of the state. Institutionalized intermediation channels local concerns into national policymaking. The linkages between local chapters of political parties, associations and interest groups, and national organizations reinforce the shifts between scales. Vertical integration extends from policymaking into the political and civic realms.

This simple delineation (Table 2.1), as Chapter 3 will show, captures the main lines of institutional variation between the three types of multilevel democracy that predominate across the developed world. Each of these types demonstrates characteristic strengths and weaknesses. They also have overall



implications. We will argue that nationalized local democracy has come the closest to realizing the possibilities of local democracy in a modern nation state, while local elitist forms have fallen the furthest short.

### 2.3 VARIETIES OF MULTILEVEL DEMOCRACY

A wide range of literatures in comparative politics have explored aspects of politics or particular institutions that play a role in multilevel democracy. The organizational forms of parties, organized interests, and civic associations as well as the institutions of national and local states each contribute to the distinctive configurations of the three types. The institutions that most characterize one variety of multilevel democracy, however, often differ from those that distinguish the other types. The examples introduced in Chapter 1 demonstrate how the multilevel local linkages in each institutional infrastructure follow common logics.

*Local elitist democracy.* A local governance infrastructure that places governmental or societal elites at the center reflects the reality of local governance arrangements in much of the world, including many democracies. The classical elite theory of Pareto and Mosca viewed a stratified social structure as inevitable. A longstanding critique of modern empirical accounts of mass democracy contends that they take officials, leaders, party organizations, and powerful interests rather than citizens as the central elements of the political process (Bachrach, 1967, Pateman, 1976). A local elitist form of multilevel democracy shares affinities with these more general accounts, but is rooted in the institutional infrastructure of a particular type of state and its relations with society. In such a setting, political, economic, or social elites with dominant positions in the state and civil society serve as the local principal for the agents active in local governance. The purist form of local elitism might be found under conditions of authoritarian rule. But under the model described by Schumpeter (1942), formally democratic local elections can also serve solely to regulate competition among elites rather than provide for responsive governance. The elites themselves would dominate agenda setting, policymaking, and governance.

A variety of institutional mechanisms in late twentieth-century Montpellier served to reinforce the position of elite networks linked to Mayor Frêche, and to insulate them from challenge. Local electoral rules limited the opportunity for challenges to the mayor, and enabled small groups to dominate local policy. In interviews in the early 1990s, an entire range of civic and environmental groups pointed to a lack of transparency in local decision-making processes. Civic groups seeking to organize to challenge the mayor's agendas faced a framework of national laws that embedded the legacies of earlier restrictions on civic associations. Civic groups were required to register with the government and provided with limited mechanisms of fiscal or institutional support. The local environmentalist and neighborhood groups that had sprung up in

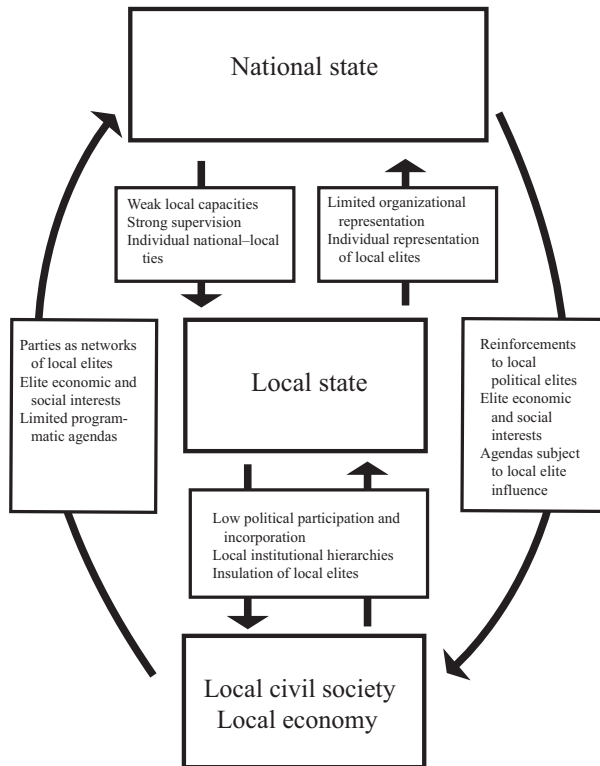


FIGURE 2.2 A local elitist infrastructure of multilevel democracy

Montpellier and surrounding suburbs were often the result of initiatives by a single individual. Generalized distrust of both the state and of other civic actors contributed to the constraints on collective civic action. As in much of southern France, systems of clientelist exchanges continued to dominate relations between civic groups and the state. Neighborhood groups, for instance, received support from the city for meeting places and local initiatives at the cost of supporting Mayor Frêche. Frêche combined these traditional means of securing support with appeals Pasotti has identified with “branding” politics (Pasotti, 2010). Personalized, populist gestures and a series of grand public projects in the downtown (Antigone, the Corum, and the “Esplanade de l’Europe”) served at once to create an image for the city that would attract new firms and residents, and to reinforce his own popularity.

Vertical relations with the hierarchies of the national state in Montpellier played out within the centralized state structures that had long been decisive for local politics in France. Even after the decentralization of the 1980s passed planning and other authorities to municipalities, local officials in Montpellier continued to work with state officials to carry out local agendas. Higher-level

governments still supplanted local governments in much of policymaking and public goods provision, such as in environmental regulation. The prefect and field offices of the national ministries continued to play a central role in governing the suburban and outlying areas where small rural communes predominated. Within the state, bureaucratic administrative hierarchies and civil service systems linked national officials at the local level to national agendas and standards. Supervisory administrative officials also served to communicate and represent local interests within the state apparatus.

Among local leaders, clientelist ties and informal networks further linked local governance to national politics and policymaking. As a representative to the National Assembly for twenty-two years, the president of the Montpellier metropolitan district, and a longtime councilor at the regional level, Mayor Frêche regularly took advantage of his position in national politics to lobby for funds and to secure acceptance from the central state for his local projects. His clout was only an individual instance of the significant systemic power that local elites throughout France exercised through their influence on national lawmaking, and the sway they held over the local state as the elected representatives of cities and communities (Page and Goldsmith, 1987). More and more following decentralization, national initiatives like the efforts to mitigate conditions in poor immigrant neighborhoods like La Paillade depended on the national and local influence of local elites themselves to integrate local and national societal interests. Local civic groups organized independently of the local elites often found their opportunities for political influence stifled in Montpellier. They could sometimes circumvent clientelist domination through protest aimed at national elites, or through alternative clientelist networks in other parties or the state itself. Environmental protests over a dump that Montpellier tried to build in a neighboring town, for instance, succeeded through protests that made it into the national media and caught the attention of regulatory authorities in Paris.

The more general local elitist model this example suggests combines linkages through clientelist relations between the state and society with the centralized structures of a state-centered rationalist bureaucracy. Although infrastructures for multilevel governance in most developed democracies share elements of this model, our empirical analysis will show it to be most characteristic of continental Europe and Japan. From the late twentieth century, this infrastructure has increasingly come under challenge. Reforms in France and other local elitist countries have sought to introduce greater accountability and accommodate demands for greater civic voice. Accounts of local governance and state–society relations in developing and transitional countries have often described similar tendencies (e.g., Horak, 2007, Bardhan, 2002). A model that fully incorporates robust civic organization, however, must look beyond local elites, clientelism, or even branding. The other forms of democracy look instead to ways that local civil society itself can be decisive for accountability.

*Nationalized local democracy.* In a nationalized infrastructure of multilevel democracy, local governance and politics are driven by organized political, economic, and civic interests, and 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, local governments carry out similar agendas at lower levels throughout the country. Beyond governmental arrangements themselves, this infrastructure also relies on a system of highly organized national parties and interests. 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 pressing for 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 entrust local decision-makers with greater independent authority to carry out national objectives locally (Figure 2.3).

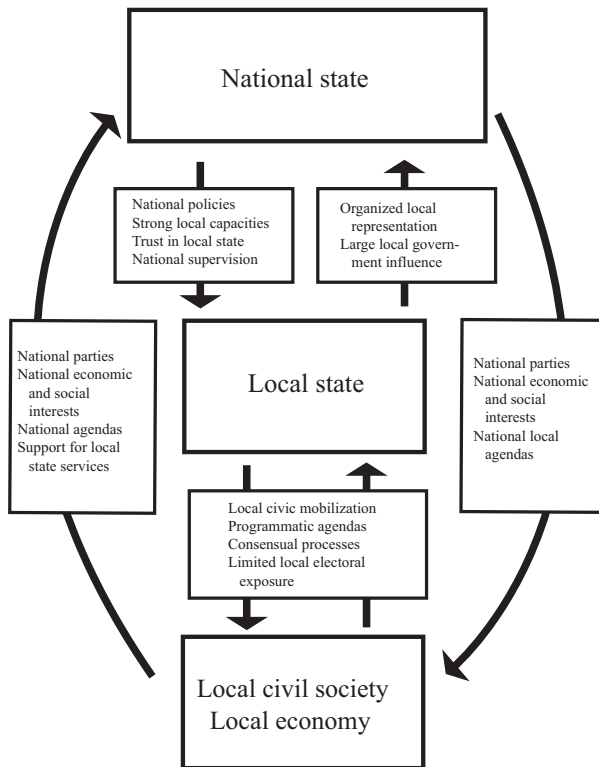


FIGURE 2.3 A nationalized infrastructure of multilevel democracy

The Swedish form of multilevel democracy, exemplified in the governance of Stockholm, approximates such a model. If nationalized local democracy corresponds less to the Weberian notion of hierarchical bureaucracy than a local elitist system, it more closely follows traditional Weberian presumptions about the relations between national and local policymaking and politics. At the same time that local government sees to the provision of local public goods, it carries out national programs in domains from education, health care, and social welfare to environmental quality. The organization of civil society is also a national matter rather than simply a local one. At the local level, representatives of national political parties, organized labor, and business as well as governmental representatives from higher levels cooperate to apply these programs. These same organizations, along with official local government representatives like SALAR, serve to represent the interests of localities in the national policy-making process. The dual national and local functions of both national parties, organized interests, and local governments themselves favor the integration of local and national policy.

Within the state, a nationalized infrastructure relies on formal and informal organizational integration of local and national levels to develop and implement programs. 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. A good example of how local governments earn this trust in Sweden is how each local council exercises its constitutionally guaranteed right each year to set the level of the local income tax independently, without having to consult with either central government or any other authorities beforehand. Despite the absence of a formal mechanism for accountability, no council behaves irresponsibly in a way that would undermine national economic priorities and fiscal balances.

Beyond the state, encompassing, hierarchically organized parties and interests reinforce this trust between levels. They do so partly by helping to ensure that national parties represent interests present at the local level. These organizations help to cultivate a general trust among citizens and local activists in the policies that local and national governments jointly carry out. Since local civil society can sometimes be quite critical of policies from above, trust often depends on the capacities of these organizations to enable citizens to take part in shaping those policies. In doing so, parties and other vertical organizations help to ensure that the operational realities of national policies represent interests present at the local level. These same hierarchical organizations offer vehicles to mobilize and channel civic participation at the local scale in support of national policy agendas.

With the incorporation of these national parties and other organizations into national policymaking, the national government serves as a principal for democratic accountability from above. Although this vertical principal-agent

relationship resembles that in a local elitist democracy, linkages within hierarchical civic organizations can strengthen this relation. SALAR, as a vehicle of formal representation of local governments in national policy, can even supplement the representation of civil society itself. There are also frequent direct links between levels within the parties. For example, every year each party arranges its own “Local government days,” when national and local politicians meet and discuss common issues.

At the local scale, the simultaneous principal–agent relationship between civil society and the local state relies not on elites, but on the incorporation of parties, business, labor, and civic organizations representing the wider citizenry into processes of local governance. Local participatory institutions emphasize national parties, encompassing collective organizations and community-wide accountability over particularistic, local movements. Local governance infrastructures regulate choice in local elections to favor these actors, and foster consensual, inclusive coalitions among them. For instance, Sweden favors collective forms of decision-making at all levels of government through councils and boards. The municipal executive committee of Stockholm, where Hjalmar Mehr was the chair, consisted of representatives from all parties. Although the political majority decided, the opposition was granted access to the same kind of information as the majority. These practices helped ensure integration between national and local policy, and between national and local civic and political organization. Enhanced through significant local autonomy, local governance represents a microcosm of the national political macrocosm.

If a vertical institutional infrastructure with this kind of integration were universal, it might be possible to deduce much of what we know about local governance from patterns of institutions at the national scale. The nationalized institutional infrastructure, however, has remained a rare phenomenon even as it has been associated with a higher quality of democracy. At best, northern European countries like the Nordic democracies and the Netherlands have approximated this model. It depends on the development of both a strong national state apparatus and strong communal institutions, and on forms of political, business, and labor organization that have maintained ties with the national state but put down strong roots in communities. The egalitarian, universalistic welfare state has often been taken as the source of such a governance infrastructure, but the perspective of cities and communities reveals its deeper historical roots. The distinctive welfare state of northern Europe took shape under the influence of this infrastructure, and would have been less likely to emerge without it.

*Civic localist democracy.* Both the nationalized and the local elitist infrastructures stand in opposition to one built instead around extensive, incorporated participation at the local level, but with minimal integration into state organization and policy at higher levels. In this type, local government receives significant responsibilities, but limited powers and capacities, from higher-level governments. Governance at the local level depends instead on local society to

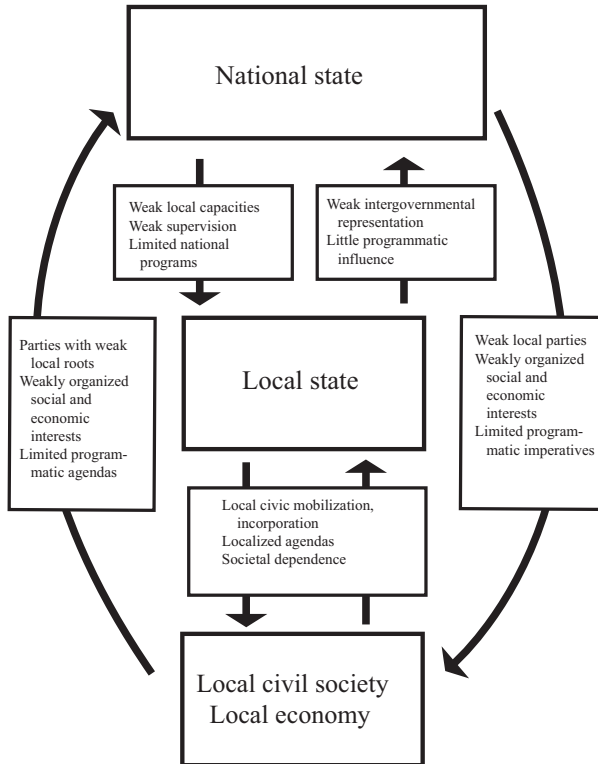


FIGURE 2.4 A civic localist infrastructure of multilevel democracy

generate political and policy resources. Inherent in the type of institutional autonomy that such an infrastructure provides, local governance remains only loosely coupled with policy agendas at higher levels and can even work at odds with them. Civic associations within communities rather than nationally organized parties and interests shape local governance. In contrast with the balanced national representation and consensual local governance that the nationalized infrastructure fosters, the institutional infrastructure of civic localism encourages responsiveness to society. More mobilized, more powerful groups within cities and communities shape local power and local agendas (Figure 2.4).

If the local institutions of the contemporary United States vary widely among the federal states, California exemplifies many of the common tendencies that fit local governance in the USA to a civic localist model. In a wide array of policy domains there, from policing to public school textbooks, the main responsibility for decision-making rests primarily with individual local governments or public authorities. Limits on local state capacities require local officials to rely on civil society to govern. At the same time, in a contrast with France that Tocqueville would recognize even today, citizens participate widely

in diverse forms of civic associations beyond the state, from churches to professional associations to neighborhood associations. Since Tocqueville made his observations, a variety of institutions have reinforced the roles of these societal participants. Federal tax laws provide subsidies for nonprofit organizations, and state and local laws authorize business improvement districts and neighborhood councils. Established rules of the local political game encourage responsiveness to local civil society. California and many other states, for instance, require local governments to hold citizen referenda to raise additional revenues or borrow funds.

In the civic localist form of multilevel democracy, supervision from above remains limited. In California, hierarchical institutions for carrying out national or state policies at the local level remained confined to distinct policy domains like air pollution, water pollution, and public education. At the national and even the state level, neither local governments themselves, nor local civic associations, nor national parties and organized interests provide consistent, institutionalized representation of interests within localities. Parties and organized interests at the national scale campaigned and even built grassroots coalitions in national elections independently of initiatives in local governance. Treatment of local issues at higher levels, from climate policy to local education funding, reflected the shifting influence of coalitions organized around state and national policy objectives rather than local agendas themselves.

At the local level itself, local government priorities often share little in common with those of policymakers at higher levels. Fiscally stressed communities of poor and working-class residents around greater Los Angeles – cities like Compton, Inglewood, or El Monte – typically gave little attention to state commands for regional coordination around environmental agendas. Within local civil society as well as in the process of governance, moreover, it is impossible to find equivalent actors to the national parties and nationally organized interests in Swedish cities. In Los Angeles, where state rules prevented party affiliations from appearing on the ballots for local office, explanations of mayoral elections generally looked to shifting coalitions among ethnic and racial constituencies (Sonenshein and Drayse, 2006, Sonenshein, 1993). Mayor Riordan, for instance, won in the 1990s with support from an emerging local Latino majority and white liberals as well as white conservatives. His successors would look increasingly to the growing Latino vote, but also to coalitions with other ethnic and racial mixes. In local governance itself, local union chapters like that of the regional service workers union (SIEU) could wield influence alongside LAANE on decisions like the successive living wage ordinances from the 1990s through 2016. But even the local SIEU operated independently from the national union in local politics and governance.

Disparities in the configuration of political and economic power within local society often skewed local patterns of influence. Disadvantaged neighborhoods in Los Angeles and other US cities, for instance, had to look to powerful local



allies in local foundations, universities, and hospitals in the search for resources in support of local regeneration (Stone et al., 2015). In the characteristically fragmented metropolitan regions surrounding cities, affluent communities enjoyed systematic fiscal advantages and better services even as poor communities struggled with greater needs and more fiscal stresses (Sellers et al., 2017). Mechanisms of incorporation at the local level nonetheless offered opportunities to diverse segments of local society to challenge local elites or to advance agendas for a city or community. Like nationalized local democracy, civic localist institutions have emerged in societies with strong, institutionalized cultures of political and civic participation. Settler nations that transplanted English legacies to North America and Australasia fit this model most completely, but so does the continental country of Switzerland. The emergence of supralocal policies and policymaking as a determinant of state–society relations has built upon the distinctive aspects of civic localist infrastructures, but also given rise to growing challenges to their foundations. Although civic localist democracies have maintained comparatively high satisfaction in citizen assessments of democracy, their policy performance has been mixed.

These three patterns correspond to distinctive cultures as well as different 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. In tracing their origins, our analysis will also consider a range of alternative forms of multilevel institutions beyond countries that meet contemporary standards for representative democracy at the national level (Table 2.2). Although the integration of local and national governments in nondemocracies can vary within a similar range as democracies, limited participation and inclusion are common to local governance in these regimes. In some historical cases, as our analysis will show, hybrid nondemocratic regimes have institutionalized local inclusion for groups beyond elites. Moreover, individual subnational authoritarian regimes have survived for whole eras at the local or regional level within national democratic regimes (Gibson, 2013). Examples such as the most liberal German principalities under the Wilhelmine Empire also demonstrate that relatively inclusionary local regimes can survive within nondemocratic countries. Only fully autocratic or totalitarian regimes at the national level preclude such possibilities.

#### 2.4 DEMOCRACY, POLITICAL INCORPORATION, AND THE LOCAL SCALE

An analytical framework to assess the quality of multilevel democracy requires criteria beyond the minimal requisites of representative democracy at the national level. More penetrating accounts of democratic inclusion have developed a more demanding set of criteria. The concept of *incorporation* into

TABLE 2.2 *Alternative infrastructures of multilevel local linkages in democratic and nondemocratic regimes*

Local integration with national state	HIGH	LOW
Local participation, incorporation		
HIGH	Nationalized multilevel democracy	Civic localist multilevel democracy
LIMITED	Elitist multilevel democracy	Local elitist multilevel democracy
	Local democracy integrated with national nondemocracy	Civic localist democracy in national nondemocracy
	Elitist local governance in national nondemocracy	Local elitist local governance in national nondemocracy
LOW	National elitist autocracy	Local elitist national autocracy

Note: Light gray = hybrid democratic and semi-autocratic national regimes; dark gray = autocratic national regimes; unshaded = national democratic regimes.

a political process offers a useful basis to assess the inclusion of societal constituencies beyond elites into governance. Within settled democracies, the concept has most often been employed to assess the effective inclusion of disadvantaged immigrant and racial minorities (Browning et al., 1986, Mollenkopf and Hochschild, 2010). Within authoritarian regimes, a qualitatively different application of the concept has been used to compare the institutionalized role of societal representatives in authoritarian states (Collier and Collier, 1991). In the multilevel state that our analysis will show to be a fact of life throughout advanced industrial democracies, broad political incorporation at the local level as well as the national level is necessary to realize full democratic political inclusion.

Accounts of democratic political incorporation (Schmidt et al., 2009) identify it with several dimensions of participation and influence in the political process: (1) access to participation, (2) representation in important decision-making processes and institutions, (3) influence in or power over government decisions, and (4) adoption of public policies that address group concerns or interests. Full incorporation into a multilevel nation state requires this relationship to be present at both the local and the national (as well as other supralocal) levels. Incorporation at one level is often linked to incorporation at the other levels. As accounts of “self-enforcing” federalism have demonstrated for federal

units (Bednar, 2009, De Figueiredo and Weingast, 2005), and our historical analysis will show for local units, incorporation through institutions or political forces at the national level can be critical to sustained incorporation at the local level. Especially for societal constituencies beyond elites, mass parties and hierarchically organized interests may be necessary to secure the influence at higher levels to reinforce those elements in national institutional infrastructures that provide for incorporation into local governance. At the local level, incorporation of these groups may be necessary to ensure that policies enacted at the national level on their behalf are implemented in ways consistent with their interests.

Our analysis of infrastructures for local incorporation draws on a cross-national literature that has demonstrated the importance of local state–society linkages in a wide variety of settings. As the vignettes in Chapter 1 suggested, the settled democratic regimes of the contemporary developed world vary significantly in the main dimensions and terms of political incorporation at the local level. In order to distinguish the variations evident in the three settings, two overarching dimensions are important. What we will call the *intensity* of incorporation encompasses how much local citizens have access to participation, enjoy representation in local government, and influence local decisions. The *scope* of incorporation captures what proportion of citizens enjoy these opportunities for incorporation (Table 2.3).

The three types of multilevel democracy differ along these dimensions. In a local elitist setting, local institutions reinforce the position of local elites in power. Even as elections can make a difference, the vast bulk of citizens possess few opportunities to participate or have an effective voice. The entrenched urban regime that dominated local politics for three decades under Georges Frêche offered limited access or influence for the local opposition, or for citizens and associations not closely allied with the mayor. Although the mayor and his coalition often undertook policies to build housing and provide services for lower-income groups, they imposed strict terms for participation and influence. Hearings and public participation were tightly managed to orchestrate support for the mayor's programs. Opponents and even unaffiliated civic representatives found few openings to affect local decisions.

Local politics in Los Angeles, and even more in many of its suburbs, reflect the more open practices of incorporation that characterize the civic localist model. Everyday practices of local governance there offer countless opportunities for neighborhood groups, parent associations, environmental groups, unions, and even spontaneous activists to engage with and influence local decisions. The opportunities have made it possible for organizations like LAANE to advocate on behalf of the disadvantaged, as well as for local groups to advocate on their own behalf. Accounts of urban governance in the United States, however, often ascribe pivotal roles in local civic engagement to powerful interests representing the business community (Stone, 1989). Others emphasize how the imperatives of capitalism have tied the hands of urban

TABLE 2.3 *Dimensions of local political incorporation: intensity, scope, and type of national regime*

<b>Intensity</b>	<i>Mass democracy</i>	Participatory with vertical integration Participatory only Elite electoral competition	Local elitist			Nationalized civic localist	Nationalized civic localist
	<i>Nondemocracy or hybrid</i>	Nondemocratic participatory State legitimization Statist	Rationalist authoritarian/ totalitarian Absolutist/authoritarian	Diverse participatory mechanisms Clientelist/ authoritarian			
		National and local elites	Nonelite societal groups	Elected and other elites	Nonelites	Disadvantaged nonelites	
		<i>Nondemocracy or hybrid</i>			<i>Mass democracy</i>		
		<b>Scope</b>					

policymakers (Hackworth, 2007, Peterson, 1981). Others point to the limits of localized decision-making in metropolitan regions where many of the most important policy questions as well as the predominant spatial inequalities extend beyond municipal boundaries (Dreier et al., 2001). Faced with these limits to local incorporation, a longstanding argument in American politics contends that minorities and historically marginalized groups must look beyond the local scale to mobilization around national policy agendas for their best chance to gain influence (Peterson, 2012). Compared with our French and Swedish examples, it is instead the limited presence of national policies and institutions that stands out.

In the polity of a democratic nation state, the fullest type of political incorporation would integrate opportunities for incorporation at the local scale like those present in Los Angeles with complementary incorporation into national politics and policymaking. Nationally organized political forces would support locally engaged movements, and local movements would pursue national objectives. National policy and local governance would both reinforce political incorporation for citizens. The national parties and nationally organized economic interests of the Swedish setting come the closest of our three examples to this robust, multilevel form of political incorporation. As the example of the Social Democratic Party in Sweden suggests, it has also made possible some of the most extensive patterns of political incorporation for working-class citizens in the developed world.

The full spectrum of local political incorporation also extends beyond democratic regimes (Table 2.3). Even certain kinds of authoritarian regimes, such as those that depend on clientelism or populist regimes, can also depend on what Schmitter labeled “state corporatist” institutions that employ institutionalized forms of incorporation that served mainly to legitimize and strengthen the position of state elites. A more robust type of local incorporation characterized the early modern regimes that preceded mass democracy in such diverse countries as Sweden, Switzerland, and England. In this form, groups beyond the elites of feudal and early modern social structures retained significant access to local participation and influence through such mechanisms as courts, parish administration, and appointive offices. Embedded in emerging national states through parliaments and estates, these more robust forms of incorporation offered favorable conditions for stronger, more extensive local political incorporation to emerge under multilevel democratic rule.

The degrees of inclusion represented in Table 2.3 reflect overall assessments rather than a uniform progression. Inclusion at the local level alone under civic localism, for instance, may exceed what is possible under nationalized local institutions. Specific groups incorporated into a nondemocratic regime may even experience stronger inclusion than under elitist forms of democracy. Our examples nonetheless point to fuller overall democratic incorporation in nationalized local democracy than in the other two types, and the most limited incorporation under local elitism.

## 2.5 LOCAL INCORPORATION AND THE CAPACITY OF THE TERRITORIAL STATE

The institutions of contemporary multilevel democracy at the local scale trace back long before the establishment of democracy at the national scale. They lie with the formation of different forms of territorial states in medieval and early modern Europe, and the ways that emergent states incorporated elements of civil society. The capacities of the early modern state to carry out the ends of rulers were directly linked to these incorporative patterns. In the settled democratic states of the contemporary era, policymaking is even more critical to what the state does, as well as to the quality of democracy itself. Along with their other effects on political incorporation, variations in multilevel democracy influence capacities to make and carry out policy.

Michael Mann's account of the origins of state capacity is particularly helpful for illuminating how local institutions contribute to it. His concept of "infrastructural power" (Soifer, 2008, Mann, 1984) is designed to capture varieties of state power beyond the coercion that is central to the original Weberian definition based on a monopoly of violence. The essence of infrastructural power is the power of the state "to exercise control and to implement policy choices in the territory it claims to govern" (Soifer, 2008). Developed with an eye toward autocracies and predemocratic regimes, Mann's historical account of state power adhered resolutely to a top-down, hierarchical conception of the state. Scholars who have applied the concept, however, note that infrastructural power depends on elements that are difficult to explain within a top-down conception of rule (Ziblatt, 2006, Soifer, 2008). For infrastructural power to extend state influence throughout a territory, the state must exercise control and carry out policy in local settings beyond the geographical center of power. This is the essence of what Mann termed the "penetration" of society by the state. For an account of state infrastructural power at the macro level, therefore, local elements of administrative capacity, technical expertise, and bureaucratic competence can be indispensable (cf. Ziblatt, 2008). Even principal-agent accounts of this relationship, which analyze the local state in terms of its responsibilities vis-à-vis the supralocal state (Tommasi and Weinschelbaum, 2007) stress the relative autonomy of actors and institutions at the local level. Fiscal federalist accounts even contend that an empowered local state, by addressing locally specific needs, can contribute to the infrastructural power of the wider state (Oates, 1999, Boadway and Shah, 2009).

Alongside its internal administrative and technical capabilities, the local state can also build political capacity in support of infrastructural power. Political incorporation at the local level, especially when it shapes wider incorporative patterns, can be critical to policy and implementation. Willing consent, or mobilization among societal actors in pursuit of policy ends, furthers the infrastructural power of even an authoritarian state. State actors within local communities can build and mobilize political support for the wider state and its

policies. In modern authoritarian regimes, accounts of state–society relations demonstrate the importance of incorporating elements of society for the survival of the regime as well as its policy capacities (Collier and Collier, 1991, Slater, 2009). Although patterns of rule like the state corporatism rule of authoritarian Brazil included top-down elements, the relative stability of this and other authoritarian regimes often depends on bargains between the national state and local or regional elites (Hagopian, 2007, Slater, 2009). Provision of public goods like water, sewers, electricity, and other local services, for instance, can build diffuse support for the state, its governing elites, and its policies.

In contemporary democracies, policy performance remains one dimension of the quality of democratic systems of rule. Contemporary policies place extensive demands on society and its resources. The social services of the welfare state, the development of economic innovation, or the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, frequently undertake more far-reaching transformations of society than state-building initiatives under absolutism. Multilevel local forms of democratic accountability impose conditions for local infrastructural power that can either enhance or thwart it. Most work on the effects of political incorporation on policy has focused on the effects of institutions at the macro level. Various accounts link national institutions of consensus democracy, corporatist interest representation, and strong parties to better policy performance, especially in social and environmental policy (Gerring et al., 2005, Gerring and Thacker, 2008, Lijphart, 2012, Scruggs, 2003). Although these accounts have often established correlations between national institutions and policy performance, they have offered little explanation of how these relationships might work at the micro level.

Infrastructures of multilevel democracy furnish a missing element that is critical to such an explanation. Multilevel institutions and governance provide a link to the local dynamics and practices that numerous literatures demonstrate can be critical to effective policy (Ostrom, 1990, Mazmanian and Kraft, 2009, Evans, 2002). Even in nondemocratic regimes, societal incorporation at the local and national scales has often been critical to infrastructural power. Long before the “state rescaling” that contemporary state theorists often attribute to the post-Keynesian era (Brenner, 2004), local elements were instrumental to the realization of policy. The multilevel mechanisms of accountability that have become characteristic of democratic regimes have reinforced the role of local incorporation. In each of the main types of multilevel democracy, these dynamics operate in distinctive ways.

Under a local elitist infrastructure, infrastructural power operates most according to the top-down logics that Mann and most of the Weberian literature have ascribed to the state. Prior to decentralization in France, state hierarchies themselves offered the main means available to national policymaking elites to bring about accountability from above. Competing local political, administrative, and social elites continue to furnish the main sources of accountability within local society itself, and to maintain significant insulation from the wider population. Political legitimacy acquired through clientelistic relationships or branding appeals within local society leaves these elites themselves with the decisive role in

local politics and governance. Civic mobilization and more robust forms of incorporation remain secondary influences compared to local leadership.

By contrast, infrastructural power in a purely civic localist infrastructure is distributed among localities and communities. Rather than integrate local governments into policymaking at higher levels, a civic localist infrastructure is designed to secure accountability by structuring the exercise of local authority for policy. In California, local referenda, independent local authorities, and local civic mobilization provide mechanisms of this kind. Functional authorities to carry out overarching policies like climate change mitigation, air pollution regulation, or transportation impose institutionally delimited islands of vertical accountability. Even these initiatives, however, often depend heavily on local participation and coordination in order to work.

In a nationalized system of local governance like that of Sweden, both vertical hierarchies and local civil society have ways to enforce accountability. The central state serves as a primary source of authority, resources, and coordination, furnishing not only about a fifth of local fiscal resources but also norms, agendas, and collaborative opportunities. It empowers as well as directs and supervises the actions of local governments. At the same time (especially in domains where local governments possess independent authority) responsiveness to the local media, local parties, and local citizen groups provide avenues of local accountability. Vertical organizational integration facilitates local feedback into national policymaking, and local initiatives that better realize national policy objectives. Under the Mehr administration in Stockholm, for instance, the local Social Democratic Party majority elaborated its own agenda for urban redevelopment, but drew on national governing agendas of the party for housing and economic development, and the resources of the central state. In contemporary Sweden, after several waves of decentralization, national legislation and institutions still set parameters for governance at the local scale. Still, local branches of nearly every party competing for office in municipal elections publish their own electoral manifestos to specify what they will do if they attain local power. Education policy exemplifies the resulting organizational integration between local and national political arenas. A national School Act and a national curriculum govern schools across the country, but local governments bear responsibility to build schools and hire teachers, and to fully fund institutionally independent as well as public schools, partly financed by locally raised taxes.

Enduring contrasts in policy performance offer one partial explanation for the variations in the quality of multilevel democracy, and in democratic incorporation itself. As Chapters 6 and 7 will show, the stronger policy performance under nationalized local governance largely predates democratic regimes. In civic localist countries, reliance on more localized accountability has produced mixed performance. The local elitist countries that have relied most on vertical accountability have suffered the greatest deficiencies in policy, and the greatest dissatisfaction with democracy. Any such differences in state capacity are also inextricably linked to the distinct dynamics of political incorporation that prevail in each of the three types.



## 2.6 CONCLUSION

Local institutions and relationships at the local scale add up to far more than the invisible micro-level dimension of national state–society relations. As distributed elements in the wider institutional matrix of multilevel democracy, they have consequences for politics at the macro scale. They are pivotal for the effective incorporation of citizens and their communities into wider patterns of democratic governance.

Different infrastructures of multilevel institutions provide the citizens of developed democracies with divergent experiences of multilevel democracy (Table 2.4). Similar infrastructures can sometimes offer even the members of undemocratic societies chances for a degree of political inclusion. Both

TABLE 2.4 *Three types of multilevel democracy*

	Nationalized	Civic localist	Local elitist
National government	Empowers but supervises localities	Neither empowers nor supervises localities	Supervises but doesn't empower localities
Local government	National and local responsibilities, party and civic representatives	Represents, reflects local civil society	Local elites with electoral legitimation
Civil society	Mobilized, nationally organized	Mobilized local interests, few vertical linkages	Thinly mobilized, narrow interests
Local political incorporation	High, but limited intensity	High	Low
Local–national policy integration	High	Limited, or confined to functional sectors	Through elites
Accountability			
Top down	Strong	Weak	Strong
Bottom up	Mixed	Strong	Weak
Contestation	Vertically channeled	Distinct local and national arenas	Constrained, mediated by local elites
Policy performance	Generally high	Mixed	Generally low
Quality of democracy	High	Mixed	Limited

contemporary and historical evidence, to be elaborated in the following chapters, point to deeply rooted differences in the multilevel institutional infrastructures that continue to mediate the practice of democracy at the local scale. Local elitist infrastructures, lacking full local political incorporation for citizens beyond local elites, impose impediments to effective policy implementation as well as to democratic inclusion. Civic localism can provide extensive opportunities for political incorporation within communities, but restricts the means for effective overall incorporation into democratic governance at higher levels of the state. A nationalized infrastructure of multilevel democracy can both sustain broad local political incorporation and link local democracy to inclusion at the national level. This combination thus offers the strongest prospects for full democratic inclusion as well as effective public policy. Only a few countries, as Chapter 3 will show, have managed to construct systems of institutions that approach this last model. In those settings, rather than the work of a single era or even decades, nationalized local democracy has been the product of centuries of institutional development.

## Trajectories of Local State Formation

Infrastructures of multilevel democracy are cumulative historical products. Their origins can date back to early state formation. Their institutional foundations were often laid before the arrival of mass democracy, national constitutional orders, state bureaucracies, or urban industrial society. Their formation and evolution has often followed distinct trajectories from national democratization, industrialization, and even the formation of national territorial states. For most of what are now developed democracies, the pivotal events took place over the long nineteenth century from the American Revolution to World War I. Over that period, throughout Europe, North America, and Japan, new national systems of local self-government and territorial administration at the scale of cities and communities established a local state. Introduced at the higher levels of states rather than localities themselves, enactments embedded into wider constitutional and administrative orders formalized a set of local institutions that had previously been informal or at best a patchwork, or had not existed before. In some instances this local state was the result of pressures from civil society. Other times it was the consequence of reform from above. Whatever its origins, this local state would shape the subsequent development of civic and political movements, and the emergence of the policy state.

The prevailing understanding of state formation has viewed it mainly from the perspective of the rulers and other powerful groups. Monarchs, dominant classes, and the shadow of geopolitical competition dominate accounts of early modern state formation (Tilly, 1990, Moore, 1966). Historical institutionalist accounts of the administrative state in later centuries also emphasize decisions and politics at the heights of states (Silberman, 1993, Skowronek, 1982). To account for how local institutions developed requires a revised understanding of state institutions as multilevel hierarchies, and of the politics of state formation as a process that depends in part on how societal forces are incorporated

into the multilevel state. Increasingly, historical accounts of the state demonstrate the importance of its local dimensions in dynamics of state formation (Ertman, 1997, Ziblatt, 2006). The civic and social forces that have long dominated accounts of democratization, from social classes to religious formations, also play a role in shaping the different forms of local state. Even before the introduction of mass democracy, some early modern states established interdependent institutions of relative societal incorporation at the local and the national scale, while others restricted local rule to elites. These differences, alongside other processes like urbanization and mass democracy, had path-dependent consequences for the subsequent formation of the local state. Divergent patterns of political incorporation shaped both the politics of local state formation and the forms of the local state itself.

This chapter traces and analyzes these distinctive national pathways. Both civic movements and their formation, to be scrutinized in Chapter 5, and the elaboration of public policy, to be traced in Chapter 6, also played various roles in the formation of local states. In most countries, however, the main institutional foundations of local states were laid relatively early in the formation of civic organization and public policy. Local states would decisively influence both subsequent sets of developments. The analysis of this chapter integrates civic influences and early elements of policy into an overarching analysis of local state formation. Chapters 5 and 6 will unpack each of these other developments, and trace how they played out following the establishment of local states.

#### 4.1 THE PROBLEM OF SUSTAINABLE LOCAL POLITICAL INCORPORATION

In the contemporary world of nation states, with the institutionalized vertical architectures that continue to define them, it is all too easy to assume that local institutions are simply an outgrowth of wider systems of rule. A longstanding view of state formation has analyzed it as the creation of elites at the heights of an organizational apparatus in pursuit of infrastructural power from above (Mann, 1984, Silberman, 1993). The astonishing resilience of many local institutions belies any such conclusion. Local institutions can survive centuries of transformations in political regimes, economic systems, state formation, and culture. Since the late twelfth century, for instance, the *waterschappen* (water boards) established by farming villages to manage the dikes and canals of the Netherlands have persisted under a succession of political regimes (Kaijser, 2002). The village assemblies that survive in rural cantons of Switzerland share a similar longevity (Stadler, 2008). In Dutch cities, municipal functions like public safety and general governmental responsibilities have occupied consistent portions of local government personnel as far back as 1600 (Raadschelders, 1994). Although these local institutions have often served community needs

effectively, as Ostrom's analyses of common pool resources show (1990), their remarkable historical resilience is due to much more than functionality alone. For local institutions like these to endure through the centuries of transformations that gave rise to the modern state, those incorporated into such institutions within communities and cities had to secure the means to check threats to local incorporation at the heights of the state.

Since the *Federalist Papers* first grappled with how to design a multi-tiered constitutional state, the intergovernmental dimensions of this problem have been central to theories of the vertical architecture of government. Concentration of power and authority at supralocal levels, an inherent property of the territorial state, poses a structural challenge for sustaining local institutions. The more a national state accumulates authority above the level of localities, the greater the danger of predation from above. Although institutional analyses of federalism have focused on regional territorial units, they point to a more general imperative for subordinate levels of institutions in a vertical state hierarchy to remain sustainable, or "self-enforcing" (Riker, 1964, Weingast, 2014). The subordinate units must receive sufficient institutional protections within the political order of the national state in order to protect their position. Formal checks and balances for federal units, from judicial review to an institutionalized role in national lawmaking, are a regular feature of federal constitutional designs. Although federal checks can help to protect local institutions, they can also empower intermediate units to encroach on localities. Self-enforcing local institutions require additional national protections, such as constitutional powers of local autonomy enforced through independent judicial review. For a national political order that includes local institutions to be fully self-enforcing, governments at supralocal levels must also be able to protect their authority from encroachment from below.

Sustaining local democracy in a national political order, like sustainable local political incorporation in general, requires more than self-enforcing local government. As our local elitist model has suggested, self-reinforcing local institutions can serve to insulate elites rather than to incorporate citizens. In a democratic regime as well as an autocracy, bargains with national elites can secure the position of local elites at the expense of influence and participatory opportunities for the mass of citizens. Groups beyond elites, whether the peasants of early modern monarchical regimes or the mass constituencies of citizens under electoral democracy, thus face a further threat to stable incorporation into local governance. Even in a national democracy, self-reinforcing local government could be compatible with local elitist rule. For self-enforcing protections to extend beyond elites at the local scale, a multilevel democracy must incorporate groups beyond elites at the national level. National incorporation gives those groups the institutional means to protect not just local institutions, but also channels of local incorporation. Without it, as the example of the contemporary Chinese regime shows, self-enforcing local and regional government would also reinforce exclusionary practices (Weingast, 1995). With

political and institutional checks on predation by local elites as well as elite predation from above, multilevel political incorporation can remain sustainable, if not entirely self-reinforcing, as societal constituencies shift. To sustain it requires simultaneous national and local political incorporation for societal groups beyond elites.

Beyond the local level itself, an analysis of multilevel incorporation in territorial states must focus on institutions that incorporate groups beyond elites into the lawmaking processes that shape local institutions from the heights of the state. The most familiar form of incorporation would be full electoral democracy at the national scale, as the standard indexes have defined it. It can also take forms that are either more extensive and intensive, like the complex institutions of nationalized local democracy, or that fail to qualify as minimally democratic. Formal representative institutions that make laws, like parliaments, are only one of the numerous types of institutions that could mediate this incorporation. Peasant assemblies, common law courts, institutions of corporatist labor representation, and even legislatures selected through less than full suffrage have at various times and places secured support within the national state for local participatory institutions.

Institutionalist thought offers numerous reasons to expect path dependence over the long run in any such multilevel configuration. Complexes of institutions are prone to retain similar characteristics even as specific institutions change. Greif (2006, p. 118) employs game theory to show how “[i]nstitutional elements inherited from the past are the default in providing the micro-foundations of behavior in new situations.” Logics of increasing returns imply that maintaining existing institutions can be more efficient than even institutions that would work better (Arthur, 1989, Pierson, 2000). Along with the laws that now anchor local institutions in the state, they are embedded in cities, communities, local cultures, and local power structures. Physical structures of settlement, from the neighborhood church to the union meeting hall to city hall itself, entrench civic practices, local governance, and accompanying power asymmetries into the everyday lives of citizens. As generations of studies on federal policy implementation in the USA have shown (Selznick, 1949, Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973), these locally embedded elements can foster resilience at the local scale to interventions from above. At the same time, local institutions and decisions rarely occupy center stage in the high politics of national policy. Like the functional policy domains that have contributed to multilevel local governance, local governance itself shares the insulation of a specialized policy subsystem (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991). Even the architects of new national political regimes often find it in their interest to leave existing subnational structures of local governance intact (Gerring et al., 2011).

If institutional effects like these certainly help to account for the resilience of many local institutions, they remain insufficient. Without vertical checks on predation from above, any kind of local institutions remain subject to erosion. Without influence within the supralocal institutions that shape infrastructures

for local governance from above, groups beyond elites lack the means to protect local incorporative institutions from elite incursions. The difference these multi-level power relations make emerged most clearly in the pivotal eras of transformation that have marked the evolution of the modern democratic state. In each of these periods, as new layers of institutions took shape, windows of opportunity opened that tested these vertical power relations. During medieval and early modern state formation, institutional precursors to modern local government were embedded in distinctive forms of states. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, national systems of local government and territorial administration laid the foundations for different types of local states, as civic organization, political party systems, and economic organizations took shape. The policy state created further layers of institutions and shifted the terms and the meaning of political inclusion. Each new layer that was added to the institutional infrastructure of the modern state opened up a window for the transformation of its overall structure, including institutions of local democracy. These phases thus qualify as critical junctures in the development of multilevel democracy: “relatively short periods of time during which there [was] a heightened probability that agents’ choices [affected] the outcome of interest” (Capoccia and Kelemen, 2007, p. 348).

Democratization at the national level, particularly in the relatively thin form that still dominates the comparative literature, bears a contingent relationship to the making of multilevel democracy. Especially before mass democracy, multilevel institutions have sometimes incorporated groups beyond elites; even after national democratization, elites have sometimes consolidated control over local institutions. Despite these qualifications, incorporation for mass constituencies at either level can contribute to greater influence at the other. Incorporation at the national level establishes channels of political opportunities that can foster local movements and civic organizations, as well as local institutional infrastructures that favor them. Local political incorporation opens up opportunities for activism within communities, and in turn can give rise to national political parties, movements and leaders (Weingast, 2014, p. 188). The resulting political forces can also provide a bulwark of support for civil liberties at the national level, and even for policies to be scaled up from communities to national institutions.

It is just as important to keep in mind that the development of local institutions has often served not just classes and movements in pursuit of incorporation, but the interests of elites themselves. From the early modern era, central state elites in pursuit of infrastructural power have sought to develop local institutions that can mobilize participation and political resources at the local level (Gerring et al., 2011). Even under autocratic regimes, as examples like nineteenth-century Prussia and Japan show, local government sometimes emerged in response to threats of unrest or secession, or as a way to bind restive local elites into the state. Even under a national democratic regime, as numerous examples in the contemporary developing world attest, national

elites often deploy local institution-building and even introduce electoral reforms to consolidate the power of local party elites (Bohlken, 2016).

It is impossible to explain the survival of such institutions as the town meetings of Swiss communes, the water boards of the Netherlands, or the development of municipal institutions in many other countries without taking account of multilevel logics like these. Such dynamics frequently belie the Napoleonic myth that elites have constructed national institutions out of whole cloth from above. Instead, the logics that have shaped even institutional development have just as often produced results analogous to the seeding of a crystal in chemistry. A single crystal, introduced into a supersaturated solution, can grow into a much bigger crystal. This larger formation emerges around the small original crystal. On a bigger scale, this new body incorporates the attributes of the initial seed crystal. It does so because it builds on the single crystal from which it grew. A multilevel account that takes account of these dynamics offers the most convincing approach to explain the many remarkable correspondences that have been noted between centuries-old historical junctures and such contemporary outcomes as democratic robustness (Hariri, 2012), economic growth (Acemoglu et al., 2005), and forms of state (Gerring et al., 2011).

#### 4.2 STARTING POINTS AND SEQUENCES IN LOCAL STATE AND CIVIC FORMATION

Across Europe, North America, and other developed regions, these dynamics have played out throughout the history of the nation state as we know it. By the early nineteenth century, distinct varieties of territorial states had emerged from a centuries-long process of state formation. Over the following two centuries, as revolutions in markets, industry, culture, and politics transformed these societies, these states elaborated new infrastructures of institutions for territorial governance and political and civic incorporation. National democratization, the construction of national administrative states, and the elaboration of national public policies contributed to this process. The formation of local states, local civic organization, and local policymaking institutions was part and parcel of these processes, and often played a pivotal role in them. Institutional legacies inherited from early modern states, and different sequences in the transformations common to the industrializing world of the time, produced a new set of contrasts in the infrastructures of rule and political incorporation. The varieties of multilevel democracy that exist today are a cumulative consequence of these divergences.

Originally considered elements in a common process of modernization (Lipset, 1959), these institutional developments grew partly out of the wider societal transformations of industrialization, the commercialization of agriculture, the spread of urbanization, and the diffusion of literacy. Over the long run, the transformations shared many influences common to the successive eras



in which they took place. Diffusion and relationships between states have shaped the course of domestic choices, and common domestic influences were at work in different countries (cf. Bartolini, 1993). In the medieval and early modern eras of early state formation, absolutist models of the state and legal inheritances from Roman law spread among European societies with a common inherited feudal social structure. Growing military competition has often been regarded as decisive for these domestic developments (Tilly, 1990). In the nineteenth century, when the institutional foundations of the local state were generally laid across the developed world, Napoleonic and British models of local government systems diffused widely among common influences from industrialization and democratization. The spread of civic organization during the same era took place largely through the diffusion of organizations and movements. As public policies in sectors from education and zoning to policing and the welfare state proliferated, they gave rise to overlapping circuits of diffusion and institutional transplantation in numerous domains of state activity. The macroeconomic Keynesianism and welfare state policies that recent state theorists have often highlighted as central to the Fordist era of the mid-twentieth century represented a culmination of this process (Jessop, 2002). In the contemporary era, transnational influences extend from neoliberalism and the perceived imperatives of global capitalism (Brenner, 2004) to transnational ties among social movements (Tarrow, 2005) to relationships among cities themselves (Ward, 2010).

Global influences of this kind remain insufficient to explain the sustained endogenous dynamics or the consistent divergences in the evolution of these institutions. The most influential recent accounts of democratization and the transformations in state–society relations within countries, however, have focused mainly on institutions and political forces at the national level. Explanations have focused on national elites (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2000, Silberman, 1993), on the growing mobilization and power resources of the working or middle classes in national politics (Rueschemeyer et al., 1992, Collier and Collier, 1991), or on hypothesized bargains between rising socioeconomic classes and those elites (Ansell and Samuels, 2010). Even in Lizzeri and Persico’s nuanced account of the relation between local government reform and democratization in nineteenth-century Britain (Lizzeri and Persico, 2004) national elite decisions remain the sole determinant of outcomes. A full account of how the multilevel infrastructures of contemporary democracy emerged requires both an explanation of how the agents who crafted the multilevel institutions of each era responded to the problem of sustainable local political incorporation, and an account of how local institutional development shaped, and was shaped by, the other major institutional developments that produced the modern democratic state.

The class forces and power relations that previous accounts have emphasized also play a role in this account. At the same time, the multilevel politics of relations between the national and the local scale, and properties of the state

and civic organization inherited from previous eras, shaped the politics of layered institutional change. Even as class configurations and social or economic demands on the state shift from one era to the next, institutional infrastructures from the previous era persisted. In each era, the new political forces and agents who built and contested institutions did so on the terms of this inherited infrastructure.

The construction of early states over the medieval and early modern era marks the first such period of institutional formation. Throughout most of what is now the developed world, this process predated the creation of full-fledged local states as well as democratic institutions at the national level. There and elsewhere, however, it put in place institutions of multilevel incorporation that would set much of the terms for subsequent institutional development. How it did so depended on the other major institutional developments. One of the most critical was the establishment of the local state itself, a national infrastructure of institutions for local rule, and with it, for incorporation at the local scale. A second, often detached from the first, was a national administrative state, embodied in a system of national bureaucratic offices, a civil service, and an organizational system of territorial administration from the center. A third distinct component was the policy state, an institutionalized set of specific objectives the state was to pursue, and institutional infrastructures designed to carry those objectives out. The complex of institutions that provided for and constrained mass political incorporation, comprised a final element. These included electoral democracy, but also institutions that set the terms of direct participation and influence in the process of governance for classes and groups beyond elites.

As a result of divergences in early state formation, the mostly predemocratic states that predominated in 1800 embedded different scopes and intensity of incorporation at the local level into hierarchical state structures. Over the ensuing 150 years, local states formed, civic and political organization took shape, administrative states were elaborated, and public policy emerged as a central task of governments. Local states generally appeared early, and the elaboration of the policy state took place last, but trajectories of political incorporation ranged widely. Path-dependent sequences in these developments gave rise to divergent politics of local state and civic formation in the three types of countries, and ultimately to the contemporary contrasts we have seen. The stylized depiction in Figure 4.1 captures how these compounded effects combined over time.

The trajectory that most characteristically led to local elitist democracy began with the centralized structures of absolutist states. There, weakened institutions of local governance shifted power to social or state elites. These conditions enabled elites to elaborate the local state as part of a wider structure that perpetuated the position of elites in the state and local society. Established from the top down by elites, the local state emerged prior to wider political incorporation, and subordinated local institutions and local participation to the hierarchies of vertical state organization. Partly as a result of the insulation

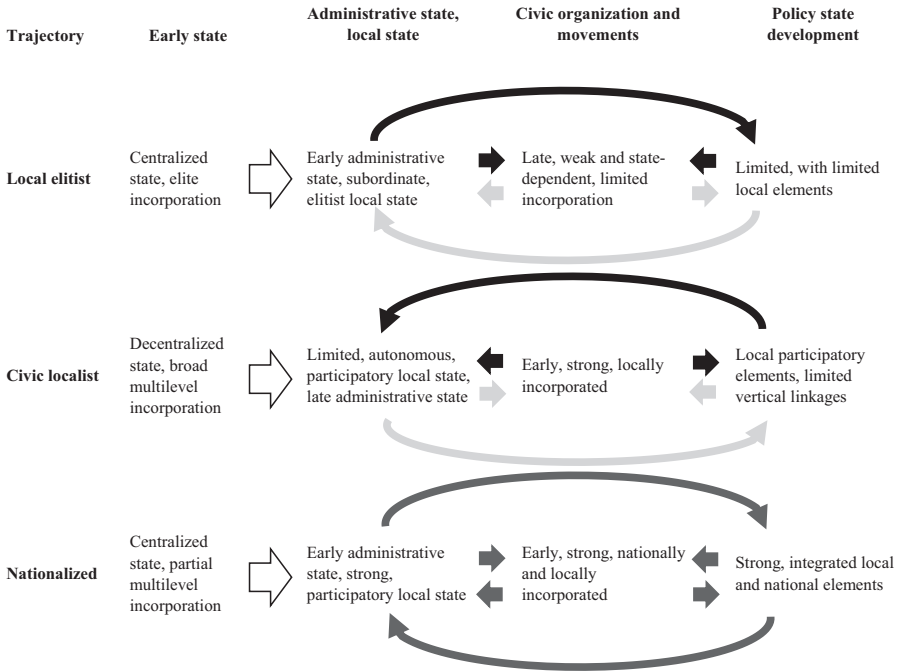


FIGURE 4.1 Sequences and recursive influences in processes of local state and civic formation, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.  
*Note:* Dark arrows indicate relatively strong recursive influences, light gray arrows weaker ones, and gray arrows equivalent ones

from society these structures gave to elites, they enjoyed relatively free rein to suppress movements for expanded civic and political incorporation, including mass democracy, among rising and subordinate groups. As a result, the challenging classes in these settings could only attain a limited, precarious place in the political process. Electoral democratization, civic liberties, and associational infrastructures emerged only after the development of administrative and local state institutions, or remained contested. Even mass democratic regimes retained many of the same earlier restrictive practices at the local scale. Reforms to institutionalize policy as an element of the state were also delayed, or took place from the top down. The policy state that resulted did little to empower the local state, or to reinforce local civic incorporation.

The trajectories that produced civic localist democracy followed what amounted in many respects to a directly contrary sequence. In emerging civic localist settings, the early modern state already extended participatory opportunities beyond elites at both the local and the national levels, and in several cases even featured mass democracy. Institutions of civic incorporation and civic organization were among the first elements of the state to

appear in these settings. The fully formalized civic localist local state, along with the policy state and the administrative state, were largely the product of civic initiatives among activists like the US Progressive Movement rather than elite-led reforms to state structures. Under the influence of these movements, the local states that resulted institutionalized roles for societal groups, including civic groups, in local governance. Policymaking institutions also frequently enabled access for societal groups. At supralocal levels, however, the relative absence of vertical linkages in civil society as well as the state limited the scope or intensity of political inclusion for local movements and civic groups.

The sequences that gave rise to nationalized local democracy included elements of both the others, and distinctive influences particular to this form. The early modern state of these settings combined a centralized, bureaucratic state at the national level with local and national institutions that provided multilevel political incorporation for circles of local property owners beyond the aristocracy. In this trajectory, an early administrative state at the national level accompanied the development of vibrant civic movements. Although mass democracy generally came comparatively late in this sequence, the multilevel incorporation of a broad spectrum of local political constituencies into the state reinforced protections for civil liberties, and fostered the growth of civic and political associations. Policy reform movements, parties, and business and labor movements gained access and influence on policymaking at the national as well as the local level. Alongside elites at the heights of the state, these movements helped secure institutionalized policies in numerous domains. The structures put in place to carry out these policies reinforced both the capacities of the local state and its integration with the national state.

As a result of these differences in sequences, distinctive sets of path-dependent influences shaped the local state, civic organization and incorporation, and policy development in each trajectory. Societal transformations like urbanization and economic development were also decisive for these trajectories, but cannot fully account for them. The following chapters will break down these recursive dynamics to compare influences on each of the three main phases. The analysis begins in this chapter with the earliest component to emerge in the largest proportion of countries: the establishment of a distinct local state. Chapter 5 compares the development of civic, economic, and political organization into the early twentieth century, and how the local state influenced this. Chapter 6 turns to the institutionalization of public policy, a process that sometimes began before the local state itself but reached its apogee with the mid-twentieth century policy state.

### 4.3 LOCAL INSTITUTIONS IN EARLY STATE FORMATION

The divergent state traditions of contemporary developed democracies first emerged over the 500 years from the late medieval era to roughly the time of

## The Quality of Multilevel Democracy

The growth and consolidation of a state built around policy marked the maturation of the three distinct varieties of multilevel democracy. Over the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, despite pressures toward convergence, distinctions between the three types have persisted. The multilevel lens through which we have examined these national systems of local institutions and their origins casts new light on a whole range of literatures that have compared national democratic processes and policy performance among advanced industrial democracies. Comparisons of national democratic institutions, welfare states, and varieties of capitalism point to a variety of clear correspondences between national institutions, policy performance, and the overall quality of democracy. A multilevel conception of state–society relations opens a new window onto the operational realities that determine how these relationships work. Local and multilevel institutions further illuminate familiar differences among national democratic systems, and elucidate other variations in the quality of democracy that analyses of national institutions have struggled to explain. In demonstrating that local institutions were much more than an outgrowth of the main variations in national democratic traditions, we have shown how they repeatedly shaped the construction of democratic institutions at the national scale. Their consequences remain apparent in the contemporary operational realities of democracies at the local scale, and continue to influence the quality of democratic institutions today.

In assessing contemporary realities of multilevel democratic institutions, our analysis engages with longstanding and vigorous scholarly and political debates across the developed world. The northern European nations we have identified with nationalized forms of multilevel democracy have earned wide admiration for their effective pursuit of comparatively egalitarian social policy along with the promotion of growth, even as critics of the model have cast doubt on its viability or transportability. Among Anglo-Saxon democracies and particularly

the United States, where liberal models of capitalism and the welfare state have been most fully realized in existing institutions, recent political contestation has revolved around neoliberal agendas even as growing inequality has posed growing challenges for policy. As the preceding chapters have shown, each of these models emerged in tandem with a distinctive model of multilevel democratic incorporation. Each model diverged in distinctive ways from the state-centered multilevel systems that we have called local elitist, and that continue to predominate among developed democracies. Each variety of multilevel democracy has its deficiencies, and each faces distinctive dilemmas. The most pervasive challenges to the quality of democracy itself, however, persist among this last group. Local institutions there remain a systematic impediment not just to local responsiveness, but to the wider performance of national policy, and to the workings of national democratic institutions.

This chapter begins with an examination of how multilevel democracy figures in the national patterns that have thus far dominated cross-national accounts of democratic institutions. We then compare general expectations about national democratic performance among the three main varieties of multilevel institutional infrastructures. The following sections assess overall indicators of governance and citizen evaluations of democracy, along with specific indicators of policy performance, among the three types of existing multilevel democracies. A final postscript to this volume will conclude with overviews of recent trends, as each type of multilevel democracy has grappled in different ways with the common challenges of democratic governance.

## 7.1 THE QUALITY OF DEMOCRACY: LOCAL AND NATIONAL

Despite widespread disagreement among comparativists about the quality of democracy, debates about how to assess it have long shared a common presumption. Whether it is the relative importance of juridical protections relative to decision-making processes (Munck, 2014), or the importance of substantive outcomes like equality to the assessment (Ringen, 2007), these debates have revolved predominantly around national processes and institutions.<sup>1</sup> Even Robert Dahl, after devoting his American Political Science Association presidential address to questions of democracy and the city (Dahl, 1967), proceeded to center his comparative empirical analysis of democracy on the peak institutions of the nation state (Dahl, 1973). Analyses that have compared how the processes and institutions of developed democracies affect particular domains of policy, such as welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1990, Huber and Stephens,

<sup>1</sup> Essential features of democracy, such as the deliberative expression of popular will about the good of society, may only occasionally correspond to the formal outputs of a government designed to institutionalize them (Wolín, 1994).

2001), capitalist institutions (Hall and Soskice, 2001), and systems of interest intermediation (e.g., Scruggs, 2003), have shared a similar national focus.

It would misrepresent such accounts to assert that they have disregarded processes and institutions at the scale of cities and regions altogether. They nonetheless share a flattened account of relations between the state and society that presumes that the interactions play out in uniform ways whatever the scale. Two of the most ambitious and best known typologies of democracies exemplify this “as if” understanding of how multilevel democracy works. In Lijphart’s model of how consensus democracy differs from majoritarian democracy (Lijphart, 2012), multiple parties and organized interests aggregate society-wide interests in more inclusive national decision-making processes. Vertical fragmentation from decentralized government, like institutional divisions in executive–legislative relations at the national level, also fosters more deliberation and better inclusion of diverse preferences. The result, in Lijphart’s resonant formulation, is substantively “kinder, gentler” policies. Gerring et al. posit a distinct set of mechanisms, but account for multilevel dynamics in similarly underspecified ways. In their analysis “centripetal democracy” (Gerring et al., 2005, Gerring and Thacker, 2008) does better than “centrifugal democracy” at a wide assortment of policies as well as governance in general. It does so by channeling demands from civil society through a limited number of strongly hierarchical organizations, and by carrying out policy by means of a centralized state.

A multilevel account of democracy fills in a critical gap in these accounts of relations between the micro and the macro scale. Close historical analysis already demonstrates that the institutions at the center of either consensus democracy or centripetal democracy took shape under the frequent influence of multilevel political incorporation and local state development, including numerous effects from below. Multilevel accounts also provide for a sharper formulation of the role of democratic accountability as an influence on the quality of democracy. The starting point for this improvement in analytical leverage is the recognition that, in contemporary democracies, elected governments at both the local and the supralocal scale share responsibility to the citizenry. Different forms of multilevel democracy integrate this dual accountability in distinctive ways. These differences give each form characteristic advantages and disadvantages for the performance of policy and the quality of democracy.

## 7.2 THE PERFORMANCE OF MULTILEVEL DEMOCRACY

In the last two decades, as metrics for comparison among countries have proliferated, a large and growing literature has undertaken to compare both the quality of democratic governance in general and the performance of democracy in specific domains. A fully realistic assessment must evaluate democratic performance in light of the limits to democracy in even relatively egalitarian advanced

industrial societies. Moreover, since citizens in different types of democracies could have different preferences for policy, one country's successful policy may be another's policy failure. Varieties of capitalist institutions and welfare states as well as democracy already point to numerous differences to account for widely recognized variations in the performance of democracy. The local state–society relations and vertical linkages of a multilevel account offer a fuller, more realistic basis to explanation of those differences than typologies based on institutions at the national level alone. Such an explanation also accounts for national outcomes that these other typologies have failed to explain.

### 7.2.1 Expectations about Performance

The democratic state of the twentieth and twenty-first century revolves around the carrying out of policy. The infrastructural theory of this volume points to governance across the state–society divide and the political incorporation of civil society as critical to this objective. The quality of democracy and the quality of policy are closely related, and the causal arrows run in both directions. Governance at the local scale plays a pivotal role in this relationship. In older, established democracies, the parallel development of local states, electoral democracy, and the policy state have brought about limited convergence in the infrastructure of democratic governance. Alternative forms of multilevel democracy contributed to the emergence of distinctive forms of capitalism, welfare states, party systems, and other institutions. With these long-run influences, and ongoing contrasts in democratic accountability, differences in multilevel democracy have had major consequences for the overall quality of democracy.

In two respects, the infrastructural theory of this volume provides a fuller account of these influences than the bureaucratic model first set forth by Weber. In a Weberian account, public policy and implementation take place within the state as an organization, and the legal, fiscal, administrative, and organizational features of the central state furnish the main sources of capacities to make and carry out policy. In contemporary advanced industrial democracies, by contrast, public policymaking and the operation of democracy at all levels can rarely escape the pervasive shadow of powerful influences from beyond the formal hierarchies of the state. Capitalist economies, unequal social structures, policymaking elites, and organized economic interests have long shaped the process and agendas of policymaking. Neomarxist state theory, analyses of US policymaking since Schattschneider, and a variety of other empirical accounts have outlined the many ways these influences have played out (Culpepper, 2011, Carnes and Lupu, 2014). At the local scale itself, capacities for multilevel democratic performance depend on how civil society can be incorporated into processes of governance at the local scale, and how agendas for local and supralocal policy can be integrated in civil society as well as within the state. Effective multilevel democratic incorporation requires policymaking to be



accountable both to constituencies at the local scale, and to the wider democratic constituencies represented through the vertical hierarchies of the state. As mid-twentieth-century social democracy in the nationalized settings demonstrated most convincingly, local forces joined to national political movements can acquire sufficient infrastructural power to challenge powerful interests and structural forces that stand in the way of social and economic change.

The nationalized form of multilevel democracy comes the closest to providing for accountability both from below and from above. In this infrastructure, institutions for local governance institutions receive responsibilities from the supralocal level, along with capacities to carry them out. The supralocal state retains the means to assure accountability and promote responsiveness from the top down. The nationalized local state combines local state capacity with effective local civic and political incorporation, and with robust supralocal linkages within society as well as the state. Political, economic, and civic organization at the supralocal scale in civil society reinforces the vertical linkages within the state. More than just an optimal institutional matrix for making and implementing policy, a nationalized infrastructure provides the means for a multiscale mobilization of societal forces around collective agendas to transform existing social and economic structures. Nationalized democracies have succeeded in building forms of capitalism that coordinate organized labor with business interests, and public welfare states that encompass half or more of their economies. From the land reform that changed the societal landscape of eighteenth-century Denmark to the twentieth-century social democratic welfare state, the northern European nations that best fit a nationalized model have a tradition of far-reaching reforms. Its main drawbacks lie in its reliance on traditional, centralized, and national organizations at the expense of responsiveness to ad hoc and non-hierarchical movements. Nationalized local democracies have also encountered difficulty striking a balance between central control and local autonomy. A constant debate there revolves around the extent to which functions should be decentralized or centralized.

Local elitism exemplifies the shortcomings of a traditional top-down conception of multilevel democracy. In a local elitist governance infrastructure, particularly one that fits the core model, the supralocal state possesses the predominant means to secure accountability, and the pursuit of infrastructural power takes place from above. The state dependence of local government, reinforced by a lack of trust in local governance, limits the means for local officials to carry out policy. Although the state lacks the autonomy from society of the Weberian organizational model, a weak local civic and political infrastructure and constraints on local incorporation leave few mechanisms to secure local accountability, or to gain support from local society. In the local elitist countries this infrastructure has enabled considerable state expansion and the construction of generous welfare states. For policies implemented by the national state, like primary education in France, it has sometimes empowered

extensive, effective implementation of policy. In hybrid infrastructures like that of Germany, greater local capacities and civic organization laid the foundations for the construction of coordinated capitalist institutions. When policy and its implementation depend on actions in local society or citizen support, the state-centered propensities and more limited local institutions of local elitism have left it less able to carry out policy or to mobilize society around governance.

The model of civic localism makes autonomous political incorporation at the local scale the central answer to the need for accountability and responsiveness. Local citizens, civic actors, and institutions can take over elements of local governance themselves. They also possess the opportunity and the resources to mobilize in support of local needs and state responsiveness. Over time, as the policy state has developed, civic localist democracy has accommodated interventions from above, both through new functional layers of local institutions and through calibrated mechanisms to assure accountability to translocal policy agendas. The civic localist model of multilevel democracy has been realized most fully, however, in those advanced industrial societies where liberal models of capitalism and the welfare state have been most influential. Alongside liberal ideology, business power, and fragmentation of the supralocal state, civic localist countries possess a limited local state and a civic dependence that have hampered the development of integrated state hierarchies to carry out policy. Disjunctures between local and national states have also fostered more fragmented political mobilization, and impeded the development of vertically integrated mass organizations. These features of civic localist democracy have helped thwart the expansion of the state and the regulation of the economy, and provided fewer resources to challenge wider power structures in the economy and society.

Clear expectations for the quality of democracy follow from these observations. A nationalized infrastructure should possess the strongest overall potential to provide for both democratic processes and the performance of policy. A civic localist model may provide for local accountability, through opportunities for participation at the local scale, but not for those dimensions of accountability that need to be secured from above. A local elitist model faces the greatest challenges for multilevel democratic performance. Despite its capacities for policy from above, it possesses the fewest means to assure accountability or responsiveness at the local scale, and often weaker local state capacities.

### 7.2.2 The Quality of Governance and Democracy

Over the last two decades, a variety of survey-based tools have been developed to compare and assess the quality of existing democratic governance at a country scale.<sup>2</sup> Although usually not specifically calibrated to test

<sup>2</sup> New databases like the Quality of Government survey and the Varieties of Democracy project offer the promise of increasingly sophisticated instruments for this purpose.