

State-Society Relations Beyond the Weberian State

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(forthcoming in Mark Bevir (ed.), *Handbook of Governance* (London: Sage Publications, 2010))

As an area of inquiry, state-society relations spans history from the emergence of states as a form of governance in medieval and early modern Europe (Ertman 1997) to the alternative trajectories of economic development in contemporary developing countries (Evans 1995, Kohli 2004). Two fundamental concepts have defined this field. First, state-society relations is partly about the state itself. Despite the notorious elusiveness of “stateness”, and the fluctuating fortunes of this concept (Nettl 1968; Levi 2002), it has remained useful to identify a set of common organizational, administrative, legal, territorial and sociocultural attributes of public authority. Second, in contrast with purely statist accounts, state-society relations as a field focuses on the interactions and interdependency between the state and society. Among a range of theoretical perspectives, scholars in the field have converged around a broadly similar conclusion that society provides crucial elements of support for a state to be effective, and that a state is critical to collective action in society (Kohli 2002; Migdal 2001; Evans 1995; Haggard 1990).

From its origins in the Weberian tradition of political sociology, work on state-society relations has inherited several propensities. Regardless of its specific focus, it shares a predilection for large-scale generalizations about the state and its relation to society. Conceptions of the state itself, bearing the imprint of traditional European state forms, continue to portray it as a hierarchical, Weberian bureaucratic apparatus (Kohli 2002). Consistent with this view of the state, analysts in the field have characteristically presumed that a sharp analytical distinction, if not always an actual separation, between the state and society. In comparative studies that have sought to generalize about

encompassing contrasts and similarities among nation-states, these approaches to state society relations remain largely hegemonic.

This essay will demonstrate how these traditional approaches have proven increasingly inadequate to capture the realities of state-society relations. Not only in developed countries but increasingly beyond them, a variety of trends have progressively altered the Weberian state and the overall patterns of state-society relations that accompanied it. Societal influences on the state have also grown, diversified and assumed new forms. The social imaginaries that have linked states with national societies may gradually be changing as well. Work in numerous fields, from public policy and public administration to local governance, political culture and economic sociology, reveals important dimensions of state-society relations that can rarely be fully grasped by means of the traditional state-society dichotomy.

This emerging work points to a need for more sophisticated approaches to state-society relations. The traditional state-society dichotomy has given way to more nuanced, more complex conceptualizations of relations between state and society. Predominantly state-centered approaches have increasingly yielded to greater attention to society and its dynamics. The changing understandings of the micro-level relations between society and the state will ultimately necessitate a wider rethinking of macro-level generalizations about state-society relations. Improved empirical understandings can ultimately furnish the basis for more sophisticated normative critiques of existing practice, and more effective, more democratic policies and institutions.

This essay is divided into three parts. The first outlines the traditional approaches that still largely dominate the study of state-society relations, and developments since the

1970s that have called these approaches into question. The second surveys the variety of approaches to state-society relations that a diverse array of contemporary disciplines have brought to bear. A final section outlines a number of promising alternative approaches that have begun to shed new light on the shifting state-society divide.

III. Trends in state-society relations: Beyond the Weberian state

A full overview of the trends in contemporary state-society relations worldwide lies beyond the scope of the present essay. Although theoretical assertions about the direction of these shifts have proliferated, the harder task of overarching empirical synthesis remains to be accomplished. This chapter focuses instead on two pervasive assumptions in accounts of state-society relations, and a range of developments that have increasingly undermined them. One of these assumptions takes state and society as dichotomous, mutually exclusive categories. The other holds the aggregation of state-society relations throughout a nation-state into an integrated, macro-level view as inherently unproblematic.

The cornerstone of the state-society dichotomy is a unitary notion of the state itself. In an influential essay, Peter Nettl outlined what this view of the state entails (1968). In this formulation, the state is an institutionalized collective power superordinate to other organizations that is sovereign vis a vis other states, autonomous or distinct from the rest of society, and identified socioculturally with a national collectivity.¹ This view of the state builds on Continental European legal theories with roots in the absolutist state, and on empirical conceptions developed by Marx, Weber and

¹ A further element of the state noted by Nettl, its role as an actor in international relations, lies beyond the scope of this essay.

Hintze. Where such an autonomous state is present, there is also an analytically distinct society. In many state-society accounts, social forces and social ties contribute to the autonomy of the state. Yet the corporate, civic, cultural, and other social elements of society are not to be mistaken with the state itself.

Thirty years after a prominent call to “bring the state back in” (Skocpol, Rueschmeyer and Evans 1979), this traditional view remains a predominant one in much of the literature on state-society relations. Even many accounts of state-building in the United States, described by Nettl himself as a country of low “stateness,” highlight elements of hierarchy and autonomy in U.S. institutions (Skowronek 1982; Jensen 2008; King and Lieberman 2008). Leading analysts of state-society relations in developing countries such as Evans (1995), Migdal (1988, 2001), and Kohli (2004) continue to rely on this Weberian conception of the state even as their analyses demonstrate limits to its autonomy and authority.

A second element implicit in this dichotomy reflects a wider problem in the traditional understanding of both state and society. Work on state-society relations has generally taken the problem of aggregating patterns of institutions and practices as unproblematic. To treat the state as a single starting point for the analysis of relations between government and society, however, requires an approach to summing up patterns of institutions and informal practices that neglects a profound, irreducible diversity. Actual modern states encompass dozens of institutionally distinct policy sectors with highly diverse organizational architectures, from delivery of welfare services to environmental regulation to macroeconomic management. The institutional reality of a state requires is a matter of vertical as well as sectoral diversity. The multiple

institutional tiers with some amount of autonomy in most contemporary states range from the nationally elected leaders at the heights of the state to the local officials who deliver local services. Alongside this vertical diversity, there is also territorial diversity. Configurations of state policies, institutions and actors may assemble in very different ways in one region or locality than in another. In the analysis of state-society relations, the even greater diversity of civil society compounds this challenge of aggregation.

Among its many meanings, the term “governance” captures a variety of ways in which society is not simply acted upon by the state, but has actively shaped the actions of and outcomes of state activity. The recent trends that many analysts have characterized as a shift from government to governance (Peters and Pierre 1998) aggravate the difficulties of aggregation inherent in the state-society dichotomy. A broad shift in this direction has been particularly evident in parts of Western Europe, where bureaucracies and state policies over the first half of the twentieth century maintained comparative autonomy from societal influences.

In Western Europe as elsewhere, however, even accounts of state-society relations prior to the 1970s pointed to elements of governance that had long been present. Parties and democratic elections linked voters to policymaking. Corporatist interests of organized labor and capital exercised regular influence on the processes and substance of policy. In the United States, accounts of the legislative process found a pluralist universe of interest groups (Truman (1967) or an iron triangle (McConnell 1966). Analyses of urban politics portrayed it as the product of leadership and the distribution of public and private political resources (Dahl 1962), or as the assertion of power by an elite

that spanned public and private realms (Hunter 1954). In developing countries too, work on clientelism had already pointed to intricate ties between society and the state.

Since the 1960s the shifts in government and policymaking as well as in the actions and influence of societal actors have brought about new complexity to relations across the state-society divide. These shifts have introduced new dynamics of interdependence between state and society, and contributed to growing ambiguity in the state-society distinction itself.

In part, these shifts trace to changes in institutions and policymaking processes:

--In numerous sectors of policy, sector-specific regimes of regulation have given rise to separate spheres of relations between societal and official stakeholders.

--Expansion of environmental and consumer regulation has mobilized both specialized groups and interests representing diffuse and activist citizen constituencies, and business and economic lobbies representing corporate interests.

--Policymakers have engaged a third sector of nonstate organizations like nonprofits and charities in the delivery of social services (Anheier and Seibel 1990; Salomon and Aneier 1997), and a variety of public private partnerships (Heinz 1993)

--Decentralization of important policies and other decisions has opened new local channels of state-society relations (United Cities and Local Governments 2008).

Increasingly, governance strategies in a range of policy sectors have revolved around efforts to incorporate regional and local participation in arrangements to conserve ecosystems or implement environmental policy (Mazmanian and Press 2001; Layzer 2008), or to pursue local social and economic agendas (Sellers 2002a).

--Privatization of public companies and services new regulations that seek to compensate for deficiencies in unregulated markets (Vogel 1998), or regional and local interventions to replace national ones (Snyder 1998).

--State regulation has itself taken new, more flexible forms that also deploy market mechanisms. Cap and trade systems that allow market exchange of rights to emit carbon dioxide or sulfur dioxide, taxes that impose penalties on carbon emissions, and voluntary green certification systems employ markets themselves as means to accomplish state ends more effectively as well as more efficiently (Rosenbaum 2005: 130-170).

--Other new mechanisms have provided for public and stakeholder participation in policy. Institutionalized opportunities for citizens and groups representing interests have expanded in a wide range of contexts, from environmental impact procedures to public hearings in the ordinary administrative process, to new rights to challenge the state through courts (Cain, Dalton and Scarrow 2006).

Societal changes have not only grown out of these shifts in states and policymaking, but have helped drive them. A voluminous literature has linked them to shifts in capitalism, such as a growing imperative of competition for regional advantage (Brenner 2004; Crouch et al. 2004) or the growth of advanced services into the leading edge of advanced industrial economies (Sassen 1991; Sellers 2002a). Jessop (1993) has argued that a “Shumpeterian workfare state” oriented toward promoting regional and local competition for employment has increasingly supplanted the Keynesian welfare state as the effective model of economic policy for advanced industrial countries.

Since the 1960s, surveys throughout the developed world document the growth of “cognitive mobilization” in popular attitudes toward politics (Dalton 1984). Larger

proportions of mass publics have adopted more active stances toward choices about party affiliations and have expressed willingness to participate in politics beyond the simple act of voting (Dalton 2006: 47-50; 2008). Broad-based social movements around environmental issues, civil rights and social justice, and on both sides of such controversial issues as abortion help to account for these broad shifts.

Many of these shifts have been incremental, and many trace their origins back to periods before the era of governance. Their cumulative effects nonetheless suggest an ongoing sea change in state-society relations, particularly in developed countries. Increasingly since the 1960s, the focus of research on state-society relations has been on strategic analysis of these shifts, and ways to further engineer state-society dynamics. The logic of the Weberian state, like that of Weber's concept of bureaucracy, was that of a self-contained, integrated organization. Formal, hierarchical organization was the path to the most effective, most efficient form of state. As governance has replaced government as the guiding concept, institutions and policies have increasingly been understood and ultimately crafted around state-society relations as well as around the state. Market incentives among societal actors, effective practices to implement policies, and responsiveness to the concerns of policy stakeholders and citizens now often play as important a role as internal bureaucratic considerations in shaping policy within the state.

Considerable evidence suggests that the spread of ideas about policy and the ways it should be crafted have been one of the most powerful drivers of these institutional, economic and social shifts (Blyth 2002; Derthick and Quirk 1985; Hall 1986). An increasingly professionalized, internationalized class of policy experts has diffused such

innovations in state-society relations as the New Public Management and local participatory reforms.

For the same reasons that the cumulative impact of these shifts on state-society relations remains difficult to discern, it is also hard to ascertain the full dimensions of the global variations in these trends. Among developed countries, the state-society relations of distinctive capitalist political economies, welfare states, systems of interest intermediation and party systems have persisted even in the face of common trends. Trends toward privatization, deregulation and welfare retrenchment, for instance, have on the whole proceeded further in liberal market economies and liberal welfare states (e.g., Feigenbaum, Henig and Hammett 1999; Lane 1997b). The Social Democratic welfare states and corporatist systems of Nordic countries have often introduced mechanisms to enhance accountability and participation as an alternative to marketization (Lane 1997a).

Among developing countries, where economic development is a pervasive, pressing concern, the problem of building effective states has kept the focus of the comparative literature more on the state-society dichotomy. Evans (1995) and Kohli (2004), for instance, examining a range of developing and transitional countries, show that effective state institutions and policies have generally played a critical role in successful cases of economic development. Informal state-society ties, often loosely characterized in such terms as clientelism, particularism or corruption, have been a pervasive influence on the implementation of state policy and the capacities of the state in developing countries (Van de Walle 2001; Manzetti 2003; Kitschelt and Stevenson 2007).

Still, similar shifts in state-society relations to those among developed countries are also taking place in the developing world. Partial or full privatization, often linked to a growing foreign investment in domestic economies and infrastructure, has played a major role in the economic strategies of developing countries from Latin America to China (Murillo 2002; Tunç 2005). In recent decades, decentralization across the developing world has generally enhanced the place of regional and local state-society relations in wider systems (United Cities and Local Governments 2008). A growing literature reveals such new innovations as citizen participation in local budgeting and city planning (De Sousa Santos 1989), participatory arrangements for service provision (Berry 1993), and institutions for private and public stakeholder participation in resource management (Agarwal and Ribot 1999; Abers and Keck 2009). Especially in post-colonial countries and among indigenous communities, legal pluralism has enabled traditional community forms of authority and decision-making to persist beyond or even with the sanction of the institutions and law of the state (Tamanaha 2000; van Cott 2000).

Especially in comparative work on the state-society relations of developing countries, the state-society dichotomy dominates the leading analytical frameworks. In one influential account (Migdal 1997), a “strong state” is what makes the difference for effective policy. But a “strong society” is crucial to building effective an effective state (Migdal 1997). Similarly, Evans (2002) points to the “synergies” between states and societal groups as the crucial element for understanding state-society relations. This insistence on broad state/society distinctions can even be seen in such critical treatments as Scott’s (1998) sweeping critique of statist approaches to policymaking and policy-relevant knowledge.

Whether in developing or developed countries, this state-society dichotomy itself has proven to be an unsuitably blunt instrument for scrutiny of relations between states and societies. Part of the reason lies in the way such concepts as “state” and “society” flatten crucial dimensions of national states that need to be distinguished for their consequences for relations with society to be understood. Retrenchment of welfare states and privatization, for instance, has followed different trajectories depending on the structure of distinct welfare sectors as well as differences in national state structures (Pierson 1994; Murillo 2007). Local and regional regimes of territorial governance also differ widely among places even under the same matrix of national policies and institutions (Sellers 2002; Navarro, Magnier and Ramirez 2008). Only in relatively exceptional circumstances, such as the similar local configurations of influence in social policy and economic development in Nordic countries (Sellers and Kwak forthcoming) or the national introduction of decentralization and marketization in New Zealand in the 1990s, has state-society relations followed patterns that can be considered uniformly national in scale. In specific domains, such as the sector of telecommunications policy (Thatcher 2004) or the territorial context of local governance in Europe (Heinelt, Getimnis and 2005), subnational practices have converged even as macro-level national institutional differences have persisted.

Similarly, analysis of governance across the state-divide consistently points to actors, forces and mechanisms that the state-society dichotomy remains insufficient to capture. In a suggestive analysis of river-basin governance in Brazil, Hochstetler and Keck (2007) show that dynamics of informal networks among prominent individuals and experts have been more critical to successes of environmental governance in Brazil than

either formal or informal institutions. Although their analysis demonstrates what Evans has termed “state-society synergies”, effective governance was not the product of a state that achieved autonomy from civil society. Instead, it emerged from networks of activists in civil society who ultimately mobilized state authority. The state-society relationship itself was less decisive for governance and its consequences than the politics of the activist groups and networks. Societal actors rather than the state effectively dictated the dynamics of governance.

A growing array of studies focused on state-society relations in developing countries have also pointed to the crucial role of joint governance arrangements within local society, or local societal initiatives and institutions, for effective governance (Tsai 2006; Shaw 2005; Agarwal and Ribot 1999). A shift away from the traditional state-society distinction has been even more evident in studies of developed countries, as researchers have sought to explain such diverse arenas of state-society relations as local governance, capitalist institutions and social movements. Accounts in these domains regularly portray state authority as fragmented, subject to mobilization by societal as well as state actors, and only one set of resources among many.

In developing as well as developed countries, analysts in diverse fields have settled on modes of analysis that disaggregate the state, that focus on subnational sectoral or territorial units of analysis, and that place the burden of explanation on factors beyond either the state itself or the state-society divide. Subsequent sections will examine the variety of perspectives that researchers have brought to bear to understand these patterns, and sketch promising directions for future analysis.

IV. Alternative empirical approaches to state-society relations

No unified consensus has emerged around an agenda for the study of state-society relations. Instead, a variety of disciplines from anthropology to law to political science have adopted various approaches to the state and its interface with society. Although state-society relations rather than either the state or society comprises the central focus for all of these approaches, the largest portion of work in public administration, public policy and comparative politics has retained a perspective centered on the actors and institutions of the state. Other lines of research, from a variety of other disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives, have sought to develop society-centered approaches to understanding state-society dynamics. The differences among these accounts are often rooted as much in different normative questions as in contrasting empirical contentions about how the relationship between state and society should be understood. Each of these contrasting approaches exhibits characteristic limitations as an account of state-society relations. The advantages and disadvantages of each depend on its approach to aggregating patterns of state-society relations as well as its perspective on the state-society divide.

Approaches to state-society relations in the contemporary literature may be classified along two broad dimensions. On one hand, these accounts have differed in whether they primarily adopt a viewpoint of policymakers within the state itself, or the viewpoint of ordinary citizens, groups or organizations in society. In an analytically distinct set of contrasts, these accounts can also be distinguished by whether they focus on the “top-down” view of actors and institutions at the top of either state or societal

hierarchies, or a “bottom-up” perspective of those at the lower rungs of state and societal organization.

Statist approaches retain much of the focus on the state that was a hallmark of early institutionalism’s emphasis on governmental institutions and the officials within them (e.g., Friedrich 1963), as well as behavioralist work on political elites (e.g., Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman 1981) and structuralist theories about the autonomy of the state from class structures (e.g., Poulantzas 1973). In contrast with most of this work, state-centered approaches in the contemporary literature generally pay closer attention to the substance of policymaking, and to the interplay of relations between society and the state. Alongside such social science disciplines as economics, sociology, and political science, new applied professional fields like public administration and public management have reinforced statist approaches to state-society relations.

State-centered accounts persist in the presumption of traditional institutionalism that state-society relations can best be understood from the perspective of officials or other actors within the state. The affinities with the old institutionalism are clearest when the perspective is that of those at the highest levels of state hierarchies. Work on political elites or national leaders, and on executive-legislative relations more generally, often clearly reflects this perspective. “New institutionalist” work on state-society relations has largely retained this top-down state-centered perspective on the relation between the state and society. Skowonek’s focus on the agency exercised by the U.S. president (1993), and the contributions in Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth (1992) exemplify how this work has illuminated policymaking at the heights of the state. Much of more recent attempts to analyze policymaking reflect a similar analytical focus. Thus institutionalist

work on public management reform continues to stress the centrality of organizations or their leaders in adopting innovations (Pollit and Bouckaert 2004; Barzelay 2006). Similarly, approaches to regulation such as that of Ayres and Braithwaite (1992) look to firm and societal dynamics, but analyze them from the standpoint of the strategies of elite policymakers. Hall (2005) has called for more searching inquiries into the ways that policies and institutions of the state affect the motivations and potential for collective action of societal groups. Even as these accounts shift the focus of empirical inquiry beyond the circle of elite policymakers, the analytical focus remains on lines of causation from the heights of the state into civil society.

With the array of shifts in the state and state-society relations, however, it has become increasingly clear that this top-down perspective fails to capture a large component of the state and what it does. In an era of increasingly complex state activity, an expanding line of research has incorporated a disaggregated conception of the state and its relations with society. Accounts adopting a “bottom-up” approach to state-society relations that remains centered on the state itself have sought to reconceptualize relationships within the state in ways that capture these additional dimensions.

Work before the 1970s had already begun to develop accounts of state-society relations that stressed the role of the local state. (Dahl 1962; Kesselman 1966; Tiebout 1956). Studies of implementation, although still framed from the perspective of higher level policymakers, showed a variety of local institutional and social conditions at the local level to be crucial to the success or failure of policy (Wildavsky and Pressman 1974; Mazmanian and Sabatier 1977). Accounts of multilevel or layered governance have gone a step further. Work in this vein demonstrates lower as well as higher levels in

state hierarchies have played important roles in policy and governance, and analyzes the interplay between levels. Marks and Hooghe's comparative analysis of two different varieties of multilevel governance (2005), for instance, highlights contrasts between models based on functional divisions between policy sectors and on hierarchies of territorial divisions between general purpose governments. Ostrom's framework for institutional analysis (Ostrom et al. 1994) focuses on formal organization and rules at multiple levels of the state as a source of governance.

Other work has shifted the locus of analysis to conceptualizations that span the multilevel state as well as civil society, but has retained a focus on officials and state policies. Rather than formal institutions of the state, the advocacy coalition framework elaborated by Sabatier and his colleagues (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Sabatier 1988) has shifted the focus to institutionalized policies and coalitions that form around contested alternatives in processes of policy and implementation. Similarly, frameworks that look to networks of organizations and interests at multiple levels, as has increasingly been employed to account for patterns of governance in Europe (Ansell 2006), incorporate participation by governments at a variety of levels and informal dynamics of interaction.

A further line of state-centered analysis has focused on state-society relations at the local or regional level. Studies of governance at the city level often stress the fluidity of state-society relationships and the critical role of coalition-building across the state-society divide. Much of the work in this vein, however, from Dahl's account of politics in the city of New Haven Connecticut (1962) to Stone's analysis of an urban regime in the city of Atlanta, Georgia (1989), has taken as its starting point the actions and

initiatives of local political leaders. In such accounts, as in other state-centered ones, the object of empirical analysis remains how far the major is able to carry out the agenda he or she has set out to accomplish. Applied analyses of state-society relations in the field of public management and leadership, such as Moore (1995), have elaborated this perspective explicitly. In this work, the main point of the analysis is to discern how public officials can act as policy entrepreneurs to bring elements of state and society together.

Alongside either type of state-centered approach, a variety of literatures since the 1970s have also developed society-centered accounts of governance across the state-society divide. Accounts of this kind have most often appeared in disciplines like sociology or economics, which focus less exclusively on the state than political science, or in cross-disciplinary fields like public policy, education and urban studies. Society-centered approaches mark a new departure not only from state-centered approaches with societal elements, such as accounts of interest intermediation, but from structuralist accounts of classes, regions or aggregated economic interests. In contrast with both state-centered perspectives and structuralist accounts, these accounts of state-society relations look to the agency in society. Groups, individuals and institutions beyond the state comprise the main analytical focus, either as a potentially decisive influence on processes and outcomes or as the main concern for purposes of understanding the consequences of governance. Just as state-centered approaches have increasingly acknowledged the importance of society, society-centered approaches can rarely jettison state actors and institutions as an important element in explanation. In society-centered accounts,

however, the state remains a disaggregated, contingent institution open to influence from without.

Since organizational hierarchies remain a common feature of society as well as the state, society-centered accounts encompass a variety of top-down as well as bottom-up approaches. For instance, studies of private or market governance in such processes as international standard-setting for industries generally focus on initiatives and relationships among peak organizations (Büthe and Mattli 2003). In comparative national political economy, Hall and Soskice (2001) shifted the focus for comparative analysis of capitalism away from the state as such to the institutions of the economy itself. The distinction they draw between liberal market capitalism and coordinated market capitalism, however, turns primarily on contrasts between national institutions for corporate governance, industrial relations, education and training and interfirm relations. As a result, most of the research that has applied this framework has focused primarily on the leadership of national business, labor and other organizational representatives in the crafting of these institutions (e.g., Mares 2003, Thelen 2004). Similarly, work on social movements has frequently dealt with their relations to the state. When these accounts focus on states, and treat the movements as unitary actors, the focus often narrow to the movement leaders themselves (e.g., Khagram, Riker and Sikkink 2002; Tarrow 2005).

Most frequently, however, society-centered approaches to the analysis of state-society relations have proceeded from the disaggregated perspective of individuals and communities. This societal perspective from the bottom up offers a vantage point from which to assess the wider impact of the state and its policies in society. Simultaneously, this starting point enables an inquiry into what difference citizens, workers,

neighborhoods, or other small-scale groups and individuals have made for policy and implementation. Within this general approach, distinct lines of research have adopted a range of alternative views of what it means to center analysis of the state and public policy around the vantage point of society.

One of the approaches focuses on collective action or community-based governance at the regional, local or neighborhood level. Analyses of social capital in the U.S., Italy and India have suggested that more organized, more participatory local civic groups can enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of governance (Putnam 1993, 2000; Varshney 2002). Accounts of urban governance at the level of neighborhoods or school districts also point to organization and mobilization at the community level as critical to enable effective local policymaking and neighborhood representation (Stone 2005; Fung 2004). In a different vein, Ostrom's analysis of effective arrangements to solve the problem of the commons in a wide range of local contexts (1990) demonstrates how institutional arrangements beyond the state, such as local cooperative arrangements for the governance of grazing land or forests, can be made to work through such mutually agreed up mechanisms. Similarly, arrangements within specific firms and industries within coordinated capitalist systems of countries like Germany foster interpersonal and interorganizational dynamics of trust can be crucial to the operation of the wider institutional system (Herrigel 1991; Culpepper 2003).

A second approach has examined individuals, families or firms who confront the state and employ it as a resource. In the U.S. law and society literature, such authors as Edelman, Uggen and Erlanger (1999) or Barnes and Burke (2006) have investigated how firms, other organizations and citizens have carried out legal norms beyond the formal

reaches of state authority. Work on legal mobilization has also explored how legal institutions offer opportunities for ordinary citizens and local groups to contest state decisions (Sellers 1995). In accounts of social capital like Putnam's work on the U.S. and Italy, the scope of the analysis also extends to everyday interactions within families or among individuals. In such accounts, organized forms of social capital in formal associations are inextricable from sociability within families or in friendships (1993, 2000). A number of accounts of relations among neighbors in both urban and rural settings portray interpersonal dynamics rather than any aspect of the state as the crucial element in governance (Ellickson 1994; Crenson 1983).

Table 1 summarizes the distinctive emphases of these approaches. Throughout these bodies of work, the interplay and interdependency between state and society remain consistent themes. Whether the approach to this interdependence is state-centered or society-centered makes an important difference in the conclusions authors reach about these themes. The emergence of both society-centered and bottom up accounts has helped to highlight empirical gaps in more traditional state-centered approaches. State-centered approaches can easily lapse into similar mistakes as earlier institutional or elitist accounts that looked primarily to governmental actors and institutions. When the analysis starts with state actors, and concentrates on elaborating their role, it is all too easy to attribute them more power than they actually hold to set agendas or shape the outcomes from policy. The influence of societal actors and pressures, whether from dominant class interests or from the pressures of social movements, may seem invisible by comparison the choices of state actors. Influences on the outcomes from policy beyond actions within the state are also more difficult to discern.

A society-centered perspective enables both a clearer view of the consequences from policy and a better understanding of the social sources of state activity. In an era of growing and increasingly articulated state-society interactions, this perspective has become indispensable to a full understanding of the state itself. A society-centered perspective, however, can obscure critical influences from the state. Often these influences are indirect and only become evident from comparative analysis. Skocpol (2004), for instance, has plausibly argued that changes in the nature of the U.S. state over the twentieth century can account for the decline in social capital that Putnam has observed. As increasingly centralized array of policies in specialized policy subsectors has replaced the decentralized, less specialized arrangements of the early twentieth century U.S. state. As a result, the networks of local civic associations from the early to mid-twentieth century have declined, and a new generation of specialized, mass membership advocacy organizations has replaced them. Society-centered analyses focused on everyday relationships between citizens and the state have encountered even greater difficulty sorting out agency from the background of state influences. This problem has been especially notable for accounts that focus on everyday interactions between the state and society. Law and society scholars, for instance, have struggled to delineate how the shadow of the law shapes the perceptions and incentives of citizens, and have neglected to capture the ways that power relationships can shape and reshape state policy (Sellers 2007). Yet even society-centered accounts focused on local or national governance among organized groups must take account of the multiple ways that differences between state traditions and policymaking institutions influence the strategies and even the agendas of societal actors (Sellers 2002b).

The choice between top-down or bottom-up approaches entails an analytically distinct set of alternatives not to be confused with the distinction between state and society. Two interconnected problems make it difficult to reconcile top-down and bottom-up approaches. The first problem arises out of the divergent ways the two approaches aggregate the myriad of individual local decisions of taxpayers, voters, workers, or small firms in society, or individual officials within the state, into wider patterns. Top-down approaches, following the conventions of macrolevel social science, characteristically start from generalizations about local states, local societies or both. This approach probabilistically ascribes uniform behaviors to individuals, or looks to organizations and representatives who speak for them in the political process to act on their behalf. Such an approach need not discount bottom-up processes, but it flattens the individual agency of actors in a way that makes it difficult to understand them properly. Within the state, top-down accounts may mistake responses to pressures from constituencies or influences from local states as exercises of leadership. Within society, they can mistake the positions of leaders or organizations as the expression of more ambivalent or more contingent societal mobilization. Backward mapping from outcomes of environmental or economic development decisions often reveals important local influences on the results from policy that a top-down account would not have discovered (Sellers 2002a).

In a mirror image of the difficulties with the top down approach, a bottom up approach faces the need to take account influences from the heights of institutions and organizations to individuals. Cross-national comparison, for instance, demonstrates a wide range of ways that national contexts influence the goals and means of local social

and environmental movements (Sellers 2002b). Contestation, deliberation and interest intermediation at the heights of states or other organizations can remain impenetrable from a bottom-up perspective. Moreover, the qualitative case study methodology that is often best suited to exploring the individual motivations and relationships faces inherently greater difficulties of aggregation from the local level than at the heights of organizational hierarchies. Every “micro-level” action of the U.S. President has a broad “macro-level” significance that a single neighborhood activist, a local government or a small regulated firm does not. As a result, findings from bottom-up approaches in such fields as urban governance, law and society studies and environmental policy are often more open to challenge as reliable general explanations.

The layered character of governance (Thelen 2004) further complicates the relationship between bottom-up and top-down approaches. Within both the state and the other social, political and economic institutions, governance arrangements take place in a variety of nested settings that inevitably alter the relation between lower and higher levels of analysis. Especially in federal states, territorial and functional disaggregation have long meant that macro-level generalizations about state-society relations at the national level could not simply be arrived at through aggregation of organizations and relations at the local or provincial level. The sectoral disaggregation and decentralization of the state adds further layers to this complexity. Parallel trends in the economy and society, such as the decentralization of firm governance and shop-floor relations (Culpepper 2003), reinforce the importance of state-society relations at the local and regional levels.

Multilevel analyses that adopt an explicit focus on multiple levels of policymaking and their interplay provide a way to bridge the difference between levels. Studies in this vein have drawn connections between local and national dynamics in such specific arenas of U.S. federal policy as urban development (Mollenkopf 1983) and metropolitan issues (Weir, Ronengerude and Ansell 2008), and in Europe between transnational and local arrangements (Börzel 2002). This work highlights the need to recognize the complexity of the feedback loops between state-society relations at different levels of state hierarchies. Feedback from lower levels can decisively influence not only the aggregate patterns of state-society relations, but governance at the national level itself. Yet even multilevel analysis has not been able to resolve the tensions among the four alternative approaches to state-society relations. Multilevel accounts themselves may adopt widely different emphases, from a top-down approach that uses local examples (e.g., Mollenkopf) to a bottom-up approach that starts from local cases (Weir, Ronengerude and Ansell).

Multilevel analyses, and more generally hybrid approaches, hold considerable promise for advances beyond the shortcomings of each approach. Yet no single integrated approach is likely to resolve the inherent analytical tensions between macro and micro analysis as well as between the perspectives of state and society. As strategies of governance shift more toward reliance on societal actors, society-centered approaches will gain in validity. As decentralization, flexibility and local responsiveness predominate, bottom-up approaches must supplement top-down ones. The optimal mix of approaches differs with both the policy sectors and the aspect of state-society relations

under study. The choices also have normative implications. A society-centered, bottom-up approach, for instance, will be more likely to clarify the possibilities for movements of citizens to organize to attain power. A top down approach is more likely to be instructive about the possibilities for those who obtain power to enact effective policies.

V. Patterning beyond the state-society divide

As the recent study of state-society relations has focused increasingly on interactions between societal and state actors in joint processes of governance, it has advanced debates about the subject in several ways. In place of assumptions that the state remains somehow autonomous from the exercise of agency by societal actors, the interplay and interdependence between state and society has become established as conventional social science wisdom. Alongside aggregated, nation-centered approaches to the analysis of the state, a diverse set of literatures has emerged to scrutinize governance across the state-society divide in the subnational sectoral and territorial settings where it most often occurs. In supplementing both hierarchical and state-centered accounts, contemporary work in state-society relations has revealed previously unexamined sources of agency both outside the state and at the lower levels of state hierarchies. Although these shifting understandings partly reflect changes in practices of governance since the 1960s, the shifts in understandings about state-society governance have also given impetus to governance reforms.

As the diversity of state-society relationships has become clear and the changes in those relationships have increasingly recast the state-society divide, it has become clear that there is a need for reformulated approaches to the patterning of state-society

relations. Recent innovations, partly driven by empirical studies as well as technocratic fashion, contributed to a world of state-society relations that increasingly eludes the traditional conceptual categories and even the methodologies of established social science. Institutions like the executive, the legislature, the bureaucracy and federalism, and even established typologies of interest intermediation, can only partly capture the new dynamics. If the aim of understanding state-society relations is partly to craft better institutional mechanisms for more representative processes and more effective policy, then this need for better empirical accounts also has a normative dimension (e.g., Fung; Heller 2000). But no normative critique of proposal to improve state-society relations can dispense with the need for reliable empirical generalizations about actual practice.

In place of traditional organizational divides and national institutions, patterns are emerging around dimensions of state-society relations that had previously received little attention. As the field continues to develop, several types of patterns offer promising prospects for future work:

1. Subnational sectoral variation across countries. As governance arrangements place growing emphasis on responsiveness and the effectiveness of policy, Lowi's observation that "policy shapes politics" (1979) has taken on added significance. Agendas specific to different types of policy now regularly shape the roles that governments as well as societal actors play in governance, and the shape of governance networks. Only recently have a number of cross-sectoral studies begun to explore the difference that these agendas make for the involvement and influence of different types of officials and societal interests in processes of governance (Heinelt, Geimnis and 2005; Sellers and Kwak 2009). This work suggests that in some sectors, such as local

economic development policy, state-society relationships have been similar across countries. In others, such as welfare services, important national differences persist. Cross-national comparative studies have tended to focus on a single domain of policy within different countries (e.g., welfare policy, environmental policy, economic policy). As a result, the consistent consequences of differences in policy sectors for state-society relations, and the relations between sectoral and national institutional differences for state-society relationships remain underexamined and undertheorized.

2. Multilevel territorial configurations. Along with processes of governance themselves, patterns of state-society relations have also increasingly organized around places. As theorists of “joined-up” governments in the U.K. (Bogdanor 2005), or “administrative conjunction” in the U.S. (Frederickson 1999) have noted, policy problems themselves often converge upon places. Efforts to remedy pollution or conserve ecosystems have frequently centered around coordinated governance arrangements among a variety of stakeholders concerned with a particular region (Mazmanian and Press; Layzer). Similarly, urban governance often amounts to what Pinson (2008) calls “governance by project”, taking its shape from an array of state and societal influences that converge at the level of a city. The governance of metropolitan regions can place through any number of intergovernmental and state-society channels, including multiple levels of government and diverse sectors of policy with a common focus on the region (Sellers 2009). Analyses of how the territorial politics of formations like these at multiple levels of states, and the role that societal elements play in local governance as well as in higher level policy, promises to cast new light on a dimension that has increasingly become a focus of governance.

3. Effects of specific mechanisms to institutionalize state-society interaction.

Although institutions remain important, new types of institutions have emerged to regulate intergovernmental and state-society relations. Institutional arrangements like mechanisms for interlocal cooperation within metropolitan areas (Feiock 2004; Sellers and Hoffmann-Martinot 2008), regional resource management in developing countries (Abers and Keck), cross-level cooperation in European multilevel governance (Ansell 2006), participatory budgeting (Nylen 2002), information release (Fung Graham and Weil 2007) or neighborhood participatory institutions (Berry, Portney and Thomson 1993) need to be understood in terms of their consequences for the role of societal actors in governance. For a macro-level view, a full analysis of individual mechanisms also requires attention to their contribution to wider systems of state-society relations, and to the configurations of state and societal influences that contribute to their introduction.

4. State-societal configurations in processes of governance. In more contingent, more open-structured contexts of state-society relations, even effective policymaking by state officials may depend on processes of mobilization and institution-building that resemble the construction of a successful social movement (Stone 2005). Studies of local education reform in the U.S. (e.g., Stone 2001), and of environmental policy in Brazil (Hochstetler and Keck 2007) show how mobilization by societal movements and experts that ultimately penetrate the state can play a critical role in effectuating policy change. As accounts of “network governance” suggest (Jones, Hesterly and Borgattei 1997), what links these formations can rarely fully be captured through formal organizations alone. Theoretical and empirical work on diverse institutional and social contexts of state-society relations should yield increasingly robust accounts of how these formations work.

5. Policy outcomes and state-society feedback. One of the approaches that work in public policy has taken to improving governance has been to devote more systematic attention to outcomes from policy. Closer examination of outcomes, through such methods as “backward mapping” from societal processes to policy decisions (Elmore 1979), also has the potential to deepen understandings of state-society relations. Shifts in societal interests and movements shift over time are often a consequence of the feedback effects from earlier policies and institutions (Pierson 2004). Tracing the causal chains between policy and politics in this way, such as between changing settlement patterns and mass opinion about urban policy (Mollenkopf 1983), can illuminate underlying connections between state actions and societal change.

6. Social classes, ethnicity and their effects. Wider patterns of social privilege and disadvantage remain a persistent influence on public policy. Some accounts have contended that new forms of state-society relations have diminished the influence of race and class on policy and politics (Clark and Hoffmann-Martinot 2001). It seems more likely that the shifts in modes of state-society relations have altered the mechanisms of social class and racial influence in ways that still sometimes reward social and economic privilege. In local development policy, for instance, citizen and business mobilization around environmental issues and economic development in some cities of the U.S. and France has reinforced the biases of local governance against the most disadvantaged neighborhoods. Elsewhere, especially in northern Europe, greater local participation has worked to the advantage of marginalized groups in social policy (Sellers 2002a). In developing world cities like Sao Paulo, opposition from a growing constituency of

middle and upper class auto owners have often undermined initiatives to restrict vehicle pollution (Hochstetler and Keck 2007).

The turn toward governance as a guiding approach to practice and an explicit focus of analysis and prescription has left the state-society dichotomy of increasingly limited utility for understanding state-society relations. As long as the state and society remain institutionally distinct, the difference between them will continue to play some role in analysis of governance. But the new informal as well as formal mechanisms of state-society interaction increasingly have increasingly required new conceptual approaches to the state-society divide, and altered methods apply them. The flexibility, versatility and responsiveness inherent in these mechanisms make it likely that patterns of state-society relations will become more contingent as well as more complex. More fine-grained units of analysis than the national state, and approaches to macro analysis based on closer attention to micro-level dynamics, will be necessary to capture these shifts. The challenge for the twenty-first century will be to devise new, refined reformulations that can capture these patterns within the broader critical perspective that social science can also provide.

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Table 1. Approaches to state-society relations

	State-centered	Society-centered
Top-down	National institutions (Skowronek 1982; Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth 1992) Political elites (Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman 1981) Institutional effects on collective capacities (Hall 2005) National development policies (Haggard 1990; Evans 1995, Kohli 2004)	National capitalist institutions (Hall and Soskice 2001) International standard-setting (Mattli and Buthe 2003)
Bottom-up	Implementation studies (Pressman/Wildavsky 1974, Mazmanian and Sabatier 1981) Multilevel governance (Marks and Hooghe 2005) Local leadership analyses (Dahl 1962, Stone 1989) Local public management (Moore 1995)	Local and regional economies (Culpepper 2003) Law and society (Edelman, Uggen and Erlanger 1999; Barnes and Burke 2006) Social capital (Putnam 2000) Ecosystem-based governance (Layzer 2008) Social movement-based governance (Stone 2005, Hochstetler and Keck 2007)