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Extending the State: Administrative Decentralization and Democratic Governance Around the World

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Sociology

by

Aaron W. Tester

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Evan Schofer, Chair
Professor Nina Bandelj
Professor David John Frank
Professor Francesca Polletta

2021

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DEDICATION

To Nayeli, who lifts me up even after hearing the word decentralization a thousand times

and

To my parents who always offer respite, love, and light on my meandering way

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The road to earning a Ph.D. is one hell of an obstacle course both professionally and personally. I am so grateful to the community of people who helped me along the way. To my mentors, colleagues, friends, and family, thank you for all you have given.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Extending the State: Administrative Decentralization and Democratic Governance Around the World

By

Aaron W. Tester

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Irvine, 2021

Professor Evan Schofer, Chair

Around the world bureaucratic forms of state coordination are being displaced by new techniques of participatory governance; changes that blur the boundaries between government, markets, and civil society. These alterations to the state are routinely attributed to three global trends: Market liberalization, democratization, and state decentralization. However, the links between these various types of state liberalization and the turn toward participatory governance remain obscure. In part, this is because decentralization involves a complex set of changes that long thwarted efforts to produce sound cross-national measures. In this dissertation I document and analyze the first worldwide dataset of administrative decentralization policies in 152 countries from 1970 – 2015. Building on this original dataset, this project addresses three main questions: First, how do we conceptualize decentralization relative to other types of state liberalization? While traditional accounts view decentralization as a process of state contraction, I conceptualize this phenomenon as a type of democratic state-building: Decentralization formally extends trusteeship over the state's role in national development to entities in civil society and markets. Second, what drives countries around the world to adopt these policies? Drawing on a sample of 123 countries from 1970 – 2014, I use event history analysis to assess

leading theories of policy diffusion. I develop an account that bridges cultural and coercive explanations for the global spread of ideas. To do so, I introduce the concept of syncretic diffusion: A form of policy transmission in which external resource flows and technocratic discourses play a co-constitutive role in the diffusion process. Third and finally, what effect do decentralization policies have on democratic governance? Using panel models with fixed effects, I examine hypotheses that stem from political modernization and the democratic deepening schools. I make two contributions. First, I find that when countries transform their local governments into fully democratic entities through political decentralization, this temporarily boosts participatory democracy. Second, I find that the positive, albeit temporary effects of democratic decentralization are strengthened when central government administrators are more involved at the local level. What explains this finding? I argue that in the early years of democratic decentralization locally appointed bureaucrats leverage their technocratic expertise to both socialize and discipline new local government actors. I posit that appointed officials train local government personnel to accomplish the ordinary feats of public administration – such as routine bookkeeping. While this restricts the autonomy of locally elected governments, it also boosts their capacity to provide transparent, accountable, and effective governance.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Beginning in the 1970s, countries around the world began to undergo a striking shift. From rejecting Keynesian dictums to upending centralized planning, national states are redefining how polities envision, plan, and manage national welfare (Bandelj 2011; Conyers 1983; Evans 1997; Manor 1999). Routinely, top-down forms of state coordination are being displaced by new techniques of participatory governance; changes that blur the boundaries between government, markets, and civil society (Bromley and Meyer 2017; Evans 1996; Kooiman 2003). These modifications to the state are routinely attributed to three global trends: market liberalization, democratization, and state decentralization (Baiocchi et al., 2011; Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Swyngedouw 2005). Sociologists of globalization primarily focus on the first two phenomena and, typically, treat them as distinct transformations (Bartley 2007; Fourcade and Babb 2002; Henisz, Zelner, and Guillen 2005; McMichael 2012; Paxton 2002; Torfason and Ingram 2010; Wejnert 2005). Meanwhile, a growing collection of political sociologists study state decentralization (Baiocchi 2005; Baiocchi et al., 2011; Heller 2001; Lee, Mcquarrie, and Walker 2015; Levine 2016; Marwell 2004). A key insight from this school is that decentralization intersects with both democratization and market liberalization to alter the dynamics of public governance. While a promising innovation, the scope of this premise is confined to small-N comparisons and case-studies. Moreover, the links between these various types of state liberalization and the turn toward participatory governance remain obscure. In part, this is because decentralization involves a complex set of changes that long thwarted efforts to produce sound cross-national measures. In this dissertation I document and analyze the first worldwide dataset of administrative decentralization policies in 152 countries from 1970 – 2015.

Decentralization to subnational governments[1], or administrative decentralization, is one of the most sweeping political trends of the last 50 years. Dubbed the "quiet revolution," these policies circulated worldwide at a rate that parallels the neoliberal turn toward free markets (Campbell 2003; Manor 1999; Oxhorn 2004). Decentralization aims to reconstitute the role of government in public affairs. In principle, this involves replacing hierarchical forms of state coordination with horizontal models of participatory governance. In 2010, for instance, Kenya launched a series of reforms to decentralize the state's administrative apparatus (Cheeseman, Lynch, and Willis 2016). These statutes created 47 subnational governments responsible for managing public services through partnerships with civil society; changes that aimed to streamline development, deepen democracy, and secure political stability. Reform efforts like this now span the globe. Yet, despite widespread research on this phenomenon outside of sociology, the causes and consequences of this worldwide shift in governance are not well understood (Smoke 2015). Building on an original, global dataset, this project addresses three main questions: First, how do we conceptualize decentralization relative to other types of state liberalization such as marketization and democratization? Second, what drives countries around the world to adopt these policies? Third and finally, what effect do decentralization policies have, if at all, on democratic governance? I address each of these questions in the following chapters.

In chapter one I briefly outline two common accounts of decentralization: Functional approaches and what I call the neoliberal school. Functional approaches interpret decentralization as an adaptive political response to the failures of state-led planning. Meanwhile, neoliberal accounts view decentralization as a set of liberalizing policies enforced by

[1] To ease discussion throughout I use the terms subnational governments and local governments synonymously.

Western powers. Generally, both accounts interpret decentralization as a process of state contraction; whether governmental capacities are "hollowed out" through market consolidation or "unraveling" into networks of public-private governance, both envision decentralization as a process that saps state capacities and authority (Hoogh and Marks 2003; Reinsberg et al. 2019). Finding these approaches wanting, I propose an alternative interpretation. Bridging insights from sociological institutionalism (Bromley and Meyer 2015; Drori, Meyer, and Hwang 2006) and studies of neoliberal governmentality (Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Goldman 2005; Li 2007; Rose 1999), I conceptualize this phenomenon as a type of democratic state-building: Decentralization formally extends trusteeship over the state's role in national development to entities in civil society and markets. Put differently, these policies broaden the authority to systematically surveil and manage the conduct of others in the pursuit of progress. To concretize these ideas, I draw from and describe the original dataset on administrative decentralization.

In chapter one I go on to stress how the dataset may be used to examine the origins and impacts of decentralization policies. In short, this data is the first to enable research on the emergence of these reforms across a global sample of countries and over time. Moreover, the data provide new opportunities to examine the effects of decentralization policies on issues that range from development and democratic governance to post-conflict stabilization. In general, the data outlined here may be used to bolster cross-national research concerning the origins and impacts of decentralization policies around the world.

How did policymakers the world over come to view decentralization as a legitimate alternative to bureaucratic rule? In Chapter two I examine the factors that lead countries to adopt decentralization reforms. Drawing on a sample of 123 countries from 1970 – 2014, I use event history analysis to assess leading theories of policy diffusion. I make two primary contributions.

First, building on sociological institutionalism and global political economic theories, I develop an account that bridges cultural and coercive explanations for the global spread of ideas. To do so, I introduce the concept of syncretic diffusion: A form of policy transmission in which ideational legitimation and control over resources play a dual role in the diffusion process. In general, world society and global political-economic scholars differentiate between these two types of external pressure. To anchor this concept, I show that a loose collection of organizations, projects, and professionals from the international development regime prompts countries to decentralize the state. Using historical examples, I theorize that this results from the interpenetration of the regime's technocratic discourses and selectively allotted resources. Moreover, I propose that the concept of syncretic diffusion may be usefully applied to other cases of policy diffusion such as participatory budgeting and other modular forms of statecraft now circulating the globe (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2016; Goldfrank 2012; Polletta 2016; Peck and Theodore 2015).

I go on to argue that the worldwide expansion of universities is a key predictor of decentralization policies. This builds on work in sociological institutionalism (Bromley and Meyer 2015; 2017; Drori, Meyer, and Hwang 2006; Frank and Meyer 2020; Hwang 2006; Hwang and Powell 2009; Schofer and Meyer 2005). I conceptualize universities as receptor sites in world society: Organizational structures that link domestic contexts to global discourses. Universities anchor and spread global models of decentralized management across national polities. As the university system expands, these blueprints penetrate domestic contexts: Credentialed with university knowledge, professionals draw on these organizing precepts to rationalize both states and societies (Hwang and Powell 2009; Schofer et al., 2020). Put differently, university-trained professionals circulate, legitimize, and advance ideas concerning

decentralized public management (e.g., see Fourcade 2006). Finally, I suggest that viewing universities as receptor sites in world society can help to explain other instances of policy diffusion on the global stage.

In chapter three I develop the first study to examine how decentralization policies impact participatory democracy around the world, 1980 – 2015. Using longitudinal panel models with fixed effects, I control for a variety of factors thought to shape democratization. I make two primary contributions. First, I find that when countries pass decentralization reforms to strengthen fully elected subnational governments these policies are associated with higher levels of participatory democracy. This provides preliminary support for functional accounts which view democratic decentralization as a critical precursor to deepening democracy (Blair 2000; Faguet 2014; Manor 1999). However, I also find that the effect is short-lived; in general, democratic decentralization is associated with five- to ten-year improvements to participatory democracy. I also find that these effects are magnified when appointed bureaucrats have more oversight at the local level. What explains this finding? I argue that in the early years of democratic decentralization locally stationed bureaucrats wield their authority and professional skillset to discipline and socialize local government actors. Using preliminary evidence from the Ivory Coast and Uganda, I suggest that appointed officials train local government personnel to accomplish the ordinary feats of public administration – such as routine bookkeeping. While this restricts the autonomy of locally elected governments, it also boosts their capacity to provide transparent, accountable, and effective governance.

Overall, this dissertation develops an original dataset on administrative decentralization, refines how this phenomenon is conceptualized, provides new explanations for its global spread, and pioneers efforts to assess how these reforms impact democratic institutions. In the following

chapters I expand upon each of these contributions. In the conclusion I discuss key limitations and provide recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Extending the State: Conceptualizing and Exploring Decentralization in 152 Countries

In this chapter I conceptualize and then explore the first worldwide dataset of administrative[2] decentralization policies in 152 countries from 1970 – 2015. The account presented here aims to advance a largely splintered field of discipline-specific and normative approaches to the study of decentralization. Conventional interpretations characterize decentralization in two ways: 1) As an adaptive political response to the failures of state-led planning (Faguet 2014; Manor 1999; Oates 1999), or, 2) as a suite of liberalizing policies imposed by Western powers (Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Jessop 2003; Kentikelenis and Babb 2019; Mohan 1996; Reinsberg et al., 2019). In these accounts decentralization is typically construed as a process of state contraction. By contrast, I interpret decentralization as form of democratic state-building. From this standpoint, liberal conceptions of modern agency are displacing traditional forms of bureaucratic rule in a wide range of organizational domains. In the case of decentralization, this involves formalizing roles and procedures that seek to place the state under the trusteeship of civil society and markets. Put differently, decentralization is a process that formally extends the authority of state surveillance and planning to civil society and markets. Oriented by this distinct conceptualization, I develop the first global dataset of decentralization policies.

[2] There are disagreements over how to conceptualize administrative decentralization. Manor (1999), for instance, associates this term with deconcentration and contrasts it with democratic forms of decentralization. Alternatively, I approach administrative decentralization as a policy that varies in its levels of democratization, decision-making autonomy, and fiscal capacity. Doing so focuses attention on the shifting locus of public management - from central to subnational administrations and governments. This approach aligns with a range of work in the field (e.g., see Falleti 2005; Grindle 2007; Oxhorn 2004; USAID 2009).

The dataset outlined in this chapter make three primary contributions to the study of decentralization. To start, this dataset provides the first opportunity for scholars to examine the historical emergence of decentralization reforms across a large sample of countries. In addition, these data present new possibilities for examining the impacts of decentralization policies comparatively and over time. This will enhance research on a range of issues involving development, post-conflict stabilization, and governance. Finally, this dataset is more encompassing than prior efforts to measure decentralization. For instance, I do not confine the scope of this project to instances of democratic decentralization (e.g., see Manor 1999); it remains empirically unclear whether democratic subnational governments are more efficacious than those run by appointed officials (Oxhorn 2004; USAID 2009). Moreover, contemporary decentralization reforms typically involve a complex combination of democratic procedures and administrative oversight. In short, the data outlined here facilitates cross-national research on the broader impacts of decentralization on societies around the world.

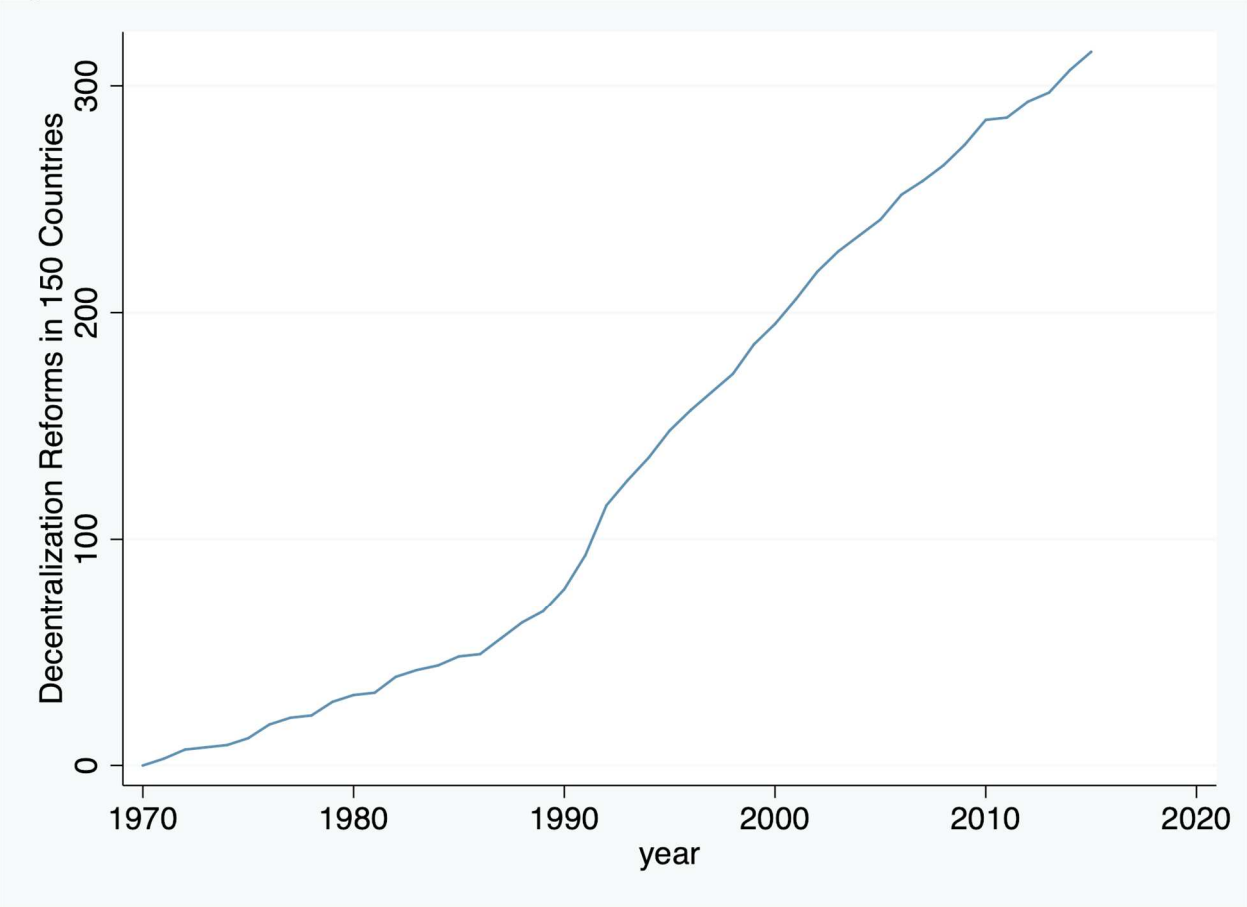
In what follows I begin by clarifying how decentralization is conceptualized in this study relative to functional and neoliberal accounts. Then, I outline conventional measures of decentralization and outline an alternative way to cataloguing these statutes. I go on to contextualize the emergence of these reforms historically and explore this new dataset.

Conceptualizing Decentralization

Decentralization reforms are enacted across a perplexing range of countries and political contexts; they appeal to democratic and authoritarian leaders, to communist parties and champions of free markets, in the Global South as well as the industrialized North, and, in places where civil society is strong or relatively weak. Figure 1, below, illustrates the worldwide proliferation of these policies. These reforms drew widespread attention from scholars in

political science, economics, public administration, and in some cases sociology (Bardhan 2002; Heller, Harilal, and Chaudhuri 2007; Maddick 1963; McNulty 2011; Pollit 2005; Oates 1999; Smith 1985; Ribot 2003; Turner and Hulme 1997).

Figure 1. Cumulative Count All Decentralization Reforms, 1970 - 2015



Across these disciplines, decentralization is understood according to a variable set of criteria. For instance, scholars may view decentralization as an opportunity to deepen democracy (Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011; Blair 2000; Fung and Wright 2003), as a method of post conflict state-building (Brancati 2009; Leonardsson and Rudd 2015), as a means to modernize public services (Mookherjee 2015; Oates 1972; 1999; Tiebout 1956), as a technique to improve management (Hood 1991; Pollit 2005), or, as a tool to strengthen the state's role in development and governance (Faguet 2014; Grindle 2007; Manor 1999; Olowu and Wunsch 2004; Smoke

2015). These wide-ranging accounts converge in their view of decentralization as a functional response to the deficiencies of top-down, bureaucratic planning. Meanwhile, scholars from the 'neoliberal school' view decentralization as a set of liberalizing policies foisted upon countries by powerful actors in the Global North (Babb and Kentikelenis 2018; Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Mohan 1996).

In general, both functional and neoliberal accounts interpret decentralization as a process of state decline. On the one hand, national states are reportedly "unraveling" as their authority to govern national territories becomes dispersed through networks of public-private governance (Hoogh and Marks 2003). Meanwhile, critical approaches assert that states are being 'hollowed out' through privatization, deregulation, and other doctrines affiliated with neoliberalism (Jessop 2003; Reinsberg et al., 2019). From this viewpoint the state is contracting due to the growing power of markets. In recent years however, a growing chorus of social scientists have noted that alongside market liberalization and democratization, decentralization structures new constellations of governance that alter the dynamics of public governance (Lee, Macquarrie, and Walker 2015; Swyngedouw 2004). That is, market liberalization, state decentralization, and new forms of participatory democracy all proliferated in the neoliberal era. However, the links between these various forms of state liberalization and the turn toward participatory governance remain unclear. To begin addressing this puzzle, I propose that decentralization is a form of democratic state-building. Then, drawing on this conceptualization, I present my original dataset.

A striking range of public bodies and private entities around the world are replacing bureaucratic forms of coordination with participatory models of organizational management. These reforms aim to make administrative units more transparent, responsive, flexible, efficient, autonomous, and accountable (Bromley and Meyer 2015). For instance, city governments

worldwide adopt various forms of participatory budgeting to involve private citizens in the allocation of municipal goods and services (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2016; Peck and Theodore 2015). Similarly, national and transnational firms adopt participatory techniques to foster new lines of accountability and to mobilize stakeholders around a range of collective concerns (Pope and Lim 2017; Walker 2009). Meanwhile, civil society organizations increasingly train individuals to act as responsible and empowered participants in public affairs (Eliasoph 2011; Watkins, Swidler, and Hannon 2012). Drawing on ideas from sociological institutionalism and governmentality (Bromley and Meyer 2015; Drori, Meyer, and Hwang 2006; Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Goldman 2005; Li 2007; Rose 1999), I posit that these modifications reflect a general pattern of institutional change: Traditional bureaucratic structures around the world are being displaced by liberal conceptions of modern agency. Decentralization is both part of and a key factor in this liberalizing trend.

As the traditional charisma of national states erodes, particularly in the neoliberal era, bureaucratic forms of decision-making are progressively delegitimized (Hwang 2006; Jepperson and Meyer 1991). In their place organizational forms grounded in the sovereignty and authority of individuals gain legitimacy (Bromley and Meyer 2015; Frank, Camp, and Boutcher 2010). Briefly, bureaucratic modes of coordination are replaced by participatory models of governance built around the sovereignty of individual actors (Bromley and Meyer 2017; Drori, Meyer, and Hwang 2006; Krücken and Meier 2006; Meyer and Bromley 2013). This institutional shift converts the custom of governing through the state into a new modality of collective rule based on liberal, semi-autonomous forms of public management. Put differently, institutional blueprints concerning the proper, agentic structure of organizations underpin the ongoing shift from government toward participatory governance. This change is indicative of what is called

neoliberal governmentality (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Administrative decentralization is both part of and a key factor in this broad-based shift.

Decentralization redistributes the authority to plan and manage public services such as education (Astiz, Wiseman, and Baker 2002; Fiske 1996), healthcare (Bossert and Beauvais 2002; Saltman, Busse, Figueras 2006), and environmental stewardship (Larson and Soto 2008; Ribot 2003) from central to subnational governments (Conyers 1983; Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1983). These changes reposition the state to interface more directly with entities in civil society; doing so aims to stimulate the active involvement of citizens and civil society organizations as stakeholders in national development (Baiocchi 2006; Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Grindle 2007; Maddick 1963; Mansuri and Rao 2012; Oxhorn 2004). When organized effectively, opportunities to partake in local initiatives kindle enthusiasm for developmental improvements, streamline the delivery of public goods, and instill the capacity for active citizenship (e.g., see Baiocchi et al., 2011; Blair 2000).

Viewed in this light, I propose that decentralization is a type of democratic state-building: These policies formally extend trusteeship over the state's role in public welfare to entities in civil society and markets. Put differently, decentralization expands the authority to systematically manage and surveil the conduct of others in the pursuit of progress. To help concretize these ideas, I outline this new dataset on administrative decentralization. First, however, I document previous efforts to measure decentralization cross-nationally.

Measuring Decentralization

There are wide-ranging efforts to measure decentralization across the social sciences (Ebel and Yilmaz 2002; Ivanyna and Shah 2014; Hooghe, Marks, and Schakel 2010; Rodden 2004; Schneider 2003; Treisman 2002). One reason for this variability is that decentralization is

a multivalent concept (See Bandelj and Tester 2020; Pollit 2005); decentralization is interpreted and deployed in a manner that reflects a researcher's discipline and/or normative predilections. For instance, political sociologists and political scientists tend to stress the decentralization of political authority, or democracy, to subnational governments (Heller 2001; Manor 1999). In these approaches, policies qualify as decentralization only in cases involving the democratization of subnational governments. Alternatively, public administration scholars tend to eschew any emphasis on political authority and, instead, focus on flexible, entrepreneurial forms of management (Hood 1991; Pollit 2005). Economists, meanwhile, tend to stress the fiscal dimensions of decentralized public services (Oates 1999; Tiebout 1956). More broadly, because decentralization to subnational governments encompasses a complex set of political, administrative, and fiscal changes, efforts to measure these policies across countries are divergent. Briefly, conventional measures of decentralization fall into two categories: Static and process-oriented (Triesman 2002). In what follows I outline the limitations of these approaches in greater detail. Afterwards, I build upon my conceptualization of decentralization to pose an alternative framework for cataloguing these policies.

Static measures establish a numerical basis for comparing degrees of decentralization across countries. Ideally, this allows one to compare relative levels of decentralization cross-nationally. In general, these approaches take two forms: 1) Data on fiscal decentralization (Fishman and Gatti 2002), or 2) institutional metrics involving composite levels of administrative responsibility, political authority, and/or fiscal autonomy at a single point in time (Ivanyna and Shah 2014; Schneider 2003; Treisman 2002). First, political scientists and economists frequently use fiscal decentralization (% of subnational spending relative to overall state spending) as a proxy for overall levels of decentralization within a given country (Fisman &

Gatti 2002). Concretely, this is measured as the proportion of subnational government expenditures relative to overall state spending; this measure derives from the International Monetary Fund and exhibits important shortcomings. To start, this measure does not account for variable levels of subnational responsibilities for public functions. Thus, a country may exhibit high levels of fiscal decentralization but confer very few public responsibilities to subnational governments (Ebel and Yilmaz 2002; USAID 2009). For instance, based on this criteria Nigeria was considered a highly decentralized state during the 1990s. Yet, during this period the country was under military rule and subnational governments were largely creatures of the central government (Rodden 2004). In addition, data on fiscal decentralization is limited to fewer than 70 countries around the world and includes more expansive coverage of wealthy countries in the Global North. In short, these issues make it difficult to compare decentralization to subnational governments across countries and over time.

Scholars have also developed institutional measures that aim to capture the relative depth of state decentralization across countries (Ivanyna and Shah 2014; Schneider 2003; Treisman 2002). By creating composite scores for public responsibilities, political authority, and/or fiscal autonomy, among other elements, these measures aim to compare levels of decentralized authority across countries. As of yet, however, there is no consensus on the metrics for this type of measure. For instance, some focus strictly on the lowest tier of subnational government (see Ivanyna and Shah 2014), while others count the number of subnational tiers as a key dimension of decentralization (See Treisman 2002). Like fiscal decentralization, these approaches primarily rely on data from OECD countries and neglect a large number of states in the Global South. Critically, these measures also fail to account for changes in decentralization policies over time.

Process-oriented measures document the emergence and impacts of decentralization reforms historically. This type of approach facilitates small-N comparisons across countries (e.g., see Blair 2000; Falletti 2005) or involves case-studies of decentralization reforms within a single country (e.g., see Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011; Grindle 2007). While descriptively rich, these efforts are also dissonant: Some emphasize the democratic dimensions of decentralization (e.g., Manor 1999; Tulchin and Selee 2004); others stress that the fiscal, administrative, and political dimensions of decentralization should be studied as historical sequences (Falletti 2005). Meanwhile, many scholars use case-studies to stress the impacts of decentralization on development and local governance, typically in the Global South (Bardhan 2002; Grindle 2007). In short, the strength of process-oriented studies is that they provide rich historical texture concerning the emergence and impacts of decentralization reforms. However, due to their reliance on small-n comparisons or case-studies, efforts to examine decentralization policies across a large sample of countries fall short. I overcome these various limitations by creating an original cross-national, panel dataset that focuses on administrative decentralization.

The Data: Substantive Contributions

I construct an original, longitudinal, cross-national dataset of administrative decentralization in 152 countries from 1970-2015. This dataset improves upon prior metrics for decentralization in several respects. First, this data captures the historical timing of decentralization reforms across a global sample of countries. This facilitates comparative, quantitative assessments of the factors thought to underpin decentralization reforms cross-nationally and over time. This permits scholars to examine general conditions rather than relying on the apparent contingencies of each case. Moreover, rather than preemptively distinguishing between reforms in the Global South and the Global North, these data allow for assessments

across a global sample. In short, this dataset provides the first opportunity for scholars to assess the factors that drive the adoption of decentralization reforms across a large sample of countries.

Second, these data present new possibilities for examining the effects of decentralization policies comparatively and over time. This will enhance research on a range of issues integral to social development including democratic development, post-conflict stabilization, and urban governance. For instance, in chapter three I develop three measures that capture the distinct political dimensions of administrative decentralization: deconcentration, democratic decentralization, and a subset of cases that involve political decentralization. Moreover, the data presented here provides new opportunities for measuring the efficacy of decentralization reforms. Prospects for improving policy-based research involve linking this dataset to subnational fiscal capacities, coding for various levels of decision-making autonomy (Oxhorn 2004), and/or creating issue-specific datasets, like reforms that focus on public health (Bossert 1998). These are all potential avenues for future research.

Third, this dataset is more encompassing than prior efforts to measure decentralization. Scholars generally place decentralization reforms along a rough continuum that ranges from deconcentration (i.e. appointed officials) to devolution (i.e. elected officials). However, researchers have yet to develop a systematic way of coding cases along this gradient. In turn, scholars lack the means to systematically compare the effects of decentralization policies across countries and over time. To tackle these issues, I focus more broadly on administrative decentralization as a policy that varies in its levels of democratization, decision-making authority, and fiscal capacities. This focuses attention on the shifting locus of public management – from central to subnational governments. The strength of this approach is that it captures the general shift from government toward participatory governance without, for

instance, preemptively cutting cases that do not fit the ideal of democratic decentralization (e.g., see Manor 1999). This permits a general set of cross-national assessments concerning the emergence and impacts of decentralization policies. In addition, the dataset provides new avenues for coding various levels of democratic decentralization. This will facilitate work concerned with the impacts of democratic versus deconcentrated subnational governments and administrations. For example, some argue that decentralization to appointees of the state, as opposed to locally elected officials, is essential for maintaining political stability in post-conflict contexts (Connerly, Eaton, and Smoke 2010). Similarly, it remains empirically unclear whether democratic local governments improve development outcomes more effectively and equitably than those run by appointed officials (Oxhorn 2004; USAID 2009). The data outlined here can be used to move these debates forward.

The Dataset: A Brief Sketch

In this section I describe the data collected for this project. To begin, I sketch some of the key contours that facilitated the data-collection process. Broadly, administrative decentralization transfers responsibility for planning and managing public functions, particularly those pertaining to socio-economic development, from central governments to subnational tiers of the state (Conyers 1983; Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1983; USAID 2009). The most common responsibilities transferred to subnational governments include environmental management (Larson and Soto 2008; Ribot 2003), education (Astiz, Wiseman, and Baker 2002; Fiske 1996), healthcare (Bossert and Beauvais 2002; Saltman, Busse, Figueras 2006), and public security (Leonardsson and Rudd 2015). For instance, devolving stewardship of public forests is one of the most pronounced administrative trends in the world (Larson 2012). In 1994 Bolivia transferred expansive authority over forest management to 198 newly established municipalities (Faguet

2012; Pacheco 2004). These changes, paired with the passage of a new Forestry Act, impelled local administrators to oversee forest conservation, prevent illegal logging, and provide environmental education on these issues. These officials rely on participatory public forums and programs to accomplish their duties (Lund, Rutt, and Ribot 2018**;** Wright et al., 2016).

Administrative decentralization policies vary along a number of consequential dimensions. Examples include the degree to which they confer political autonomy, distribute financial resources, and apportion public responsibilities. Following the USAID Handbook on Democratic Decentralization, I do not preemptively differentiate between deconcentration and devolution. Consequently, decentralization amendments in this study include reforms with little to no democratic components (e.g. Angola's 2007 state administration law) and those that are deeply democratic (e.g., Bolivia's 1994 Law of Popular Participation). From this standpoint political decentralization, which dictates that subnational governments be democratically elected, is a distinct dimension of administrative decentralization. Indeed, the democratization of subnational administrations and governments may not be necessary – nor the most effective approach – for managing some kinds of public goods and/or purposes (Connerly et al 2010). For instance, countries undergoing post conflict reconstruction may benefit from a deconcentrated administrative structure. Other examples include non-local roads and water resources (USAID 2009). Still, most decentralization reforms included here involve least a modicum of democratic procedures.

I constructed an original, longitudinal, cross-national dataset of administrative decentralization reforms from 1970-2015. Following conventional approaches to global-comparative data collection, I sampled all countries with a minimum population of 1 million (Reith, Paxton, and Hughes 2016). The data stem from three primary sources: 1) The United

Cities and Local Governments Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization Country Profiles (UCLG 2020), 2) the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment Report (OECD/UCLG 2019), and 3) the Commonwealth Local Government Forum Country Profiles (CLGF 2018). I expand upon and triangulate these sources with country reports pertinent to decentralization from the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, and a variety of bi-lateral agencies. I use these reports to code three distinct types of decentralization reform: Constitutional enshrinement, local government reform laws, and decentralization framework laws.

Constitutional enshrinement, local government reforms, and decentralization frameworks are the institutional cornerstones of decentralization (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006; UN Habitat 2009**;** USAID 2009). As illustration, consider three examples. First, Brazil's 1988 constitution enshrined decentralization to municipalities which included responsibilities for secondary education, health services, territorial planning, and mass transportation, among other functions. This far-reaching change encouraged the use of deliberative planning among local governments and facilitated the rise of participatory budgeting (Baiocchi 2006). Second, in 2014 Ireland passed a Local Government Reform Act, which converted the nation's subnational administrative system into 3 regional assemblies, 31 local governments, and established a sub-county system of Municipal Districts (OECD/UCLG 2019). Expansive responsibilities for planning and delivering on development initiatives underlined this shift. Third, in 2001 Rwanda adopted a National Decentralization Policy (Chemouni 2014). This established a long-term plan to reconstitute subnational governments with emphasis on streamlining public services through local participation.

States may adopt all three types of reform. For instance, Peru first enshrined decentralization in the 1979 constitution (McNulty 2011). Years later, in 2002, Peru passed a Framework Decentralization Law, and, in 2003 the Organic Law of Municipalities was approved. Moreover, in some cases local government laws are overhauled more than once. For instance, in 1997 the country of Georgia passed its Organic Law on Local Self-Government (OECD/UCLG 2019). This gave initial form to the decentralized structure of public administration, but, in 2014 policymakers replaced this measure with the more expansive Code on Local Self-Government, which placed greater emphasis on citizen-based participation in development. I count both these instances because they are separate laws, one overturned the other.

What qualifies these policies as acts of administration decentralization? I use four primary criteria to determine whether each reform constitutes a decentralization statute:

1. The reform includes a specific outline and/or list of at least 5 new public services to be administered by subnational governments

2. The reform confers authority to draft local development plans to subnational governments

3. The reform confers the authority to pass legislation on issues pertaining to socioeconomic development to subnational governments

4. The reform explicitly identifies decentralization as a guiding principle of subnational government

In all cases, I only identify a policy as a decentralization reform if it redefines public responsibilities for subnational tier(s) of government that are considered "local." Doing so focuses the dataset on reforms that stress the principle of subsidiarity (i.e. that responsibilities should be devolved to the closest possible point of contact between citizens and the state).

Generally, the reforms in this study include a combination of these criteria. The criteria used here captures omnibus decentralization reforms like those passed in Bolivia, Indonesia, and Japan. They also include well-known constitutional amendments such as those passed in India (Heller, Harilal, and Chaudhuri 2007). Moreover, less familiar reforms, such as Angola's Local State Administration law in 2007 and New Zealand's 2001 Local Government Amendment Act are included (OECD/UCLG 2019).

I exclude reforms that are sector-specific (i.e., they strictly focus on up to three administrative responsibilities). For instance, Falletti's (2005) measure of administrative decentralization in Argentina focuses on transferring responsibility for national preschools and primary schools to the provinces. I discount such instances because my empirical focus is on general decentralization reforms. Following this reasoning, I also discount reforms that are specific to large cities, capitals, special zones, or regions. Typically, these relatively delimited reforms accompany or quickly follow the overarching policies measured here Moreover, administrative laws that strictly focus on territorial reorganization, as opposed to reallocating responsibilities, do not count. Finally, when countries pass local government reforms through a variety of separate contemporaneous acts, I treat these as a single event. Doing so addresses the fact that some countries bundle local government reforms into omnibus laws while others pass distinct statutes for every subnational tier of the state. Whenever countries pass contemporaneous laws for each subnational tier, I always count the reform that redefines public responsibilities for the lowest level of government or administration. This focuses the dataset on decentralization reforms that adhere to the principle of subsidiarity. In what follows I briefly situate the rise of these reforms historically and use examples to describe each type of decentralization reform.

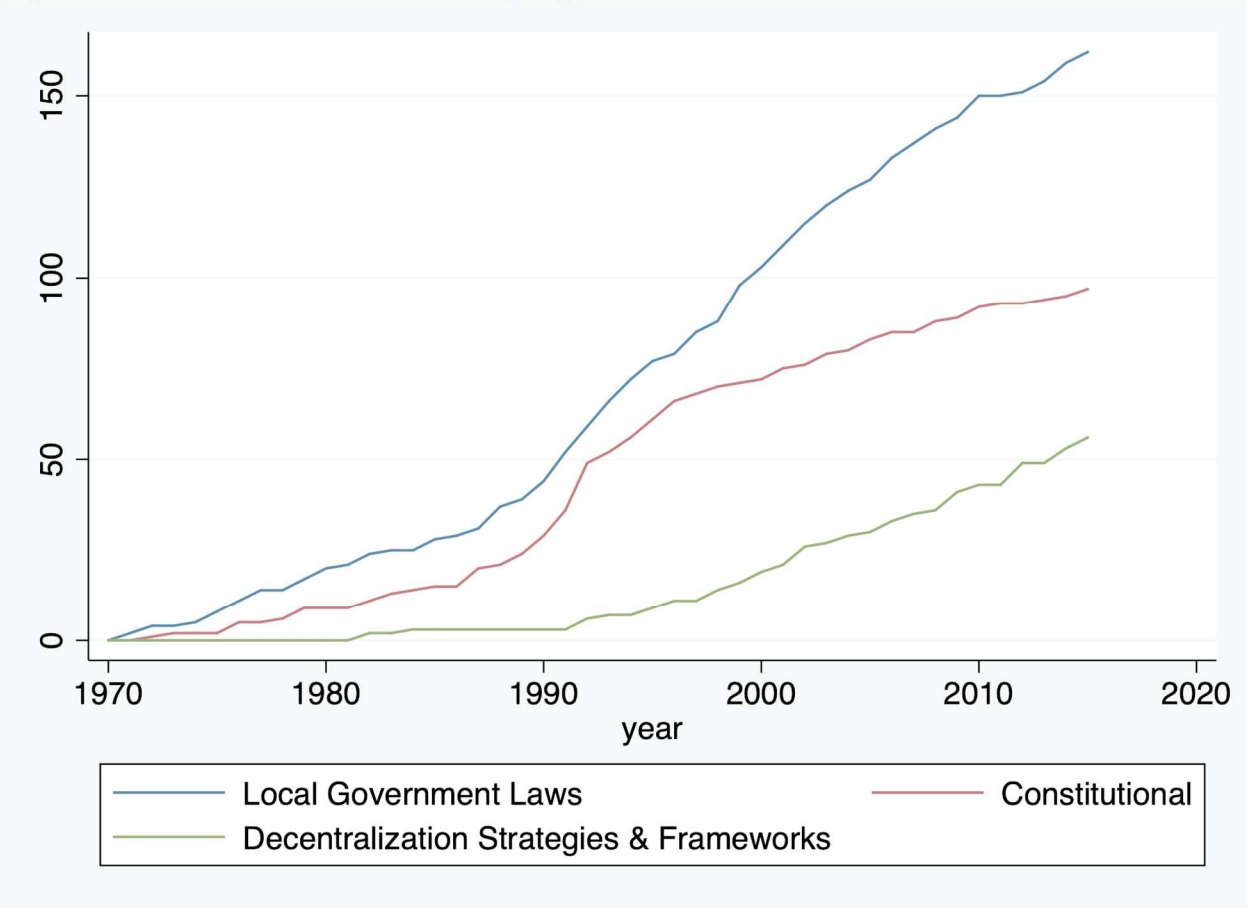
Exploring the Data: Historical Background and Cases

In the decades following World War Two, efforts to promote socio-economic development were largely overseen by central governments seeking to spur national industrialization (Hall 1989; Hirschman 1981). From Keynesian interventionism to centralized planning in communist countries, state-led development signaled sovereignty and modernity in the post-war era (Hwang 2006); it was widely assumed that bureaucratic, expert-led policy-making optimized economic growth and encouraged nation-building (Oxhorn 2004). Accordingly, throughout the 1950s and 1960s countries around the world deployed national development plans (Hwang 2006). However, by the late 1960s and early 1970s this consensus eroded and conceptualizations of development began to shift in tandem. Traditionally synonymous with economic growth and national industrialization, development came to be viewed more holistically – first, as the pursuit of basic social needs and later as a wholesale institutional shift that centered on sustainable human empowerment (Chabbot 1999; Sen 2001). It is in the context of this shift that countries began decentralizing responsibilities for and authority over development to subnational governments (Conyers 1983; Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1983).

In line with ideas espoused by Maddick (1963), whose work was funded by the United Nations and used by a growing stratum of development theorists and practitioners, early adopters of decentralization policies were largely in the Global South. Countries categorized as being part of the "Third World" were diagnosed as rigid bureaucracies in need of more flexible, participatory forms development planning and management. As the theorized links between participatory development and decentralization gained legitimacy as emblems of modernization, political leaders in the Global South began passing bureaucratic reforms. In 1971, for instance, Socialist leaders in Sudan passed one of the most far-reaching attempts to decentralize the state

in the 1970s: The People's Local Government Act (Rondinelli 1981). The chief aim of this legislation was to promote democratic development by fortifying the administrative authority of subnational governments and fostering a system of local participation in development processes. In places as disparate as China, Papua New Guinea, Bangladesh, Cuba, and Tanzania, similar efforts to localize and democratize development planning and management began crystallizing around the globe. After the fall of the Soviet Union, efforts to decentralize the state intensified worldwide. Alongside countries in the periphery, Post-socialist countries and wealthy industrialized countries in the Global North joined the fray. From large countries like Russia and India, to smaller-sized polities like Benin and Lesotho, decentralization policies became commonplace around the globe. Figure 2, below, illustrates this trend according to the three distinct kinds of decentralization policy. In what follows, I provide examples for each type of reform by drawing on a variety of cases.

Figure 2. Decentralization Reforms by Type, 1970 - 2015



Local Government Reforms

The most common type of decentralization policy is what I categorize as local government reforms; this represents approximately 51% of all amendments documented in this study. To illustrate, in 1993 Ghana passed its Local Government Act 462 (UCLG Ghana 2008). Like most decentralization reforms, this policy involves a mix of administrative, political, and fiscal dimensions. However, according to the criteria established, above, the defining feature of this policy is that it charges the Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies, or, subnational governments, with a variety of public responsibilities. These functions center on coordinating social and economic development by forming local plans, managing the environment, and promoting local security, among other domains. The underlying rationale for

this policy is to devolve power to Ghana's citizens by providing a more direct interface between the state and members of civil society. In principle, decentralization reforms like this place the state under the stewardship of civil society; replacing hierarchical forms of bureaucratic coordination with more local, inclusive, and participatory modes of public engagement. Evidence suggests that Ghana's decentralization policy created new, meaningful pathways for participation and empowerment through local policymaking (Ahwoi 2010; Ayee 2008). For instance, while limitations are evident Debrah (2014) finds that ordinary citizens were routinely consulted by planning experts on matters of local development. Moreover, local constituents consistently launched, financed, and co-managed public projects within their jurisdictions.

In this dataset omnibus decentralization reforms are also categorized as Local Government Reforms. While omnibus reforms may be more expansive in scope (as of yet this is not definitive), they share the same key features as Local Government Laws: They are legal statutes that formally designate subnational governments as hubs that interface with civil society to promote local, inclusive forms development. For instance, Bolivia's Law of Popular Participation in 1994 is one of the most far-reaching decentralization reforms in the world (Faguet 2012). Like Ghana, this statute formalizes a combination of administrative, political, and fiscal changes to subnational governments. In this case, Bolivia created 198 new municipal governments across the country responsible for issues pertaining to health, education, the environment, and local infrastructure, among others. Creating participatory links between these new governments and traditional entities in civil society was integral to this reform. Still, even when reforms of this type do not recognize local governments as fully democratic, the underlying rationale is to promote horizontal synergies with civil society. For instance, Angola's 2007 Local State Administrative Law formally obligated provincial and municipal administrators

to consult with entities in civil society on matters concerning socio-economic development (Feliciou and Yilmaz 2009). While this policy did not champion formal elections of any kind, this was the first time that civil society participation in subnational affairs was formally institutionalized by the Angolan state.

Constitutional Enshrinement

Enshrining decentralization in the constitution takes place in 97 countries, or, 65% of this sample. This provides a distinct pillar of legitimacy to decentralization reforms. Notably, constitutional enshrinement provides the key avenue for federal countries to institutionalize decentralization. For example, the 73rd and 74th amendments to the constitution in India stipulated that each of the states promote decentralization within their respective jurisdictions (Heller 2001). More expansively, as Brazil transitioned to democracy in the late 1980s the country's leaders enshrined decentralization in the constitution (Baiocchi 2005). This granted an extensive range of public powers to the municipalities, which also share responsibilities for local development with the federation of provinces. Constitutional enshrinement may precipitate wide-ranging changes within a given polity. Mexico, for instance, formally inscribed decentralization into the constitution in 1983 through Article 115 (Grindle 2007). Amended numerous times in subsequent years, this initial change laid the foundation for greater municipal autonomy on issues pertaining to socio-economic development. Over time, both NGOs and municipalities gained legitimacy as representatives of the local public interest, posing new challenges to traditional hubs of centralized power within the country (Santín 2004). Similar shifts in subnational governance were advanced by enshrining decentralization in the constitutions of the Philippines, South Korea, and Spain among other countries.

National Decentralization Frameworks and Strategies

By 2015, 57 countries or 37% of this sample passed a decentralization framework or strategy law. Decentralization frameworks and strategies outline long-term plans that aim to streamline decentralization processes within a given country. At times, these policies provide the foundation for other kinds of decentralization reforms. In 1995 for instance, Japan passed its Decentralization Promotion Law which organized committees to explore the possibility of pursuing decentralization within the country (Barret 2000). This framework culminated in the passage of Japan's 1999 omnibus decentralization law. Similarly, in 2001 Rwanda passed its National Decentralization Policy which outlined three phases for the implementation of decentralization within the country (Chemouni 2014). The chief aim of this policy was to promote citizen participation in the planning and management of socio-economic development. Subsequently, decentralization was enshrined in the constitution, and, in 2013 Act 87 outlined expanded public functions for subnational administrative entities. In general, these policies institutionalize public bodies that develop long-term plans to deepen the decentralization process within a given country. For instance, Peru's Framework Decentralization Law in 2002 established parameters for the gradual implementation of decentralized governance within the country (McNulty 2011). This law identified key actions to promote the actualization of decentralization policies such as additional legislation and various types of capacity-building. These aimed to augment extant local government laws. In short, framework and strategy laws help to orient the process of decentralization by structuring roles and procedures that allow public bodies to periodically revise key policies.

Conclusion

Despite ample research on decentralization efforts around the world, our understanding of the causes and consequences of this global shift toward governance remain preliminary. In part,

this is because decentralization is a complex, multi-dimensional process that makes it difficult to establish valid and reliable cross-national measures. In this chapter I conceptualized decentralization as a form of democratic state-building that aims to place the state under the trusteeship of civil society and markets. Building off this broader approach, I outlined a new, global dataset of decentralization reforms. These policies reposition the state to interface more directly and collaboratively with entities in civil society. The strength of this approach is threefold: 1) this is the first dataset that allows scholars to examine the emergence of decentralization reforms over time and across a large sample of countries; 2) these data present new opportunities to assess the impacts of decentralization policies cross-nationally; and 3) this dataset is more encompassing than prior efforts to measure decentralization, including a much larger sample of countries and a broader spectrum of policies. Building on these efforts, the following two chapters use this data to examine the origins these policies and their impacts on democratic governance.

CHAPTER 3

Bureaucratic Reform in Global Context: Decentralization to Subnational Governments in 123 Countries, 1970 – 2014

What drives countries around the world to adopt decentralization policies? Drawing on an original, newly assembled dataset of administrative decentralization reforms in 123 countries from 1970 – 2014[3], I evaluate two prominent theories of policy diffusion: The constructivist approach from world society theory and coercive accounts based on global political economy (Dobbin, Simmons, and Garret 2007). Despite their ostensibly clear-cut differences, efforts to adjudicate between cultural and coercive diffusion processes remain preliminary. One reason for the persistence of this issue is that world society and global political economic accounts tend to focus on substantively different policy domains (Downey et al., 2020). Scholars in the former tend to study rights-based instances of political liberalization while the latter school stresses various forms economic liberalization, particularly in the Global South. This limitation notwithstanding, there are recent efforts to bring these schools into conversation (Kentikelenis and Babb 2019; Kentikelenis and Seabrooke 2017; Lim and Tsutsui 2011; Shorette 2012). While promising, these studies exhibit two shortcomings: 1) They theorize how diffusion stems from changes *within* global organizations but do not assess empirical patterns of policy transmission, or, 2) they focus on the efficacy of adopted policies rather than the mechanics of diffusion itself. In this study I assess and seek to bridge cultural and coercive approaches to the global spread of ideas. I also expand upon world society theory, and constructivist approaches more broadly, by theorizing how universities structure the transnational diffusion of institutions.

[3] The analysis stops in 2014 due to missing data on key independent variables

I use event-history analysis to examine world society and global-political economic explanations for the adoption of decentralization reforms. Building on evidence of the international development regime's role in the Global South, I sketch an account that bridges insights from these competing theories of policy transmission. To do so, I introduce the concept of syncretic diffusion. In this approach external resource flows and technocratic discourses play a co-constitutive role in the dissemination of policy ideas. Specifically, I argue that as countries are infused with development aid that prioritizes local forms of governance, policymakers are more likely to pass decentralization reforms. As countries become more reliant on external funding for local governance institutions this levies an interlaced set of material and cultural pressures, prompting states to adopt decentralization policies. Drawing on examples, I contrast this account to world society and global political-economic theories of diffusion. The former prioritizes integration into global hubs of knowledge and expertise (Meyer et al., 1997; Schofer et al., 2012), while the latter stresses the strategic, coercive deployment of resources (Babb 2013; Chase-Dunn 1998; McMichael 2012; Reinsberg et al., 2019). Alternatively, the concept of syncretic diffusion orients researchers to focus on how cultural and material forces play a mutualistic role in the dissemination of public policies.

I note four additional findings. In line with prior research I find that democratization is a key predictor of policy adoption in the Global South (McNulty 2011). I also show that the worldwide expansion of university enrollments facilitates the spread of these policies and draw on world society theory to explain this result (Bromley and Meyer 2015; Frank and Meyer 2020; Schofer, Ramirez, and Meyer 2020). Preliminary evidence also supports the idea that local power over the nomination of national representatives accelerates policy reform in the Global South (Willis, Garman, and Haggard 1999). Finally, I show that countries with lower levels of

economic growth are more likely to decentralize in the Global South (Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Selee and Tulchin 2004).

In what follows I provide background on decentralization policies and outline their affiliation with bureaucratic reforms more broadly. Then, I sketch competing explanations and pose hypotheses. Primarily, I develop arguments concerning the international development regime and university-based rationalization. Afterwards I present a new, worldwide dataset of decentralization reforms. I then describe the variables and outline the method of analysis. Finally, I present the findings, discuss the implications, and provide recommendations for future research.

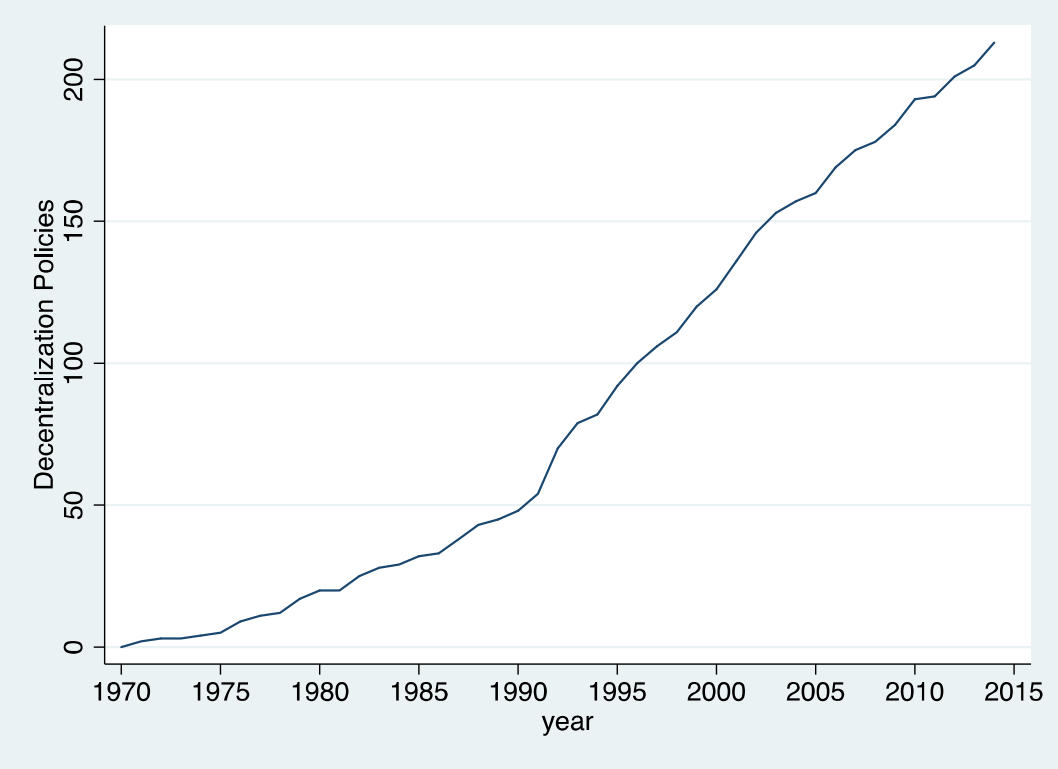
Bureaucratic Reform Around the World

Decentralization transfers the authority to plan and manage public services such as education (Astiz, Wiseman, and Baker 2002; Fiske 1996), healthcare (Bossert and Beauvais 2002; Saltman, Busse, Figueras 2006), and environmental stewardship (Larson and Soto 2008; Ribot 2003) from central to subnational governments (Conyers 1983; Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1983). These changes relocate the state to interface more directly with entities in civil society; doing so aims to encourage the participation of citizens and civil society organizations as stakeholders in national development (Baiocchi 2006; Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Grindle 2007; Maddick 1963; Mansuri and Rao 2012; Oxhorn 2004). Ideally, opportunities to contribute to local initiatives spur enthusiasm for developmental improvements, streamline the delivery of public goods, and enhance the capacity for active citizenship (e.g., see Baiocchi et al., 2011; Blair 2000).

As illustrated by figure 3, below, contemporary efforts to decentralize the state emerged in the 1970s and then proliferated worldwide. For instance, in 1972 Tanzania's Decentralization

of Government Administration Act recognized villages as the lowest tier of development administration (Maro 1990). This extended responsibilities for public planning downwards to local representatives to encourage popular participation among rural denizens. In 1991 the Philippines passed a new Local Government Code that transferred responsibilities for health, the environment, education, and public order to subnational governments (Brillantes 1998; Cariño 2007). This law stipulates that civil society organizations should actively participate in steering these affairs. In Venezuela, the 1999 constitution recognized municipalities as an autonomous level of government responsible for social and economic development (UCLG Venezuela). This change, alongside the Law on Municipal Public Power in 2005, formalized mechanisms for civil society participation through local planning councils, participatory budgeting, and citizen assemblies – among others. Parallel changes to the state are evident in industrialized countries of the Global North. For instance, Japan's 1999 Omnibus Decentralization Law overturned more than 450 laws relating to the prefectures and municipalities. Expansive responsibilities for public welfare were transferred to these jurisdictions for local management (Ikawa 2008; UCLG Japan 2008). In 2007 Denmark passed a landmark decentralization reform. This transferred nearly all responsibilities for social welfare to the municipalities, making them the chief access point to the public sector for citizens and businesses (Local Government Denmark 2009). Similar shifts are evident in Ireland, Italy, and New Zealand among other industrialized countries. What leads countries around the world to enact these reforms?

Figure 3. Global Count of Decentralization Reforms in 123 Countries (Cumulative)



Domestic Functional Explanations

Conventional explanations interpret decentralization as a function of national factors[4] including democratization, economic stagnation, and/or contentious party politics (Brancati 2009; Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006; Binswanger and Deininger 1997; Campbell 2003; Manor 1999; McNulty 2011; Montero and Samuels 2004; Rondinelli 1989; Selee and Tulchin 2004; Willis, Garman, and Haggard 1999). In general, these accounts assert that countries pass decentralization policies independent of external factors. For instance, as countries democratize this theoretically provides a window of opportunity for policymakers to pass liberal reforms like decentralization (McNulty 2011). Similarly, decentralization is viewed as calculated political

[4] I focus on these three factors to streamline this discussion. Scholars also pinpoint ethnic divisions and socio-economic development as key precipitants of decentralization. In a series of unreported analyses, I control for ethnic fractionalization and ethnic polarization. These exhibit no effect and the findings are substantively similar to those presented here. Tables available upon request. I control levels of economic development in the analyses below.

response to address a range of domestic problems such as economic stagnation (Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Faguet 2012; Selee and Tulchin 2004) and political contention between local and national political elites (Montero and Samuels 2004; Willis, Garman, and Haggard 1999)

Hypothesis 1: Countries with stronger democratic systems exhibit higher rates of administrative decentralization

Hypothesis 2: Countries with slower economic growth exhibit higher rates of administrative decentralization

Hypothesis 3: Countries where subnational officials have greater control over the careers of national representatives exhibit higher rates of administrative decentralization

Global Political Economy

Global political-economic and critical organization scholars view the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank as agents of neoliberalism that compel countries in the Global South to adopt various decentralizing reforms (Babb 2013; Babb and Kentikelenis 2018; Kentikelenis and Babb 2019; McMichael 2012; Reinsberg et al., 2019). From this perspective powerful interests at the IMF and World Bank pressure countries to adopt decentralization policies through structural adjustment programs and conditions. Typically, these accounts focus on powerful actors in the United States who, through covert action, seek to insert conditions that benefit corporate and financial elites. In this approach, administrative decentralization is best explained by structural adjustment conditions that oblige national policymakers to devolve the state. Some scholarship on decentralization supports this view (see Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Mohan 1996).

Hypothesis 4: National states with more structural adjustment conditions for administrative decentralization exhibit higher rates of decentralization

World Cultural Explanations

World society scholars posit that a liberal, highly rationalistic global culture infiltrates and transforms how polities are organized (Meyer et al., 1997). From this perspective, domestic policymakers enact institutional models and normative rules codified by transnational experts, professionals, and scientists (Boyle, Kim, and Longhofer 2015; Lerch, Russel, and Ramirez 2017; Paxton, Hughes, and Green 2006; Tsutsui and Wotipka 2004). Conventional accounts assert that international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) drive the diffusion of liberal policy models (Boli and Thomas 1999). Yet, a growing body of work views universities as organizational structures that anchor and disperse global institutions (Bromley and Meyer 2015; Frank and Gabler 2006; Frank and Meyer 2007; 2020; Schofer and Meyer 2005; Schofer, Meyer, and Ramirez 2020).

A growing body of work in world society stresses the impact of universities as a global institution (Bromley and Meyer 2015; Frank and Gabler 2006; Frank and Meyer 2007; 2020 Meyer, Ramirez, and Frank 2007; Schofer and Meyer 2005; Schofer, Meyer, and Ramirez 2020). Universities around the globe rely on a broadly standard set of curricular categories, and they link local contexts to these universalistic bodies of scientific and professional expertise (Frank and Gabler 2006). Put differently, through its transnational links and global orientation, the university system generates a markedly common stock of rationalistic knowledge that transcends national borders (Fourcade 2006; Frank and Meyer 2020). For instance, throughout the 1950s and 1960s the United Nations Programme on Public Administration co-founded collegiate programs around the globe for training domestic civil servants (United Nations 2008). This initiative co-sponsored the creation of Brazil's School of Public Administration in 1952 - which was the first in all Latin America to offer an academic degree on the subject (Oliveira and Rubin 2013). By 1970, nearly 80 countries received assistance from the United Nations to form

academic programs and training centers that also focused on public administration and development. Similarly, Moon and Wotipka (2006) find that master's in business administration and business school programs diffused to universities globally, particularly after the 1960s.

As the university system consolidates worldwide this produces a growing stratum of professionals and national elites steeped in a broadly common suite of global repertoires. This shift legitimates and anchors a highly generalized set of institutional blueprints and normative rules concerning the proper structure of social organization (Bromley and Meyer 2015; Drori et al., 2006; Frank and Meyer 2020; Meyer and Rowan 1977). Critically, these precepts brace the sovereignty and authority of individuals - rather than corporate, bureaucratic bodies - as the proper locus of strategic planning and coordinated action (Frank and Meyer 2020; Hwang 2006). As these global templates accrue legitimacy through expansion of the university system, they condition national contexts. Specifically, universities disperse templates for decentralized public management to countries around the world (Bromley and Meyer 2021; Fourcade 2006; Moon and Wotipka 2006). Disciplined by university knowledge, professionals steeped in liberal theories of public management enact these organizing principles, propelling the rationalization of states and societies (Hwang and Powell 2009; Pope et al., 2018; Schofer et al., 2020). Put differently, as the university system consolidates normative pressures to rationalize state bureaucracies intensify, prompting countries to adopt decentralization policies.

Hypothesis 5: National states more deeply embedded in the university system exhibit higher rates of administrative decentralization

Syncretic Policy Diffusion: The International Development Regime

The international development regime involves a loose collection of global organizations, understandings, and assumptions that structure how development is conceptualized, promoted, and practiced globally (Babb and Chorev 2016). While most sociological research focuses on the

World Bank and International Monetary Fund, my approach to the regime is more expansive, encompassing bilateral aid (Swiss and Longhofer 2016), development NGOs (Watkins, Swidler, and Hannon 2012), and research institutes (Conyers 1984; Stone 2000). Organizations from the development regime influence governmental action through two[5] main modalities (Babb and Chorev 2016):

> 1) Organizations selectively allocate funding and resources for development projects based on the priorities of lenders. This leads recipient governments to focus on problems underscored by the regime. These pressures center on coercively gatekeeping access to resources through funding conditionalities.
>
> 2) By exercising moral authority, international organizations disseminate norms and ideas. For instance, the United Nations is a global forum that codifies best practices and establishes benchmarks for developmental success (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Broome and Seabrooke 2015).

In general, world society and global political-economic scholars isolate these two modes of external persuasion: World society theorists prioritize the role of norms and ideas transmitted by professionals, experts, and scientists through international organizations (Schofer et al., 2012). Meanwhile, critical and global political economic scholars stress the importance of elite-controlled organizations like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. From this perspective, powerful interests embedded within these organizations compel countries to adopt public policies through resource-based conditionalities (Babb 2013; Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Kentikelenis and Babb 2019; McMichael 2012; Mohan 1996; Reinsberg et al., 2019. I

[5] Babb and Chorev (2016) list three but I distill these into two categories

posit that that the key issue here is how these theories conceptualize the role of resources in policy diffusion.

Traditionally, when asymmetric resource flows underlie a diffusion process this is treated as a coercive mechanism of policy transfer (Dimaggio and Powell 1983). This approach, however, does not distinguish between resource flows as an institutional pressure and more instrumentalist interpretations, which stress the influence of powerful interests. For instance, recent scholarship in sociological institutionalism characterizes the supply of organizational resources from transnational entities as part of a broader process of cultural isomorphism (Frank, Longhofer, and Schofer 2007; Longhofer and Schofer 2010; Schofer and Longhofer 2011). Similarly, international aid structures the professionalization of development NGOs and orients the issues they focus on - not through carrot and stick conditionalities, but, through byzantine procedures for the allocation of project funding (Suárez and Gugerty 2016; Swidler and Watkins 2017; Swiss 2016). In short, the way resources factor into diffusion processes remains imprecise and undertheorized.

To begin addressing this issue, I introduce the concept of syncretic diffusion: A form of policy transmission in which resource flows and technocratic discourses play a co-constitutive role in the dissemination of policy ideas. This places analytical attention on how institutional models become legitimized through the disbursement of transnational resources. To anchor this concept, I draw on historical evidence of the international development regime's newfound role in promoting local governance.

Historically, as funding for international development shifted away from state-led industrialization in the 1970s, foreign aid organizations began to stipulate that countries in the Global South should work directly with entities in civil society and, more broadly, promote

"good governance" (Doornbus 2001; Grindle 2004). When aid organizations perceived states as lacking proper institutions to support local governance, they would often bypass public officials to work directly with local organizations and communities (Dietrich 2013; Mansuri and Rao 2004; Rose 1999). This pervasive shift in funding priorities models a novel role for the state in national welfare – one that hinges on a more collaborative relationship with civil society and local populations. As countries are infused with aid resources that prioritize local forms of governance, policymakers face an escalating set of material and cultural pressures to pass decentralization reforms. One plausible explanation for this outcome is that national leaders seek to re-legitimize the state as a good-faith actor on the global stage; one that warrants continued financial support from the international community (e.g., see Robinson 2015). This is distinct from global political-economic accounts which stress the imposition of policy-reforms through strategic, carrot-and-stick conditionalities.

Hypothesis 6: Countries more reliant on aid resources that prioritize local forms of governance exhibit higher rates of administrative decentralization

Data: Measuring Decentralization

I constructed an original, longitudinal, cross-national dataset of administrative decentralization reforms from 1970-2014. Following conventional approaches to global-comparative data collection, I sampled all countries with a minimum population of 1 million (Reith, Paxton, and Hughes 2016). After omitting cases due to missing data on key covariates, 123 countries remain in the analysis. The data stem from three primary sources: 1) The United Cities and Local Governments Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralization Country Profiles (UCLG 2020), 2) the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment Report (OECD/UCLG 2019), and 3) the Commonwealth Local Government Forum Country Profiles

(CLGF 2018). I expand upon and triangulate these sources with country reports pertinent to decentralization from the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, and a variety of bi-lateral agencies. I use these reports to code three distinct types of decentralization reform: Constitutional enshrinement, local government reform laws, and decentralization framework laws.

Constitutional enshrinement, local government reforms, and decentralization frameworks are the institutional cornerstones of decentralization (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006; UN Habitat 2009**;** USAID 2009). States may adopt all three types of reform. For instance, Peru first enshrined decentralization in the 1979 constitution (McNulty 2011). Years later, in 2002, Peru passed a Framework Decentralization Law, and, in 2003 the Organic Law of Municipalities was approved. Moreover, in some cases local government laws are overhauled more than once. For instance, in 1997 the country of Georgia passed its Organic Law on Local Self-Government (OECD/UCLG 2019). This gave initial form to the decentralized structure of public administration, but, in 2014 policymakers replaced this measure with the more expansive Code on Local Self-Government, which placed greater emphasis on citizen-based participation in development. I count both these instances because they are separate laws, one overturned the other.

I coded 212 decentralization events among the 123 countries sampled in this study. A total of 103 countries, or 84% of the sample, passed at least 1 decentralization statute by the end of 2014. Meanwhile, 20 countries - many of them wealthier federations like Argentina, Australia, Germany, and the United States - did not pass a general, national statute on administrative decentralization. It is important to note that while these countries did not pass

general decentralization reforms other types of decentralization are adopted in these contexts (e.g., see Falleti 2005; Marwell 2004; UCLG Australia; Vetter 2009).

Data: Independent Variables

Local Party Control: When subnational party officials wield greater control over the careers of national politicians this increases the likelihood of decentralization (Willis, Garman, and Haggard 1999). Data on subnational control over the selection of national candidates draws from VDEM (Coppedge et al., 2021). This measure asks: "How centralized is legislative candidate selection within the parties?" Higher values indicate that local officials and citizens have greater, more direct control over the selection of national legislatures.

Economic growth: Scholars assert that economic stagnation is a key predictor of state decentralization (Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Selee and Tulchin 2004). This indicator measures the annual percentage growth rate of GDP based on a constant of 2010 U.S. dollars. Data are from the World Bank (2019).

Democracy: Higher levels of democracy ostensibly structure political opportunities for domestic actors to press for decentralization reforms (McNulty 2011; Selee and Tulchin 2004). I use the Varieties of Democracy (VDEM) electoral democracy index to assess the impact of democracy on rates of policy adoption (Coppedge et al., 2021). Like other measures such as Polity IV and Freedom House, the VDEM electoral democracy index interprets competition among parties vying for approval from the national electorate as a cornerstone democratic processes (Lindberg et al., 2014). This measure also captures freedom of association, free media, and freedom of expression as key elements of competitive elections. While there are similarities between the

VDEM, Polity, Freedom House indices, the electoral democracy index used here offers potential improvements. For instance Freedom House relies on secondary sources throughout the 1970s and 1980s while more recent data depends on country experts. This shift in sources (and potential coding) over time may distort the integrity of the time series data (Coppedge et al., 2015). Similarly, the Polity IV index lacks systematic checks on inter-coder reliability over time, leading to concerns about the conceptual validity of this measure. The VDEM dataset complements and improves upon these indices by using country experts for the duration of the data, drawing on multiple, independent coders for each non-factual question, and deploying inter-coder reliability tests throughout[4].

IMF Structural Conditions: The data draw from Kentikelenis, Stubbs, and King (2016) who compiled a comprehensive list of IMF structural adjustment conditions from 1985 - 2014. Using search terms such as decentralization, devolution, deconcentration, municipal, and local, I generate a measure for IMF conditions that focus on administrative decentralization. I compiled a list of conditions generated by the search terms above. I then cut any conditions that do not involve administrative decentralization. For instance, many conditions include the term local but focus on privatization. Moreover, I remove conditions that diminish rather than strengthen the role of subnational governments. For instance, a 1992 structural adjustment condition in Estonia rescinded the authority of local governments to regulate the prices of state enterprises. This left a total of 47 structural adjustment conditions pertinent to administrative decentralization. For example, in 1995 the IMF finalized a condition that obligated the Philippines to create a program for devolution.

University Enrollments: I use a country's gross tertiary enrollment ratio as a proxy for the expansion of universities around the world. Due to gaps in the data among countries in the Global South, I interpolate these values. As receptor sites in world society, universities and their enrollments expand precipitously throughout the time period (Frank and Meyer 2020). This growth intensifies normative pressures to rationalize state bureaucracies according to liberal principles of public management (Schofer et al., 2020). This measure includes students enrolled in International Standard Classification 5 and 6 (which correspond with general conceptualizations of higher education) as a proportion of the relevant population age group. Data are from the World Bank (2019).

International Development Regime: I measure the technocratic and material impacts of the international development regime using the Net Official Development Assistance Received as a % of Gross National Income. In the 1970s foreign aid pivoted away from state-led planning to focus increasingly on local governance programs. Foreign aid flows stem from 29 OECD countries as well as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations Development Program. Data are from the World Bank (2019).

DATA: CONTROL VARIABLES

Total Population: Estimates are drawn from the World Bank (2019).

% Urban Population: Estimates are drawn from the World Bank (2019).

Federal: I generate a dummy variable for federal countries following guidelines from the Forum of Federations (2021).

Gross Domestic Product per Capita: This indicator represents economic development within a given country. Data come from the World Bank (2019).

Post-Civil War: Civil war is an intra-state conflict that involves sustained combat, organized armed forces, and results in a minimum of 1,000 battle-related deaths in a single year. Data on civil war stems for the Correlates of War database (Dixon and Sarkees 2015). I generate a post-civil war dummy variable by coding a value of 1 for a period of five years following the end of civil war.

Method and Diagnostics

In this study I use event history analysis to assess the rate and timing of adopting decentralization policies across 123 countries (Allison 2014; Box-Steffensmeier and Jones 2004). Event history models analyze events that occur at specific points in time. This differs from regression in that it assesses rates of change as opposed to continuous amounts. Like regression, however, event history models provide coefficients and standard errors, indicating the effect that independent variables have on the rate of a given outcome. Positive coefficients suggest that a variable increases the rate of policy adoption while negative coefficients indicate variables that decrease the rate of adoption. I treat constitutional enshrinement, local government codes, and decentralization frameworks as co-equal events, each coded from 0 to 1. Put differently, the model treats each type of reform as a general decentralization event. Thus, decentralization events are recurrent rather than absorbing. If countries pass all three types of reform they remain in the model because all remain at risk for passing entirely new local government codes. Six countries in this study passed all three types of decentralization reform

and then adopted a new local government code. Diagnostics show that if these countries are removed after event #3 then findings remain substantively similar. The equation for this modeling technique is below. Analyses also deploy robust standard errors.

$$h(t) = e^{(a+b_1X_1+b_2X_2+\ldots+b_nX_n)}$$

I ran a number of diagnostics and sensitivity checks. First, I considered other event-history techniques such as shared frailty models. These models involve strong assumptions concerning the independence of policy events. Put differently, these models check for whether some countries are more prone to passing decentralization reforms than others independent of covariates in the model. Findings are substantively similar and available upon request. I also checked for potential collinearity and outliers. Based on these checks I drop five observations from the measure for development aid. These are exceptional case-years where 75% or more of a country's Gross National Income is reliant on foreign aid. I drop five similarly extreme observations for GDP growth. In a series of unreported analyses I also controlled for other civil conflict measures including linguistic fractionalization and ethnic polarization. In addition, I controlled for other potential political-economic pressures including foreign direct investment stocks, international trade, exports, and colonial history. None of these factors were significant. I also examined hazard rates to check the proportional hazard assumption. Coefficients remain similar over time.

Table 1. Correlation Matrix for All Variables

	Population Total	% Urban	Federal	GDP capita	Post-Civil War	Local Party	GDP Growth	Democracy	Tertiary Enrollments	IMF Conditions
Total Population	1.00									
% Urban	-0.08	1.00								
Federal	0.22	0.29	1.00							
GDP capita	-0.02	0.53	0.27	1.00						
Post-Civil War	0.06	-0.20	0.00	-0.15	1.00					
Local Party Control	0.03	0.32	0.20	0.43	-0.14	1.00				
GDP Growth	0.10	-0.11	-0.05	-0.12	-0.03	-0.05	1.00			
Democracy	0.00	0.54	0.30	0.56	-0.17	0.57	-0.09	1.00		
Tertiary Enrollments	-0.01	0.69	0.27	0.73	-0.18	0.37	-0.10	0.62	1.00	
IMF Conditions	-0.01	-0.01	-0.03	-0.03	0.00	-0.02	0.00	0.01	0.01	1.00
Development Aid	-0.13	-0.53	-0.26	-0.31	0.10	-0.18	0.04	-0.31	0.42	0.02

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, All Variables in Analyses

Variable	Mean	Median	St. Dev.	Min	Max	N
Decentralization	.05	0.00	0.23	0.00	1.00	4,261
Total Population	43800000	10000000	148000000	374215	1364270000	4,261
% Urban	50.33	50.08	23.76	2.98	108.25	4,261
Federal	0.16	0.00	0.36	0.00	1.00	4,261
GDP per Capita	6411.37	1367.38	12058.54	57.63	102910.40	4,261
Post-Civil War	0.10	0.00	.30	0	1	4,261
Local Party Control	0.33	0.29	1.29	-2.48	4.67	4,261
GDP Growth	3.78	3.91	5.50	-30.15	39.49	4,261
Democracy	0.46	0.41	0.29	0.01	0.92	4,261
Tertiary Enrollments	20.77	13.31	22.62	0.00	122.40	4,261
IMF Conditions	0.01	0.00	0.14	0.00	6.00	4,261
Development Aid	4.70	1.32	7.24	-0.68	72.06	4,261

Note: In some cases % urban and tertiary enrollment values are above 100 due to computation. Findings are substantively similar if these few case-years are removed. Available upon request.

Findings

Table 3, below, depicts results for the global sample of countries. In this table, I impute 0-values for development aid among Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries. Then, following Lim and Tsutsui (2012), tables 4 and 5 show results that distinguish between countries in the Global North and the Global South. These groups are organized by membership in the DAC[6]. Doing so differentiates between countries that export and those that receive foreign aid. Table 4 shows that in the Global South countries with higher levels of GDP per capita adopt fewer decentralization policies. Every unit increase in GDP per capita results in a .001% reduction in the risk of decentralizing. When local party officials have greater control over the selection of national representatives, these countries are more likely to decentralize. Every unit increase in local control results in a 13% increase in the risk of decentralizing. This provides

preliminary support for accounts that stress political bargaining between subnational and national party officials (Willis, Garman, and Haggard 1999). Countries with lower rates of economic growth are more likely to decentralize. This supports the idea that economic stagnation stimulates the adoption of decentralization policies (Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Selee and Tulchin 2004). Every unit decrease in economic growth results in a 2% increase in the rate of policy ratification. Countries with higher levels of democracy are more likely to pass decentralization reforms. This supports the idea that democratization presents a political opportunity structure for decentralization reforms (McNulty 2011). Every unit increase in democracy increases the risk of decentralizing by 144%. university enrollments exhibit a notable effect. Every unit increase in tertiary enrollments heightens the risk of decentralizing by 1%. In many cases tertiary enrollments increase precipitously over time. Infusions of foreign aid are also an important predictor of policy adoption in the Global South. Every unit increase in foreign aid as a % of GNI increases the risk of decentralizing by 2%. Meanwhile total population, % urban, federal, civil war, and IMF conditionalities are not significant predictors in these countries. Table 5 shows results for countries in the Global North. Those with higher levels of urbanization are less likely to decentralize. Every unit increase in urbanization leads to a 4% reduction in the risk of decentralizing. Higher levels of local political power over national representatives predicts lower rates of decentralization. Every unit increase in local party power results in a 28% decrease in the risk of decentralizing among these countries. This suggests that countries with longstanding systems of local political control are less likely to pass contemporary decentralization reforms. Finally, tertiary enrollments are also a strong predictor in the Global North: Every unit increase of higher education enrollments escalates the risk of decentralizing by 3%. In what follows I discuss these results.

Table 3. Event History Analysis of Decentralization Statutes All Countries, 1970 - 2014

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Population Total	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
% Urban	0.98***	.98***	.98***	0.98***
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Federal Countries	0.42*	0.43*	0.43*	0.44*
	(0.150)	(0.158)	(0.159)	(0.167)
GDP per capita	0.99	0.99*	0.99	0.99*
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(0.000)
Post-Civil War	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.95
	(0.199)	(0.199)	(0.199)	(0.198)
Local Party Control	1.02	1.05	1.05	1.05
	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.056)	(0.056)
GDP Growth	.98	.98	.98	.98
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Democracy	2.36**	2.03*	2.02*	1.99*
	(0.760)	(0.649)	(0.649)	(0.570)
Tertiary Enrollments		1.01*	1.01**	1.01**
		(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
IMF Conditionality			1.39	1.39
			(0.269)	(0.272)
Development Aid				1.02***
				(0.183)
Constant	0.080***	0.087***	0.087***	0.086***
	(0.013)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Wald Chi-Square	.	.	.	.
Observations	4,261	4,261	4,261	4,261
N Events	212	212	212	212
Countries	123	123	123	123

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 4. Event History Analysis of Decentralization Statutes, Non-DAC Countries, 1970 - 2014

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Population Total	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
% Urban	0.99	.99	.99	0.99
	(0.004)	(0.230)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Federal Countries	0.60	0.64	0.65	0.68
	(0.202)	(0.231)	(0.232)	(0.250)
GDP per capita	0.99*	0.99*	0.99*	0.99*
	(.000)	(.000)	(.000)	(0.000)
Post-Civil War	0.91	0.92	0.92	0.91
	(0.189)	(0.188)	(0.188)	(0.012)
Local Party Control	1.09	1.13*	1.13*	1.13*
	(0.061)	(0.063)	(0.063)	(0.064)
GDP Growth	.98*	.98*	.98*	.98*
	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Democracy	3.16**	2.62**	2.60**	2.44*
	(1.166)	(0.985)	(0.968)	(0.914)
Tertiary Enrollments		1.01**	1.01**	1.01**
		(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
IMF Conditionality			1.33	1.34
			(0.261)	(0.265)
Development Aid				1.02*
				(0.007)
Constant	0.063***	0.69***	0.69***	0.055***
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Wald Chi-Square	41.77	46.25	46.25	74.15
Observations	3,373	3,373	3,373	3,373
N Events	188	188	188	188
Countries	102	102	102	102

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 5. Event History Analysis of Decentralization Statutes in DAC Countries, 1970 - 2014

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)
Population Total	1.00	1.00
	(0.000)	(0.000)
% Urban	0.98	.96*
	(0.010)	(0.015)
Federal Countries	0.19	0.19
	(0.187)	(0.202)
GDP per capita	1.00**	1.00
	(.000)	(.000)
Post-Civil War	-	-
	-	-
Local Party Control	0.67*	0.72*
	(0.115)	(0.095)
GDP Growth	1.05	1.06
	(0.078)	(0.065)
Democracy	3.12	1.66
	(3.853)	(1.68)
Tertiary Enrollments		1.03**
		(0.010)
IMF Conditionality		-
		-
Development Aid		-
		-
Constant	0.036*	0.100*
	(0.054)	(0.106)
Wald Chi-Square	35.62	35.62
Observations	888	888
N Events	24	24
Countries	21	21

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Syncretic Diffusion: The International Development Regime

In this section I provide historical background to frame and help theorize how the international development regime operates as a source of syncretic diffusion that prompts countries to pass decentralization reforms. I also briefly interpret the effects of democratization, university enrollments, local power over national representatives, and GDP growth. Throughout this discussion I provide recommendations for future research.

In the immediate decades following World War Two development was largely planned and executed by central governments using top-down protocols to stimulate national industrialization (Hall 1989; Hirschman 1981). From Keynesian interventionism to Socialist modes of centralized coordination, state-led planning signaled sovereignty and modernity in the post-war era (Hwang 2006). At the time, there was widespread agreement that bureaucratic, expert-led decisions optimized economic growth and facilitated nation-building. However, by the early 1970s this consensus began to fracture. Due to heated criticisms and pervasive failures, development professionals and organizations came to view bureaucratic approaches to development as an unequivocal disaster (McMichael 2012).

By the early 1970s funding from the development regime began to pivot away from state-led industrialization. From integrated rural development and basic needs (Ruttan 1984) to participatory rural appraisal (Chambers 1994), social capital (Evans 1996), and civil society (Edwards and Hulme 1996), the regime began to fund local, participatory forms of governance. Fueling the delegitimization of bureaucratic rule, development NGOs emerged as the "people-centered" alternative to state-led planning. By the mid-1980s NGOs were the new, favored vehicle of donor programs (Van der Heijden 1987; Mitlin, Hickey, and Bebbington 2007). Their emphasis on self-reliance, participation, and empowerment contrasted sharply with development models of the 1950s and 1960s (Cernea 1988; Korten 1987; Turner and Hulme 1997; Watkins, Swidler, and Hannon 2012). This change aligned with the shifting discourses of intellectuals and development professionals who, by the 1970s, came to view orthodox interventions by the state as outmoded, rigid, and overly hierarchical (Chabbot 1999; Conyers 1984). It is amid this overarching programmatic and discursive shift that contemporary decentralization reforms emerged.

As Conyers (1984) notes, early efforts to decentralize the state mapped onto the development regime's new focus on rural development and basic social needs. For example, with direct support from Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United States, Kenya initiated a Special Rural Development Program in 1971 (Chambers 1974; Cohen and Hook 1987; Wallis 1990). This project aimed to bolster incomes for rural denizens by encouraging local representatives to participate in development planning and management. By 1976 the project ended, but two related changes endured: 1) The program consolidated new organizational roles and procedures that, 2) legitimized district (i.e. local) planning as the proper locus of development administration (Barkan and Chege 1989; Ergas 1982). Specifically, District Development Officers gained the authority to craft local development plans. When Kenya launched its "District Focus" decentralization reform in 1983, national policymakers grafted this policy onto these new administrative roles (Ruttan 1990). With ongoing support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and experts at Harvard's Institute for International Development, President Moi decreed that districts around the country would become hubs for rural development (Cohen and Hook 1987). This approach aimed to involve "the people in identifying, designing, implementing, and managing projects and programmes in the districts," and asserted that decision-making should be local to offset any problems affiliated with centralization (Ergas 1982: 443).

Over time, the international development regime expanded its commitment to decentralized forms of governance, and pressures for states to decentralize intensified (Cheema and Rondinelli 2007). For instance, after the Cold War foreign aid organizations began to fund conflict mitigation programs in war-torn areas such as Bosnia, Nepal, and Sierra Leone (Brancati 2009; Leonardsson and Rudd 2015). Promoting decentralization was integral to these efforts.

More broadly, the widespread emphasis on local, participatory governance prompted states to embrace decentralization. For example, in 1990, Honduras passed a decentralization law that granted substantial autonomy to local governments for administering public welfare. Prior to this shift, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsored local governance programs throughout the country (Blair 2000; Lippman 1998). In the 1980s, USAID funded municipal capacities and development projects, promoted a new legal framework for local governments, and, they trained development NGOs and municipal associations to be knowledgeable proponents of decentralization (Lippman 1998). These efforts reinforced Honduras' efforts to decentralize the state. Similarly, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA 2003) found that party leaders in Laos encountered the idea of decentralization incrementally through donor-funded projects. They conclude that, "*numerous development projects, particularly with external support, fostered the concept of bottom-up, participatory development with local beneficiaries making decisions. Gradually, Party and GOL authorities included this decentralized approach in their policies and speeches*" (SIDA 2003: 28). These efforts culminated in a series of decentralization reforms passed between 2000 and 2003.

In general, the pressures elicited by the development regime do not accord with explanations that stress strategic resource conditionalities. Nor is this a clear-cut process of institutional emulation. This does not rule out coercive acts from the development regime (e.g. see Fanthorpe 2005: 35-36). However, across the Global South the spread of decentralization policies is better explained by dual pressures elicited by the resource flows and technocratic discourses that stem from development aid. As funding for local, participatory forms of governance consolidates this levies a mutualistic - or syncretic - set of material and institutional pressures: Countries more reliant on aid resources that champion local governance pass

decentralization reforms at higher rates. One plausible explanation for this dynamic is that national leaders seek to (re)legitimize the state as a good-faith actor in the pursuit of development: Building on local governance institutions sponsored by foreign aid, domestic policymakers adopt the developmental ideals of the international community by decentralizing the state (For similar types of examples see Dawson and Swiss 2020; Robinson 2015; Swidler and Watkins 2017; Thornton, Dorius, Swindle 2015). Doing so may signal that states in the Global South merit continued financial support from the international development community (Robinson 2015). However, evidence on this front remains preliminary. One reason for this limitation is the data on foreign aid remains aggregated. Additional work is needed to sensitize the concept of syncretic diffusion and clarify how resource flows and technocratic discourses levy a co-constitutive set of pressures. One potential avenue for this work is to examine other instances of "coreless diffusion" – cases in which policies are first adopted in the Global South and then circulate worldwide (Barrett, Kurzman, and Shanahan 2010; Robinson 2015). Examples of such instruments include participatory budgeting and conditional cash transfers which are now common features of development aid (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2016; Goldfrank 2012; Peck and Theodore 2015).

This study makes four additional contributions. Findings show that countries with higher levels of democracy are more likely to decentralize in the Global South. This supports the idea that democratization presents political opportunities for domestic actors to pass decentralization policies (McNulty 2011). From Brazil (Baiocchi 2006) and Chile (Eaton 2004) to Ghana (Debrah 2004), Indonesia (Carnegie 2008), and the Philippines (Cariño 2007), decentralization reforms are frequently packaged as part of country's democratic transition. I suggest this supports the idea that decentralization is widely viewed as a form of democratic state-building. These policies

routinely formalize democratic procedures in subnational administrations and governments. Such changes range from giving voice to local populations in administrative decision-making to constructing new, fully elected subnational governments. For instance, Angola's 2007 Local State Administrative Law obligated subnational administrators to consult with entities in civil society on matters pertaining to socio-economic development (Yilmaz and Felicio 2009). Meanwhile, Bolivia's Law of Popular Participation in 1994 created 198 new, fully elected municipal governments around the country (Faguet 2012). These municipalities became responsible for issues pertaining to health, education, and the environment. Moreover, promoting participation in these affairs was integral to this reform. Still, the general impact that these policies have on democratic institutions is a matter for future research.

Discussion and Conclusion

As bureaucratic modes of rule are delegitimized new forms of participatory governance become prevalent. These new models are built around liberal conceptions of individual sovereignty as the proper locus of strategic planning and organizational management. Administrative decentralization is emblematic of this shift, and, I argue that two global processes underpin these reforms. Primarily, I developed an account of the shifting discourses and funding priorities associated with the international development regime. I argued that the development regime is a syncretic source of knowledge production and resource-based regulation that prompts countries to decentralize the state. Viewed in this light, the international development regime helps to explain phenomena overlooked by conventional approaches to policy diffusion. For instance, the World Bank is now a key sponsor of participatory budgeting in cities around the world (Goldfrank 2012). Global-political economic accounts, which focus on structural adjustment conditions, and world society, which highlights broad discursive pressures, have

difficulty theorizing the World Bank's role in these reforms. Approaching these efforts as a syncretic process of both knowledge production and resource-based regulation offers a fruitful avenue to assess these now prevalent types of administrative reforms (e.g., see Goldman 2005;). Similarly, global-political economy and world society approaches overlook changes brought about by development experts and NGOs (Barret et al., 2010; Swidler and Watkins 2017; Watkins et al., 2012). For instance, the veritable explosion of development NGOs across the Global South generates new patterns of inequality that link the capricious priorities of wealthy donors to transitory modes of economic opportunity in places like Malawi (Swidler and Watkins 2017). The approach outlined here embraces a dual role for cultural and resource-based pressures.

The expansion of university enrollments worldwide accelerates the spread of decentralization policies. What explains this result? As organizational hubs in world society (Bromley and Meyer 2015; Frank and Meyer 2020; Schofer, Ramirez, and Meyer 2020) universities disseminate global models of decentralized management to a growing cadre of domestic technocrats, escalating normative pressures to decentralize the state. For example, in 1971 Sudan passed an extensive Local Government Act (Rondinelli 1981). In this case it was an academic who both advocated for and designed this new administrative system (Norris 1983). Formerly a prominent researcher at Khartoum University, Dr. Gaafar Bakheit became the Minister for Local Development and sought to pry open access to the state by encouraging participation in governmental affairs. Similarly, the University of the Philippines and the country's "Local Government Academy" facilitated the passage of decentralization policies in the 1990s (Angeles and Magno 2004). Similarly, Bolivia's 1994 Law of Popular Participation, one of the most extensive decentralization policies in the world, was drafted behind closed doors

by technocratic elites; when first announced, this law was met with widespread opposition from civil society (Faguet 2012:15). Moreover, this account helps to explain decentralization reforms in the Global North. For instance, decentralization was spearheaded by technocrats in both Japan and France (Barret 2000; Schmidt 2007). This imagery corresponds with work in economic sociology which shows that the transnational spread of neoliberal economists and laissez-faire principles contribute to market liberalization around the world (Fourcade 2006; Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002). Moreover, this account addresses a puzzling pattern: Decentralization reforms are routinely advanced from the top-down by intellectuals and other technocratic elites (Barrett 2000; Eaton 2004; Faguet 2012: 15; Heller 2001; McNulty 2011:54 ; Oxhorn et al., 2004; Schmidt 2007). Additional research is needed to concretize how the university system disseminates templates for decentralized public management across world society.

I find preliminary support for the hypothesis that local power over the careers of national representatives escalates the likelihood of policy adoption in the Global South (Willis, Garman, and Haggard 1999). From this perspective, when national representatives are more accountable to subnational officials and citizens countries are more likely to pass decentralization reforms. In these contexts subnational officials ostensibly wield greater bargaining power over national elites, and this incentivizes the reallocation of political authority through decentralization. I also find support for the idea that economic stagnation stimulates the adoption of decentralization policies, particularly in the Global South (Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Selee and Tulchin 2004). These accounts suggest that national leaders pursue decentralization to revitalize the economy. In theory, decentralization transforms sluggish bureaucratic institutions into more flexible, responsive forms of developmental statecraft.

CONCLUSION

As bureaucratic modes of rule are delegitimized new forms of participatory governance become prevalent. These new models are built around liberal conceptions of individual sovereignty as the proper locus of strategic planning and organizational management. In this dissertation I conceptualize administrative decentralization as key component of this institutional shift. Using an original dataset, I then assess the transnational diffusion of these policies. Primarily, I introduce the concept of syncretic diffusion to help explain the spread of these policies across the Global South. This effort remains in the early stages: Using improved sources of data future work should refine our understanding how resources flows and technocratic discourses levy a mutualistic set of pressures on national states. Such work might consider how backlash against the postwar liberal order affects these dynamics (Bromley, Schofer, and Longhofer 2020).

There are several other areas in need of additional research. To start, scholars need to clarify the interplay between democratization and decentralization (McNulty 2011; Oxhorn 2004). Regarding institutional explanations, future research could focus on the liminal boundaries between the university system and the international development regime. Doing so could enhance our understanding of how institutional diffusion operates within and across these imbricated arenas of global activity. These dynamics matter because the world society approach views decentralization as a broad-based shift that stems, largely, from the consolidation of the university system. Yet, this study indicates that decentralization reforms also emerged due to a specific constellation of knowledge production and resource-based regulation: the international development regime. Elucidating these dynamics has implications for understanding the ongoing shift toward neoliberal forms of participatory governance in polities around the world.

CHAPTER 4

Democratic Decentralization and Participatory Democracy Around the World, 1980 - 2015

How does state decentralization impact participatory democracy? Drawing on a new, worldwide dataset of administrative decentralization statutes, this is the first study to explore whether and how these reforms impact democratic institutions across a global sample of countries. Contemporary research on the links between decentralization and democracy span the social sciences (Baiocchi, Heller, and Silva 2011; Brown 2015; Heller, Harilal and Chaudhuri 2007; Manor 1999; Putnam 1992; Ribot 2003; Swyngedouw 2004; Tiebout 1952). In this study I focus on a subset of these debates involving decentralization to subnational governments. I organize these ideas into two schools of thought: A political modernization approach (Faguet 2014; Fung and Wright 2003; Manor 1999), and a political process account that draws from the 'democratic deepening' school (Baiocchi et al., 2011; Heller 2003; 2009; Heller and Evans 2015).

First, an expansive, largely normative literature asserts that decentralization to elected subnational governments strengthens democratic institutions (Faguet 2012; Manor 1999). Meanwhile, decentralization policies that redistribute authority to appointed officials, a process called de-concentration, are thought to weaken democratic institutions. This is the first study to empirically assess these assumptions. Second, political process accounts stress that the impacts of decentralization on democracy are mediated by contingent, domestic factors (Baiocchi 2005; Heller 2012). Critically, these forces are expected to operate strictly within the context of decentralization to elected subnational governments, or democratic decentralization. For instance, political sociologists find that the effects of decentralization on democracy are moderated by the strength of domestic civil society (Baiocchi, Heller and Silva 2011; Heller

2001); this view aligns more broadly with the emphasis on social capital as a medium for democratization (Paxton 2002; Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1994). From this perspective, decentralization reforms depend on a vigorous civil sphere to press these policies into deeper forms of democratic governance. A second claim is that the effects of democratic decentralization are moderated by the relative autonomy of subnational governments from central administrators (Crook and Manor 2018; Ribot 2009); elected subnational governments with the sovereignty to pass policies and introduce programs of local interest are expected to strengthen democracy more than those with greater oversight by locally-stationed bureaucrats.

In this study I leverage a new, large-N dataset to assess and theorize the impacts of decentralization policies on democratic institutions in countries around the world. Using longitudinal panel models with fixed effects, I control for a variety of factors thought to shape democratization. I make two primary contributions. Net of conventional factors, I find that when countries pass decentralization reforms to strengthen elected, as opposed to appointed subnational governments, these policies are associated with higher levels of participatory democracy. This lends support for functional accounts which view democratic decentralization as an essential precondition for deepening democracy. Notably however, I also find that the effect is temporary; in general democratic decentralization initiates short-lived improvements to participatory democracy. Over time the significant, positive effect of these reforms wanes. Sensitivity analyses reveal this effect is driven by cases that formally democratize local governments *through* decentralization policies. Put differently, when countries with longstanding locally elected governments pass decentralization reforms – this elicits no effect. Instead, when countries transform their local governments into fully democratic entities through political decentralization, this temporarily boosts participatory democracy.

Second, I find that the positive, albeit temporary effects of democratic decentralization are strengthened when central government administrators are more involved at the subnational level. Put differently, in countries where elected subnational governments are less autonomous (i.e., prone to interference by locally appointed bureaucrats), this provides an added benefit to participatory democracy in the early stages of decentralization. What explains this finding? I argue that in the early years of democratic decentralization locally appointed bureaucrats leverage their technocratic expertise to both socialize and discipline new local government actors. Using suggestive evidence from the Ivory Coast and Uganda, I posit that appointed officials train personnel to accomplish the mundane procedures of public administration – such as routine bookkeeping. While this constrains the autonomy of locally elected governments, it also strengthens the capacity of these entities to provide transparent and accountable governance. In what follows I provide additional background on decentralization to subnational governments, or administrative decentralization. I then describe the data, outline the method of analysis, and present the findings. I conclude with recommendations for future research on the links between decentralization and democratization.

Decentralization and Democracy

Scholars have long deliberated how various forms of economic and political liberalism shape democratic institutions (De Tocqueville 2003; Friedman 2016; Habermas 1991; Putnam 1992; Rodrik 2011). In recent decades these issues garnered new attention. Political sociologists, for instance, increasingly focus on the links between neoliberal reforms and the rise of participatory democratic governance (Baiocchi and Ganuza 2016; Fung and Wright 2003; Lee, Mcnulty, and Schafer 2013; Lee, Mcquarrie, and Walker 2015; Pacewicz 2016; Polletta 2016). More broadly, political scientists focus on how various types of economic and political

liberalization impact democracy (Leys 2003; Li and Reuveny 2003; Rudra 2005; Weyland 2004). These sprawling literatures tend to focus on the links between various forms of market liberalization and democracy. Here, I focus on how a distinct type of state liberalization, administrative decentralization, impacts democratic institutions.

Decentralization comprises a cluster of liberal reforms that redistribute centralized public functions and political authority across markets, civil society, and subnational tiers of the state (Cheema and Rondinelli 2007; Rondinelli et al., 1983). Drawing on an original dataset, I focus on a subset of these policies: Administrative decentralization. From erecting local communities in Armenia (Drampian 2004) and district councils in Zambia (Conyers 1984), to streamlining subnational administrations across France (Schmidt 2007) and Japan (Barret 2007), administrative decentralization restructures the authority to govern national development across subnational territories. Substantively, this type of liberalization extends the authority to plan and manage public services such as education (Astiz, Wiseman, and Baker 2002; Fiske 1996), healthcare (Bossert and Beauvais 2002; Saltman, Busse, Figueras 2006), and environmental stewardship (Larson and Soto 2008; Ribot 2003) from central to subnational governments (Conyers 1983; Rondinelli, Nellis, and Cheema 1983). These reforms aim to deepen democracy, improve public services, and secure political stability. Ostensibly, these improvements arise by repositioning the state to interface more directly with entities in civil society and markets. How do these policies impact democratic institutions?

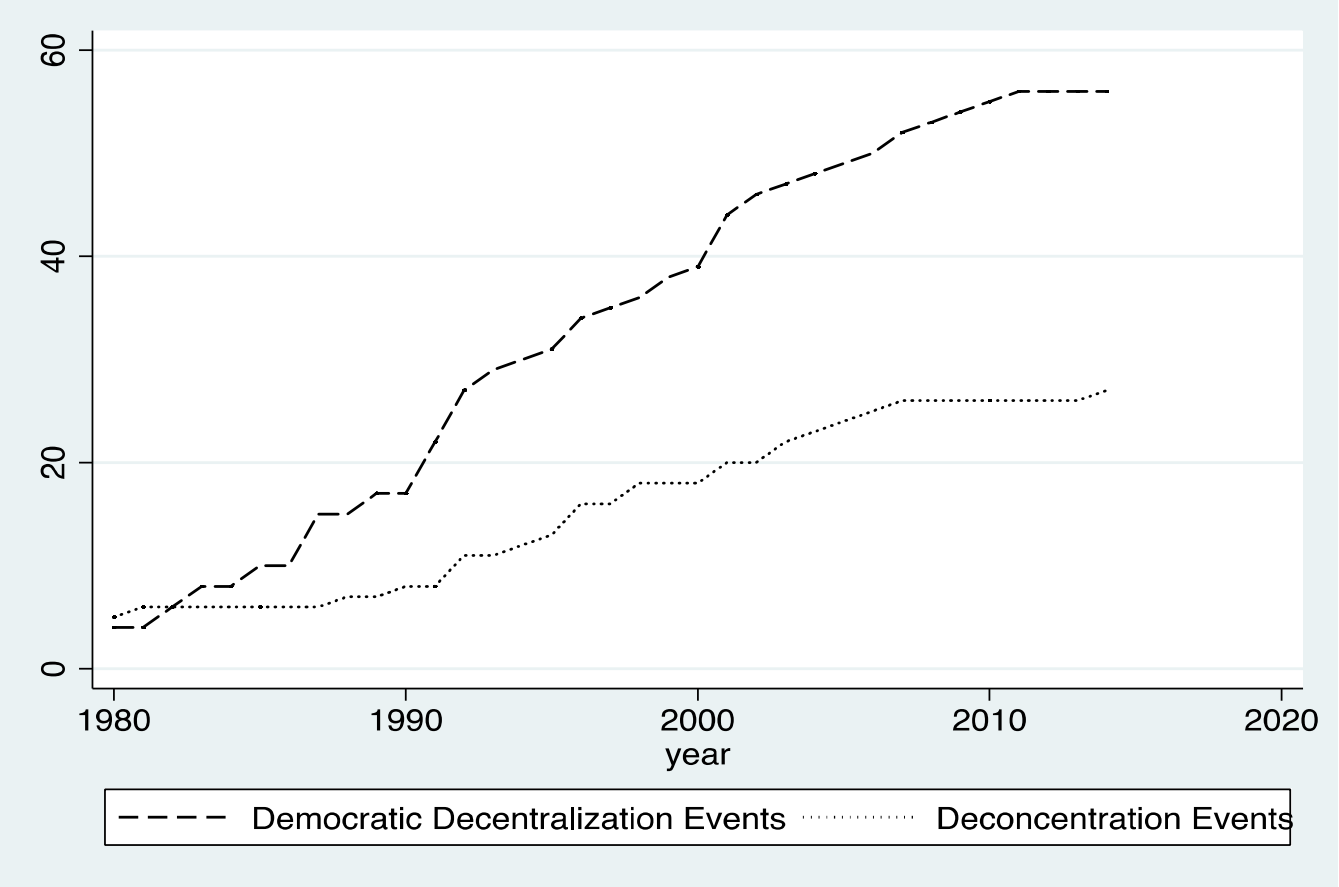
Competing Explanations

Functional

Scholars have long debated the benefits and potential drawbacks of decentralization to subnational governments (Faguet 2014; Litvack, Ahmad, and Bird 1998; Manor 1999;

Prud'Homme 1995; Treisman 2007). Conventionally, these accounts recognize two types of administrative decentralization: Those that confer authority to democratically elected governments (i.e., democratic decentralization) and those that deconcentrate authority to appointed officials. Figure 4, below, depicts global trends for these two distinct types of administrative decentralization. Generally, it is widely assumed that democratic decentralization strengthens democratic institutions by making local governments more transparent, responsive, flexible, efficient, autonomous, accountable, and participatory (Faguet 2012; Fung and Wright 2003). Viewed as a best practice for re-designing public administration, democratic decentralization is expected to alter the incentive structure for local actors; these changes prod subnational politicians to base their legitimacy on the expressed preferences of local publics. One commonly proposed mechanism for these outcomes is that democratic decentralization provides new forums for political education and citizenship training (Maddick 1963; Smith 1985). From this perspective, subnational governments provide new opportunities for historically marginalized groups to participate in public affairs. These changes facilitate individual empowerment, community-based mobilization, and political training for the general population. The skills imparted by these new forums for public engagement are thought to enhance transparency, reduce political corruption, and refine party-based leadership. In short, decentralization is thought to strengthen democracy by training a broader range of actors in the population to be proactive citizens who hold local officials to account. Empirically, these explanations typically rely on case studies that document the impacts of democratic decentralization within single country (e.g., see Faguet 2012; Grindle 2007).

Figure 4. Democratic Decentralization and Deconcentration Events, Cumulative 1980 - 2014



Alternatively, decentralization policies that redistribute authority to a coterie of appointed officials are expected to weaken democratic institutions. Historically, this suspicion is warranted: After Ethiopia decentralized its state administration to appointed officials in 1975, a military junta called "The Derg" utilized this new apparatus to commit genocide (Ayele 2011). A similarly striking instance occurred in Tanzania; after passing a decentralization law in 1972, bureaucrats sought to reorganize the rural populace around these governmental tenets; this involved forcibly removing millions of denizens from their families to place them into rationally planned villages (Maro 1990). In either case, this is the first study to empirically assess these assumptions across a global sample of countries.

H1: Countries that pass democratic decentralization reforms fortify democracy

H2: Countries that pass decentralization reforms that confer authority to appointed officials weaken democracy

Political Process Accounts: Democratic Deepening

Political sociologists theorize that deepening democracy in the context of decentralization rests on two conceptual pillars: Tocquevillian and Weberian (Baiocchi et. al, 2011). The Tocquevillian approach focuses on how civil society impacts the formation and representation of preferences among citizens. Countries with a stronger civil sphere tend to make local governments more transparent, accountable, and responsive to citizen demands. Put differently, the impacts of democratic decentralization are mediated by the strength of civil society in any given country. This accords with scholarship on social capital, which views the strength of associational ties as integral to democratization (Paxton 2002), particularly in the context of decentralization (Putnam 1992). In short, the Tocquevillian approach expects the strength of civil society to moderate the impact of democratic decentralization in a positive direction.

H3: Decentralization fortifies democracy when these policies are mediated by a stronger civil society

The Weberian approach to democratic deepening stresses the chain of sovereignty. This concept focuses on the vertical integration of public action from civil society upwards through various levels of the state. In short, this is the degree to which political representation translates inputs and outputs: From citizens to public officials to actualizing local preferences into policy. In general, scholars agree that when subnational governments are shielded from interference by locally-stationed bureaucrats, this safeguards the wishes of local denizens throughout the policymaking process. Put differently when subnational governments are more autonomous this

preserves the chain of sovereignty. In effect, subnational political autonomy deepens democracy by protecting the demands of local constituents as the policymaking process unfolds.

H4: Decentralization strengthens democracy when these policies are moderated by higher levels of subnational political autonomy

Data: Measuring Decentralization

Researchers measure decentralization in various ways (Ebel and Yilmaz 2002; Ivanya and Shah 2012; Rodden 2004; Schneider 2003; Treisman 2007). These approaches primarily rely on data from OECD countries, and, they typically construct measures to capture the fiscal, political, and administrative dimensions of decentralization at a single point in time. Moreover, these studies do not permit comparisons across different types of decentralization. This is an important limitation because decentralization to elected subnational governments, or democratic decentralization is viewed as distinct from reforms that redistribute authority to appointed officials (Manor 1999). This is the first study to differentiate between and examine the effects of these distinct types of administrative decentralization. To do so, I build on an original, longitudinal, cross-national dataset of administrative decentralization policies in 125 countries from 1980-2015. Expanding on the dataset outlined in chapter one, I develop the following two measures:

Democratic Decentralization: To construct this indicator I triangulate each case of administrative decentralization with a longitudinal measure of local government elections using the Varieties of Democracy dataset (Coppedge et al., 2021). I count a decentralization reform as democratic if the local government is fully elected within 5-years of the policy's ratification. I designate the following types of local government as fully elected: 1) The executive and assembly of local governments are both elected; 2) The local executive is elected and there is no assembly; 3) The

assembly is elected and there is no local executive. Critically, in some cases local government elections precede decentralization while others are a result of a given decentralization reform. I count both as instances of democratic decentralization. However, as I outline in the discussion, I also run sensitivity analyses to differentiate between these two forms of democratic decentralization. Case-years are measured as 1 once a policy is passed; to explore the possibility of a short-term effect I restrict this measure to a 5-year period.

Deconcentration: To develop this indicator I triangulate each case of administrative decentralization with data on local government elections using the Varieties of Democracy (Coppedge 2021). I count a decentralization reform as deconcentration if a local government is *not* fully elected within 5-years of the policy. Notably however, efforts to deconcentrate authority to subnational governments typically involve at least a modicum of democratic elements (Conyers 1983). Concretely, these cases exhibit the following characteristics: 1) Offices at the local level are not elected; 2) the local assembly is elected but not the executive; 3) the executive is elected but not the local assembly. Case-years are measured as 1 once a policy is passed; to explore the possibility of a short-term effect I restrict this measure to a 5-year period.

Dependent Variable and Covariates

Participatory Democracy: This measure is an index from the Varieties of Democracy dataset (Coppedge 2021). Participatory democracy reflects a growing wariness of standard forms of electoral democracy, which stress the delegation of political authority to representatives at the national level. Instead, through the lens of participatory democracy direct rule by citizens is considered desirable. Accordingly, this measure emphasizes political engagement through civil society organizations, direct democracy, and elected bodies at the subnational level. I use this

measure because decentralization policies aim to bolster participatory forms of local governance. In practice, this occurs through strengthening and/or introducing subnational elections, permitting referendums, fostering participatory budgeting, and forming councils for deliberative policy-making – among other techniques.

Total Population: Estimates are drawn from the World Bank (2020) and logged to correct for skew.

% Urban Population: Estimates are drawn from the World Bank (2020).

National Wealth: Measured as gross domestic product per capita: This indicator represents development in each country. I log this variable to correct for its skewed distribution. Data come from the World Bank (2020).

Civil War: Data stem for the Correlates of War database and are measured using a dummy variable with a value of 1 for each year of civil war.

Higher Education: Levels of higher education within a country are measured by tertiary enrollments. This data includes students enrolled in International Standard Classification 5 and 6 (which correspond with general conceptualizations of higher education) as a proportion of the relevant population age group. Data are from the World Bank (2020).

Foreign Capital Stock: Levels of inward foreign capital stocks in millions of dollars, U.S.A. Data are from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2020).

IGOs: Membership in International Governmental Organizations is considered an important predictor of democratization (Torfason and Ingram 2010). I use a total, cumulative count of a country memberships in IGOs.

Domestic Civil Society: Drawing on data from Schofer and Longhofer (2011) I measure the vitality of civil society within a given country using total counts of domestic NGOs within a given country.

Local Government Autonomy: This measures the relative power of locally elected offices relative to non-elected officials stationed at the local level. Lower scores indicate that elected officials are more subordinate to non-elected bureaucrats while higher scores suggest greater autonomy for elected officials at the local level. Data draw from Varieties of Democracy (Coppedge 2021).

Interactions

Domestic NGOs x Democratic Decentralization: I interact the strength of domestic civil society with a 5-year period effect for democratic decentralization. The data for these variables are discussed above. This measure is constructed by multiplying these two indicators together.

Local Government Autonomy x Democratic Decentralization: I interact local autonomy with a 5-year period effect for democratic decentralization. The data for these variables are discussed above. This measure is constructed by multiplying these two indicators together.

Method

I use unbalanced panel models to estimate the effect of decentralization reforms on democracy. I use country fixed effects because of my theoretical focus on how these policies shape democratic institutions within countries over time: Fixed effects eliminate the impact of stable country-specific attributes (Allison 2005). The Hausman test reinforces this choice, indicating that fixed effects are preferred. It is also important to use fixed effects in this case because the breadth of decentralization reforms vary across countries. Consequently, it is important to focus on how these reforms impact democracy within countries over time, as opposed to assessing these reforms comparatively, across countries. I use clustered standard errors after finding that heteroscedasticity is an issue using hettest (Drukker 2003). I logged all skewed variables based on the Skewness and Kurtosis test (sktest) in STATA. The analysis is organized into one-year increments from 1980 – 2014. Analyses end in 2014 due to the limited availability of data for some covariates. The independent variable and covariates are lagged one year to establish causal order. I include the dependent variable, participatory democracy as a control to place a check on the possibility of endogeneity, especially reverse causality. Preliminary evidence suggests that democracy is an important predictor of decentralization (McNulty 2011) while others suggest that decentralization bolsters democracy (Faguet 2014).

Findings

Tables 6 and 7, below, present correlations and descriptive statistics for all variables. Findings are presented in table 8, below. Higher levels of tertiary enrollment are negatively

associated with participatory democracy. One likely reason for this effect is that tertiary enrollments are surging in countries all around the world (Frank and Gabler 2006; Schofer and Meyer 2005). Enrollment increases are particularly striking across the Global South, where governments are more likely to be authoritarian. Still, the negative association found here requires additional research. Next, countries with more expansive holdings of foreign capital stock are also associated with lower levels of participatory democracy. This finding aligns with research which views the penetration of global capitalism as key hindrance to building democratic institutions through state liberalization (Brenner 2004; Robinson 2004; Swyngedouw 2004). From this perspective, the demands of foreign capital enervate subnational publics by enforcing their need for flexible nodes of economic production in the post-Fordist era. These efforts strengthen the sway of capitalist elites while delimiting democracy. In line with research on world culture, countries more integrated into world society through IGO memberships show positive association with participatory democracy (Torfason and Ingram 2010). In addition, countries that permit greater autonomy for subnational governments are associated with higher levels of participatory democracy. Meanwhile, measures including population, % urbanization, national wealth, exports % GDP, duration of civil war, and domestic NGOs are not significant.

Table 6. Correlation Matrix for All Variables

Variables	Democracy	Population	% Urban	Exports % GDP	GDP per capita	Civil War	Tertiary Enrollment	FDI Stock	IGOs
Democracy	1								
Population	0.003	1							
% Urban	0.586	-0.032	1						
Exports % GDP	0.127	-0.378	0.297	1					
GDP per capita	0.725	-0.003	0.835	0.344	1				
Civil War	-0.159	0.116	-0.211	-0.132	-0.244	1			
Tertiary Enrollment	0.658	0.054	0.721	0.268	0.807	-0.168	1		
FDI Stock	0.571	0.434	0.658	0.235	0.788	-0.173	0.685	1	
IGOs	0.597	0.296	0.472	0.113	0.639	-0.108	0.615	0.713	1
Domestic NGOs	0.688	0.449	0.543	0.001	0.688	-0.084	0.618	0.728	0.576
Local Autonomy	0.811	-0.043	0.437	0.048	0.533	-0.070	0.472	0.402	0.427
Deconcentration	-0.104	-0.045	-0.060	-0.004	-0.067	-0.010	-0.052	-0.089	-0.102
Democratic Decentralization	0.021	0.001	-0.044	-0.107	-0.099	0.073	-0.084	-0.135	-0.036

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics, All Variables in Analyses

Variable	Mean	Median	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Population (log)	16.45	16.22	1.36	13.49	21.03
% Urban	52.23	53.45	22.37	4.37	108.25
Exports % GDP	32.77	28.78	17.81	3.34	121.31
GDP per Capita (log)	7.71	7.50	1.63	4.60	11.54
Civil War	0.08	0.00	0.26	0.00	1.00
Tertiary Enrollment	25.52	18.41	24.50	0.01	122.40
Foreign Capital Stock (log)	8.41	8.39	2.57	1.00	15.51
IGO Connections	129.54	123.00	55.36	0.00	336
Domestic Civil Society (log)	3.52	3.49	1.76	0.00	8.58
Local Autonomy	0.82	1.05	1.26	-2.63	2.81
Deconcentration	0.03	0	0.17	0.00	1
Democratic Decentralization	0.09	0	0.28	0.00	1

Note: In some cases % urban and tertiary enrollment values are above 100 due to computation. Findings are substantively similar if these few case-years are removed. Available upon request.

Table 8. Fixed Effects Analyses of Participatory Democracy, 1980 - 2014

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Participatory Democracy (lag)	0.886***	0.885***	0.885***	0.884***
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.017)
Civil War	-0.005	-0.005	-0.005	-0.005
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Tertiary Enrollments	-0.0001*	-0.001*	-0.001*	-0.001*
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Foreign Capital Stock	-0.002***	-0.002**	-0.002**	-0.002**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
IGO Connections	0.001***	0.001***	0.001***	0.001***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Domestic Civil Society	0.004	0.004	0.005	0.005
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Local Government Autonomy	0.005*	0.005*	0.005*	0.005*
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Deconcentration		0.002	0.003	0.003
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Democratic Decentralization		.005**	.013*	.009**
		(0.002)	(0.005)	(0.003)
Civil Society x Decentralization			-0.002	-
			(0.001)	-
Local Autonomy x Decentralization			-	-0.004*
			-	(0.002)
Observations	3,413	3,413	3,413	3,413
R-Square Within	.89	.89	.89	.89
Number of Countries	125	125	125	125

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05
For simplicity I do not present total population (log), % urban population, GDP per capita (log), and exports % GDP in these tables though are they covariates in these models. Available upon request.

The key measures of interest show mixed results. To start, decentralization policies that largely deconcentrate authority to appointed officials show no association with participatory democracy. Moreover, the coefficients are positive. This presents strong evidence against the idea that, in general, decentralization to appointed officials weakens democratic institutions. Alternatively, the effect of democratic decentralization on participatory democracy is positive. This effect shows that these reforms elicit a temporary, 5-10 year upswing in participatory democracy within countries and over time. This provides suggestive evidence that supports

functional accounts of democratic decentralization (Faguet 2014; Fung and Wright 2003). Findings for the two interaction effects are also mixed. Countries with more substantial civil society sector do not moderate the effect democratic decentralization. Finally, in countries where subnational governments have less autonomy from locally-stationed bureaucrats, the effects of democratic decentralization on participatory democracy are stronger. This provides a preliminary challenge to the longstanding, largely normative assumption that local autonomy is a key factor that mediates the impacts of decentralization in a positive direction. I discuss the implications of these findings below.

Discussion and Conclusion

Scholars have long theorized how decentralization to subnational governments impacts democratic institutions. This is the first study to examine these claims quantitatively across a global sample of countries. This study makes three primary contributions to this literature. First, researchers have long proposed that deconcentration, as opposed to democratic decentralization, weakens democracy. The expectation here is that decentralization to appointed officials expands the role and reach of central government administrators; local autonomy and freedom of association within these contexts is, ostensibly, crushed by the heavy hand of the state. Historically, striking instances of state violence in Ethiopia and Tanzania lends credence to these claims. However, the analyses presented here show that, in general, deconcentration is not associated with lower levels of participatory democracy. What explains this null effect? Reflecting the global shift toward participatory local governance, deconcentrating state authority typically involves at least a modicum of democratic elements. For instance, when Angola passed its Local State Administration Law in 2007, this was the country's first decentralization reform to reallocate a complex set of responsibilities to municipalities – all led by centrally appointed

bureaucrats. This law stipulates that municipalities should develop participatory councils to consult with local populations on issues such as health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure. While efforts like this are highly constrained relative to democratic decentralization, they also legitimize civil society as the proper locus of public planning and collective action (Oxhorn 2004). Put differently, deconcentration is a ceremonial shift in the organizational architecture of the state that, thus far, elicits no general effect on democratic institutions in either direction.

Second, when countries pass decentralization reforms to strengthen elected subnational governments these policies are associated with higher levels of participatory democracy. This finding lends some support for longstanding functional accounts. However, sensitivity analyses reveal two important qualifications. First, the impact of democratic decentralization on participatory democracy is temporary, lasting an estimated 5-10 years. Second, this short-term effect is largely based on cases that democratize local governments *through* decentralization policies. Put differently, in countries where local governments elected officials prior to passing a major decentralization reform, these policies have no effect on participatory democracy. Instead, when decentralization policies convert local governments *into* fully elected public bodies this is what strengthens participatory democracy. Figure 5, below, illustrates this trend of political decentralization relative to the overall number of countries that pass democratic decentralization reforms.

Figure 5. Democratic Decentralization and Political Decentralization Events, Cumulative 1980 - 2014

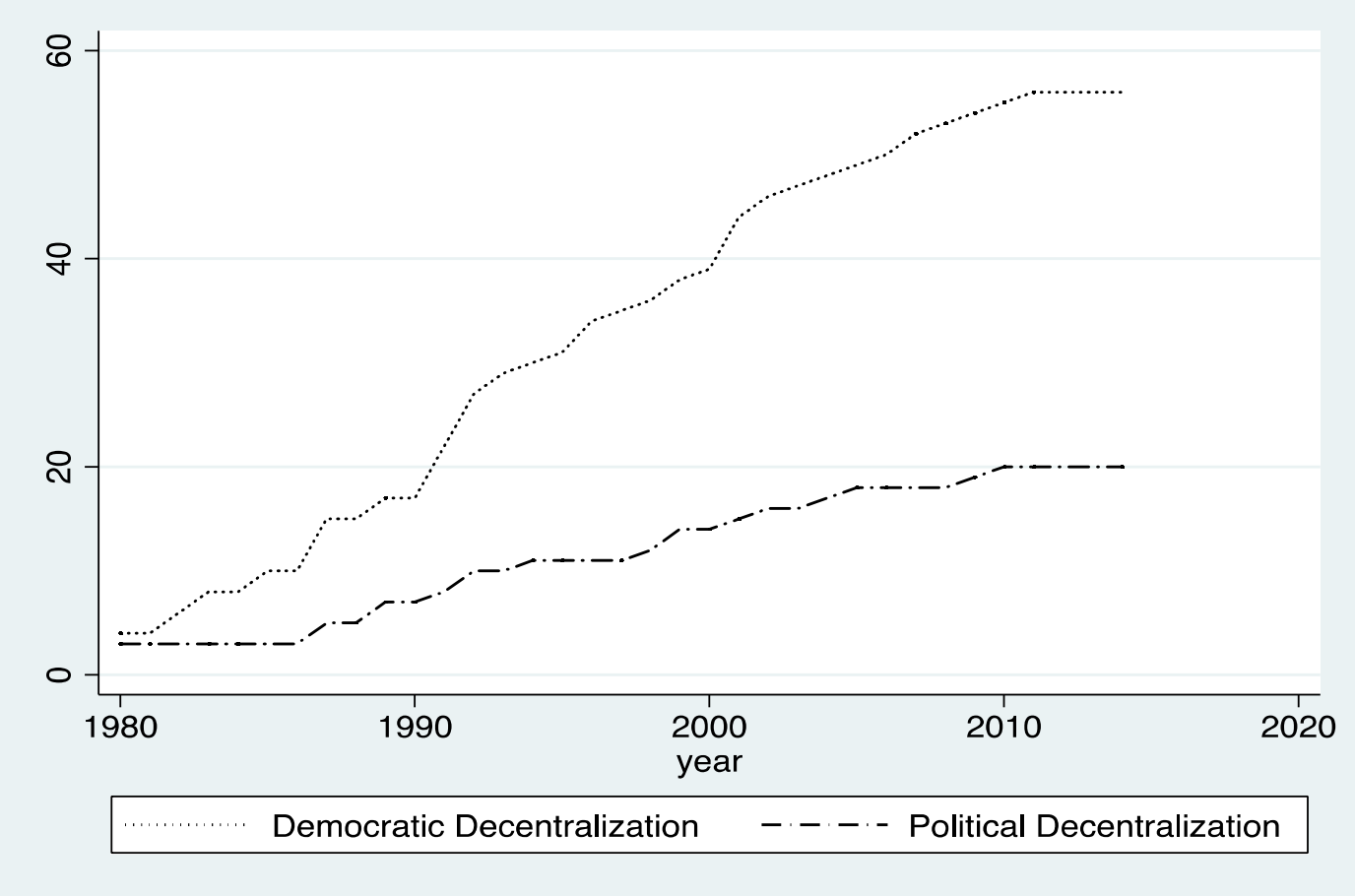


Figure 5 shows that an estimated 20 countries, or 36% of those that passed democratic decentralization reforms, do so in a manner that transforms their local governments into formally democratic bodies. These primarily include countries of the Global South, but, this type of decentralization is also evident in the Czech Republic, South Korea, and Spain. For example, in 2008 Cambodia passed a decentralization law for the Commune and Sangkat administrations (Cambodia Organic Law 2008). Formerly constituted by appointees by the central government, this law granted electoral autonomy to villages and sub-municipal governments. Moreover, these newly elected leaders may now select representatives at higher tiers of subnational government. Similarly, when Nicaragua enshrined decentralization in its 1987 Constitution, national legislatures also mandated that their local governments be fully democratic (Coppedge 2021). A

year later, policymakers also passed the Law of Municipalities, or Decentralization Law 40 (UCLG Nicaragua 2008). This legislation stipulated that municipalities should develop techniques to cultivate citizen participation in public affairs. One outcome of this change was the growth of environmental commissions, which allow for public deliberation regarding the local uses of natural resources. In general, when decentralization transforms local governments into fully elected bodies, these new structures of representative and collaborative governance amplify participatory democracy.

Third and finally, I show that the effects of democratic decentralization are bolstered when central government administrators are more involved at the subnational level. In short, when elected subnational governments are less autonomous (i.e., prone to meddling by locally appointed officials), this generates an added benefit for participatory democracy in the preliminary stages of democratic decentralization. This challenges the conventional wisdom on this issue; in general scholars tend to assume and even promote the idea that local autonomy is a key element for deepening democracy through decentralization (Faguet 2014; Ribot 2009). What explains this finding? I posit that in the early years of democratic decentralization locally appointed bureaucrats leverage their technocratic expertise to discipline and train local government actors in the art of public administration. For instance, throughout the 1980s local governments in the Ivory Coast were under the tutelage of centrally appointed bureaucrats (Crook and Manor 1998). This structure was maintained even after the country's 1985 decentralization reform. Overall, the role played by these appointees had a positive effect on decentralized institutions: The continuity and training provided by professional civil servants at the local level helped to ensure that procedures such as routine bookkeeping were maintained. These efforts improved the administrative efficiency of these local governments as they sought

to promote socio-economic development. Moreover, the Ministry of the Interior would often intervene to maintain the integrity of electoral procedures and corruption at the local level. Similarly, as part of its decentralization process, in 1992 Uganda placed District Executive Secretaries throughout the country. Armed with experienced staff from various governmental ministries, these administrative posts aimed to streamline democratic decentralization across Uganda. While this evidence here is only suggestive, it substantiates the idea that democratic decentralization depends on an affirmative state to help local governments develop the basic capacities of democratic governance.

In conclusion, decentralization to subnational governments neither weakens nor straightforwardly strengthens democratic institutions. These findings illustrate the contingent, short-lived contexts through which decentralization policies deepen participatory democracy. More broadly these findings indicate that, in practice, these policies are loosely coupled from their intended outcomes. This is a common finding in the literature on world society and global institutions (Bromley and Powell 2012). Given the delimited contexts in which these policies elicit positive effects, this raises fresh questions about the ubiquity of these reforms in countries around the world. If, as these findings suggest, the positive effects of decentralization policies are quite constrained, what drives countries around the world to launch such ostentatious reforms? Based on my findings and discussion from chapter two, one answer to this question is that decentralization is best viewed as world-cultural shift that reconstitutes states around liberal, highly individualized models of public governance. That is decentralization is an isomorphic trend that, in general, produces threadbare scaffoldings for participatory democracy and public management. Whether this trend will generate enduring effects on democratic institutions as countries continue to refine these policies remains to be seen.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

In recent decades political sociologists began to note a puzzling trend: Participatory forms of democratic governance proliferated alongside and in the context of market-based, neoliberal reforms. One frequently cited reason for these changes is state decentralization. However, our understanding of decentralization as process of state change, its impressive proliferation to countries around the world, and its impacts on democratic governance remain delimited. One key reason for this situation is a longstanding lack of valid and reliable cross-national measures. In this dissertation I present and examine the first worldwide dataset on administrative decentralization reforms. In doing so, this project explores three primary questions: First, how do we conceptualize decentralization relative to other types of state liberalization? Second, what leads countries around the world to adopt these policies? Third, what impact do these policies have on democratic governance? By providing fresh answers to these questions, I contribute to contemporary theories of the state, to the sociology of globalization, and to various literatures concerned with the impacts of decentralization on democracy. In this conclusion I discuss some of key limitations of this study, and I offer suggestions for future research.

Data limitations and Recommendations

While the data collected here is the first of its kind, it is important to note limitations. To start, the reforms documented in this study are all policies that aim to transform bureaucratic rule in a general fashion. While it was essential to confine the scope of the data, this does omit some instances of decentralization cross-nationally. For example, sector-specific reforms and those that focus primarily on fiscal dimensions are excluded here. Thus, while the data offer a general,

global-comparative view of decentralization as process of state-formation, if researchers are interested in a specific issue (e.g., primary education, forest conservation, or community-based health management), then additional work is needed to refine the dataset. Moreover, because the data do not account for the fiscal dimensions of decentralization, efforts to compare the efficacy of decentralization reforms remain constrained. One possible solution to this issue is to draw on the fiscal decentralization dataset from the International Monetary Fund. However, this data remains limited especially for countries across the Global South. One potential way to improve this situation is to document decentralization policies that include and/or focus on fiscal decentralization. This work remains to be done.

A second limitation to the data involves differentiating between democratic and deconcentrated forms of decentralization. In chapter three I develop the first-ever comparative approach to this issue. However, the conceptualization of democratic decentralization presented here focuses strictly on local governments. While this fruitfully aligns with the emphasis on subsidiarity – the idea that decentralization is most efficacious when authority is devolved to the unit of government closest to the people – this also neglects democratizing trends at other levels of subnational government. Questions remain concerning the vertical structure of subnational governments and their overall levels of democratization (Treisman 2002). For instance, what are the implications when provinces are appointed but local governments are fully elected, as is the case of Cambodia? Similarly, what are the impacts on development when decentralization policies place appointed bureaucrats at multiple levels of the subnational system – as in the case of China? Our understanding of these various configurations of subnational governance are still in the early stages.

These limitations aside, the issues presented above can be corrected with additional data collection and cleaning. Moreover, the current dataset offers the first global-comparative window into the sprawling shift from government toward governance. As it stands, the current data lays a new foundation for grappling with the shifting logic of public management and national welfare in countries around the world.

Theoretical Advancements: Limitations and Recommendations

In this section I discuss several issues related to theory-development in the dissertation. I focus on three topics: 1) Theorizing decentralization as a form of state-building, 2) Clarifying and testing the concept of syncretic diffusion, and 3) Conceiving of universities as receptor sites in world society.

In chapter one I posit that decentralization is best viewed as a form of state-building. These policies extend the authority to manage public goods and services to entities in civil society and markets. However, tensions remain with the neoliberal school's emphasis on markets as a form of state contraction. To put the matter plainly: How should we view privatization and deregulation, both of which are hallmarks of state liberalization, in light of my conceptualization of administrative decentralization as a form of state-building? These tensions should be addressed in future work.

The concept of syncretic diffusion makes an important intervention to the sociology of globalization. In short, this idea addresses a longstanding divide between cultural and political-economic accounts of ideational transmission on the world stage: By accounting for both discursive and material pressures, I seek to bridge these schools. However, additional work is needed to cement this concept. First, data that fully captures these dual pressures is needed. The data on foreign aid as a percent of Gross National Product remains a somewhat crude

operationalization of these processes. Instead, it is the historical examples that lend support to the argument that both ideas and material resources play a co-constitutive role in diffusion. Second and similarly, the concept of syncretic diffusion that I develop here needs formalization. While the historical backdrop and examples provide texture for this concept, it would be helpful to typologize syncretic diffusion and outline its general applicability to the globalization of public policies.

While conceptualizing universities as organizational hubs in world society is not entirely novel, this is the first study to empirically test their effects on policy diffusion. While a useful stepping-stone, additional work is needed on this matter. First, the data used here is tertiary enrollments rather than organizational counts. This remains a necessity due to the limited availability of data on the founding-dates of universities across countries and over time. While the rapid expansion of tertiary enrollments across nearly all countries makes this a useful measure to capture the overall growth of universities, it would be helpful to develop new measures that capture universities as a form of organizational structure. Moreover, world society scholars theorize that universities are integral to the shift toward participatory forms of governance. At the core of this assertion is the idea that liberal theories of public management increasingly penetrate and, through the activities of credentialed professionals, reconstitute national polities. The transnational dynamics at play here need elaboration.

Despite these limitations, this dissertation makes important contributions in several areas. By refining how decentralization is conceptualized this project challenges conventional views of how states are changing in the neoliberal era. By proposing new pathways for the global spread of ideas, this thesis enriches our understanding of diffusion processes. By examining the impacts of these policies on participatory governance, this project enhances our understanding the links

between state liberalization and democracy. Together, these contributions lay the groundwork for new developments in the sociology of globalization, theories of the state, and studies of contemporary governance.

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Appendix A: List of 152 Countries in the Dataset

Afghanistan
Albania
Algeria
Angola
Argentina
Armenia
Australia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Bangladesh
Bahrain
Belarus
Belize
Belgium
Benin
Bolivia
Bosnia
Botswana
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cambodia
Cameroon
Canada
Central African Republic
Chad
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Croatia
Cuba
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Denmark
Dominican Republic
East Timor
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Equatorial Guinea
Eritrea
Estonia
Eswatini
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Gabon
Gambia
Georgia
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Haiti
Honduras
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran
Iraq
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Ivory Coast
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Kosovo
Kuwait
Kyrgyzstan
Laos
Latvia
Lebanon
Lesotho
Liberia
Libya
Lithuania
Macedonia
Madagascar
Malawi

Malaysia
Mali
Mauritania
Mexico
Moldova
Mongolia
Morocco
Mozambique
Myanmar
Namibia
Nepal
Netherlands
New Zealand
Nicaragua
Niger
Nigeria
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Panama
Papua New Guinea
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Qatar
Romania
Russia
Rwanda
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Serbia
Sierra Leone
Slovakia
Slovenia
Somalia
South Africa
South Korea
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Sweden
Switzerland
Syria
Tajikistan
Tanzania
Thailand
Togo
Tunisia
Turkey
Turkmenistan
Uganda
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom
United States of America
Uruguay
Uzbekistan
Venezuela
Vietnam
Yemen
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Appendix B: List of All 123 Countries in Analyses. Development Assistance Committee Members (DAC) in parentheses.

Albania
Algeria
Angola
Argentina
Armenia
Australia (DAC)
Austria (DAC)
Azerbaijan
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belgium (DAC)
Benin
Botswana
Brazil
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Cambodia
Cameroon
Canada (DAC)
Central African Republic
Chad
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Croatia
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Denmark (DAC)
Dominican Republic
East Timor
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Finland (DAC)
France (DAC)
Eswatini
Gabon
Gambia
Georgia
Germany (DAC)
Ghana
Greece (DAC)
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Honduras
India
Indonesia
Iran
Iraq
Ireland (DAC)
Israel
Italy (DAC)
Ivory Coast
Jamaica
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Kuwait
Kyrgyzstan
Laos
Lesotho
Liberia
Madagascar
Malawi
Malaysia
Mali
Mauritania
Mexico
Moldova
Mongolia
Morocco
Mozambique
Nepal
Netherlands (DAC)
New Zealand (DAC)

Nicaragua
Niger
Nigeria
Norway (DAC)
Oman
Pakistan
Panama
Papua New Guinea
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Portugal (DAC)
Rwanda
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Serbia
Sierra Leone
Slovenia
South Africa
South Korea (DAC)
Spain (DAC)
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Sweden (DAC)
Switzerland (DAC)
Syria
Tajikistan
Tanzania
Thailand
Togo
Tunisia
Turkey
Uganda
Ukraine
United Kingdom (DAC)
United States of America (DAC)
Uruguay
Uzbekistan
Venezuela
Vietnam
Yemen
Zambia
Zimbabwe