

Research Article

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The Always Embedded State: Six Types of State-Society Interaction

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Abstract: This paper offers a critical analysis of the concept of embeddedness as currently used in political sociology and state theory. It argues that the concept of embeddedness can be successfully used to solve a current theoretical impasse – namely, how to conceptualize state-society relations. The paper creates a conceptual space at the intersection of two axes of variation: the pattern of embeddedness (mono- versus multi-embeddedness) and the degree of state autonomy (captive versus autonomous). A central finding of this paper is that at least six types of embeddedness can be shown to exist in this conceptual space. In the remainder of the paper, the six types are described using a range of evidence extracted from the literature. One major advantage of the proposed typology is that it is able to incorporate, under the same umbrella, a variety of preexisting approaches of state-society interactions.

Keywords: Embeddedness; state-society interaction; institutional change; political sociology.

Introduction

The concept of state embeddedness appeared a few decades ago within the larger context of the developmental state literature. As is well known, this literature emerged in the 1980s in response to the exceptional economic growth of the East Asian region after the Second World War (Johnson, 1982; Woo-Cumings, 1999). One main finding of this body of research was that the state had played a prominent role in the economic development of many countries from this region (Johnson, 1982; Wade, 1990; Amsden, 1992; Evans, 1995). Among this wave of

studies, it was arguably Peter Evans' work that launched the career of "state embeddedness".

In his seminal study, Evans (1995) persuasively argued that developmental states combined two traits, autonomy and embeddedness. His research indicated that civil services approximating the ideal type of Weberian bureaucracy enabled states to formulate a coherent vision of industrial policy while avoiding predatory practices. In addition, a maze of ties connected ministries and major industrialists, providing institutional channels for the negotiation of goals and policies (Evans, 1995). This connectedness, termed by Evans "embeddedness", was thus the other central key feature of East Asian developmental states. Evans' work on developmental states and later on state-society synergy sparked off an entire literature (for example, Evans, 1996a; Evans, 1996b; Heller, 1996; Ostrom, 1996). Throughout the remainder of the 1990s and continuing until today, the new direction continued to generate a significant number of publications focusing on the positive role of public-private collaboration and deliberative institutions (Fung & Wright, 2003; Ackerman, 2004; Evans, 2004; Ansell & Gash, 2007)¹. In other words, the literature on state embeddedness has burgeoned into a notable and vigorous subfield.

In this paper, I argue that the literature on state embeddedness contains the seeds of a richer conceptualization of state-society relationships, one that could extend well beyond developmental states. One key advance made by the developmental state literature was to frame state-society relationships in terms of embeddedness. I argue that this was an important breakthrough, but one that has not been exploited to its full potential. This paper is an attempt to demonstrate that this key insight can be applied to a wide range of states. But before developing a new conceptual schema, we need to confront two issues of the current literature. First, the literature displays a certain level of incongruity

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¹ Not all these works use embeddedness or synergy explicitly, but they all emphasize novel forms of public-private collaboration.

between the definitional level, where states are depicted as always embedded in society, and the empirical level where embeddedness is portrayed as either present or absent. Second, state embeddedness—almost without exception—is treated as a positive phenomenon.

This paper attempts to solve these tensions and, in so doing, to develop new conceptual tools. First, I maintain that the current literature is correct in its definitional treatment of embeddedness but largely incorrect in the way it deals with it empirically. I will show that the available evidence supports the notion of the “always embedded” state. And second, in contrast to the current tendency to consider embeddedness a positive phenomenon, I propose that state embeddedness can have positive as well as negative aspects. But if these assumptions are correct, it then becomes possible to construct a typology of state-society relations that extends beyond the dichotomy between developmental and “non-developmental” states. The paper argues that if we juxtapose forms of embeddedness (mono- versus multi-embeddedness) and degrees of state autonomy (captive versus autonomous states), the resulting conceptual space can be used to characterize a wide variety of state-society relationships, as well as their social, economic, and political implications. In the remainder of the paper, I describe each of the six types using a range of evidence extracted from existing studies.

STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONS

The concept of embeddedness has great potential to reconfigure the state-society relations literature, which has reached an impasse. Until recently, the study of state-society interactions was dominated by the dispute between the pluralist school, which sustained that states are reducible to social forces (see for example Dahl, 1972), and the state-centered position which maintained that, far from being malleable epiphenomena, states have at least the potential for emerging as autonomous actors whose actions are irreducible to social forces (Nordlinger, 1981; Skocpol, 1985; Orloff & Skocpol, 1984; Amenta, 1998). State-centered scholars criticized the pluralist school for its alleged failure to treat the state as a social actor in its own right (Skocpol, 1985). Subsequently, however, several other scholars criticized the state-centered position for its assumed reification of state and society, whereby both entities were presented as analytically separable and internally cohesive when in fact this was not the case (Mitchell, 1991; Sellers, 2010).

Due in part to these critical reactions, the last two decades have seen the emergence of approaches that attempt to combine the virtues of both society-centered and state-centered perspectives (Migdal, 2001; Evans, 2005). But despite their rich empirical accounts and sophisticated theorizations, current state-society approaches still fall short of providing a set of concepts with which to analyze state-society dynamics. There have been several attempts to deal with the problem of reification, with notions such as “hybridity” (Evans, 2005) and the “mutual constitution” of states and societies (Block & Evans, 2005) coming to the fore. In addition, scholars increasingly admit embeddedness is not static but dynamic and that it could have positive as well as negative consequences (Block & Evans, 2005). Yet, although there seems to be agreement as to what the future research agenda should look like, the literature lacks a coherent set of concepts with which to analyze the state seen as “an emergent, partial, and unstable system that is interdependent with other systems in a complex social order” (Jessop, 2001, p. 166).

This is where a typology of state-society relations based on embeddedness becomes relevant. In the same way that Karl Polanyi had envisioned the economy as something inseparable from the rest of society, conceptualizing the state as always embedded does not presume states and societies as distinct entities. I argue that embeddedness can bring a resolution to this debate by illuminating how states are actually enmeshed in national societies and global communities.

PROBLEMS AND INCONSISTENCIES

There are two main problems with available representations of state embeddedness. First, since the concept was partly adopted from Karl Polanyi (1944), it inherited a key inconsistency that haunted the work of the great political economist, namely his conflicting statements on whether embeddedness was a permanent or a contingent phenomenon. And second, the focus on social connectedness intrinsic to the notion of embeddedness has led scholars to borrow an assumption widely shared in the social capital literature, namely that social connectedness is always a positive phenomenon. Before we can move forward, we need to examine these inconsistencies and assumptions with a critical eye.

Although Evans does not mention this directly, his notion of state embeddedness is clearly traceable to the work of Karl Polanyi. In his magnum opus, *The Great Transformation*, Polanyi (1944) famously argued that

economy is embedded in society. For all its brilliance, however, Polanyi's book contained two mutually contradicting interpretations of embeddedness. The first perspective was that in all pre-market societies the economy was embedded in society, but with the advent of the nineteenth century's market society, that was no longer the case – economy was successfully disembedded from society. The second interpretation of embeddedness was that economy is always contained in a larger network of social relations, where the pursuit of material gain is mingled with interests in social standing, social claims, and social assets (Polanyi, 1944, p. 48). In this interpretation, market economies can never be completely disembedded from society.

The literature on state embeddedness inherited this indecision. In the literature, state embeddedness is defined as “ties that connect citizens and public officials across the public-private divide” (Evans, 1996a, p. 1120). These ties allow public officials to facilitate the building of networks and civic engagement among citizens, which, in turn, state agencies leverage to generate developmental effects (Evans, 1996b). A careful examination of the literature, however, reveals that not all ties that connect citizens to public officials seem to qualify in practice as embeddedness. Whereas the relationship between the Korean state and the Korean business class is seen as the epitome of “embeddedness”, the relationship between Brazilian landowning elites and the state is labeled as “traditional symbiosis” that reinforced the “perverse modernization” of the state (Evans, 1995, p. 62). Similarly, the relationship between the Soviet party-state and the society it ruled is not a case of embeddedness but “a stagnant, corrupt set of ties” (Evans 1996a, p. 1035). But both cases that were seemingly denied the status of embeddedness meet, in fact, the criterion of embeddedness described above: they are ties that connect citizens and public officials across the public-private divide. The literature on state embeddedness, therefore, inherited Polanyi's indecision. At the definitional level, the literature seems to have embraced the notion of the “always embedded” state. In empirical analyses, however, scholars seem to have adopted the notion that some states are embedded in society whereas others are not.

The second set of problems associated with state embeddedness stems from the close relation between this concept and that of social capital. In the 1990s, following the important work of Robert Putnam (1993, 1995), a vast literature emerged that began treating social capital as a group-level phenomenon, in sharp contrast to previous definitions that had viewed social capital as a characteristic of individuals (Portes, 1998). In their work, students

of state embeddedness repeatedly cited social capital studies. This was natural since both literatures share a focus on networks of trust and collaboration. Theorists of embeddedness invoked social capital in two ways. First, state embeddedness, like social capital, consists of social ties, and therefore the mechanisms that create one can be shown to create the other. State embeddedness, in this perspective, is a specific type of social capital that connects public and private spheres (Evans, 1996b). The second sense in which embeddedness and social capital are connected is that in order to generate developmental effects, state embeddedness requires communities with considerable levels of social capital (Evans, 1996a). Borrowing from the social capital literature, however, came with significant costs. That literature has been criticized for focusing only on the positive aspects of social ties and neglecting the negative ones (Portes, 1998; Woolcock & Narayan, 2000). Treating social capital as always beneficial obscures its darker side manifested as social exclusion, criminal behavior, and intellectual lock-in. In a similar manner, the state embeddedness literature tended to stress only the positive aspects of social ties and dismiss the negative ones, as in the examples discussed in the previous section: East Asian ties between state and industrialists were examples of embeddedness while the relationship between the Brazilian state and landed elite was not.

In what follows, I redefine the concept of state embeddedness in a way that could solve the tensions described above. First, following recent work in economic sociology, I propose the notion of the always embedded state. Second, I put forward the notion that depending on the context, state embeddedness can engender positive but also negative outcomes.

Polanyi's indecision on embeddedness has been noted repeatedly. Indeed, given the master status that embeddedness has acquired in economic sociology, solving the Polanyian puzzle has become somewhat of a central concern (see for example Krippner, 2001). A recent and influential trend in the literature has been to tackle the dilemma by arguing that economies are always embedded in society (Block, 2003; Block & Evans, 2005). Fred Block (2003) explained Polanyi's ambivalence by arguing that during the writing of his master opus, Polanyi changed his position. He had started from a classic Marxist position according to which the attempt to institute a self-regulated market society leads to a disembedded economy and debilitating crises. During writing, however, Polanyi seems to have arrived at a more sophisticated position that posited that since labor, land and money are fictitious commodities, market economies can never be completely

disembedded. Because of the continued existence of state-enacted regulations and social protection, market economies are always embedded.

In a similar manner, I argue that a fruitful way to conceptualize the state is to see it as always embedded in society. In this new interpretation, there are always links between the state and civil society. Rather than qualifying some of these relationships as “embedded” and other as “symbiotic”, “clientelistic”, and so forth, I argue that all these seemingly disparate types of ties should be conceptualized as different forms of embeddedness. The question, therefore, is not *whether* states are embedded or not, but *how* they are embedded in society. If states are always embedded, it then becomes easier to understand that their ties to various social groups can have positive as well as negative results, depending on various circumstances.

FORMS OF STATE-SOCIETY INTERACTION

Despite its heuristic value, the notion of the always embedded state is more of a sensitizing concept than a precise instrument. To turn this general notion into a set of workable conceptual tools, the key starting point is that, since the way states are embedded cannot always be the same, there must be several discrete forms, or types, of embeddedness, that can be identified. In economic sociology, this strategy has produced several typologies of embeddedness, beginning with the seminal one advanced by Zukin & DiMaggio (1990) and continuing with several others (see Krippner & Alvarez, 2007, for an exhaustive listing).

But how do we go about creating a typology of state embeddedness? Once again, Evans is the obvious starting point. One of Evans’ groundbreaking insights was that we should picture embeddedness and autonomy not as opposing characteristics, but rather as independent axes of variation. As shown by Evans, the postwar Korean state was both relatively autonomous from, *and* highly connected to, domestic business elites. The problem, of course, was that he conceptualized these underlying dimensions as dichotomous (either present or absent) rather than as continua.

Embeddedness is our first axis of variation. An “always embedded” perspective suggests that we cannot picture this axis as a continuum from “disembedded” to “embedded”, as earlier accounts have suggested. Instead, a close look at the literature suggests that state-society relationships range from forms of embeddedness whereby

the state is connected primarily to one social group or class (a situation which can be called mono-embeddedness) to forms that involve multiple connections between states and social groups (multiple embeddedness). Several accounts of state-society interactions, in fact, implicitly draw on this distinction. On the one hand, we have the Evansian account of “embedded autonomy” whereby an exclusive alliance between state bureaucrats and business groups is said to have presided over the spectacular economic growth of East Asia after the World War Two. On the other hand, more recent research has uncovered a different model characterized by “multi-embeddedness”. Sean O Riain (2004) argued that in contrast to East Asian postwar development, contemporary developmental states are multiply embedded in local networks of innovation, international capital, educational institutions, and professional associations.

The second building block of our conceptual space is state autonomy. For analytic purposes, in this paper I draw a distinction between captive and autonomous states. Captive states are states that largely lack the capacity to make independent decisions regarding the formulation and implementation of public policies and the hiring and firing of public servants. By contrast, autonomous states cannot be coerced into acting in ways they – as collective entities – deem undesirable. The main advantage of using this typology is its capacity to measure “true” autonomy. Many states, for example, are captured by their politicians or business classes but are autonomous vis-à-vis subordinate classes. Using the definition presented here, states could be considered autonomous only when they are autonomous in relation to most, if not all, influences. Of course, perfect state autonomy and perfect state capture merely define the two ends of a continuum, on which we expect to find a variety of different real-world configurations.

At the intersection of the two conceptual dimensions, a conceptual space with four quadrants results. One of the central claims of this paper, based on a thorough examination of the available evidence, is that at least six types of state-society relations can be shown to exist in this conceptual space. The typology is shown in Figure 1 below.

Before we describe the six types, two observations are in order. First, the axes of variation that are used to plot the types shown above are best thought of as descriptive, not causal – in other words, I am not making the argument that embeddedness in social groups determines how states operate and what their structure is like. Second, the types of state embeddedness identified here are not assumed to be the only possible ones. Rather, the list that

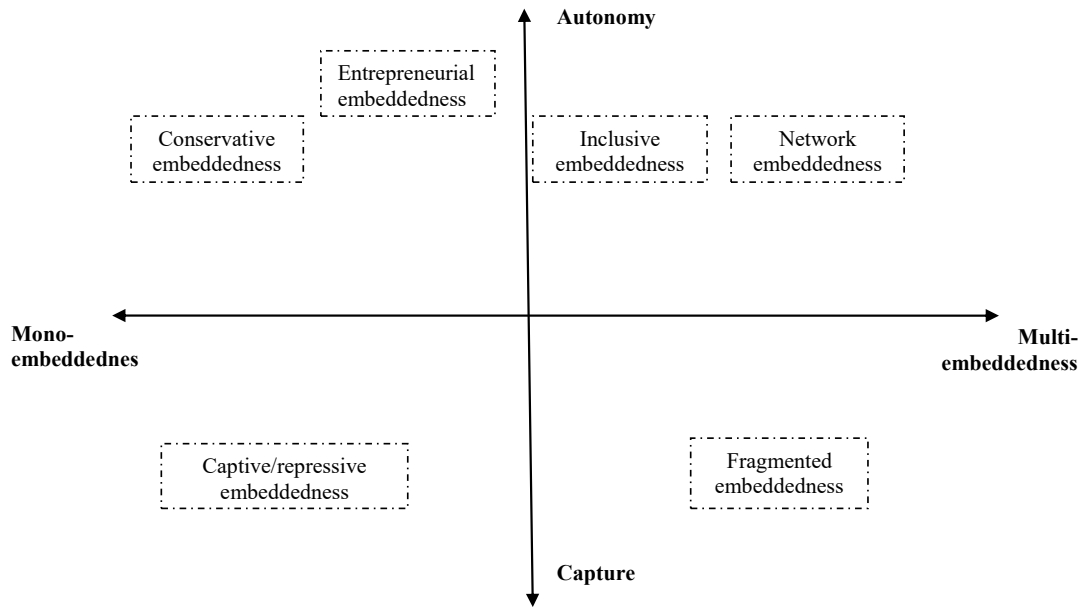


Figure 1. Forms of State-Society Interaction

follows is conceived as an open inventory, to be amended and enriched by subsequent research.

Conservative Embeddedness

In this type of state-society interaction, the state is connected to one elite group (landowners) while maintaining other groups at arm's length. By according limited rights to some civil society groups while repressing others, the state prevents cross-class alliances to form, thus preserving social order. Another distinguishing characteristic of conservative embeddedness is that despite the high level of embeddedness in the elite group, there is a high level of shared identity among state officials. Most cases in this category—Imperial Germany, Austria, and Czarist Russia, among others—managed to create powerful bureaucracies during the buildup of absolutist empires. Given the historic paucity of capital in all the European lands east of the Elbe (Brenner, 1976), when monarchs did manage to establish control over vast territories, the necessity of large-scale warfare tended to create coherent bureaucracies and to weaken landed elites. This feature persisted into the nineteenth century, when the necessity to generate capitalist development pushed these societies to impose “revolutions from above” (Moore, 1966[1993]).

In this section I illustrate conservative embeddedness using the classic example of Germany during the period between the unification of 1871 and the First World War. A close alliance between the state and the landed elite

was a defining characteristic of Wilhelmine Germany. In fact, there is little doubt that the state bureaucracy itself had a pronounced aristocratic class character. Whereas a great many bureaucrats were of aristocratic origin, Social Democrats were automatically excluded from entering the civil service (Rohl, 1967). The bourgeois did not fare much better. In the 1870s, the state—in close collaboration with a segment of the landed elite—initiated a rapid industrialization program directed against some landed elite groups, the peasantry, and especially the working class (Moore, 1966[1993]). Although industrialization naturally resulted in the ascent of a fledgling bourgeoisie, the capitalists were never able to coagulate into a powerful force. As a result, the German society continued to be ruled by a conservative faction that sought to spur capitalist development while opposing extensive liberal reforms and controlling subordinate groups through coercive means.

Despite the high level of embeddedness in the landed elite, the German state apparatus enjoyed a considerable level of autonomy from it (Kocka, 1981). The *Allgemeines Landrecht* of 1794 had established the Prussian bureaucracy—which later served as a model for the whole of Germany—as a corporative body on the same level with the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie (Gillis, 1968). In the early nineteenth century, civil servants successfully defeated monarchic patronage by making appointment dependent on qualifications (Kocka, 1981). By the time of the German unification, candidates for high-level civil service positions had to pass a three-year course in

jurisprudence, spend four years training in law courts, and pass two demanding civil service examinations (Rohl, 1967). And despite the often-meager salaries, entrance into civil service was highly sought after because of the high prestige and possibility for career advancement it conferred. Around 1910, the proportion of public employees in the population was roughly twice as high in Germany compared to Great Britain (Kocka, 1981, p. 455).

With the advance of industrialization, labor – represented by the Social Democratic Party – began to coalesce into a significant force. Nonetheless, the regime averted thorough political reforms through a combination of duplicity and selective social protection. The government formally embraced democracy, but did everything it could to minimize the effect of democratic reforms while playing off various social groups against one other (Mann, 1987). The second strategy was to build—well before other countries in Western Europe—a social protection system that was strategically aimed at consolidating differences among social groups while strengthening loyalty to the crown (Esping-Andersen, 1989). The social insurance system developed by Chancellor Bismarck offered different provision levels to a variety of social and occupational groups, thus preventing anti-regime cross-class alliances to form.

Imperial Germany suggests some of the dilemmas faced by conservative embeddedness. If successful, the regime's attempt to industrialize will unleash forces—a strong bourgeoisie and a powerful working-class movement among others—that are likely to sap the regime's own foundations. This scenario seemed to play out in Germany on the eve of World War One, with the Social Democrats becoming the largest faction in *Reichstag* (Steinmetz, 1991). If, on the other hand, the regime experiences a long and painful recession, such as the one experienced during the short-lived Weimar Republic, an external faction can ride the popular disillusionment and topple the regime, possibly ending in captive/repressive embeddedness (see the last sub-section).

Entrepreneurial Embeddedness

The main characteristic of this type is a close alliance between the state and the capitalist elite, coupled with the suppression of subordinate classes through coercive means. The state's level of autonomy is slightly greater than in the case of conservative embeddedness. The main reason for this is that capitalist groups are rarely interested in governing directly. Typically, business elites want state managers to provide favorable conditions for economic transactions (Mann, 1986), including social stability,

secure trade, favorable taxation, and even repression of labor to secure competitive advantage over firms in other countries, but they rarely seek the control of the state from within.

Entrepreneurial embeddedness is the type of state-society relationship that Evans (1995) described in his aforementioned study of East Asian developmental states. The predominant model of state-society interaction present in postwar East Asia combined a close connection between state bureaucrats and industrial groups and an arm's length approach vis-à-vis subordinate classes, particularly labor (Amsden, 1992; Wade, 1990). Peter Evans (1995, p. 231) memorably captured this situation by stating, "Capital is connected, labor is excluded. Embedded autonomy increases coherence of capital at labor's expense".

Although there are no systematic comparative analyses of the emergence of entrepreneurial embeddedness, long historic trajectories of bureaucratic development and the absence of semifeudal landowners seem to be among the contributing factors. Low levels of social inequality may have also contributed to the outcome by empowering the state in its relationship with business classes (Amsden, 1992). In India, by contrast, despite a venerable bureaucratic tradition, a powerful class of rural landowners slowed down the emergence of a developmental state considerably (Evans, 1995). Other analysts pointed toward the East Asian states' connections with international elites, emphasizing the role of the United States influence in the area (Wade, 1990; McMichael, 2004).

Like conservative embeddedness, entrepreneurial embeddedness has also been historically associated with capitalist development – perhaps even more so. In the East Asian case, this type of state-society interaction generated development because, having amiable relationships with business elites, state managers could convince industrialists to embark on risky endeavors, while at the same time exercising a degree of pressure to obtain the desired results (Wade, 1990; Amsden, 1992; Evans, 1995). The role of midwife played by the state included provision of subsidies and incentives to firms, protection against foreign competition by way of import tariffs, and promotion of public and private research and development (R&D) (Evans, 1995; Ó Riain, 2006). While these measures were not unique to East Asia, what set this region apart was the tight control that state agencies were able to exert over domestic firms. Thus, state subsidies were allocated in exchange for strict performance standards (Amsden, 1992). When firms failed to meet the performance standards, subsidies were retracted and

firms were allowed to fail. This is perhaps the mechanism that most clearly differentiates East Asian states from their fragmented clientelist counterparts, where, as we shall see, subsidies are treated as giveaways and do not contribute to competitiveness and growth. The historic record of East Asian entrepreneurial embeddedness was thus mostly positive in the economic arena, although clearly wanting in terms of civil and political liberties for subordinate groups.

Inclusive Embeddedness

Under inclusive embeddedness, the state has relative autonomy in relation to the dominant elite group - capitalists - and features a relatively high level of centralization. At the same time, however, previously disenfranchised groups see sharp improvements in terms of civil and political rights (freedom of protest, voting rights) and increasingly social rights (the right to a decent living regardless of one's worth in the labor market)². Nonetheless, regular citizens do not typically participate in the design and implementation of public policies. Inclusive embeddedness, therefore, is a type of state-society linkage where subordinate groups get to choose the officials who run the state, but the amount of direct popular input into decision making is rather limited.

Inclusive embeddedness reached its apex in most Western countries after World War Two. Significantly, this is the type of state-society relationship that most state-centric theorists arguably studied. As Theda Skocpol and her colleagues have emphasized, this type of state-society interaction featured states that were well insulated from societal pressure thanks to civil services that more or less approximated the description famously provided by Weber (1968). State apparatuses that fell in this category were relatively insulated from politics, tended to employ meritocratic criteria for advancement, and were highly professionalized (Silberman, 1993; Hood, 1995).

Perhaps the largest imprint left by this type of state-society interaction was the construction of comprehensive welfare programs. These programs sought to stimulate national economic growth and protect citizens from a wide range of social risks. Despite national variations, all postwar Western governments subscribed to the notion of a Keynesian welfare state in which the state was seen responsible for macroeconomic management and social protection (Block, 2007b). Welfare programs took a wide range of forms, from cash payments to labor protection legislation to insurance against unemployment, disability,

and old age, creating a sense of social solidarity and mutual dependency (Rose & Miller, 1992). This, in turn, placed workers in the historically unprecedented position where they could resist capitalist exploitation (Offe, 1982). This "golden age" of the welfare state that lasted until roughly the mid-1970s was characterized by large gains in both economic productivity and welfare state spending. The share of public sector expenditure in the Gross National Product (GNP) in the OECD countries as a whole grew from 28 percent in the mid-1950s to 41 percent by the mid-1970s (Glyn et al., 1986, p. 61).

Although inclusive embeddedness produced an array of beneficial outcomes for regular civil society groups, the kind of citizenship that flourished in many Western postwar societies could be characterized as "citizenship from above"³. There was a strong technocratic element to public decision-making as highly trained professionals exerted great influence over governments' choice of policies. Scores of professional economists entered public bureaucracies during this period, redefining economic policy as something that only professional economists could design and implement (Fourcade, 2006). By the end of the New Deal, technocratization was ubiquitous within the US government (Stryker, 1989). As a result, a significant portion of policymaking fell under the influence of shielded professional groups within the state bureaucracy. Many social protection programs, for example, were created by state bureaucrats without much, if any, popular consultation (Heclo, 1974). Moreover, given their expert training, technocrats often assumed that they "knew best" what policies should be pursued. Under the Roosevelt administration, for example, top Department of Labor officials began the New Deal legislation assuming to "know" what labor wanted and trying to impose their vision on labor unions (Blyth, 2002, p. 62-63). On the other side of the Atlantic, the British National Health Service became an enclosure closely controlled and administered by doctors, who set the policy agenda on health issues and succeeded in making some issues invisible to the public (Rose & Miller, 1992).

Network Embeddedness

Network embeddedness is relatively new - it has emerged during the last few decades and it is still currently in a state of flux. It is the successor of inclusive embeddedness following two major sets of changes taking place in the Western world. First, many Western societies are

² See Marshall (1966) for a classic description.

³ The term was coined by Turner (1990) in a slightly different context.

experiencing demands for increased pluralism coming from previously disenfranchised groups, especially women and racial minorities. Secondly, globalization and flexible production are rendering old modes of state intervention in the economy increasingly irrelevant. The result of these factors is a state that continues to be moderately embedded in capitalist elite groups, but that at the same time develops linkages with a multitude of other social groups.

In the realm of politics, the rise of the civil rights movement and the advent of identity politics contributed to pressure on state bureaucracies to be more accommodating to demands coming from a variety of groups (Block, 2007b). Increasingly, states have begun to treat civil society groups as partners rather than subjects. The result of this process was variously labeled as “the network state” (Castells, 2000), multi-level governance (Hooghe, 1996), polycentric governance (Hooghe & Marks, 2003), or network governance (Papadopoulos, 2003). These various formulations attempted to describe a real trend in the way in which Western states are organized. Whereas the bureaucratic state solved societal problems in a largely top-down manner, contemporary Western states are beginning to coordinate their activities through networks, partnerships, and deliberative fora (Hirst, 2000). As a result, the boundaries between state and society are blurred by multi-level alliances and partnerships between state and civil society (Papadopoulos, 2003). The same phenomenon is observed with respect to relationships between states and transnational social movements, with the latter becoming increasingly influential during the last few decades (Keck & Sikkink, 1999).

In the economic sphere, network embedded states attempt to foster technological innovation by creating and supporting decentralized production networks. They do so through a decentralized set of agencies which have the task to identify technological barriers, provide funding to firms, and facilitate connections between the members of various consortia (Block, 2008; Block & Keller, 2009). This new type of state is necessarily decentralized because the complexity involved in emerging technologies requires government officials who are deeply conversant with each of these technological domains. But the increased connectedness between business, technologists, and state officials does not degenerate into corruption because state agencies carefully monitor how public money is spent and the performance of the projects they sponsor. The main flaw of network embeddedness is perhaps a deficit of coordination: since many state programs operate in isolation, they run the risk of creating redundancy and wasted resources.

Fragmented Embeddedness

In the context of fragmented embeddedness, several elite factions vie for power and influence within the state, but no one group can predominate at any given time. In addition, because civil society groups are typically able to exert some influence, clientelist networks emerge to provide citizens with some measure of inclusion and social protection⁴. The result of this type of state society interaction is a state that is highly embedded in both elite and civil society groups, but in a way which tends to undermine the state’s capacity to act as a unitary actor.

Fragmented embeddedness is perhaps the most widespread form of state-society nexus. The presence of the characteristics associated with it was shown in large parts of Latin America (Geddes and Neto, 1992; O’Donnell, 1993), Middle East (Anderson, 1987), and post-communist Eastern Europe (Burawoy, 1996; Ganev, 2001a; Grzymala-Busse, 2003). Many of the examples featured in Migdal (2001) come from this category as well. However, for the sake of clarity, I will explore in some detail a classic example: Mexico under the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) regime.

In Mexico, the PRI played a key role in mediating state-society relations that consisted in the incorporation of subordinate social groups under state tutelage in exchange for welfare programs (Fox, 1994). For decades, the PRI was able to monopolize fiscal resources and also to target transfers by rewarding loyalists and withholding benefits for defectors (Magaloni, Diaz-Cayeros, & Estevez, 2007). In the first phase – roughly until the mid-1980s – most clientelist networks operated between institutional actors (Levitsky, 2007). For example, the most important Mexican labor union, the Confederation of Mexican Workers, was for decades one of the power bases of the PRI, with which it was formally associated (Roniger, 1990). Under this arrangement, powerful and politically-connected union leaders developed patron-client relations with union representatives by offering them better jobs and other material benefits; in turn, union representatives developed clientelistic relations with workers (Roniger, 1990).

Although remarkably resilient, the institutional configuration described above began to crumble in the

⁴ Clientelist networks are built on asymmetric but mutually beneficial exchanges between actors with access to prized resources and other actors lacking such access (Roniger, 1994). Often having a pyramidal shape, these networks are complex affairs connecting different strata, sectors and groups in society, including political parties and state administrations (Roniger, 2004).

mid-1980s as a result of the debt crisis and the resulting neoliberal reforms that weakened labor. But this did not spell the end of clientelism. With the breakdown of the old structure, the PRI sought to broaden its support among middle classes and the urban poor by transitioning to a form of patron-client relationships based on a territorial model (Levitsky, 2007). In 1989, after a disputed and controversial presidential election, the new administration launched Pronasol, a spending program aimed at alleviating extreme poverty. The true goal of the program, however, was to stem the decline of PRI's electoral dominance since few of the moneys aimed at the poorest citizens actually reached them. A recent study estimated that 29 percent of the Pronasol funds received by an average municipality throughout the existence of the program were diverted toward such purposes (Magaloni et al., 2007, p. 193). Although significant, in comparative perspective the Pronasol is hardly an isolated example. Successive Indian administrations, for example, used money allocated through so-called Centrally Allocated Schemes (CSS) to target government resources toward key segments of the electorate (Wilkinson, 2007). According to some estimations, only about 25 percent of the money allocated through CSS ever reached its intended beneficiaries (Wilkinson, 2007, p. 119).

The available evidence indicates that fragmented forms of state embeddedness feature two structural weaknesses. First, the diversion of public money into private hands is likely to limit the amount of funds available for public development projects. And second, because the high level of fragmentation of state structures that it generates, this type of embeddedness undermines the state's potential to act as a coordinating entity.

The diversion of public money is straightforward. Since most of the countries where fragmented embeddedness prevails are low-income or developing countries, and given that development usually requires significant capital accumulation, the rerouting of important funds from public to private realms is bound to undermine developmental prospects in the long term. In addition, clientelistic linkages undermine the already feeble attempts by the state to provide social assistance to its more vulnerable citizens. Returning to our Mexican example, it was estimated that if Pronasol funds had been correctly distributed to the most in need, they could have eradicated a third of Mexico's poverty (Magaloni et al., 2007, p. 193).

The second structural consequence of fragmented embeddedness is a weak and disorganized state. In contrast to entrepreneurial, inclusive, and even conservative embeddedness where the state apparatus

acts coherently, under fragmented embeddedness the various patronage networks crisscrossing the society are likely to create rifts and factions within the state itself (O'Donnell, 1993). The result of the state's lack of coherence, quite simply, is that the state becomes unable to pursue developmental strategies for extended periods of time. In Mexico, for instance, high bureaucratic turnover led to inconsistent implementation of policies and audit of regulations (Roniger, 1990). In India, the regime built by Indira Gandhi contributed to a sharp decline in the professionalism of the state bureaucracy (Kohli, 2004).

Captive/Repressive Embeddedness

Captive/Repressive embeddedness results when a radical group or movement gains extensive influence within the state apparatus and successfully blocks attempts by other elite groups to gain positions of power and prestige within it. In time, the initially fringe elite group becomes all-powerful, destroys old elite groups, brutally represses subordinate groups, and generates a new social order. The puzzling feature of this type of embeddedness, and the reason it bears the chosen label, is that the state is powerful and powerless at the same time: powerless vis-à-vis the ruling elite and towering over all the other social groups. The main result of this type of state-society interaction is the loss of the corporate identity of the bureaucracy (if such corporate identity had existed before the takeover), as the civil servants' identity becomes that of members of the ruling political party. In turn, state capture is conducive to coherent but potentially disastrous public policies.

Soviet-style communist regimes and Nazi Germany were exemplars of captive/repressive embeddedness. I would like to exemplify the emergence and consequences of this type of state-society relations using communist Romania as an example. As many other members of the Soviet bloc, communist Romania featured a close relation between the state apparatus and the communist party. Since a single party exercised power and no opposition was formally allowed to exist, strong ties between the ruling party and the state apparatus are typical for communist systems (Ganev, 2001b). The resulting "symbiosis", however, was highly asymmetrical since communist parties had tremendous influence over the state apparatus (Grzymala-Busse, 2003).

The Romanian communist regime led by Nicolae Ceaușescu was an extreme case of state subservience to ideologically-driven forces, on the one hand, and repression of civil society groups on the other. After an initially mildly liberal period, during the 1970s Ceaușescu

began erecting one of the most oppressive political regimes from the Soviet-dominated bloc. Controlling the state apparatus was one of the regime's most pressing concerns. Although the intense efforts toward industrial development carried out in the 1950s created pressure to build a more competent state apparatus, the need to control the state pushed the regime to prefer loyalty over technical expertise. This was a general characteristic of Leninist and Maoist regimes (U, 2005) and the Nazi regime (Peterson, 1966). The result, in all cases, was the de-professionalization of public administrations.

In addition to distrust in technocrats, another factor weakening the Romanian state apparatus was the principle of "cadre rotation". Its rationale, propaganda aside, was to preserve the political control of functionaries: shifting officials to and from various positions ensured that they could not develop a base for political opposition. Although cadre rotation achieved its goal in the sense that no organized opposition to the regime was ever able to form (Gabanyi, 2003), it also contributed to the de-professionalization of civil servants. Along with cadre rotation, another strategy that contributed to the extreme level of political subservience of the state bureaucracy was the "blending" of the Party and state structures⁵. The regime used two strategies for "blending". The first was the creation of bodies with double subordination – simultaneously Party and state structures. The second strategy was creating offices with double accountability (King, 1978).

After a few decades of uninterrupted economic growth, by the beginning of the 1980s there was stagnation and, by the end of the decade, negative growth (Linden, 1986; Poirot, 1996). The major cause behind the crisis of the 1980s was the complete colonization of economic and social policy by the communist party and even to a greater extent, by the increasingly personalized regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu. In an attempt to transform Romania into a "Rotterdam of the East", the regime almost doubled the capacity of the oil-refining sector between 1973 and 1980 (Linden, 1986). This led to a massive increase in the amount of imported oil at a time when world oil prices were increasing and demand for refined oil was decreasing, leading to hard-currency deficits. Moreover, as Ceaușescu gained in years, his decisions became increasingly erratic. He personally devised and implemented many large-scale projects whose merit was questionable at best. For example, a huge industrial project that was supposed to generate electric energy by burning lignite, a lower-

quality coal, had to be abandoned after it was discovered that a key technology was not available (Ionete, 2003). Another example, perhaps more chilling, was the rural resettlement plan that the regime initiated at the end of 1970s and planned to finalize by 2000. The plan aimed to increase the cultivable agricultural area by eliminating many small villages. Had the plan been carried out in full, more than half of the Romanian rural population would have been forcibly resettled (Ronnas, 1989). Although Ceaușescu's excesses pale in comparison to the atrocities initiated by Hitler and Stalin, what these leaderships had in common was an unchecked capacity to initiate and execute policy.

A close analysis of the Romanian case thus reveals a potentially key insight into the reasons why captive/repressive embeddedness is almost always unstable. It suggests that diminished deliberation, coupled with the total subservience of the state apparatus, is conducive to internal tensions that may prove ultimately self-destructive. Ceaușescu, for one, undid his own regime by his decision to drastically limit the population's food rations, which infuriated the workers and eventually led to the revolts that terminated the regime (Siani-Davies, 2005)⁶.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have sought to provide a critical analysis of the concept of embeddedness as employed in the sociology of the state. The paper showed that during its adoption by political sociology from economic sociology, the concept inherited one of its primary weaknesses, namely Polanyi's indecision on whether embeddedness was a permanent or a discrete phenomenon. To deal with this problem, I have followed the solution proposed by some economic sociologists and argued that we should start picturing states as always embedded in society. In addition, I have argued that state embeddedness suffered from its too-close relationship to another seminal concept, that of social capital, because it inherited the tendency to view embeddedness as a phenomenon with always positive consequences. By contrast, I have argued for a more nuanced understanding of state-society interactions. Subsequently, the paper exemplified these theoretical ideas by creating a bi-dimensional conceptual space. A survey of the literature revealed six types of state embeddedness, although I conceive of this as an open list

⁵ Joseph Stalin made similar attempts to end the duality between party and state in the beginning of the 1930s (Sunny 1991).

⁶ For an expanded discussion of the Romanian case, see Negoita (2011).

rather than an exhaustive set.

Due to space limitations, the present paper operated from the simplifying assumption that most interactions take place at the national level (although there were some mentions to supra-national and global forces that may affect state-level phenomena). In addition, further research is needed to show whether the typology built here can accommodate the addition of global/transnational factors. Nonetheless, one of the virtues of the approach sketched in this paper is that it views the internal coherence of the state as a variable in itself. This approach matters because in the cases where the state is highly coherent, such as conservative embeddedness, we do not reify the state when we assume a high level of similarity between the operations of the various agencies making up the state. In more decentralized types of embeddedness, such as the fragmented type, it would be of course a mistake to assume a high level of coherence. Instead, we should expect a much greater variety of approaches and organizational forms. It is not unusual, for example, for weak and disorganized states to feature “pockets of excellence” – exceptionally well-run and efficient agencies (Leonard, 2010). In this case, it is likely that several forms could coexist at the same time, although one of them would arguably be predominant.

Given the conflicted and convoluted state of the literature, even partially successful attempts at clarification have the potential for delivering analytical payoffs. As I show, the literature has made significant progress in its attempt to capture the complexity of state-society interactions, but at the same time it has struggled to go beyond vague generalizations. This paper has attempted to offer a solution to this problem by identifying concrete types of state-society interaction based on the notion of embeddedness. At the very least, this paper will have pointed out the continued usefulness of embeddedness as a tool in the study of the state, and it will have contributed to a better understanding of various types of state-society interaction.

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