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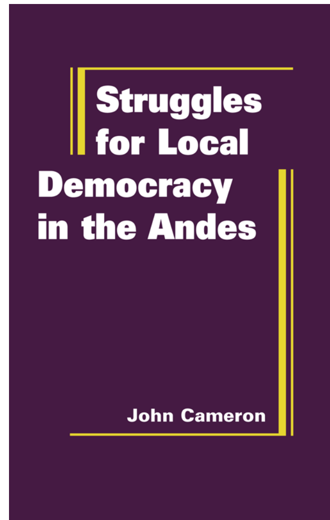
Struggles for Local Democracy in the Andes

John Cameron



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1
Introduction

This book is about political struggles by peasant and Indigenous groups and their supporters to control and to democratize rural municipal governments in the highland regions of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. Municipal governments in Latin America now play a much greater role in the politics and social and economic development of the region than they did in the past. Two key trends lie behind this change; one has come from above and the other from below. First, since the 1980s and 1990s, decentralization reforms have significantly increased the administrative responsibilities of municipal governments and the financial resources available to them. In many countries, decentralization has also involved new legal regulations that ostensibly aim to make municipal decision making more participatory and more accountable to local populations. Second, well before decentralization reforms were implemented, popular movements in many locales initiated struggles to wrest municipal power from the control of local elites. In the Andean region, locally based Indigenous and peasant organizations initiated political projects to control municipal governments as central elements of their strategies for territorial autonomy and resource control; those specific struggles for municipal power followed decades and in some cases centuries of struggles for local political power and autonomy. Popular struggles for municipal power intensified in the wake of decentralization and in some countries, such as Bolivia and Ecuador, national Indigenous and peasant organizations explicitly prioritized efforts to win control of municipal governments as a central element of their broader political strategies.

As municipal governments have acquired more financial resources and more administrative authority, and as struggles to control municipal power have intensified, questions about the depth of municipal democracy need to be taken more seriously than they have been in the past. The widespread assumption that decentralization would automatically promote democratization by moving government 'closer

to the people,' which accompanied the initial implementation of decentralization policies, has given way to a more nuanced recognition among academics and policymakers that decentralization *can* foster democratic deepening but it can also reinforce the power of undemocratic elites. However, understanding of the factors that actually promote municipal democratization and of the wide variations in the depth of municipal democracy in Latin America are both still weak. Indeed, as the authors of a comparative analysis of decentralization and democratization in Africa, Asia and Latin America concluded, "we know very little about the reasons why some sub-national governments become successful innovators in democratic governance while others reinforce authoritarian patterns" (Selee and Tulchin 2004: 314). The goal of this book is to better understand the forces that shape the possibilities for municipal democratization in rural Latin America.

The central argument of the book is that municipal democracy is shaped in important ways by the historical evolution of economic, social and political power relations among local political actors. The analysis of struggles for municipal democracy in this book draws from approaches to national democratic transitions that explicitly emphasize economic, social and political power relations in order to better understand local democratic transitions. The relative depth of democracy in rural municipalities requires an analysis of the historically structured relations of power within civil society that form the contexts within which municipal institutions and municipal leaders operate. Economic, social and political power relations can vary considerably between municipalities as a result of different ecological contexts, differences in the historical development of capitalism, and different degrees of intervention by outside actors—ranging from the state to political parties, churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—all of which need to be taken into consideration in order to understand the wide variations in the depth of municipal democracy in the Andean region and in other parts of the world.

The rural Andes are the site of both some of the most interesting experiments in municipal democracy and also some of the most exclusionary, elite dominated systems of local government in Latin America. In addition to these wide variations in patterns of rural municipal governance, there are several other compelling reasons to focus attention on struggles for municipal democracy in the rural Andes, and in rural Latin America more broadly. First, the vast majority of the more than fourteen thousand municipalities in Latin America are small and contain highly dispersed populations that are heavily dependent on agricultural production for their livelihoods (Nickson 1995: 1). While

national populations are increasingly centralized in large urban centers, most municipal governments represent rural areas—where poverty is also disproportionately concentrated. Globally, the World Bank (2002) reports that more than eighty percent of the billion people who live in abject poverty live in rural areas. In the Andean region, World Bank data similarly indicates that poverty is much higher in the countryside than in cities.[1] The role that municipal governments might play in improving rural living conditions and livelihoods hinges heavily on the extent to which they are managed democratically and seek to represent and respond to the concerns of their constituents.

Second, as the level of the state that is 'closest to the people,' municipal governments play important roles in both the promotion and the denial of citizen's rights—with crucial implications for people's sense of dignity and the formation of their political identities. As Jonathan Fox wrote in the context of rural Mexico, it is at the local level "where most citizens either gain access to or find themselves excluded from the state" (1994: 106). In the rural Andes, where the legacies of racism and the highly unequal servile social relations that characterized neo-feudal systems of agriculture remain strong, local governments have a particularly important role to play in fostering political cultures of democratic citizenship.

Third, rural municipal governments are key nodes within broader regional and national Indigenous and peasant social movements in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. Indigenous and peasant struggles for municipal power have generated national social movement leaders, popular bases of Indigenous and peasant movement support, and important ideas for alternative forms of governance. In Bolivia and Ecuador, Indigenous and peasant political parties prioritized struggles for municipal power as crucial opportunities for developing administrative experience, for building local bases of support, and for experimenting with alternative political systems that might later be scaled up to higher levels of politics. Indeed, recent constitutional reforms in both Bolivia and Ecuador that expand the possibilities for Indigenous political autonomy are based on institutional experiments in rural municipal governments in their respective countries. Nevertheless, very little recent research on Indigenous and peasant social movements in the Andes has paid careful attention to the dynamics of municipal power struggles.

From a methodological perspective, there are also important reasons for studying struggles to democratize rural municipalities separately from the politics of large urban centers. First, throughout much of Latin America, and in the Andean region in particular, the legacies of feudal

agricultural, social and political systems based on racial exploitation remain much stronger in the countryside than in urban centers. Those feudal legacies—coupled with the widespread absence of industry, dependence on labor migration, physical isolation and the dispersion of rural populations—mean that the factors that shape economic, social and political power relations among local actors in rural areas are distinct from those of large cities. Second, rural municipalities confront different challenges from those faced by large urban centers—in particular, the challenges of responding to the massive historical debt of unmet basic services and infrastructure in highly dispersed rural communities with miniscule budgets and tiny staffs with inadequate training. Moreover, the education levels of rural constituents are generally much lower than those in cities, while media coverage of municipal affairs is frequently non-existent and political parties are often much less institutionalized.

Municipal democratization means different things to different social actors in the rural Andes. Municipal governments have been elected in Ecuador and Peru since 1979 and in Bolivia since 1994. However, in many instances these municipal administrations do not satisfy even minimalist definitions of formal democracy. Both coercion and bribery of voters are common during elections, as are other forms of corruption, including clientelism, nepotism and kickback schemes. Moreover, municipal governments in the region have been historically dominated by local elites that have demonstrated systematic biases against rural peasants and especially Indigenous populations in both the allocation of municipal resources and treatment by municipal officials. It is not uncommon for rural municipal governments to allocate the vast majority of their investment resources to urban infrastructure projects in the small towns where local elites typically reside and to literally ignore the needs of rural communities within their jurisdiction, even when the vast majority of the population of the municipality lives in dispersed agricultural communities. It is also common to find municipal officials who cannot or will not speak the languages of local Indigenous majorities and who expect personal favors or political support in return for the allocation of supposedly 'public' services, jobs and infrastructure. Thus, despite the advent of municipal elections, there is significant space for deepening municipal democracy in the region. Outside actors such as aid donor officials, NGO personnel and urban academics generally articulate understandings of municipal democratization based on changes in the ways in which municipal governments make decisions; that is, they emphasize political process. By contrast, as the cases examined in this book make clear, the members of rural communities often convey a different understanding of

municipal democratization that prioritizes the redistribution of municipal investment resources over specific changes in the ways in which decisions are actually made; in short, changes in the distribution of resources rather than changes in modes of decision making are seen as the most important feature of municipal democratization. A second element of democratization that motivates many of the peasant and Indigenous actors involved in the struggles to control municipal governments that are examined in this book concerns the desire for dignified treatment by municipal officials—in contrast to the racist and exclusionary practices that remain widespread in rural municipalities. The tensions between understandings of municipal democratization that emphasize changes in political process and those that highlight the redistribution of resources and dignified treatment create very real challenges for rural municipal governments that are often caught between very different expectations of what democracy and democratization mean. How rural municipal governments respond to those tensions is one of the central themes examined in this book.

Social scientists have long debated the possibilities of democratization in rural settings. As Jonathan Fox (1990: 13) noted, neoclassical analysis of collective action dilemmas in dispersed and isolated rural settings corresponds closely with Marx's widely cited argument that the modes of production, geographic isolation, poor means of communication and poverty that characterize peasants also work to isolate them from one another and undermine both their political capabilities and the possibilities for rural democracy (1963 [1869]: 123–124). Similarly, various analyses of popular struggles for democracy have drawn attention to industrialization and urbanization as crucial processes, which have pulled members of subordinate social groups away from rural environments and into urban settings that are presumed to facilitate popular political organization and democratization (Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens 1992: 58; Therborn 1977, 1979; Collier 1999). The goal of this book is not to dispute earlier analyses that viewed peasants as incapable of political struggle or rural areas as unpropitious sites for democracy, but rather to examine the ways in which rural settings and rural political actors changed over the course of the twentieth century in ways that may facilitate democratization. For example, understandings of what it means to be a *campesino* (peasant) in the rural Andes at the beginning of the twenty-first century have little in common with objective definitions based on relations to the means of production, and are instead more closely connected to self-identification based on ties to a rural community (see Kearney 1996). Cyclical labor migration, frequently across national borders, combined with economic

differentiation and expanded opportunities for education means that many 'peasant' leaders in the Andes have significant urban and even international experiences and strong academic backgrounds. Their capacities for political agency are very different from the French peasants that Marx wrote about in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*.[2] Similarly, agrarian reforms that have redistributed land and interventions by external actors to help peasant and Indigenous groups to organize politically have in fact spurned significant processes of democratization in some rural municipalities in the Andes.

In an effort to better understand rural municipal democratization in the Andean region, this book poses three sets of questions. The first set of questions concerns the factors that best help to explain the deepening of democracy in rural municipalities. The second set of questions relates to the forms of democracy that are emerging in rural municipalities—from participatory to corporatist to clientelist, and including both western and Indigenous systems of governance. The third set of questions concerns the impacts of municipal democratization on rural populations, understood in terms of their material well-being, their dignity, their political identities, and their capacities for political action. By posing and seeking to answer these questions I hope to generate a better understanding of the forces that have promoted democratization in rural municipalities in the Andes, the possibilities for democratization in other municipalities, and the implications of municipal democratization for rural populations.

Theoretical Approaches to Municipal Democratization

Most recent analysis of municipal governance in Latin America has focused on technical issues of service delivery and administrative capacity rather than democracy. Within the smaller body of research that has focused on municipal democratization, the predominant methodological approaches have privileged questions about the design of decentralization frameworks and municipal institutions as well as the administrative and political strategies of municipal leaders. Policy proposals have highlighted the importance of good leadership (Rosales 1994; Campbell 2003; Campbell and Fuhr 2004), but have put particular emphasis on the institutional design of municipal governments and decentralization frameworks as the key factors involved in deepening municipal democracy. For example, the World Bank's 2004 *World Development Report* titled *Making Services Work for Poor People* asserted that making municipal governments into more effective and more democratic service providers was primarily a matter of putting in

place “the right institutional incentives” (World Bank 2004: 185). Specific institutional reforms that have been recommended to deepen municipal democracy include electoral reforms,[3] the use of performance indicators, access to information legislation, and the creation of institutionalized spaces for citizen participation in municipal decision making, particularly in the allocation of municipal budgets (Peterson 1997; Burki, Perry and Dillinger 1999: 32; USAID 2000: 37).

Academic analyses have also identified the design of municipal institutions, national decentralization frameworks and municipal leadership as key explanatory factors for municipal democratization. For example, Campbell (2003) proposed an explicit framework for the analysis of municipal governance in Latin America that emphasized municipal leadership and the structure of incentives for democratic municipal governance created by national decentralization laws. Similarly, the editors of a collection of essays on decentralization and democracy in Latin America argued that institutionalist approaches provide the most effective methodologies for understanding municipal democracy in the region (Montero and Samuels 2004), and a recent two volume analysis of decentralization in Bolivia focused entirely on the institutional design of the country’s decentralization framework and municipal governments (Fundación Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and ILDIS 2004). Analysis of participatory budgeting, which first emerged in Porto Alegre, Brazil but has since spread throughout Latin America, has also focused overwhelmingly on questions of institutional design and political leadership. In the specific context of the Andes, Van Cott’s (2008) examination of Indigenous run municipal governments in Bolivia and Ecuador focused explicitly on political leadership and Indigenous political parties as the two key variables behind municipal democratization, while Grindle’s (2007) analysis of municipal governments in Mexico highlighted the leadership of municipal officials as the single most important factor behind changes in patterns of local governance.

The prominent attention given to questions about the design of municipal institutions and decentralization follows a broader methodological trend within the discipline of political science that privileges analysis of the design of government institutions as the key variable that explains political behavior.[4] In short, an increasing number of political scientists assert that ‘institutions matter.’ The difficulty with this approach is not that institutions do not matter, but rather that they are not all that matters. Because institutionalist perspectives have dominated the study of municipal governance, non-institutionalist approaches that scholars have long used to understand national

democratization have been largely ignored. However, comparative research clearly indicates that within individual countries with a single design for all municipal governments, there are very wide variations in the depth of local democracy that closely relate to variations in local power relations (Fox 1994, 2007; Remick 2002; Selee and Tulchin 2004). A narrow focus on questions of institutional design fails to recognize the ways in which other factors and especially social, political and economic power relations shape both the creation of institutions and the ways in which they operate on the ground. As Douglas North, one of the leading proponents of the New Institutional Economics and a Nobel prize winner, pointed out in an analysis of the relationship between institutional design and economic growth, institutions "are not necessarily or even usually created to be socially efficient" but rather are "created to serve the interests of those with the bargaining power to devise new rules" (1990: 16). Similarly, the ways in which institutions function in practice is a product not just of their specific design but also of the particular social and economic context in which they operate. Analysis of municipal democratization or any process of political change thus requires that we ask questions about the relative importance of the design of institutions in comparison with other factors, such as ecological context and social and economic power relations. As Vedi Hadiz argued in a critique of institutionalist approaches to decentralization and democracy in Indonesia, rather than the result of institutional tinkering, "democracy, public participation, accountability and social and economic rights are all historically tied to the outcomes of struggles of social forces and interests…the product of grinding social change over centuries, colored by often violent and bloody confrontations, not least between social classes" (Hadiz 2004: 702). Similarly, in her analysis of municipal governance in Mexico, Grindle argued that

> [l]egislating and regulating institutions, particularly from above, may not be enough to ensure that they are put in place and then serve useful purposes. Sustaining change may require more engaged civil societies that are able to insist on the continuity of structures and processes that provide good results…. The challenges ahead may focus less on building institutions from the top down than on sustaining them from the bottom up (2007: 182).

In the specific context of the Andean region, the Spanish aphorism 'small village, big hell' (*pueblo chico, infierno grande*) similarly alludes to the social, economic, political and personal tensions and struggles

over power that exist even in the smallest rural communities. An understanding of those tensions and struggles is essential to any effective analysis of rural municipal governance.

The significant attention paid to questions of municipal leadership as a central variable in the democratization of municipal governments in Latin America similarly distracts attention away from the role that long-term historical changes in local power relations play in shaping the context in which municipal leaders operate. For example, Van Cott asserted that "exceptional mayors" were necessary to initiate and guide the radical democratic institutional innovations that she studied in Ecuador and Bolivia (2008: 58), while Grindle emphasized that in the Mexican municipal governments that she examined, "the agents of innovation were overwhelmingly public officials" (2007: 22). Similarly, Tender's (1997) analysis of regional and municipal governance in northeastern Brazil also highlighted the key role of municipal leaders in improving the quality of local governance. Within such perspectives that highlight the specific short-term time periods in which democratic innovations actually take place, municipal leadership—especially that of mayors—does indeed appear to be a central factor in explaining municipal democratization, as particular institutional reforms generally can be traced to the leadership of the particular individuals formally responsible for their implementation. However, such a focus overlooks questions about longer-term changes in local power relations that shape the contexts in which municipal leaders are able—or not able—to implement particular institutional or policy reforms. Indeed, Van Cott's categorization of municipal leadership partly conflates the context within which leaders operate with leadership itself (2008: 62–63), which results in an overemphasis on the relative importance of leadership at the expense of contextual factors. Moreover, strong municipal leaders who operate in the absence of political power relations that favor municipal democratization may succeed in creating new municipal institutions and policies, but those innovations are rarely to be sustained over time. Throughout the rural Andes, local political actors refer to the problem of '*alcaldecentrismo*' (mayor-centrism), that is, the excessive reliance on the leadership of a particular mayor to bring about hoped-for changes. Without a broader context of democratic power relations and a supportive social movement, those changes generally failed to emerge or could not be sustained beyond the tenure of the particular mayor associated with them.

Rather than disregard the ways in which the design of political institutions and political leadership shape political change in favor of an emphasis on social power relations and political struggle, the challenge

is to understand the relative importance of these different factors in democratization processes. In an analysis of decentralization in South Africa, Kerala (India) and Porto Alegre (Brazil), Patrick Heller asserted that technocratic perspectives on decentralization "reify institutions at the expense of [political] mobilization" while anarchist and communitarian perspectives "reify mobilization at the expense of institutions" (2001: 36). Heller also highlights the importance of creating institutions that can consolidate and sustain the gains of social and political struggles for democratization. Similarly, Van Cott argued in the specific context of the Andean region that "improvements in democratic quality cannot rely on existing institutional designs and processes" (2006: 7). Baiocchi (2003) highlighted Gramsci's observation that the deepening of democracy requires a 'long march through institutions'—that is, careful attention to the design and functioning of institutional arrangements to guide and promote citizen engagement—which cannot be sustained in the long-term on the basis of ad hoc social mobilization. At the same time, however, Baiocchi also emphasized the dangers of popular movement demobilization and bureaucratization that come from close engagement with state institutions, including those created by popular movements.

Some recent research has incorporated, at least implicitly, an analysis of the relationship between local level power relations and municipal governance. For example, Abers' (2000) study of the now well-known participatory budgeting process in Porto Alegre, Brazil alludes to the connections between changes in the balance of socio-economic power in the city and the relative success of the participatory budget. Most notably, she pointed out that municipal leaders were able to exploit divisions within the city's business elite and to forge an alliance between construction contractors and the city's poor and working class neighborhood organizations against large-scale property owners. Goldfrank (2003, 2007) also refers to the absence of a united opposition as an important factor behind the success of the participatory budget in Porto Alegre. In her research on good governance in the Brazilian state of Ceará, Tendler (1997) highlighted the efforts of the state government to curb the power of elite-based municipal politicians in relation to local popular sectors as a key condition for improved service delivery. By contrast, Campbell (2003) drew attention to the ways in which national governments and international agencies in Latin America used their power to limit experiments in democracy and developmental governance at the municipal level during the 1990s in order to maintain fiscal stability. Incorporating a clear analysis of social power relations into their examination of the performance of anti-

poverty programs managed by Mexican municipalities, Fox and Aranda (1996, 2000) drew attention to the strength of local popular movements, municipal autonomy from higher levels of government, and class and ethnic polarization between rural towns and outlying communities. Unfortunately, their analysis stopped short of examining the historical forces behind these factors that enhanced municipal service delivery. Heller (2001), Radcliffe, Laurie and Andolina (2001) and Van Cott (2006, 2008) all draw attention to political power relations in their respective analyses of conditions that support municipal democracy, but focus on aspects of power related much more closely to contemporary political agency than long-term historical changes in economic and social structures. Heller highlights the importance of the political will and capacity of the central state to promote municipal democratization along with the need for well-developed civil society organizations and political party leadership to champion democratic decentralization. Radcliffe, Laurie and Andolina focus attention on alliances among grassroots organizations, support from aid donors and NGOs, and multicultural political strategies of municipal leaders. In turn, Van Cott (2006, 2008) places particular emphasis on the roles of Indigenous political parties in deepening municipal democracy.

Grindle's presentation of comparative institutionalist approaches to the study of political change highlights several of the key factors that relative power approaches to democratization emphasize, in particular the ways in which historical contexts shape the relations of economic and political power among political actors who in turn determine public policy (2000: 25–26). Grindle's more recent analysis of local governance in Mexico also highlights the ways in which historical factors shape the performance of municipal governments, but she emphasizes the legacies of political traditions such as clientelism rather than historically structured economic power relations. Moreover, while Grindle argues that entrepreneurial leadership by municipal officials is the single most important factor behind innovations in governance in the thirty medium sized Mexican municipalities that she analyzed, she also concludes that in order to be sustained, those innovations need to be supported by engaged civil societies (2007: 182)—a reflection of the importance of equitable power relations to municipal democracy. Similarly, Avritzer (2002) elaborates an approach to the study of democratization in Latin America that emphasizes the importance of democratic practices in civil society as the starting point for the democratization of government decision making, although he stresses cultural practices in the public sphere rather than social and economic power relations. Looking back to earlier research on municipal

democratization, Robert Dahl's (1961) analysis of the gradual transition from oligarchic rule to pluralism in New Haven, Connecticut over the course of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries can be read as an account of the ways in which the development of capitalism in the northeastern United States lay behind shifts in political power. Indeed, Dahl's account of democratization in New Haven makes little reference to changes in the design of municipal institutions at all.

Numerous anthropological studies have also examined the dynamics of social and economic power relations in rural micro-regions in the Andes and provide excellent examples of how local power can be analyzed and understood.[5] The only difficulties are that very few of these works have identified specific connections between local power relations and patterns of municipal governance and that almost all of them concentrate on single case studies, which makes systematic comparison of cases difficult because different authors ask different questions and employ different research methods. The challenge, which this book takes up, is to find a balance between thick ethnographic examination of local power relations and comparative analysis of a variety of cases –which makes it possible to at least suggest generalizable relationships between municipal democratization and different patterns of local power relations.

Attention to local level social and economic power relations can be found in other works on municipal governance, such as those by Baud and Post (2002), Fox (2007), Mitlin (2001), Myers and Dietz (2002), and Schonwalder (1997). However, an understanding of the ways in which relations of social and economic power shape the functioning of municipal governments remains incipient. Selee and Tulchin's analysis of decentralization and democracy on three continents concludes only that evidence of the impact of local power relations on municipal governance is "inconclusive" and that "we *suspect* that the success of decentralization initiatives in improving democratic governance depends in part on the restructuring of local power relationships by empowering previously excluded sectors" (2004: 311, emphasis added). In order to better understand and promote municipal democratization, an integrated framework is needed that explicitly examines not only the broader constellation of forces that shape municipal democratization—including municipal leadership and the design of municipal institutions and decentralization laws—but also incorporates historical changes in local social and economic power relations and local ecological factors.

A Relative Power Approach to Municipal Democratization

Analysis of the political trajectories of Latin American states from comparative historical political economy perspectives offers an important methodological starting point for more careful examination of municipal governance in the region. Included in this tradition are works by Collier (1999), Huber and Safford (1995), Paige (1997), Roseberry, Gudmondson and Samper (1995), Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992), Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens (1997), Therborn (1979), Williams (1994), and Yashar (1997), all of whom draw on Barrington Moore, Jr.'s (1966) seminal work on the relationships between agrarian structures and state formation. These works draw attention to the ways in which the political trajectories of states have been shaped by historical changes in social, economic and political power relations, and they understand democratization as a process of institutional change that results from increased equality in the balance of social, economic and political power. To borrow from Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992), this body of work represents a relative power approach to democratization.[6] As they argue, "it is *power relations* that most importantly determine whether democracy can emerge, stabilize, and then maintain itself in the face of adverse conditions" (1992: 5, emphasis added).

To explain the varied democratic and authoritarian trajectories of different states in Latin America, authors working within the relative power approach have emphasized the following factors, which I list here in approximate order of importance:

- historical changes in the distribution of productive assets and the balance of social, economic, and political power of different groups in national society;
- the political organization of subordinate groups;
- divisions among dominant groups and coalitions among subordinate groups;
- the relative autonomy of the state from social forces, especially elites;
- the impact of global political and economic forces on the relative power of national political actors.

Within the context of these factors, the relative power approach also examines the impact of the design of state institutions and the strategies of key political actors on national political trajectories.

In order to explain the historical changes in power relations that lie behind democratization, the relative power approach draws particular attention to the contradictions of capitalist economic development. For example, Collier (1999) and Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) argue that gradual industrialization and urbanization created conditions in which working class organizations formed and struggled for political inclusion. Other authors, such as Huber and Safford (1995), Paige (1997), Roseberry, Gudmondson and Samper (1995), and Williams (1995) direct primary attention to the ways in which different paths of capitalist agricultural production in Latin America shaped the formation of nation states and the exercise of political power. More specifically, they highlight the ways in which systems of agricultural production based on extensive land control and repressive labor relations generated authoritarian political systems while democracy was associated with more egalitarian systems of landholding, agricultural production, and marketing. Significantly, many of the works that have used relative power approaches to analyze the political trajectories of Latin American states have noted considerable regional and local variations in the historical development of agrarian structures and socio-economic power relations within individual states. In particular, Williams argued that because of the widespread local differences in the development of agrarian production systems and labor relations in nineteenth century Central America, analysis of historical changes in agrarian structures and power relations was much more useful for explaining different patterns of municipal governance than the behavior of national governments. As Williams stated simply, "[t]he particular agrarian social formation of an area strongly influenced the behavior of town hall" (1995: 238). The relative power approach thus also points to the ways in which micro-regional variations in patterns of capitalist economic development in turn have shaped local economic and social power relations and the exercise of political power at the municipal level.

Most of the works within the relative power tradition give analytical priority to historical changes in the balance of power among different classes, defined primarily in objective terms as a relationship to the means of economic production. However, in order to understand the prospects for municipal democratization it is also essential to examine changes in other social power relations and the ways in which they influence municipal governance. In addition to class, social power in rural Latin America is also often sharply divided along lines of ethnicity, gender, generation and religion as well as between migrants and non-migrants and between the residents of rural towns and the surrounding

countryside. In many rural municipalities in the Andes, the principle cleavage of social, economic, and political power is based on differences between town-based, petty-bourgeois, white mestizos and rural, Indigenous, semi-proletarian peasants. But within each of those groups there are also other important inequalities of power based on gender, generation, religion, migration, education and economic strata. As Tanya Korovkin pointed out, in "the complexities of Andean politics...ethnicity, class, political ideology, and religion intertwine, producing political outcomes not easily understood when any one of these factors is considered in isolation from the others" (1997: 31). Moreover, these categories are not objective but rather are socially constructed, and the decisions of individuals to self-identify and organize around specific identities—such as peasant or Indigenous—both shape and are shaped by local power relations.

With these considerations in mind, the relative power approach can be adapted to the analysis of municipal democratization. The approach focuses attention on historical changes in the balance of local social, economic and political power. This analysis in turn requires an examination of:

- changes in the distribution of productive assets such as land, water, credit, infrastructure and the control of marketing networks;
- political organization and the social construction of local class, gender, and ethnic identities (amongst others) among both subordinate and dominant political actors;
- coalitions between members of different social groups (i.e. between rural Indigenous peasants and town-based mestizo petty bourgeoisies or between Catholic and Evangelical peasant organizations);
- political divisions within different social sectors;
- the impact of global and national actors and forces (i.e. aid donors, NGOs, political parties; central state actors; macroeconomic policies).

In the context of historical changes in local power relations, the relative power approach to municipal democratization also examines the institutional design of municipal governments and the political strategies of the key actors involved in struggles over municipal power.

While analysis of these factors can help to explain the relative depth of municipal democracy and the particular forms it has taken in different locales, it is also important to ask questions about the impacts of

municipal democratization on rural populations. To what extent has the deepening of municipal democracy generated better access to infrastructure and social services and to improved livelihoods? What impacts has municipal democratization had on the dignity and identity of historically excluded groups as citizens and how important are such non-material changes for local populations?

It is also important to examine the implications of municipal democratization—and especially the control of municipal power—for the political strategies and capacities of historically marginalized rural populations. Does it enhance their abilities to contest the political and economic structures that have marginalized them, or is municipal democratization a means of incorporating and taming rural social movements in a way that is ultimately disempowering? Scholars have long been deeply divided over this question. Scholarly proponents of decentralization and of popular struggles for municipal power have echoed Tocqueville's (1968 [1848]) arguments that local governments are a crucial site for political education and a training ground for higher levels of politics. Indeed, the leaders of national Indigenous and peasant organizations and political parties in Bolivia and Ecuador dedicated a high priority to local struggles for municipal power precisely in order to increase the political and administrative capacities of their respective movements. By contrast, within the context of much broader debates about social movement engagement in formal politics and the implications of such participation (Day 2005; Holloway 2002; Michels 2001 [1915]), two different sets of critics have argued against social movement involvement in local governance. The first line of criticism asserts that decentralization and participation in local politics is a "neoliberal cul-de-sac," devised by states, northern aid agencies, and international financial institutions as a strategy to fragment popular social movements and divert their attention away from national politics to parochial issues of local governance (Schuurman 1997; see also Petras and Veltmeyer 2005; Regalsky 2006; Kohl 2002; Harvey 1989: 237, 277, 296; Mohan and Stokke 2001).

A second line of criticism argues that engagement in local governance fosters what Foucault (1991) described as 'governmentality' or the self-discipline of the governed. Governmentality refers not to top-down coercion or discipline, but rather to "the conduct of conduct" (Dean 1999: 10)—that is, the strategies of states and other powerful actors to create self-regulating subjects. As Ferguson and Gupta explain, "governmentality does not name a negative relationship of power, one characterized entirely by discipline and regulation; rather, the emphasis is on its productive dimension" (2002: 989). Peasant and Indigenous

efforts to control municipal power can reflect these positive or productive elements of governmentality, first through political struggles to control municipal power and then through the expansion of legal knowledge and administrative capacities to manage municipal governments. Struggles for municipal power in the Andes have not been imposed by the states in a coercive manner, but rather have been actively pursued by Indigenous and peasant leaders as strategies of individual and collective empowerment. Rather than contesting the western bureaucratic rationale of central states, some Indigenous and peasant groups in the Andes have thus actively struggled to be incorporated into the logic of state laws and bureaucratic procedures in order to gain control of municipal power and resources. Similarly, some analysts of Brazilian municipalities that have implemented participatory budget procedures have noted changes in popular political activism away from oppositional, protest-oriented actions towards more bureaucratic, technical engagement with municipal accounting—a shift from 'shouting to counting' (Alvarez 2007; Heller and Baiocchi 2007; Rubin 2007). Charles Hale also draws attention to the ways in which multicultural reforms in Latin America that appear to empower Indigenous populations by granting them new rights simultaneously "perpetuate their subordination" by placing other, primarily economic rights off limits (2004: 19). Arguably, Indigenous control of municipal governance, like multicultural citizenship reforms, fosters what Hale calls the "*indio permitido*" (the authorized Indian) while undermining alternative political identities and forms of action. As Hale argues, "the *indio permitido* has passed the test of modernity, substituted 'protest' with 'proposal,' and learned to be both authentic and fully conversant with the dominant milieu. Its Other is unruly, vindictive and conflict prone" (2004: 19).

Various scholars have also analyzed the emergence of a particular form of neoliberal governmentality characterized by the "devolution of risk" to individuals and communities and "the 'responsabilization' of subjects who are increasingly 'empowered' to discipline themselves" (Ferguson and Gupta 2002: 989; Postero 2007). As Tanya Li explained in an analysis of neoliberal governmentality in Indonesia, the goal is to create "empowered communities" that "would be able to plan their own projects, manage conflicts, and reform the state apparatus from below" (2007: 230). From this perspective, popular struggles to exercise municipal power can be seen as self-directed struggles to be made governable and to be 'governmentalized.'

What is less clear, however, is the extent to which state efforts have actually been successful in promoting the self-disciplining of political

subjects through the creation of new opportunities to engage in municipal governance. While Foucault's analysis of governmentality is compelling, it is crucial, as Lukes asserted, to examine "how and to what extent the governed are rendered governable" (2005: 98). Anthropologists such as Mosse and Lewis (2006) and Lund (2001) have drawn attention to the ways in which the recipients of development aid often perform rather than internalize compliance with the goals and rationales of neoliberal aid donors. Similarly, Rossi's (2006) analysis of rural development projects in Niger led her to argue that governmentality can be very fragile and even illusory: "recipients are less locked into a lifeworld than they are temporarily attempting to turn development rationales to their own ends" (2006: 29).[7] Rossi points out that a major challenge for students of development "consists in distinguishing between conscious strategic action (i.e. when brokers in development perform a 'role' to attract projects to their village) and attitudes and dispositions that are produced unconsciously" (2006: 30). Thus, rather than assume that governmentality is inevitable and to search for evidence of it, the challenge for the analysis of struggles to control and administer municipal power in the rural Andes is to understand the extent to which Indigenous and peasant political actors have genuinely internalized the rationale underlying the laws that regulate municipal governance—a reflection of governmentality—and the extent to which they are strategically performing for the state and aid donors in order to gain access to municipal power and resources. The important questions are thus, first, whether deeper engagement in municipal politics has diverted the attention of local Indigenous and peasant organizations away from other avenues of political change, and, second, whether peasant leaders could easily step away from the state-imposed logic of municipal governance if they decided that municipal power no longer constituted a worthwhile political opportunity. Finally, if evidence of governmentality does exist, it is important to consider whether it represents a necessary cost of 'success' in struggles to democratize rural municipal governance.

A crucial element of the relative power approach to democracy is its attention to long-term historical changes in social, economic and political power relations and not just the dynamics of the specific short-term moments in which new institutions are created or transitions from one political regime to another take place. The French historian Fernand Braudel conceptualized historical time according to three different speeds or timeframes in a way that is useful for analyzing democratization at the municipal (and other) level(s) of politics. Braudel (1978, 1980) distinguished between *l'histoire événementielle* or the

short time span of particular events, a medium-term conjunctural perspective that analyzes historical changes over the course of decades, and a long-term perspective, which he called the *longue durée* that draws attention to very gradual changes in socio-economic structures and cultural patterns over the course of centuries. Municipal democratization needs to be analyzed from all three perspectives of historical time.

In the Andean context, the *longue durée* highlights not only the gradual transition from neo-feudal to capitalist agrarian production systems and labor relations but also the implications of that transition for social and political power relations. Significantly, while the shift from feudal to capitalist industrial agriculture took place over the course of centuries in Europe, the breakdown of semi-feudal production systems in the Andes occurred much more recently and quickly during the middle of the twentieth century. As a result, the crucial historical period for understanding municipal democratization in the rural Andes starts with the crisis of feudal agriculture that began in the early twentieth century in most of the region, although it is also important to be attentive to the deeper historical roots of that crisis as well as the pre-colonial origins of some of the democratization initiatives pursued by local Indigenous organizations. The transformation of agricultural production systems and labor relations was a necessary but insufficient condition for democratization in rural municipalities. The cases examined in this volume indicate that even where favorable structural conditions were present, the factors that explained actual changes in municipal governance were connected much more closely to the agency of particular individuals and groups than sweeping structural changes. The conjunctural perspective focuses attention on the ways in which patterns of economic development since the breakdown of feudal agriculture have influenced local power relations; it also calls attention to the impacts of changes in political regimes at the national level on local systems of government, such as the shifts from military to elected civilian regimes and the transition from highly centralized systems of governance towards decentralization. The perspective of *l'histoire événementielle* highlights the particular events and decisions that have shaped efforts to deepen municipal democracy within the context of more gradual changes in local power relations. The case studies in this book aim to understand municipal democratization in terms of all three perspectives on historical time, beginning with gradual long-term shifts in land tenure and rural labor relations, then analyzing changes in local power relations and patterns of municipal governance over the twentieth century, and, finally, examining the implications of recent

decentralization reforms and efforts by Indigenous and peasant groups to contest municipal elections.

Before proceeding further, it is important to acknowledge three possible problems with the relative power approach to municipal democratization. The first is that the approach yields few easily applicable policy lessons for promoting municipal democracy in the contemporary Latin American political and economic context. Policymakers have favored the institutional approaches to democratization that I criticized above precisely because they offer potentially viable strategies for shaping political behavior. By shifting attention away from the design of decentralization frameworks and municipal institutions and from technical questions of administrative capacity and resource transfers to long-term shifts in political power relations, the relative power approach focuses attention on issues that are much more difficult for policymakers and development experts to influence. Indeed, when I presented an earlier version of this research to the Canadian International Development Agency, one official explained that the only elements of it that were of any real interest to the agency were those that could be influenced within the scope of a typical two- to five-year development project. The second problem is that the relative power approach employs a qualitative methodology that limits the number of cases to which it can be easily applied for comparative purposes. Scholars working from quantitative or less holistic perspectives will argue that there are too few cases and too many variables for the approach to yield any broadly generalizable conclusions. There is much merit to this criticism. Nevertheless, the relative power approach encourages scholars and policymakers to consider a series of factors that have important implications for municipal democratization in Latin America but which have been largely ignored to date. Finally, there is also a danger that efforts to explain contemporary political outcomes through reference to historical changes may be clouded by the ways in which history has been recorded, and may thus overemphasize certain elements of the past and miss the significance of others. However, in spite of these dangers, the attention to historical change in the relative power approach is crucial in order to counterbalance the relative ahistoricism of much contemporary analysis of municipal democratization, which focuses attention only on the recent strategies of political actors and changes in the design of political institutions.

Research Methodology

To put the relative power approach into practice, I conducted research in eight rural municipalities in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru from 1999 through 2007, six of which are featured in this book.[8] By examining the histories of democratization in two municipalities in each of the three countries, this book aims to strike a balance between a thick and thin analysis that allows both a careful examination of each case but also a comparative analysis of multiple cases. Since one of the goals of this research was to understand the conditions and strategies that favored municipal democratization and some criteria were needed to select a feasible number of case studies from the more than 2,500 rural municipal governments that exist in the three countries, I initially chose to conduct research in municipalities that were widely viewed in government, NGO, academic and media circles in each country as 'success stories' of decentralization and municipal democratization. They were all seen by a wide array of development experts as exceptional experiences of good governance and participatory democracy that departed from the much more common patterns of corruption, racist exclusion and weak administrative capacity. Government, NGO and academic observers also highlighted these cases as 'models' of municipal democracy and encouraged other municipalities to emulate their apparent successes, which seemed to make it even more important to understand the factors underlying the democratization of these particular municipal governments. I also chose to examine apparently successful cases of municipal democratization in order to better understand the tensions and challenges that 'successful' struggles for municipal power created for Indigenous and peasant groups.

Nevertheless, it very quickly became apparent when I began to conduct research in the selected municipalities that accounts of their success were often wildly exaggerated. Laudatory descriptions of participatory democracy often masked some rather undemocratic practices including domination by NGOs and small cliques of local leaders, clientelism, and the marginalization of base members—especially women—from decision making. Moreover, the subsequent breakdown of some of the initiatives to deepen municipal democracy made it clear that municipal democracy can be much more fragile than enthusiastic proponents of decentralization have recognized. It also became clear that the governments, aid agencies, NGOs, and academics who were heavily engaged in decentralization initiatives needed success stories in order to justify and legitimate their efforts. As a result, this

research project also became an effort to interrogate success stories in order to understand whether participatory forms of democracy were really flourishing to the extent that outside reports often suggested. Thus, rather than successful democratic outcomes, what unites all of the cases examined here is that they were the sites of significant struggles by Indigenous and peasant groups and well-intentioned outsiders to make rural municipal governments more democratic.

The municipalities examined in this book also share a number of other important features in common. They all have relatively small populations of between 10,000 and 35,000 that are highly dispersed among rural communities and depend heavily on a combination of agriculture and labor migration for their livelihoods. The municipal governments themselves are also small in terms of their annual budgets, which ranged from just under $1 million to just over $4 million, and the size of their staffs, which varied from ten to seventy people. The cases examined are also all located in the highland regions of their respective countries, which is significant not just because of the ecological context but also because of the zones' long histories of interaction with colonial and republican governments, which most municipalities in the Amazon regions of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru did not experience. All of the cases are marked by long histories of domination by local elites who were—and in some cases remain—geographically concentrated in the small towns where local government offices and most local businesses and services are also located. Beyond these common features, the six municipalities reveal significant variations in land tenure and the distribution of economic power, local histories of capitalist development, ethnic self-identification, ecology, and intervention by outside actors such as state agents, political parties, and NGOs.

Research itself involved analysis of municipal documents and semi-formal interviews with thirty to forty key political actors in each of the six municipalities as well as many other informal conversations with local residents and observation of meetings held by municipal officials and Indigenous and peasant organizations. I made multiple trips to each municipality between 1999 and the end of 2007 and was able to observe changes in municipal governance over the course of at least two and sometimes three electoral periods. While the eight-year time frame of the field research was primarily a result of the distractions of university teaching and family rather than conscious planning, it did make it possible to analyze the unfolding dynamics of local power relations and municipal governance over an important period of time, which included the collapse of some initially successful democratization initiatives. Historical analysis of the six cases is based on secondary sources and

oral histories, which in some cases leave important questions unanswered that could only be addressed through meticulous archival research. The pressures of time in a research project that involved six research sites in three different countries means that such research will have to wait for other investigators.

Decentralization in the Andes

As I explained above, this book does not seek to explain the political and economic forces behind decentralization in the Andes, which have already been carefully analyzed by numerous other scholars.[9] Rather, the focus is on the field of forces that shape municipal governance, which include but are not limited to decentralization laws. However, four particular issues connected to the political, administrative and fiscal dimensions of decentralization in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru are particularly important for the analysis of the cases of municipal democratization in this book.

The first key issue concerns the historical timing of political decentralization—that is, the creation of municipal districts and selection of municipal leaders through public elections. In all three countries, municipalities (rather than provinces or regional levels of government) have been the privileged focus of decentralization reforms. In Bolivia, the 1994 Law of Popular Participation and the 1995 Law of Administrative Decentralization marked a decisive shift from centralized political management to decentralized governance. The new legislation created 311 municipal governments (328 as of 2008), mandated the transfer to them of twenty percent of state revenue (proportional to population size) as well as administrative authority for a variety of policy areas, and established specific procedures for citizen participation in municipal decision making. Because municipal governments did not exist at all in most areas of Bolivia before 1994, there were very few struggles to control or democratize municipal power. Struggles for local power were widespread prior to 1994, but they focused on other institutions such as peasant federations, unions, schools, marketing networks and informal social power relations. Municipal governments have had a much longer presence in rural Ecuador and Peru but have only been elected through universal suffrage since 1979 and 1980, respectively. In many rural municipalities, the opportunity to elect mayors and municipal councilors was the most important institutional change that led peasant and Indigenous groups to fight for municipal power. Indeed, most of the struggles for municipal power analyzed in this book began with the first municipal elections under conditions of

universal suffrage in their respective countries. However, it is essential to make clear that struggles over local power have had much deeper roots; it was simply with the advent of universal suffrage in municipal elections that those struggles began to focus on the control of municipal institutions.

A second important element of political decentralization concerns the creation of new institutions for citizen participation in municipal decision making. Andrea Cornwall and other scholars associated with the Institute for Development Studies have distinguished between two different kinds of spaces for citizen participation in government decision making: "invited spaces" created from above and "popular or autonomous spaces" created from below, and they argue that the dynamics of these distinct types of participatory space need to be understood differently (Cornwall 2002: 1; Brock et al. 2001). Similarly, Van Cott (2008) highlighted the differences between the legal frameworks for decentralization in Ecuador and Bolivia. In Ecuador, decentralization has involved no specific measures to promote the deepening of democracy in municipal governance. A minimalist but very flexible legal framework for municipal governance allows municipal governments a wide degree of freedom to experiment with new institutions for citizen participation but imposes very few regulations to encourage citizen involvement in local governance. As a result, the emergence of new institutions to increase citizen involvement in municipal governance resulted entirely from local *sui generis* processes in specific municipalities that can be understood only by analyzing local factors. By contrast, Bolivia's 1994 Law of Popular Participation and subsequent legal reforms have created a strict framework of regulations that impose from above specific mechanisms for citizen participation, which makes bottom-up experimentation more difficult. However, while national laws imposed a uniform institutional design on all municipal governments in the country, the actual functioning of those institutions and the extent to which other institutions have been created to deepen municipal democracy requires careful analysis of local power relations. Similarly, in Peru, decentralization initiatives were accompanied by specific reforms to increase citizen involvement in municipal governance, most notably the 2003 Law of Participatory Budgets. Significantly, in both Bolivia and Peru, there have been wide variations in the extent to which the new institutions for citizen participation have actually promoted more democratic political behavior. Moreover, the national imposition of a common set of institutions for citizen participation in all municipalities has tended to displace local *sui generis* institutional innovations and has

made it more difficult for local actors to experiment with alternative institutional arrangements for popular involvement in municipal decision making, a concern also raised by Goldfrank (2007) and Van Cott (2008).

Administrative decentralization—that is, the transfer of administrative responsibilities from central to municipal governments—also has important implications for municipal democratization because it determines the degree of jurisdiction that municipal governments can exercise over issues that can generate serious political cleavages and conflicts. Municipal democracy is important to the extent that municipal governments have jurisdiction over issues that matter to local populations. In settings in which municipal governments have no authority over issues that divide local populations or affect the interests of locally powerful actors, municipal democratization may be quite compatible with highly unequal patterns of social, economic and political power. However, as municipal governments become responsible for the delivery of a broader range of goods and services and new areas of regulation and policymaking, the possibility of serious conflict—and the importance of local power relations to municipal governance—increases substantially.

Finally, fiscal decentralization, or the transfer of financial resources from central to sub-national governments—the most widely cited indicator of decentralization—seems to have important but only indirect impacts on municipal democratization.[10] There is certainly no direct connection between the resources available to municipal governments and the depth of democracy, but competition over municipal power clearly has increased as monetary transfers to municipal governments have grown. However, in many cases the result of increased political competition has been a growth in the number of individual power brokers seeking access to municipal resources and a fragmentation of peasant and Indigenous votes rather than a strengthening of municipal democracy. While the transfers of resources to rural municipalities in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru have increased significantly over the past fifteen years, municipal budgets remain woefully inadequate in comparison with the unmet basic needs and new administrative responsibilities of municipal governments. This problem of "unfunded mandates" (Bond 2008) has sparked an additional trend that has important implications for municipal democracy. Because rural municipalities lack sufficient resources to fulfill their basic mandates, ambitious mayors have actively sought out additional financial and technical resources, primarily from aid donors and NGOs—many of which have become keen supporters of municipal decentralization.

Municipal efforts to broker external aid have thus introduced new national and international actors into the field of forces that shape municipal governance and democratization—though not always in positive ways. In some cases, aid donors and NGOs have given crucial political and technical support to democratization efforts and have contributed resources that have helped to legitimate participatory forms of governance; in other cases, they have imposed external views of how democratic institutions should be designed and have even taken over the leadership of municipal democratization efforts.

Overview of the Book

The six case studies of Indigenous and peasant struggles for municipal power are analyzed in Chapters Two through Seven. Chapter Two examines the long and difficult struggle for municipal power by Indigenous peasants in the municipality of Guamote, in the highland province of Chimborazo in central Ecuador. Guamote experienced a profound transformation of social and political power from the hands of a tiny elite of neo-feudal landowners that dominated local government until the late 1970s into the hands of a new elite of politically savvy Indigenous leaders. The changes in economic, social and political power relations that made possible the transition from neo-feudal to Indigenous control of Guamote's municipal government were closely connected to the unusually thorough implementation of agrarian reform laws that redistributed agricultural land to the Indigenous majority and broke the economic and political power of the neo-feudal elite. The democratization of power relations was also facilitated by the interventions of numerous external actors—ranging from left political parties to radical Catholic priests, to progressive NGOs—that helped to organize the local Indigenous population as collective political actors. The experience of Guamote also highlights the ways in which some of the factors that initially facilitated municipal democratization—such as poor conditions for agricultural production and peasant differentiation—subsequently came to pose serious challenges to democratic deepening. Indeed, as a result of Guamote's difficult ecological and geographic setting, Indigenous leaders in the municipal government found the promotion of local economic development to be an almost impossible challenge. Moreover, the gradual process of economic differentiation that contributed to the emergence of the well-educated Indigenous leaders who took on positions of municipal authority also enabled them to dominate municipal decision-making with few effective checks from the rest of the local population.

Chapter Three examines the very different history of local governance in the municipality of Cotacachi in Ecuador's northern highland province of Imbabura. Although agrarian reform laws were never implemented in Cotacachi and land distribution remains highly unequal, its municipal government has received international recognition for initiatives to promote citizen participation and to defend local residents against multinational mining corporations. The chapter examines the factors behind the apparent contradiction between the extremely unequal relations of economic power in Cotacachi and a highly participatory municipal government. The chapter clearly demonstrates that highly unequal power relations do not necessarily block the democratization of some elements of municipal governance, but powerful economic actors can and do seriously constrain the jurisdiction of municipal governments and the specific policy areas in which they are able to act. In Cotacachi, powerful landowners were able to keep key political issues such as property taxation and the regulation of water and chemical pesticides off the municipal agenda.

Chapter Four, researched and written with Gonzalo Colque, shifts attention to the efforts of Aymara peasants in the recently created municipality of Jesús de Machaca in the Bolivian *altiplano* to merge re-constructed forms of Indigenous governance with the complex system of laws that regulate municipal governments in Bolivia. The chapter pays particular attention to the ways in which unique land tenure arrangements and a centuries-long struggle for political autonomy shaped local economic and social power relations and converged in the context of Bolivia's 1994 Law of Popular Participation to create an opportunity for the creation of the new municipality and subsequent efforts to govern it in accordance with Indigenous norms of decision making. It also examines the serious tensions between western and Indigenous forms of governance, and the dilemmas that the control of municipal power poses for Indigenous organizations.

Chapter Five examines the vicissitudes of municipal governance and the deep tensions between peasant leaders, non-governmental organizations, political parties and municipal politicians in their respective efforts to control municipal power in the municipality of Mizque, in Bolivia's Cochabamba department. As a result of initiatives by a Cochabamba NGO that effectively controlled municipal power for ten years, municipal governance practices in Mizque became key elements of Bolivia's 1994 Law of Popular Participation, and during the 1990s it was one of the most widely touted municipal success stories in the country. However, tensions rooted in the unequal relations of economic and political power between peasant leaders on the one hand,

and on the other hand the Cochabamba NGO and its representatives in the municipal government, ultimately ended the ten-year experiment and opened a new chapter in the history of municipal power. The NGO had carefully engineered a shift in political power away from the old town-based commercial elite that had dominated municipal power since Bolivia's 1953 Agrarian Reform Law undermined the power of quasi-feudal landlords. However, by the early 2000s the increased political power of Mizque's peasant federation—in part a product of efforts by the NGO—in association with the Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) political party enabled peasant leaders to force the NGO out of power and to claim control of the municipal government for themselves, although without support from NGOs or any other outside actors.

Chapter Six analyzes the shift from a highly clientelist system of municipal governance to more democratic forms of decision making and the subsequent return to clientelism in the municipality of Limatambo, in the southern highland department of Cuzco, Peru. The municipality of Limatambo gained national attention because of the efforts of a charismatic NGO staff member who was elected as mayor for three consecutive terms in office during the 1990s, and who implemented a series of significant pro-peasant initiatives that abruptly ended the control of municipal power by the local elite of town-based landowners and merchants. The chapter highlights the ways in which agrarian reform in Peru weakened but did not destroy the economic and political power of local agricultural elites, which retained sufficient power to undermine the democratic initiatives of the pro-peasant mayor. Significantly, the deepening of municipal democracy in Limatambo took place during a period characterized by the extreme centralization of political power and active hostility towards municipal democratization by then-President Alberto Fujimori. Ironically, the municipal democratization process broke down in the early 2000s, precisely when Peru's national government began to decentralize and implemented national legislation to promote citizen participation in municipal decision making. Indeed, the nation-wide reforms that were implemented in the early 2000s to promote municipal democratization actually weakened municipal democracy in Limatambo by replacing institutions that had been created by the grassroots with much less participatory institutions created by central government bureaucrats in Lima.

Chapter Seven explores the history of municipal governance in the isolated municipality of Haquira, in Peru's southern highland department of Apurímac, in the context of changes in local power relations from the 1920s to the early 2000s. Like Limatambo, Haquira

gained national attention in the 1990s as a result of initiatives by an NGO staff member-turned-mayor to engage the local peasant population in municipal decision making. Although there was no history of large-scale landholding in Haquira, municipal politics had long been controlled by a local elite of medium-scale landowners and merchants. It was only during the 1980s, in the wake of the political violence inflicted by *Sendero Luminoso* guerrillas and state military forces in Haquira, that many of the elite families fled the area and political power relations began to shift in favor of the peasant majority. When Peru's civil war ended in the mid-1990s, NGO staff members and closely associated peasant leaders were able to take advantage of the new political space to establish a series of institutional changes aimed at increasing peasant involvement in municipal decision making. Although municipal political power remained firmly under the control of peasant leaders, the institutional changes pioneered in the 1990s failed to resonate with the local population and non-participatory, clientelist forms of governance were re-established under peasant leadership. Significantly, as in Limatambo, municipal democratization initiatives in Haquira collapsed just as Peru's national government implemented measures intended to increase citizen involvement in municipal governance and national government reforms ostensibly intended to promote municipal democratization actually weakened it.

Chapter Eight concludes the book with a comparative analysis of the central factors behind the relative success and failure of struggles to control and democratize municipal power in the rural Andes. The chapter also responds to the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter about the forms of municipal democracy that are emerging in the rural Andes and their implications for the material well-being and political identities of rural populations. The chapter also highlights the difficult challenges and contradictions that confront Indigenous and peasant groups after they have taken control of municipal governments.

Notes

[1] According to the World Bank (2007: 290–291), rural and urban poverty levels in the three countries were: Bolivia—rural poverty: 77.3 percent, urban poverty: 53.8 percent; Ecuador—rural poverty: 56.0 percent, urban poverty: 19.0 percent; Peru—rural poverty: 67 percent, urban poverty: 46.1 percent. The national censuses on which the World Bank relies are somewhat outdated and should be interpreted as very approximate. Nevertheless, they give a clear indication of the differences between urban and rural poverty levels.

[2] Marx famously asserted in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that French peasants in the mid-nineteenth century were isolated from one another and were thus incapable of political action (1963 [1852]: 123–124).

[3] Proposed reforms include ward-based electoral systems, the direct election of mayors, the separation of national and local elections, the elimination of systems of voting by closed party lists, and the abolition of requirements to contest municipal elections through political parties.

[4] See, for example, March and Olsen (1984); Evans, Reuschemeyer and Skocpol (1985); Pierson and Skocpol (2002); Goodin and Klingeman (1996); and Boin (2008) for a concise review.

[5] See, for example, Ejdesgaard Jeppesen (2002); Gelles (2000); Goudsmit (2006); Harvey (2002); Lagos (1994); McNeish (2001, 2002); Orlove (1980); Rasnake (1988); Rockefeller (1998); Roper (2003); Seligman (1995); Smith (1989); Striffler (2002).

[6] Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens propose a "relative *class* power approach" to democratization (1992: 47).

[7] Foucault's own writing varies between explanations of governmentality as a highly structured, totalizing process and more flexible descriptions in which there is greater room for oppositional agency or transgression. Bevir (1999: 25) distinguishes between Foucault's "excitable" and "composed" writing on governmentality to highlight these differences. I thank Molly den Heyer for bringing this distinction to my attention.

[8] Two cases—the municipality of Bolívar de Carchi in Ecuador and the municipality of Potosí in Bolivia—are not discussed here for simple reasons of space. The case of Bolívar is examined in Cameron (2003a, 2003b and 2005).

[9] For comparative perspectives on decentralization in the three countries, see Carrión (2003) and O'Neill (2005). On decentralization in Bolivia, see: Booth (1997), Grindle (2000), Molina Monasterios (1997); Van Cott (2000). On decentralization in Ecuador, see Barrera, Gallegos and Rodríguez (1999); Muñoz (1999); Ojeda Segovia (1998, 2000, 2002, 2004); Harbers and Illerhues (2006). On decentralization in Peru, see Gonzales de Olarte (2004); Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana (2006); Planas (1998).

[10] World Bank statistics indicate that in 2004, municipal governments accounted for approximately thirty-five percent of public spending in Bolivia, twenty percent in Ecuador and fifteen percent in Peru—up from single-digit figures in the early 1980s. (www1.worldbank.org/publicscector/ decentralization).