



Democratization by Institutions: Argentina's Transition Years in Comparative Perspective

Leslie E. Anderson

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In this pioneering study of democratization in Argentina, Leslie Anderson challenges Robert Putnam's thesis that democracy requires high levels of social capital. She demonstrates in *Democratization by Institutions* that formal institutions (e.g., the executive, the legislature, the courts) can serve not only as operational parts within democracy but as the driving force toward democracy.

As Anderson astutely observes, the American founders debated the merits of the institutions they were creating. Examining how, and how well, Argentina's American-style institutional structure functions, she considers the advantages and risks of the separation of powers, checks and balances, legislative policymaking, and strong presidential power. During the democratic transition, the Argentinian state has used institutions to address immediate policy challenges in ways responsive to citizens and thereby to provide a supportive environment in which social capital can develop.

By highlighting the role that institutions can play in leading a nation out of authoritarianism, even when social capital is low, Anderson begins a new conversation about the possibilities of democratization. *Democratization by Institutions* has much to say not only to Latin Americanists and scholars of democratization but also to those interested in the U.S. constitutional structure and its application in other parts of the world.

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