

Preface and Acknowledgments

In 2015, Ira Katznelson, the then President of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), convened a group of scholars to discuss ways to promote innovative work in the social sciences. The group represented a wide range of disciplines and included faculty and administrators from universities, colleges, and foundations, with expertise in both research and pedagogy. Those expansive and lively discussions eventually came to focus on a thesis proposed by the political scientist Rick Valelly. In his 2014 article, “Two Political Sciences or One? Liberal Arts Political Science as a Disciplinary Partner,” Valelly argued that political science has “two cultures”: one most fully developed at major research universities, the other best embodied by top liberal arts colleges. The former tends to emphasize the importance of cutting-edge research, narrow specialization, and graduate instruction; the latter, focusing on undergraduate education, prizes interdisciplinary competence and cultivates the arts of writing and discussion. One is deep but narrow, while the other is broad and often less connected to methodological debates in the field. Neither is sufficient unto itself. Echoing C. P. Snow’s influential book, Valelly voiced caution as well as hope: If political science is diminished by the segregation of its cultures, their integration promises not only to enrich and revitalize the discipline but also to make its work more socially meaningful and civically engaged. And if this were true of political science in particular, might it not also be true of the social sciences as a whole?

Embracing this diagnosis, the SSRC-led group developed over a series of meetings a paradigm for multi-day retreats, each focused on a particular topic, that would bring together faculty from research universities and liberal arts colleges to address questions of shared concern through structured discussion and collaborative inquiry. The retreats were conceived to foster links between disciplinary expertise and liberal arts knowledge, to explore the relationship between the social sciences and the humanities, to promote innovative and effective pedagogy, and to address major questions of both immediate and

enduring significance. As the group was contemplating potential topics for the initial retreat, the 2016 presidential election in the United States provided a clarifying jolt and an unambiguous choice: popular sovereignty.

The first retreat, hosted at Swarthmore College in January 2017, convened a team of scholars and educators to discuss foundational texts and cutting-edge research and to develop a collaborative undergraduate course on the theme of popular sovereignty. Versions of this course were subsequently offered at several liberal arts colleges and universities (see www.ssrc.org/programs/china-environment-and-health-initiative-cehi/forum-on-health-environment-and-development/ for more information). One of those courses is described in the chapter by Nicole Mellow and Andrew Perrin in the present volume (Chapter 16). Subsequent retreats were designed to cultivate new research, with a view toward producing an integrated volume on popular sovereignty that would also promote the wider goals of the SSRC initiative. These retreats were dedicated to discussing key texts on the history, theory, and practice of popular sovereignty; to presenting new work; and to collectively conceiving the shape and substance of the book that would eventually become *When the People Rule*.

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We also gratefully acknowledge all the participants who have contributed to this project. We thank, in the first place, those who joined us for the initial planning sessions in 2015: Richard Arum, Edward Ayers, Andrew del Banco, Joseph Meisel, Susan Pedersen, Judith Shapiro, Eugene Tobin, and Rick Valelly; and for the course-development retreat in 2017: Richard Boyd, Ioannis Evrigenis, Nicole Mellow, Carol Nackenoff, Andrew Perrin, and Rick Valelly. The editors are especially grateful to all the workshop participants and volume contributors, who dedicated substantial time and ample good will in attending the retreats, and whose arguments, suggestions, and critiques shaped the idea for *When the People Rule* as well as its organization and central claims. The collegial exchanges, and incisive and close engagement with each other's arguments, embodied the best spirit of intellectual debate and collaboration. This is, we believe, one of the essential pillars of popular sovereignty. While most of the retreat attendees eventually wrote chapters for the volume, we owe a special debt to Rick Valelly and Nathan Tarcov, whose contributions enriched our discussions and whose ideas and arguments are present in this book.

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Last but not least, we would like to thank the many students with whom we have studied and discussed these matters. From you we have learned a great deal about what it means for the people to rule.

