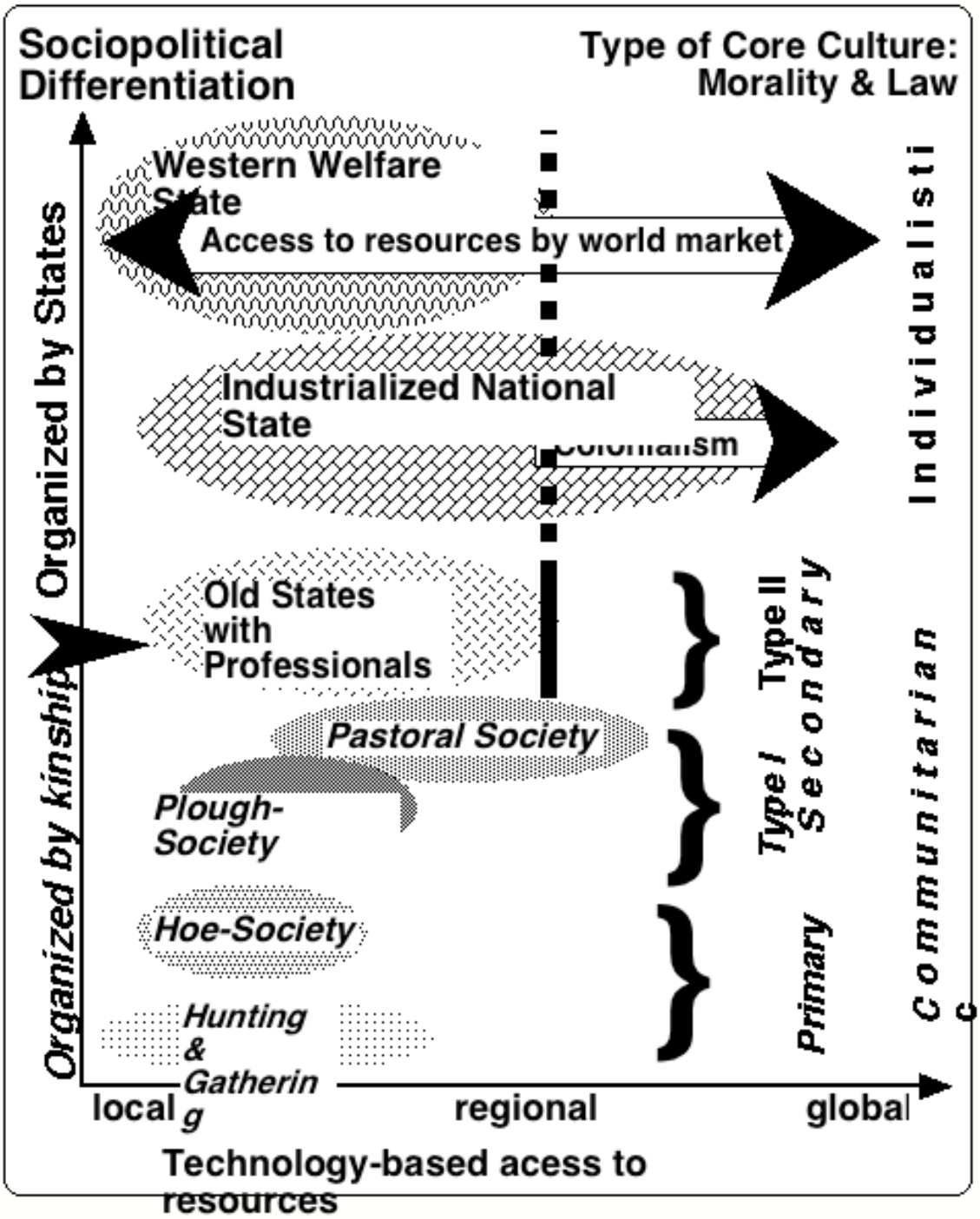From small local societies to the Western Welfare State