

Democratic Processes, Clientelistic Relationships, and the Material Goods Problem

Tina Hilgers

The central question in this volume is, what is the relationship between clientelism and democracy? The traditional answer to this question has been that clientelism is a vestige of authoritarian regimes that undermines democratic institutions and processes (see the discussion in Roniger 1994). In our view, the dynamics of clientelism and democracy on the ground are more complex. In third-wave countries with developing economies, the realities of doing politics while coping with markets whose benefits are not broadly accessible are far from the democratic ideals of equality, universality, and participation. Formal democratic rules are implanted on deeply unequal societies, in which the poor are socially and politically marginalized as a result of scarce economic opportunities, and the state is faced with continuous fiscal shortages and real or potential political instability. In a context of uncertainty, actors often prefer the use of personal relationships, such as clientelism, that create predictability, to trusting in the doubtful outcome of formal channels.

The contributors to this volume demonstrate that clientelism and democracy are not always opposing poles of the political spectrum, but that they often intermesh in unexpected ways. Archetypal authoritarian elites can use democratic discourse and institutions to reinforce clientelistic networks at the subnational level (Durazo Herrmann); grassroots contentious collective action may be motivated by clientelism (Lapegna and Auyero); drug gangs use both clientelism and democratic processes to protect their positions (Gay); participatory institutions blur the lines between clientelism and citizenship (Montambeault); citizens use clientelism to

fulfill material demands unmet by modern democracy (Shefner); and citizens learn the skills of democratic participation and cooperation through clientelistic relationships (Canel). In examining clientelism and democracy as overlapping phenomena, the contributors to this volume expose the ways in which clientelism can both undermine and also improve accountability and access to the state, often doing both at the same time.

The clientelism observed in developing democracies today is, thus, clearly not the familiar beast of traditional societies and authoritarian regimes. It is a contextually embedded phenomenon that changes with societal characteristics and regime type. Its dynamics are affected by the development of democratic competition, which increases the client's relative position of power inside the clientelistic relationship by providing him with a choice among patrons. Through its changing forms, clientelism may or may not undermine democracy. The theoretical perspectives, case studies, and regional analyses of Latin America in this volume demonstrate that clientelism can *erode*, *accompany*, and/or *supplement* democratic processes.

An understanding of the mechanisms that actors employ to engage with the state and its policies at the micro-level can inform more effective macro-level policy design. There have been increasing calls for broader analysis of informal politics, following O'Donnell's (1996) statement that politics has been a personal affair for most of history and that only recently and in some areas of the world have formal rules supplanted personalism. The personal rule of Big Men and caciques, clientelism, kinship, and the social networks underpinning informal economies involve well-established and widely practiced rules for interaction. As much as these rules and the networks through which they flow are informal, they are often the key to comprehending political behavior in developing third-wave democracies (Bratton 2007; Helmke and Levitsky 2006; O'Donnell 1996). Armed with evidence of the complex interactions between clientelistic

relationships and the rules, agencies, and organizations of the modern democratic state, we hope to improve an understanding of why state policy is often ineffective in the developing world (see Centeno and Portes 2006 for an equivalent argument regarding informal economies).

Political Ideals and Realities

According to Dahl's (1972) classic definition, democracy is a responsive form of government in which citizens express their preferences and representatives weigh all preferences equally in making policy. This kind of responsiveness is underpinned by the freedoms of expression and association; access to non-state sources of information; the right to vote, to run for office, and to compete for votes and support in free and fair elections; and the dependence of policy on votes and other expressions of preference. Subsequent work emphasized the importance of the rule of law, a professional bureaucracy, and accountability in ensuring the civil society freedoms and activism as well as the state responsiveness stressed by Dahl. Thus, in a democracy, all citizens—including elites—subject themselves to the law, interpreted by an independent judiciary, and an effective and professional state bureaucracy guarantees the rights of citizenship, including the equal treatment of all citizens (Linz and Stepan 1996). Rulers provide information and explanations of their actions to citizens on a regular basis, so that the latter may evaluate leaders' performance and reward or sanction them during, but—importantly—also between, elections. In return, citizens comply with the policies of their leaders, which are made without interference from non-elected actors such as the military, entrenched bureaucrats, and external powers (Schmitter and Karl 1991; for accountability, see also Fox 2007).

In sum, democracy is built on institutional mechanisms providing a regulatory framework for the operation of the executive, legislature, judiciary, and bureaucracy, as well as for elections, oversight, the circulation of information, the rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of citizenship, and so on. The power of institutional arrangements rests on a culture of participation in which citizens take responsibility for expressing preferences, forming and joining associations, gathering information, voting, and holding officials and leaders accountable (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Putnam 1993 and 2000; de Tocqueville 1875).

While the ideals of responsiveness, accountability, and participation are elusive even in areas considered to be strong and stable democracies—including the United States and the countries of Northwestern Europe—the reality in developing, third-wave democracies is a particularly poor match for these principles. The third wave began in 1974 and includes transitions to democracy in a number of Latin American, Asian, African, and European countries. In most of these cases, the political game continues to be played based on rules and relationships other than those formally expressed in constitutions and other laws, resulting in descriptions using “democracy with adjectives” intended to differentiate empirical cases featuring only some aspects of democracy from core definitions (Collier and Levitsky 1997). Classifying our cases is beyond the scope of this volume, but in saying that relatively competitive elections are held regularly, with other elements of democracy present in variation, we can call them weak democracies (see Enterline and Greig 2008). Progress in democratic institutions, processes, and behaviors is uneven across and within cases and is not necessarily linear, so that one or a number of the following non- or anti-democratic practices may occur from time to time—or even regularly—to varying degrees. Notably, the examples of non-ideal

processes and behaviors also occur in stable, developed democracies, but tend to be much more restricted by the rule of law.

Electoral fraud takes place and incumbents enjoy privileged access to the media and funding sources. Certain sectors of the citizenry—particularly in poor, rural areas—find it more difficult than others to reach polling booths and to have secret ballots. Police, military, and paramilitary forces use brutal measures to contain public opposition. Elected officials privilege private concerns over the public interest and cannot ignore pressures exerted by powerful local or foreign interests. Officials actively undermine efforts to increase transparency. Media routinely critical of entrenched elites at times encounter legal difficulties and individual journalists may be threatened or even killed. Judges can be bought and very progressive ones may even lose their lives. Citizens comply with the policies of their leaders until these are deemed too costly, elites are able to buy decisions in their favor, and the poor are less likely to benefit from due process. Entrenched interests and cultures of kinship, friendship, clientelism, and nepotism undermine bureaucratic professionalism.

The institutional context of the state in such regimes is unclear for many citizens. They cannot trust in the predictable outcome of democratic interactions because the rules for regulating such behavior are not broadly recognized and applied—they are not institutionalized (O'Donnell 1994). Citizens do not know what their position is vis-à-vis the state and its agents, and if they do know the formal rules of the democratic regime, they cannot be sure that these will be employed. The best way of protecting themselves from this uncertainty is often to create a special relationship with a person who has knowledge of, and access to, the state and its resources—a person whose patronage will create through informal means the security that is lacking in the formal system. In Latin America (as in other developing regions) politicians and

bureaucracies are often inextricably linked, so that a good relationship with the former implies access to the latter (e.g. Haque 1997; Gingerich 2009; Grindle 2010; Roniger this volume).

Clientelism is perhaps the principal informal mechanism used to integrate or co-opt otherwise marginalized sectors of the population—that is, those who are “excluded from meaningful participation” (UNESCO, cited in Jenson 2000, 1n1) in the political arena and the market—into the political systems of the developing world. The core element of clientelism is a long-term relationship of unequal power in which identifiable actors exchange goods and services that often involve political allegiance. Unlike well-functioning democratic redistributive policies and politics, clientelistic benefits are not universally available but are restricted to the supporters of persons with access to resources. In addition, clientelism operates according to a logic of exchange, while the ideal of democracy is based on an ethos of citizenship rights.

Clientelism has long historical roots and current applications in both developed and developing areas. The Roman Empire and feudal Europe were built on exchange relationships. The expansion of suffrage in Europe was marked by clientelistic and patronage competition among political parties and nineteenth century American cities were run by political machines that used clientelism to co-opt immigrant populations. Wholesale vote-buying through campaign donations and/or threats of political or geographic defection by influential groups and individuals is the hallmark of contemporary political exchange relationships in post-industrial democracies. Pre-colonial African kingdoms, Indian princedoms, Latin American civilizations, and South-East Asian kinship networks functioned based on exchanges whereby able leaders convinced followers to accept their authority in return for protection from natural forces or human enemies and for material benefits. Colonizers around the world established patronage links with such leaders, allowing them to subjugate local populations with very little manpower (Paul 2008;

Newbury 2003; Nadeau 2002). Post-independence, state leaders unable to penetrate the entirety of their territories with their own agencies or to maintain control of these agencies also used relationships with local leaders to ensure political stability (Migdal 1988). As much as clientelistic arrangements rob the state of a certain amount of power—as strongmen work to shore up their influence by taking over local agencies and party chapters, allocating state resources according to personal criteria—state leaders often prefer them to uncertainty. At the same time, even those state officials who are committed to democratic ideals and rules-based processes in developing areas often find themselves with little choice but to use discretionary targeting of public goods, since resources are too scarce to satisfy the demand of entitled sectors (Fox this volume).

The contemporary politico-institutional insecurity characterizing many developing democracies is embedded in a context of socio-economic inequality that deteriorated with the Washington Consensus. In the final quarter of the twentieth century, institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank sponsored neoliberal structural adjustment in many developing countries, including Latin America. Policies to promote privatization, cuts in public spending, and free trade were broadly implemented in the hope of solving the problems of high inflation, insurmountable debt, and public sectors that were expensive, corrupt, and inefficient. While these policies were successful in controlling inflation and debt and economic growth resumed, the effect on the masses of lower and lower-middle class citizens were devastating. Socioeconomic inequality and poverty grew and increasing numbers turned to employment in the informal economy for survival, while the benefits of economic growth were restricted to elites (see, for example, Bateman, Duran Ortiz, and Maclean 2011; Panizza 2009; Fernandez-Kelly and Shefner 2006; Ocampo 2004).

Although the formal rules of democracy are based on equality and universalism, the societies on which these rules are superimposed are deeply unequal. Elites dominate politics and the market, while economic stagnation marginalizes the poor. Scarcity practically bars the poor from formal employment and the (minimal) benefits through social programs that accompany it. Many are able to survive by informally contracting out services, trading, bartering, and negotiating, and using social networks to create a system of community pressure for the fulfillment of economic agreements (Portes and Haller 2005). Economic deficiency and the concomitant lack of education and social contact with politically and economically ‘connected’ individuals also restrict the poor’s access to the state, its agencies, and its resources, diminishing their ability to demand equal treatment and to sanction state leaders for their record on implementing democratic procedures. Some are able to find connected, wealthy, and/or educated patrons with the ability to decode external political and economic processes and protect them from threats (Krishna 2007). Thus, from the perspectives of both state and civil society actors, the predictability of personal relationships such as clientelism may be preferable to the uncertain outcomes of formal rules and in some cases formal processes are simply impracticable.

Varieties of Clientelism

Despite global similarities in the use of clientelism, the dynamics of particular relationships and systems have been, and continue to be, contextually embedded. The realization that democratization and new social movements—collective action networks that recurrently oppose entrenched forms of power (Tarrow 2011)—have not transformed societies to the degree once hoped has resulted in a resurgence of interest in clientelism (see, for example, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Leonard et al. 2011; Schaffer 2007; Szwarcberg 2012; Ong 2012; Sadanandan

2012), but the growing literature on the subject is marked by definitional problems related to contextualization. The early phase of research on clientelism, spanning two decades from the 1960s to the early 1980s, involved animated debates on the content, meaning, and impact of clientelistic links (see especially the essays collected in Schmidt et al. 1977, and the detailed definition provided by Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984). Recent studies are, unfortunately, much more isolationist. Researchers are more engaged in explaining particular cases operating at distinct levels of analysis than in constructing a common understanding of what clientelism is and how it affects society. One recent example is Kitschelt and Wilkinson's (2007) very interesting edited volume that attempts to oppose clientelism to programmatic electoral appeals and to consider the policy impact of both vote-gathering methods. The editors' effort to bring together analyses covering developed and developing countries and regions is laudable. However, the effect is one of a broad introductory definition and individual contributions that agree or disagree with the opening analysis and often fail to engage each other. It seems that scholars have given up on debate, deciding to limit themselves to using clientelism in terms of its local characteristics because the differences in its understanding are too entrenched to be overcome.

Nonetheless, it is clear that an appreciation of the many ways in which clientelism operates and affects society requires understanding its multiple forms. Clientelism is motivated by supply and demand at elected political leadership and civil society levels (Shefter 1994); it functions in the spheres of governance institutions (Helmke and Levitsky 2006), at the grassroots (Fernández-Kelly and Shefner 2006; Leonard et al. 2011), and perhaps even at the supranational level (Berman 1974, although this dimension will not be treated in this volume). A conception of the social processes related to clientelism necessitates consideration of its various

manifestations—globally, but also regionally and locally (see Hilgers 2008). One of the goals of this volume is, thus, to engage different perspectives on clientelism with each other, in order to give readers a comprehensive approach to its dynamics and effects and to draw out convergences across fields, methodologies, and geographic as well as analytical areas of interest.

Researchers tend to agree only that clientelism involves an exchange of goods and services often involving political allegiance. Beyond this characteristic, they use, or refute, a series of other attributes. Clientelism has been variously defined as either *dyadic* or *collective*. In classic studies describing kinship, fictive kinship, and landlord-peasant relations in traditional societies, links were often described as involving two individuals. Here, individual villagers and peasants sought out persons within or outside their families who had access to needed resources and constructed special relationships with them in order to benefit from their position (Foster 1977 [1961]; Landé 1977 [1973]) and persons of status enhanced their social and political standing by gathering as many individual followers as their resource base could support (Cornelius 1975). Other researchers stressed a collective aspect because they identified as clientelistic the relationships between entire communities and an external political power (Silverman 1977) or between political parties and mass publics (Graziano 1976). Some of the contemporary work defining clientelism as a dyadic link does so in order to create a broad concept applicable to a series of phenomena including individual and group relationships, with the argument that all of these, at some level, involve inter-personal bargains (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Piattoni 2001). However, others insist that the collective element is central to an understanding of clientelism because clients form groups with common identities based on class, employment, neighbourhood, ethnicity, or other factors and are of interest to patrons because they come in ready-made voting groups (Paul 2008; Shefner 2006).

Another factor of contention has been the relative *power* positions of the parties to clientelistic bargains. Some argue that clientelism is restricted to links between persons of unequal social, economic, and/or political status, in which the patron's position endows him with the balance of power and the ability to direct the relationship (Scott 1977 [1972]), while others extend clientelism to cover symmetrical and asymmetrical power relations (Saller 1982). For those who see clientelism as inherently *exploitative*, the imbalance of power is crucial because it describes a context in which the client has little choice but to rely on a patron for protection and resources and the patron uses his position to politically subjugate and economically profit from the client, sometimes resorting to *coercion* to ensure compliance (Singelmann 1981). At the same time, clientelism is not governed by formal contractual obligations: the relationship is *voluntary* and clients are free to terminate it at any time. This makes violence and exploitation risky for the patron, since it may cause him to lose his clients, lowering his status and his ability to negotiate in the political hierarchy. In order for clientelism to function at all, it must be *mutually beneficial* to the parties involved (Roniger 1990). Although some argue that the patron controls the relationship because he holds more valuable resources and that the client gains little from the relationship, others show that it is important to judge value based on context and the relative needs of patron and client (Leonard et al. 2011). As a result, the goods and services exchanged may better be considered *noncomparable* than unequal (Legg 1975).

Relatedly, clientelism has been defined as either *exclusionary* or *inclusionary*. Since clientelism provides access to resources and the state only to those who have a patron, it excludes others, creating a further level of inequality that divides not only rich from poor, but creates a privileged underclass. However, those who do profit from clientelism are included in the distribution of otherwise unattainable benefits, may be able to use these as a jumping-off

point for social mobility and greater integration, and learn democratic skills (Heredia 2001; Canel this volume; see the discussion of neopluralism in Oxhorn 1998).

Although clientelism involves “perverse accountability”—where voters are responsible to their representatives, rather than the reverse—(Stokes 2005) and inequality, it is not necessarily devoid of *agency* and *rationality* since all members draw benefits that outweigh the bargain’s costs (Shefner 2001 and 2008). The *perceptions of users* often differ quite markedly from those of observers. While observers criticize the status differential and exclusionary aspects of clientelism (Flynn 1975; see also Auyero 1999b), patrons and clients are contextually bound and see their choices and relationships as reasonable methods for creating order and stability in otherwise unpredictable environments (Hilgers 2009). Certain contemporary studies portray patrons and clients who do not objectively regard their situation as one of exploitation and submission, but construct complex rituals including *friendship*, *affection*, and *obligation* surrounding *diffuse* exchanges where material needs fulfillment is embedded in symbolic, *long-term* relationships that make the harsh reality of poverty more bearable (Auyero 1999a and b; Güneş-Ayata 1994). Such exchanges are undergirded by a *norm of reciprocity*, according to which benefits given must be returned and persons having provided benefits must not be harmed (Gouldner 1977 [1960]). Others argue that these diffuse, norms-based relationships were much more prevalent in traditional societies (Weingrod 1977 [1968]), while modern clientelism tends to focus on *short-term*, material transactions, such as vote-buying or turnout-buying immediately preceding an election, that require *monitoring* to ensure compliance (Wang and Kurzman 2007; Schaffer 2007; Nichter 2008).

Differing perceptions of clientelism are generated both by contextual factors and by levels of analysis. Researchers use Weberian ideal types and a variety of methodological tools

for generating concepts applicable to specific cases or to broadly comparable phenomena (see Collier and Mahon 1993 and Gerring 1999 for overviews of such methods). They add or remove definitional characteristics the more or less they focus on, and try to describe, particular places and relationships.

Despite their varying perspectives regarding the nature of clientelism, in engaging with each other, the contributors to this volume have found fertile common ground. Whether they consider clientelism to be dyadic or collective, more exploitative or more strategic, whether they study it at the grassroots or in the state, the contributors see transformations in how it is playing out as regimes change. The personalized exchanges at all levels that are considered to be clientelism evolve with contextual rules, degrees of competition, and the actors involved, providing evidence that clientelism is more than a simple remainder of authoritarian regimes or cultures.

Evaluating Clientelism and other Social Exchange Networks

We know that clientelism is dynamic because it has adapted across the world from traditional to modern societies and changed alongside the characteristics of authoritarian and democratic regimes. In the past, analysts of clientelistic relationships in traditional societies ranging across Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America tended to argue that such links would disappear as society modernized and professionalized state agencies took over the role played by patrons (see, for example, the contributions to Schmidt, et al, 1977). However, as modernization began, social scientists observed personalized exchanges similar to those described by the traditional clientelism in processes that linked agricultural villages to central markets, represented villages and urban slums in central politics, and allowed exchanges of information

and resources inside increasingly complex political and governmental institutions (Weingrod 1977; Roniger and Gunes-Ayata 1994). It has also been demonstrated that clientelism is not the same from one authoritarian regime to another. The more authoritarian leaders allow political competition, the more redistributive clientelism becomes (Sandbrook 1985) and the less authoritarian leaders are able to back their clientelistic bargains with credible threats of coercion, the more power clients gain vis-à-vis their patrons (Fox 1994).

Based on this work, it would be logical to assume that clientelism would also adapt to the systemic changes brought by democracy. However, much like the traditional conclusions drawn regarding clientelism and modernization, the assumption here was that democracy would bring the end of clientelism, as an autonomous civil society moved into the space of political activity opened by the state withdrawing from society. Although researchers now know that democracy has not, in fact, sounded clientelism's death knell, few have moved beyond linking clientelism to a lingering authoritarian culture among bureaucrats and elected leaders.

Recognizing the importance of clientelism and other social exchange networks over ten years ago, O'Donnell wrote that “[p]articularism is a permanent feature of human society; only recently, and only in some places and institutional sites, has it been tempered by universalistic norms and rules” (1996, 15). Research on informal networks and particularly clientelism subsequently increased (see, for example, Helmke and Levitsky 2006; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Schaffer 2007). However, while it rightly assumes that clientelism is inferior—and often detrimental—to formal democratic rules (Stokes 2005), it tends to do so without accounting for the immediate benefits to the marginalized masses of clientelistic processes versus formal democratic ones (for exceptions, see Lazar 2008; Shefner 2001; Gay 1999; Auyero 1999 a and b). Other literatures on social exchange networks have struck out in different directions.

Social exchange networks are present in all societies and organizations. However, the perspective from which they are understood and studied by practitioners and observers differs according to their perceived potential and effect on formal structures.

In the business literature, it is a well-studied fact that informal networks permeate formal ones and cross formal divides in and between organizations. Managers know and acknowledge that the way things get done is not necessarily reflected by a formal organizational chart (Cross, Nohria, and Parker 2002), MBAs are routinely taught the need to network, and universities sell their management programs based on the networking potential among prominent graduates (as any rudimentary internet search quickly shows). Informal relationships are not seen as negative, but as resources that can be harnessed to increase productivity: personal links not only grease the wheels of business deals, but keep people happy and motivated in the workplace (Cross, Nohria, and Parker 2002). Of course, such ties are also assessed critically. For example, where gender and race discrimination has no place in formal business structures, it may, nonetheless, be hidden in informal ones (McGuire 2002). And, some students of the new economic sociology argue that informal networks in business can undermine accountability and competitiveness, when employees across hierarchical levels collude to hide mismanagement and subcontracts or other deals go to known organizations rather than to the best bidder (see review in Granovetter 1985).¹

Despite critical perspectives on informal networks, the *raison d'être* of the new economic sociology is the argument that economic behavior and institutions are embedded in social relations. As much as individuals act with purpose, they are part of an informal social context. And this is a good thing, according to Granovetter (1985), because the market could not function without networks of personal relationships that constrain opportunistic behavior through the knowledge that deceit would endanger the long-term exchange (see also Granovetter 1973;

Krippner 2001). This is particularly true in the informal economies that are so important to survival in many developing countries. Lying outside the purview of the state, the informal economy is not formally regulated and transactions undertaken within it cannot rely on the protection of the contractual laws of the formal market. Instead, order and predictability are ensured through personal networks of trust (Portes and Haller 2005). Although informal economies and their networks are broadly criticized as islands of lawlessness and tax evasion that undermine formal systems (Palmade and Anayiotos 2005), there is a debate in the literature that opposes the long-term, negative systemic effects of these activities to their immediate benefits as a means of survival to marginalized citizens and a pressure-release valve in stagnant economies (Centeno and Portes 2006).

The sharing of information and ideas through informal networks independent of state agencies is also often seen as the base for strong democracy. The idea of social capital—broadly, social networks that generate trust and cooperation and bring individual and shared benefits (Inglehart 1997; Putnam 2000)—is used across the social sciences to explain organizational, economic, political, and social networks and outcomes. It is considered to be linked intimately with good government because active networks share ideas, engage in debates, and take responsibility for what goes on in their communities, holding officials accountable and providing a social context that values participation in public affairs (Inglehart 1997; Putnam 2000; de Tocqueville 1875).

Here, strong, active, autonomous civil society organizations are seen as the key to socio-political transformation toward participatory regimes. Independent associations defend the interests of citizens against arbitrary state action, define and articulate common demands—including what form state structures should take—and organize people to help each other

(Oxhorn 2011; Harbeson 1994). Similar arguments are made by students of social movements, who see dense social networks as capable of opposing powerful forces in and outside the state (Tarrow 2011).

Although critics demonstrate that social capital can also support authoritarian regimes (Rossteutscher 2010), and that an active civil society is neither always confrontational vis-à-vis the state (Kasfir 1998) nor internally egalitarian (Shefner 2008; Holzner 2010), support for activity through informal networks independent of the state is overwhelming. In fact, belief in the transformative potential of informal networks is so strong that billions of dollars are donated toward their development by international aid agencies (Ottaway and Carothers 2000). To be sure, donors and policy experts desire to formalize such networks, but the fact remains that this occurs because of the potential existing in the first place.

Clientelistic networks, on the contrary, are judged as strictly negative in the general literature. The consensus is that, in developing democracies where formal democratic mechanisms of representation and demand-making do not function very well, clientelism is one of the key culprits undermining the development of stronger democracy. Clientelistic social networks are argued to develop where politics and the market are no longer organized ascriptively, but institutions are not entirely impartial, so that actors search for relationships of trust outside of the formal spheres of state and market to make up for institutional weaknesses. However, in using clientelism, they undermine the further development of impartial institutions, as voters become dependent on the state and state resources are privatized (Roniger 1990; Fox 1994; Stokes 2005).

In a normatively logical fashion, informal networks at large are evaluated by whether they articulate—or demonstrate the potential for generating—autonomously from the state,

political or economic ideals that are in accordance with dominant liberal, democratic ideas of how politics and the market should function. Yet, there are double standards in such evaluations. One is a “linguistic hypocrisy” where exchange relationships in societies, such as Spain, identified with clientelism in the recent past are judged more harshly than similar phenomena in other societies (Blakeley 2001). Another is that ‘good’ networks often articulate ideals to which they fail to subject themselves. For example, many social movements widely considered to be transformative are also known by insiders to be clientelistic and/or authoritarian; characteristics generally driven by the need to provide material incentives to motivate members’ participation (Haber 2006).

Politics has a practical side whose goals require fulfillment. Actors engage in politics not only to develop an ideal society, but also to meet material needs (Shefner this volume). A thorough analysis of clientelism should differentiate between normative and substantive goals, recognize the capacity of formal and informal networks to channel and meet these, and see the complex interaction of the formal regulations and agencies of the state with the social rules and organizations of the actors involved.

An analysis capable of determining the multiple causes and effects of clientelism requires contextualization. The advantages and disadvantages of informal networks vis-à-vis formal processes can only be determined in relation to the social context in which both exist. Thus, clientelism often meets material needs that the state cannot, its dynamics are deeply affected by the character of formal state regulations, and its functions and effects can erode, accompany, and/or supplement those of formal democratic networks.

Democratizing Clientelism?

It is our argument that democratization has given voters broader choices, but that the type of economic growth experienced in Latin America—one with benefits unavailable to the masses (Ocampo 2004; Birdsall, de la Torre, and Menezes 2008; Angeriz, Arestis, and Chakravarty 2011)—limits the viability of these choices and maintains clientelism as a strategic option for accessing state and private resources. This is not to say that clientelism today is always the same as that of yesteryear; it has adapted to the context of democratic competition and circumscribed state power, and now presents various faces in its relationship with the new, weakly democratic regimes. Clientelism incongruously, and sometimes simultaneously, *erodes*, *accompanies*, and/or *supplements* democratic processes (see Helmke and Levitsky 2006 for a related argument).

As much of the literature shows, clientelism *erodes* broad democratic processes and the long-term development of a vibrant, democratic civil society. It individualizes demand-making and resource distribution, dividing civil society. Its procedures and outcomes are not transparent to non-participants, impeding accountability. It privatizes public goods, undermining transparency, accountability, and universal access. It favors incumbents because they have privileged access to state resources, hampering fair political competition. It makes access to resources dependent on political or personal support, subordinating what should be free political and private choices. And it leaves a legacy of non-democratic political skills that is slower to change than the formal rules surrounding competition, hampering the evolution of a democratically participatory culture. Under these circumstances, formal, professionalized, merit-based, universalistic rules, and a culture to support them are counteracted and cannot thrive.

Yet, clientelism also *accompanies* the evolution of democratic processes. On one hand, clientelism has become more competitive with democratization. Clients can choose among a number of patrons with access to resources or with reasonably good chances of gaining such

access. On the other hand, clientelism is inclusive enough to create political stability. Referring to informal economies, Portes and Haller (2005) cogently argue that, as much as the regulatory (including tax) evasion involved is negative for the state, informal economies provide work and income to people who would otherwise be unemployed and politically restive. Clientelism similarly acts as a pressure-release valve and/or as a problem-solving network, giving formal democratic processes time to develop in contexts of economic scarcity and uneven access to the state without unmet public resource demands erupting into a broad protest movement. This aspect of clientelism has been recognized in authoritarian regimes, where the same redistributive and individualizing properties allowed non-democratic leaders to maintain legitimacy (Sandbrook 1985; Hagopian 1996). At the same time, and linking to clientelism's erosive characteristic, no formal system in a complex modern society can prosper in the long term while its rules are undermined by informal mechanisms (see Centeno and Portes 2006 for this argument regarding the informal economy).

Finally, and most perplexingly in view of general understandings of clientelism, clientelism sometimes *supplements* democratic processes. Democratic electoral contests and policy not only generate competition among patrons for clients, but sometimes provide opportunities for a new type of patron and a new type of clientelistic relationship to arise. Although still using private exchanges, these patrons and their links with clients are based on a more equal, less hierarchical relationship than the power gap traditionally considered inherent to clientelism. Sometimes, clientelism is used to make democratic processes work for people with otherwise limited access. Since it often forces a certain degree of political learning through the activities required by patrons of clients, in a context of democracy or democratization clientelism may even result in clients learning skills and values that are considered important to the

functioning of a democracy, including participation, activism, cooperation, familiarity with laws, and ability to identify leaders. Of course, this is not to say that clientelism is a good alternative to democratic processes, since it remains a relationship that only includes those lucky enough to find a patron and it limits civil society autonomy. Nonetheless, clientelistic cooptation may be the best form of access for which a great number of people can hope.²

In the first section of this volume, Luis Roniger and Jon Shefner theoretically evaluate the linkages between clientelism and democracy in Latin America, paying particular attention to the significance of economic factors. In Chapter Two, Luis Roniger presents a contextual overview of historical and recent trends of clientelism across Latin America, including examples from Colombia, Venezuela, Argentina, and Chile, in a discussion that demonstrates its eroding, accompanying, and supplementing links with democratic processes. Although numerous individuals and groups oppose clientelism, many among them also use it to achieve social, economic, and political advancement. Roniger argues that this duality reflects a major tension of Latin American political systems, which are built on the premises of citizenship and political equality but leave the economic and social domains open to inequalities and substantial socioeconomic gaps. This may explain the paradoxical flourishing of clientelistic networks under macro-economic adjustment and restructuring. Liberalization, reduction of state intervention in favor of market mechanisms, privatization of state-owned and state-supported services and curtailment of union power have further fragmented society and heightened the need for such support networks. Moreover, there are indications of reliance on these asymmetric but mutually beneficial relationships of power and exchange also in those societies that have moved to participatory models of citizenship and populism.

Jon Shefner, in Chapter Three, uses a grassroots perspective to make the case that clientelism should not be counterposed to the democratic practices it often accompanies. He draws on evidence from Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, Honduras, and Jamaica, as well as Lebanon and Zambia, to reason that motives for political action depend on the mix of political and economic opportunities defining particular social sectors. Clientelism and democratic processes each address economic needs such as jobs and urban services and political needs such as representation of disparate groups and creation of order with varying success. Although clientelism is hierarchical, it is a mechanism of political representation and access to the state and, in settings of restricted economic opportunities, it has been more successful at providing goods than democratic processes. Given the substantive difficulty of separating voters' political goals from economic ones, Shefner argues for conceptual clarification. First, if politics is about order, representation, and the resolution of material needs, and we wish to compare clientelism, as a phenomenon with significant economic characteristics, to democratic processes, we must think of democracy in terms of inclusive politics *and* inclusive economics. Second, clientelism should represent a middle position, rather than one pole, on a continuum from democracy to coercive exclusion.

In the second section of the book, Pablo Lapegna and Javier Auyero, Robert Gay, Françoise Montambeault, Julian Durazo Herrman, and Eduardo Canel engage with the debate on clientelism and democracy through case studies of local politics. Pablo Lapegna and Javier Auyero, in Chapter Four, see a blurring of lines between civil society and clientelistic activities. As much as collective action is usually associated with democratic politics and patronage with authoritarian practices, the authors assert that the two are mutually influential processes. They show that patronage networks and contentious collective action collide in Latin America, the

Caribbean, and beyond. Based on a case study of El Alto, Bolivia, where a patronage network and an autonomous social movement both attempt to use a protest to further their political interests, and in comparison with evidence from Argentina, Lapegna and Auyero conclude that collective action driven by patronage networks erodes democracy.

In a study of Rio de Janeiro *favelas*, Robert Gay (Chapter Five) cautions that positive developments in the dynamics of clientelism are by no means assurances of future improvements. Gay traces two important changes in clientelism since the 1980s. As in many Latin American countries, the transition to democracy in Brazil witnessed an attempt by newly emerging civil society actors to rewrite the rules of the political game. This involved challenging the traditional system of clientelism and replacing it with interest representation based on the principles of universalism and citizens' rights. In Rio de Janeiro's squatter settlements, this process blended clientelism with attempts to make politicians accountable and responsive. By the mid 1990s, however, whatever gains had been made were lost, as community after community was engulfed by the violence associated with the drug trade. The reemergence of authoritarian forms of political articulation and control were reminiscent of a bygone era. Gay explores the process of clientelistic democratization and reversal in the *favela* of Santa Clara in Rio's Zona Sul.

In Chapter Six, Françoise Montambeault looks at the changes in clientelism produced by participatory budgeting (PB). She compares two models of PB in Recife, Brazil, to show that different types of clientelism can emerge from the process of democratization. Since Brazil's return to democracy in 1985, two Recife governments (PMDB/PFL and PT) have implemented PB, and have done so by combining democratic institutions with predominantly informal and clientelistic state-society relationships. However, diverging institutional frameworks led to

different grassroots mobilization strategies and resulted in *dyadic clientelism*, revolving around powerful individuals, in the first and *collective clientelism*, empowering groups of citizens, in the second case. Montambeault's finding distorts the classical distinction between clientelism and citizenship that depicts the former as demobilizing and subjugating and the latter as mobilizing and empowering. Although she contends that clientelism cannot but undermine long-term democratic developments due to its hierarchical essence, she demonstrates that it may accompany democratic changes in the short term.

In his study of politics at the subnational level in Mexico and Brazil, Julián Durazo Herrmann (Chapter Seven) finds that blending clientelism and democracy to generate legitimacy can have unexpected results. He traces the processes through which traditional elites in Oaxaca and Bahia used clientelism to construct hybrid regimes, adopting federally mandated democratic reforms while retaining authoritarian practices. Indeed, clientelism ensured political control, allowing elites to present themselves as the only able mediators between regional needs and central powers and to continue winning elections. At the same time, opposition forces have successfully used the reverse tactic, employing clientelism to enable democratic action. Thus, many social groups continue to engage with the state through traditional, exchange based hierarchies, but have managed to gain some rights related to autonomous organization. The political inclusion, however limited, of such organizations through clientelism may be at the root of political learning that sustains opposition movements. Durazo Herrmann concludes that the links between clientelism and democracy are ambiguous—simultaneously eroding, accompanying, and supplementing.

In Chapter Eight, Eduardo Canel examines the positive effects of clientelism on participatory decentralization in Montevideo, Uruguay. He argues that the communities that were

most successful in fostering sustained democratic participation and synergy with local government officials were ones that possessed specific capacities and traditions that had been developed through their contact with past clientelistic systems. These traditions—which included a strong preference for negotiation, pragmatism and pluralistic local associations—proved to be more adaptable to the framework of the new participatory institutions than those found in neighborhoods with stronger traditions of collective action based on contentious strategies and partisan local associations. Canel shows that the skills that originated within traditional clientelistic practices paradoxically supplemented the emerging system of participatory urban governance that was introduced to reduce the incidence of clientelism in the city.

In the concluding section, Hilgers and Fox review some of the practical and theoretical considerations important to the study of clientelism and propose future directions of study. In Chapter Nine, Tina Hilgers argues that the vast literature on clientelism is marked by the struggle to explain the difference between the formal, impersonal and universally applicable channels and institutions that are identified with democracy in theory—and ostensibly implanted in practice—and the more personalized exchanges that occur in real politics, all efforts to eliminate them to the contrary. Searching for the causes and effects of these exchanges is crucial to understanding political realities and to improving the development and practical application of theoretical ideals. However, the concept deformation that has occurred in the evolution of research into clientelism does not aid the cause. Hilgers suggests that future research would benefit from using clientelism as a concept differentiated from neighboring terms such as vote-buying and restricted to the microanalytical level of personal exchanges.

In the final chapter, Jonathan Fox analyzes the complex dynamics of public resource allocation to individuals and groups in Latin America and beyond, challenging the assumption

that clientelism and democracy are driven by the institutions that determine who governs. How rules are applied and evaluated, he argues, is contextually driven. In developing political economies, redistributive models may well be rules-based, but if too few resources are available to satisfy the demand of the entitled sector, then some form of discretionary allocation necessarily occurs and the door is opened to clientelism. Similarly, programs for which budgetary decisions are made based on citizen deliberation may involve a partisan bias because the process leading to participation is politicized. Yet, over time, recipients of partisan social program benefits can come to see access as an entitlement that does not require political subordination, as has been the case for Mexico's Procampo. Fox argues that we are thus faced with the dual conceptual problem of assuming that the use of democratic rules necessarily leads to democratic outcomes and that politicization invariably undermines the development of citizenship rights. Since clientelism accompanies and supplements democratic regimes, we have to re-examine the assumption that electoral competition would eliminate it and turn, instead, to a combination of political economy and the rule of law.

¹ A similar phenomenon has, of course, been studied extensively regarding economic planning in the Soviet Union.

² Jon Shefner (Clientelism and Democracy Workshop discussion, McGill University, Oct. 3, 2009) attributes this statement, made in a private conversation, to Frances Fox Piven.