



DISC WORKING PAPER SERIES

DISC WP/2008/2

Clientelism and the Quality(ies) of Democracy Public and Policy Aspects

Luís de Sousa



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF IMPERFECTIONS IN DEMOCRACY
A research center at Central European University

NÁDOR U. 9, 1051, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY, DISC@CEU.HU, WWW.CEU.HU/DISC

Clientelism and the Quality(ies) of Democracy: Public and Policy Aspects

Luís de Sousa

*luis.desousa@eui.eu**

Clientelism is an age-old political phenomenon. It is an ancient form of consented domination by means of reciprocal, yet uneven terms of exchange caused by an unequal access to the state apparatus/resources and political power. The figure of client was already known in Roman times. 'Denizens' alienated from the law making process and a fair access to the different magistracies sought economic and juridical protection from landlords and nobles (patricians) and in exchange rendered their services to their patron by working in the fields or performing domestic tasks.

The nature of the patron-client exchanges and bonds that underline this power relation are more complex and less clear-cut in contemporary societies than in classical times. The roman patrician is now replaced by a political boss, party leader, government official or political broker, the clients, who renounce their autonomy as citizens or are prevented from developing such capacity, are recruited from different social strata and the means of exchange are of a political/public nature: votes and political support are exchanged for jobs, benefits, career protection, services which the beneficiaries may or may not be entitled to. Because resources are limited and their allocation is a discretionary monopoly of the patron, it is sufficient for him/her to trade the possibility/expectation of being granted a favour. The exchange does not always result in an illicit outcome this is why most clientelistic practices take place in the open with a great degree of tolerance from the public. In fact, the patron wishes to make clear to those who benefit from his/her protection that heshe is capable to deliver. Open demonstrations of the capacity to influence and to deliver are fundamental to build a relationship between the actors based on strategic trust.

* **Luís de Sousa** is research associate at CIES-ISCTE, Portugal and currently Gulbenkian Fellow at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies / European University institute, Florence, Italy.

Although there is fairly general agreement that clientelism is a trans-systemic phenomenon common in different forms and degree to all societies, regimes, and countries, and salient in different periods of the history of mankind, the study of clientelism reveals a weaker consensus as to its measurement, explanation and policy implications. Before we address these three cognitive dimensions, fundamental to any comparative study or policy analysis, it is recommendable to start by defining what clientelism actually means. This may seem a straightforward task, but a roundtrip to the mainstream literature immediately gives us the impression that clientelism, like many other concepts in social sciences lacks a precise definition or agreement upon its meaning. Clientelism is subject to historical, social, and cultural connotations and susceptible to variations across time and space, which make the empirical testing of derived hypotheses bound to show rather limited or disputed results.

What is clientelism?

The literature is fertile in definitions of clientelism. Some definitions tend to associate the phenomenon with democracy or democratization. Kitschelt (2008) refers to clientelism as a specific mode of principal-agent relationship in democracies. His major concern is to study how certain modes of relationship between politicians and voters, such as clientelism, come about when you have a democratic baseline, that is, free and fair elections. Clientelism for many authors is one of the historical forms in which interests are represented and promoted in political society. It is 'a practical (although in many ways undesirable) solution to the problem of democratic representation' (Roniger 2004: 360)

In world of growing numbers of fragile or imperfect democracies, in which informal institutions enjoy greater legitimacy than formal ones, it is understandable that the phenomenon catches the attention of academics when associated to democratic practices. It is in their interest to understand both how the actual practice and mental frame of the players in brokerage survive regime transition and successfully adapt to democratic contexts and to what extent this particularistic distribution of public benefits/services is (or is not) compatible with the principles underpinning modern democracy. The phenomenon is by no means intrinsic to democracies, but its occurrence is likely to become more complex given the increased diversity of players, institutional contexts and information available in democratic regimes compared to autocracies. The fact that clientelism has adapted successfully to democratic governance does not mean it is more frequent in democracies than in non-democracies. What changes from one context to another is the degree of public

condemnation: whereas most people would regard clientelism as a survival technique in a non-democracy, a legitimate response in the face of oppression and the privation social and political rights; in democracy its consequences are perceived by the majority of citizens as more damaging to the basic principles underpinning democracy: equity, fairness, accountability, efficacy, transparency, integrity, etc. One should bear in mind, however, that non-performing democracies are likely to force citizens to adopt the same survival mode as non-democracies, despite widespread public condemnation of these practices.

Historically, clientelism is linked to the particularistic use of public resources regardless of the nature of the political regime where it occurs. For that reason, we need an operational definition that does not directly associate the phenomenon with electoral mobilization and democratic politics and can therefore be used in different contexts. Roniger offers such a definition

‘Clientelism’, he writes, ‘involves asymmetric but mutually beneficial relationships of power and exchange, a nonuniversalistic quid pro quo between individuals or groups of unequal standing. It implies mediated and selective access to resources and markets which others are normally excluded. This access is conditioned on subordination, compliance or dependence on the goodwill of others.’ (2004: 353-4).

In a similar way Lemarchand and Legg define clientelism as a

‘personalized, affective, and reciprocal relationship between actors, or a set of actors, commanding unequal resources and involving mutually beneficial transactions that have political ramifications beyond the immediate sphere of dyadic relationships’ (1972: 151-152)

For Javier Auyero, clientelist relations are seen as

‘bonds of dependence and control, based on power differences and on inequality. Being highly selective, particularistic and diffuse types of resources and services: instrumental (e.g., economic and political) and “sociational” or expressive (e.g., promises of loyalty and solidarity)’. Clientelist relationships are also characterised by having individuals as their protagonists in opposition to organized corporate groups. Finally, they are said to be neither “fully contractual nor legal – in act, they are often illegal – but are based on more informal, though tightly binding, understandings” (1999: 298-299).

No matter how vague and disputable these definitions may be, they are, nevertheless, sufficiently broad to capture three general characteristics of clientelism: 1) the asymmetry of power discernible in patron-client relationships; 2) the quid pro quo nature of the

exchanges attendant upon such relationships; and 3) the scope and durability of the relationships.

What causes clientelism and what are its consequences?

A second important cognitive dimension concerns the causal explanations of clientelism and of its consequences to political society. Empirical and theoretical approaches to clientelism have evolved partly as a response to epistemological developments, partly as a consequence of a change in the nature of the regimes and a rise in expectations concerning democratic governance. During the 1960s and 1970s, clientelism was regarded as an evidence of unaccomplished modernization and/or a cultural trait characteristic of 'agrarian' or 'backward societies', which was bound to disappear in the course of development or democratization. The early works by anthropologists, political historians and sociologists such as Edward Banfield (1958), Samuel Huntington (1968), René Lemarchand and Keith Legg (1972), James Scott (1972), Luigi Graziano (1974) and Ernst Gellner and James Waterbury (1977) were very important in demarcating clientelism as an important subject area in social sciences by making groundbreaking contributions in what concerns its conceptualization, categorization, theoretical framing and analysis. The second research wave, which took place between the 1980s and early 1990s, 'expanded the range of studies, tried to systematize the field, and added historical works tracing clientelism back to early modernity and even antiquity' (Roniger 2004: 356). Clientelism was no longer regarded as a phenomenon typical of 'Third World' countries at the crossroads to modernization, but 'a model of social exchange and a specific strategy of political mobilization and control' (Roniger 2004: 356) identifiable also in 'First' and 'Second World' countries.

Both research waves have avoided dealing with an important phenomenological aspect which is partly related to the end of the Cold War and the expansion of liberal democracy worldwide: i.e. the moral condemnation/tolerance of clientelism in democratic societies. They had fallen into a reductionist and mechanic vision of the democratic process and ignored that democracy, other than being a set of procedures and institutions, is also a normative system with ultimate goals to be realized in society (Mény 1992). Current literature on democracy theory looks attentively at normative aspects and qualities, including a diagnosis of its pathologies and a tentative prescription of the measures to prevent its degeneration.

Studies on clientelism were not indifferent to this epistemological development and

adjusted to the new research agenda in democracy studies. From the early 1990s, studies on clientelism have refocused their attention to the negative externalities of clientelism and the resilience of informal institutions in new democracies (Roniger 2004: 356). The phenomenon is now regarded as threatening to the foundations of democracy, causing government capture by interest groups, damaging institutional performance by reducing its legitimacy and capacity to reform, fomenting cynicism and public deception about the functioning of the State, and undermining the idea of public good. Reference works of this new approach include, amongst other, *Poor People's Politics*, by Javier Auyero (2000) and *Clientelism, Interests, and Democratic Representation*, edited by Simona Piattoni (2001).

Political scientists were not only invited to revise their definitions and analysis to include normative concerns, but also to take public perceptions on board in their empirical account of clientelism. Clientelism has become less tolerated than before. As Susan Stokes (2008) put it, 'if we asked an average citizen of most democracies whether clientelism is bad for democracy, he/she would most likely say "yes"'. There is a growing public condemnation of the phenomenon along with other social bads such as corruption. Unlike other issues for which there are no consensual positions as to their consequences to societies, nobody is in favour of clientelism, the same way as nobody favours corruption. Such symbolic condemnation does not prevent people from accepting some of these practices as normal/functional to their daily relationships with the public administration. These are two distinct levels of anchoring ethical judgements (Becquart-Leclercq 1984). In fact, it is known from various survey studies (De Sousa 2008a) that citizens may resent and condemn clientelism and would rather live in a political society characterised by social anonymity, bureaucratic universalism, and market rationality (Lemarchand and Legg 1972: 151; Roniger 2004: 367), but this does not prevent them from accepting clientelism as an inevitable feature of interest mediation in their societies, especially when they are the beneficiaries of that system.

Despite most social scholars have revised their positions in light of this global value change, not all accept tout court the 'badness' of clientelism. The literature is still inconclusive with regard to the causes and effects of clientelism, especially with regard to late modernity countries where modern/rational forms of organization coexist with pre-modern/family-based relations between citizens and the public administration (see Table 1).

One of the least consensual dimensions of the analysis of clientelism relates to its causal explanation. What causes clientelism (in contemporary societies as opposed to

traditional ones)? Underdevelopment? (The lack of) Competitiveness in elections? State-centered political economy? Personalistic democratic institutions? Cultural predispositions? There is no single causal explanation and no exact answer to the dilemma whether clientelism is culturally determined or product of structural opportunism.

Cultural explanations of clientelism are important to the extent that cultural factors/attributes can frame and influence the expectations of the actors involved in the exchange. One of the most striking examples of the use of cultural explanations to understand the prevalence of clientelism in a given society or regions was the series of studies done on the North-South gap in Italian politics, society and economy:

‘Explanations for the North-South gap point variedly to social “disaggregation” (Gramsci 1974), cultural backwardness (Banfield 1958), economic dualism (Graziani 1979), widespread distrust (Gambetta 1988), lack of civicness (Putnam 1993) – factors that cannot be easily reversed or, worse still, have a tendency to feed on themselves and become increasingly deeply-rooted. An impressive Italian and foreign literature has contributed to forging this unshakable stereotype’ (Piattoni 2002: 1).

In a recent survey carried out in 24 countries, *2004 European Social Survey*, the two Iberian democracies, Portugal and Spain, display the highest scores for the number of family or friendship based contacts people have in order to ask for a service or benefit they are not entitled to despite displaying low levels of (declared practice of) bribery and high levels of abeyance to the law (a socio-psychological attribute related to the experience of nearly five decades of authoritarianism) (De Sousa 2008b). The prevalence of clientelism as an informal institution in a given society depends to a great extent upon the degree of tolerance of these practices in society (low moral costs) and the people’s predisposition to enter those exchanges (Auyero 1999; Maiz 2003). Cultural attitudes shape the normative environment in which clientelist practices take place and influence institutional performance. For that reason, their study is very important to the understanding of the nature, scope and dynamics of clientelism, but they are not a sufficient explanation. Would people do without clientelism if they were not constrained by organizational imperfections?

The analysis of institutional contexts and mechanisms that explain the propensity for and the prevalence of clientelism in a given society is complementary to cultural explanations. After all culture also embodies patterns of human interaction with formal and informal institutions that are repeated in time and transmitted from generation to generation. As Simona Piattoni simply put it, “culture” has an important effect on

institutional performance', but '[it] can be changed through political agency in non-epochal times'.

Public administrations with a reputation for being unjust and partial, for delivering bad service, for being inefficiency and insufficient in addressing citizens' needs, for being perceived as acting dishonesty, invite this type of practices. The incapacity of certain countries to put in place a sustainable Welfare State has led to the emergence of a "Welfare Society" functioning through a series of interconnected networks of relationships among family members and other affinity ties in which mutual support and assistance are guaranteed in parallel with the state provisions and sometimes drawing the resources from the state apparatus itself. When institutions fail to provide goods, services and values, society finds alternative ways to cope with people's daily problems through informal institutions, rules and processes such as clientelism. Other than being determined by the cultural particularities, clientelism is product of the way political and administrative power is organised in a given society: more open/transparent or more closed/opaque; more democratic or more oligarchic; more centralised or more decentralised; more assertive or more submissive with regard to private interests; more oriented towards public welfare or more in favour of the market provision of social goods, etc.

The externalities of clientelism to contemporary political societies is also another source of disagreement. Those who believe clientelism has a negative institutional significance in countries at the crossroads to modernity, see it as 'inimical to the institutionalization of public accountability and to mechanisms of administrative control', because it 'neutralizes the system of representation and entitlements by placing associates and friends in strategic positions of public power and control' (Roniger 2004: 354). In contrast, those who believe clientelism has a positive institutional significance to late modernity countries 'emphasize the pragmatic aspects of social action'. For this group, clientelism helps the state to perform effectively its redistributive functions; it articulates different national cultures and regional claims; it integrates illiterate or immigrants into politics; and it eases the relations of citizens with a bureaucratic State apparatus based on inherited abstract/rational rules and values alien to the native traditions. In other words, clientelism may adjust late modernity countries 'to postmodern conditions and civil society more than is usually expected' (Roniger 2004: 355).

Table 1. Is clientelism good or bad for late modernity countries? An overview of the major arguments in the literature

Tonic	Toxic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It enables integration of citizens with low levels of literacy and immigrants into politics; • It articulates local-regional-national relations thus contributing to cement the political community; • It levels off growing demands from citizens in relation to the low capacity of response of the state by allowing brokers to make a more effective use of the limited state resources (process of natural selection by quid pro quo exchanges); • It helps parties to consolidate electoral support and thus plays a role in their institutionalization and legitimization in society; • It helps state institutions to develop natural resistances and further the creation of controls and accountability; • Like corruption, it “greases the wheels of the system”: it allows an obstructive and inefficient state to function (despite being unjust or selective); • It helps to develop an expedient and creative political class (it promotes political entrepreneurialism); • It is a substitute for other forms of political domination by means of violence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is dysfunctional and raises instability to systems of legitimization: it is selective in its redistributive approach (it may be a short term solution to some, i.e. those who can mobilize their social capital, but it becomes a long term problem to all); • It hinders citizens’ trust in institutions by inflicting negatively in the ethical standards governing modern public life (such as transparency, impartiality, accountability, fairness, etc.) and generates cynicism; It violates citizens’ rights, in particular the universal and equal access to the state; • It represents a cost to the public purse leading to the embezzlement of funds; overpricing of public works; and biased bidding for public works which often disregards value-for-money considerations; • It reduces government efficacy by increasing public spending and making governments hostage to their clienteles; • It produces a political class with a low sense of public good and irresponsible with regard to the management of public resources; • It hinders the modernization of bureaucracy by leading to over-employment and under-qualified personnel in the public administration.

Can clientelism work as a feature of democratic accountability?

As already mentioned in this paper, clientelism is not intrinsic to democracy, but it assumes more complex forms when associated to democratic parties. The effectiveness of clientelistic networks, as mechanisms of electoral mobilization in which votes are exchanged for favours, depends largely on ‘everyday, strong, face-to-face relationships’. This need for proximity and intimacy limits ‘the massive vote-getting capacity’ (Auyero 1999: 300). First

there is a problem of numbers: clientelistic parties or candidates need to mobilize much more than their client voters in order to get elected. According to Kitschelt (2008), the agent does not need to buy-off all voters in every poor constituency; it may simply manage voters' expectations and ensure regular symbolic demonstrations that the clientelistic systems (eventually) works for everybody. In order to have this cascade effect, the clientelistic party/candidate in question, once in office, has to systematically invest in the asset-poor but vote-rich constituencies to cultivate the general feeling amongst those left out that they will be the lucky ones in the future. This raises a second problem that of temporality:

Clientelism is an exchange relationship between principal and agent that is difficult to consummate, as the participants to such exchange do not deliver on their mutual promises of goods and services simultaneously, but over time. [...] Because of this inter-temporally drawn-out process, clientelism opens the door to all sorts of opportunism both by politicians and voters' (Kitschelt 2008: 7).

In the long run, however, it will be difficult for the patron to survive only on the basis of illusory promises. Clientelistic voters will have to be rewarded at a certain point. This brings to a third problem: resources. Developing credible clientelistic exchange commitments in asset-poor but vote-rich constituencies requires resources which the patron does not have at his/her disposal and will have to collect from asset-rich but vote-poor constituencies. This makes the clientelistic party or candidate dependent upon the interests of the asset-rich elite. It is easy to imagine how the system will perpetuate itself in unequal societies: asset-rich elites provide campaign and "beneficence" money to clientelistic politicians who in turn use it to buy off asset-poor voters; these will cast their vote for the clientelistic politician on the expectation that he/she will deliver the promises made; the politician will then turn to their campaign financiers and reward them with the adoption of targeted policies, regulations, procurement contracts and tax incentives.

This quid pro quo system, Kitschelt (2008) argues, can act as an informal form of accountability in democracies, by allowing voters (clients) to make their representatives (patrons) keep their end of the bargain. This approach presents, however, serious drawbacks. First, government resources are limited and they are even more limited in countries with an unequal redistribution of wealth. Clientelistic politicians fall short of addressing everybody's interests and needs in asset-poor constituencies. According to Kitschelt this is not a problem: since all politicians engage in the same practices, 'voters can

effectively discriminate between alternative suppliers of targeted benefits' (2008: 11). It means that in a clientelistic system if a party or candidate decides not to engage in such practices it is doomed to failure. Voter's rationality is then reduced to a choice of grades of clientelistic offers instead of credible electoral programmes. This, however, does not seem to reduce the degree of political competition. On the contrary, as 'rival parties or candidates competing for the same electoral office develop a track record, reputation, and forward-looking credible appeal to redeem clientelistic exchange commitments' (2008: 11), the system will be quite competitive, with a continuous alternation of "suppliers of targeted benefits" in office. This element of "accountability", i.e. the possibility of choosing between clientelistic suppliers, runs counter to the fact that clientelistic networks are cultivated in time, and their dynamics are intrinsically related to the patrons' longevity in office (Della Porta and Vannucci 1999; Keefer 2007). Second, the alleged "accountability" that results from clientelistic exchanges maintains or even accentuates power asymmetries in society and for that reason helps clientelism to persist. Asset-poor voters only make politicians "accountable" to their promised targeted benefits and not to the broad set of policies they will put in place while in office. These broad set of policies have been captured by the asset-rich campaign donors and their implementation may run counter to the interests of the asset-poor and the effective allocation of targeted benefits.

Associating accountability with clientelistic transactions is an overstretched and misleading use of the term. Accountability is a principle underpinning any office of entrusted authority and it expresses the office holder's responsibility before the law, his/her responsiveness to voters expectations and his/her availability to be submitted to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office (procedural, criminal, electoral, public opinion, etc.). Accountability presupposes a blind judgement on the office holder's performance in office. Clientelistic transactions are not at all blind: they are a quid pro quo exchange between two parties that are familiar with each other. Moreover, voters' judgements on the performance of their politicians are not simply strategically oriented. Voters make judgements on issues that go beyond their strategic interests and concern the society as a whole. They too have a definition of overarching public interest. How distant and autonomous this concept is from their own private interests is something worthwhile discussing in future research on this field.

What are the policy implications of clientelism and what can we do about it?

Clientelism is not a neutral phenomenon, just an informal way of doing politics. Its occurrence is often associated with a series of other problems of governance such as corruption, influence peddling, patronage, favouritism, etc. which affect negatively the quality of democracy. It is equally said to reinforce inequality and social injustices in society and to inhibit its development both in economic as well as human terms. Although these correlations have tended to assume greater relevance in the discourse of international organizations, donors and government leaders, they are by no means consensual in the burgeoning literature. There is no clear answer as to how clientelism affects policy preferences nor is there any accurate measurement of clientelism that enables policy analysts and decision makers to have an approximate idea of how deep and widespread the problem is in their societies.

Today, it would be difficult to advocate the benefits of clientelism, in countries where toleration of those practices furthered the expansion and institutionalization of corruption in public life, paving the collapse of the political system (Italy 1992, Argentina 2001). Moreover, the belief that clientelism in peripheral or semi-peripheral developing regions, such as Southern Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa, promoted economic development, political participation, and administrative efficacy proved historically wrong. These functionalist interpretations of clientelism had never accounted for the long-term negative effects in democratic performance. Clientelism hinders the three legitimacy pillars of democracy provoking a net decline in levels of trust in/support to state institutions: it damages input legitimacy by reducing the act of voting to a quid pro quo exchange and by barring or limiting access to the administration to those individuals with sufficient social capital to make their problems/needs heard; it damages throughput legitimacy because it perverts the rules of the game in a non-transparent way to favour the interests of clienteles; it damages output legitimacy because it leads to irresponsible and unaccountable public spending. Clientelism is also incompatible with the complexity of modern democracies. To use Huntington's reasoning (1971), clientelism is a rudimentary response to the decision-making insufficiencies, and the consequent social and political instability caused by an imbalance between the advances in political participation and rising standards of democratic governance and the slowness of political institutionalization and administrative modernization to respond to those changes. For all these reasons, it is important to discuss what are the policy impacts of clientelism to contemporary democratic regimes and what

instruments can be put in place to address it.

Clientelism has a public policy dimension. Current political research is particularly concerned with the way clientelism affects governmental capacity and efficacy to deliver policy outputs, varying accordingly to the singular organizational and cultural characteristics of each country. In a few words, clientelism runs counter to good governance. Other than 'a model of social exchange and a specific strategy of political mobilization and control' (Roniger 2004: 356), clientelism is a social practice with policy and societal implications. Clientelism grows the state has failed to accomplish its social functions, where democratic standards have not been fully appropriated across all segments of society, where there are no clear rules through which public business is carried out, and where public or private activities lack proper modes of regulation to guarantee due process and fairness. A lot of money is spent in commodities that do not deliver broad externalities to the whole of the population and whose access and benefits are restricted to a limited number of people.

In a recent article, Philip Keefer (2007) attempted to identify for the first time systematic performance differences between younger and older democracies arguing that these might be driven by 'the inability of political competitors to make broadly credible preelectoral promises to voters'. Uncertainty remains with regard to this causal explanation, 'since no variable exist to measure the credibility of voters' (2007: 804-805). Keefer tries to overcome this insufficiency through indirect testing of the proposition, but the exercise raises more questions than answers. The study uses jobs and public works as a measure for targeted goods, but it fails to distinguish between current and capital expenditure: the first concerns the running of the administration, whereas the second is related to public investment such as infrastructural public works which can be an important instrument to boost the economy. Looking at public work projects as targeted goods with probable negative externalities to the performance of democratic institutions (such as clientelism) is a too reductionist perspective of public spending. According to this policy-oriented model, decision-makers in "poor democracies" are trapped in a loose-loose situation. On the one hand, they are asked to modernize their bureaucracies and make their judicial systems work more effectively in order to counter the bads of democratic governance such as clientelism and corruption. Such reforms are likely to represent an increase in public spending both in terms of the improvement of infrastructures (for example, the creation of an anticorruption agency or the introduction of ICT solutions in the public administration) and the requalification of the personnel. One of the inevitable consequences of investing in a

professionally trained and specialised civil service is that costs with personnel are likely to rise. On the other hand, the model looks at public spending with suspicion.

Table 2. The cost of a clean, efficient and knowledge-based state

<i>(2006, medians, cutoff = \$5725 ppp-adj. inc/cap)</i>	Poor democracies	Rich democracies
Gross sec. school enrolment 2005 (%)	59	98
Corruption (0-6, least corrupt = 6), 2006	2	2.75
Bureaucratic quality (0-6, 6 = highest quality), 2000	2	3
Gov't expend./GDP %	18	34

Source: Based on Keefer's presentation at the DISC Launching Conference "Qualities of Old and New Democracies", CEU, Budapest 18-19 June 2008

Non-targeted goods such as education, information and social care need (public) investment in order to widen its access to the whole of the population. Moreover, a modern state is a complex bureaucratic creature that is constantly evolving into new areas of public activity/provision/regulation that need new supporting administrative structures. Clean, efficient and knowledge-based state does not come for free. The figures on Table 2 show clearly that governments in rich democracies spend almost as twice as the governments in poor democracies as a percentage of their GDP. The neoliberal argument that less state means less corruption and clientelism is proven historically wrong. Nineteenth century Britain was the embodiment of the modern liberal state and yet one of the most corrupt regimes in Europe. The Scandinavian countries, by contrast, are regarded by all measures as the best functioning states in Europe, where the levels of public spending are significantly higher than the rest of its European counterparts. The problem cannot only be reasoned in terms how much the state spends, but how it spends and with what purpose.

If research is only slowly trying to address the measurement of clientelism and its impact on policy preferences, studies on what instruments ought to be put in place to address this problem are still needed. There is a total 'absence of strategies for preventing

or mitigating the negative effects of clientelism' (Sobrado Chaves and Stoller 2002: 8) in the decision-making.

What strategies can be designed and implemented to counter the negative policy impacts of clientelism? This paper does not attempt to give a full answer to this problem, partly because there is no universal formula (each case is singular), partly because the framing of reform proposals requires further research as to its nature, scope, cost and expected (and unexpected) outcomes. It will nevertheless indicate some general reform trends discussed in the literature and IGO reports:

- **countering nepotism and patronage** through the introduction of meritocratic recruitment procedures and a sustainable career policy (clear recruitment and career progression rules, fair rules and procedures of appeal; ICT job databanks where job offers are advertised and the public job market is managed with transparency and on a competitive basis);

- **increasing budget credibility and sustainability** by reducing the possibility of politicians to fiddle around with the allocation of public expenditure (stricter budget controls, limiting the executive's discretionary capacity to overturn what has been decided by the deliberative body, introducing proper budget review procedures, improving the quality of the budget planning and the internal/external auditing);

- **reducing policy capture through campaign donations.** The escalation campaign costs in face of a general decline in party militancy forces programmatic parties to a desperate search for money, which inevitably puts them in a weak condition vis-à-vis market players who use political financing as an opportunity to strike a quid pro quo exchange. The prohibition of private donations to parties and the introduction of public funding does not prevent parties from undue private influence either because the monitoring/enforcement mechanisms are always limited or because companies have other possibilities for making their offer attractive to elective officials and rewarding their policy endeavours while in office (consultancy payments and attractive job offers after leaving office);

- **improving the policy capacity of parties.** It is an inevitable feature of democratization that foundations and donors tend to focus more on the process than on the substance and that their work seems to have exhaust once a minimal threshold of democracy is reached. The "parties+elections+market" formula is not sufficient. In recent years we witnessed to a proliferation of democratic regimes that 'fall short of many autocracies in the provision of public services or the protection of human and economic

rights' (Keefer 2007: 804). The credibility of democracy is largely dependent on the credibility of the basic units that make pluralistic governance possible, i.e. political parties. Further investment is needed to make parties deliver credible electoral programmes, credible mediation of interests, and credible policies;

- **introducing conflicts of interest rules and mechanisms of control.** During processes of collective decision-making, the interests of every person who is subject to the decision must (within the limits of feasibility) be accurately interpreted and made known;

- **introducing limitation of mandates.** Limiting the possibility of patrons to remain in office for more than two consecutive mandates can greatly reduce the vicious circles of clientelism and corruption associated with their longevity in office. These institutional levers can only result positively if the statutes of parties have similar provisions applicable to their internal nomination/election of candidates and list formation.

These solutions are not a panacea. They are merely a starting point for a long due policy discussion on effective measures to prevent or mitigate clientelistic practices in democracy.

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