

Clientelism and Democratic Accountability

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Abstract:

Clientelism has made the transition from a dyadic relationship of patronage, to a pyramidal structure of exchange. The present paper explores this transformation in terms of form and structure, and it assesses the changing impact clientelistic linkages might have on the electoral process. It also distinguishes between the short-term clientelistic interactions, and the long-term ones, accounting for their differing consequences. These theoretical considerations are based on empirical evidence gathered in the field. My research focuses on the Romanian electoral process. Thus, the theoretical analysis of the clientelistic political phenomenon is based on this case study.

I will put forward and explain a succinct model of electoral mobilization. One pathway represents the formal electoral system (FES), which is based on programmatic linkages, or how citizens/voters respond to political platforms. The other pathway, the parallel electoral system (PES) is constructed through clientelistic linkages, or electoral exchanges. I argue that with each Romanian election, the PES becomes gradually more influential in determining electoral outcomes than the FES. The PES is based on clientelistic exchanges that strip a citizen of its rights, and the candidates of their responsibilities. Through short-term clientelistic interactions such as electoral mercantilism, the candidate's obligations to his voters end the same day he resumes office. This degeneration of the relationship between elected officials and the electorate leads to grave repercussions in terms of administrative practices. I argue that the absence of accountability mechanisms will thwart any effort to counter corruption or ineffective resource distribution.

Key Words: clientelism, informal exchanges, electoral outcomes, Romania

Relevance of the Topic

Patronage and preferential spending are indeed occurrences of our everyday lives. They aren't always malign endeavors, in both practice and intent, and more so, they can often be perceived as honest, or justified actions. Merton (1968) considered clientelism to be "humanizing and personalizing all manner of assistance to those in need", while Muller (2006) and Hopkin (2006a) observe its integrative function, in linking the citizens to their political representatives. That is why the significance of studying such practices is sometimes questioned. The relevance of studying clientelism, for a political scientist, is sourced in the distortion that iterative linkage mechanism might cause on the accountability relationship between elective representatives, and the citizens of a polity. Thus, as this research endeavor supports, the reverberating effects of such practices are profound, and alter to the core the accountability relationships in a democratic society.

The literature finds common ground in what concerns the negative effects of clientelistic practices, as many assessments revolve around three dimensions: electoral, economic, institutional. Along the first dimension, clientelism distorts electoral competition, by generating "incumbency effects" (Wantchekon 2003), and thus diminishing significantly the contestation chances of the opposition. This means that even if a person is discontented, or disillusioned with the performance of her elected representative, she will most likely be inclined to vote and support him/her the second time around, because of the conditionality of the networks of resource distribution. The costs of changing the *status quo* become apparently, or in the short term, too steep in a clientelistic society, and thus, the accountability relationship loses its main strength—the ability to impose sanctions. On the long term, clientelism may also affect electoral competition by provoking a populist backlash (Muller 2006), which is equally dangerous considering that it is often only a change of actors, not of habits, as the case of Romania demonstrates it.

Secondly, there are also economic implications of clientelism. It leads to economic inefficiency, by discouraging the government from pursuing growth (Medina and Stokes 2007). As Chubb (1981/1983) points out in the case of Italy, the economic crises may actually enhance the role of the party as the privileged channel of access to resources. As the multiplier effects of the economy diminish, more and more citizens become reliant on informal channels of resource distribution. This type

of resource hoarding may include jobs in the public sector, public contracts for entrepreneurs, or simple distribution of goods—food, cloths etc.

Finally, although clientelism and corruption are two separate phenomena, they are interlinked, as the first may incite the latter. The rationale through which the clientelistic relationship is maintained—“primacy to the distribution of individual, selective benefits to citizens, to the detriment of the provision of collective goods” (Hopkin 2006a), is itself a prescription for venal use of state resources. Kitschelt (2000) asserts that high scores of corruption are a good indicator of the prevalence of clientelism. But, clientelism’s impact and effects on society are not always clear-cut. While electoral competition is straightforwardly affected by informal exchanges, in the case of corruption or economic deprivation, it is hard to say which is the cause of which. As Stokes (2009, 623) underlies, clientelism is ‘intimately linked to poverty and inequality, of which it is probably both a cause and a consequence’. For this reason, in-depth, exploratory case studies may shed more light on the mechanisms that reinforce such practices.

Evolution of the Concept

Through historical and cultural assessments, patron-client relations were seen in the 70s-80s literature, as being typical for pre-industrial societies—a primitive form of organization that would be destroyed by democratization or strengthening of states. In this conceptual frame, Scott (1972: 92) defines patron-client relationship as:

‘a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron.’

This definition portrays an asymmetrical relationship between the patron and the client. As explained by Lande (in Schmidt et al 1977:xiii) ‘dyadic relationships are composed of only two individuals, and thus are micro-level entities’. Such personal ties are necessarily based on mutual, and general social trust (Eisenstadt and

Roniger 1984). Tilly (2004) refers to such basic units of social organization as ‘trust networks’.

The redefinition of clientelism in the past decade is encouraged by the fact that the prophecy of self-defeat turned out to be false. Clientelism persisted in developed countries as well as less developed one, disregarding the system of rule (authoritarianism, democracy). Piattoni (2001) explains this fallacy by observing how ‘democracy strengthens the clients’ bargaining leverage vis-à-vis brokers and patrons’. Therefore, clientelism wasn’t crushed by democracy and programmatic platforms, but rather forced to evolve into a more ‘complex pyramidal exchange network of client-broker-patron exchange’ (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007:8). Hopkin (2001) emphasizes the distinction between the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ clientelism. He argues that ‘this ‘mass party clientelism’ involves parties distributing state resources to groups, areas or individuals in exchange for their votes, and is less unequal, less personalized and more explicitly materialistic relationship than the ‘old’ clientelism’ (2001:3). Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2001:4) underlie other changes: ‘clientelism thus evolves into a more symmetrical (rather than asymmetrical), instrumental-rational (rather than normative) and broker-mediated (rather than face-to-face based) exchange relationship’. In accordance to this new mechanism of clientelistic dominance, they also develop a new definition of clientelism as a transaction — *‘the direct exchange of a citizen’s vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods and services’* (2007:2).

This new definition accounts for three major changes in perspective. Firstly, it captures the symbiotic relationship between the patron and the state, which is the first supplier of the goods and services that the patron/broker transacts. It thus portrays a full-scale social hierarchy. Secondly, this definition accounts for Piettoni’s emancipation of the client. In theory, it is no longer an asymmetrical relationship of dominance, but rather a commercial transaction between equal parts each offering what the other desires. Still, in practice, the fact that the broker/patron has political or economic monopoly (Medina and Stokes 2007) (or at least is part of an economic or political oligopoly) demonstrates the persistence of an asymmetrical relationship. Apparently, it is also a shift from vertical relationships, to horizontal ones. The citizenship offers a bargaining leverage to the client, but it is not always respected / applied and therefore, the dependency of the client remains significantly higher than that of the patron in the absence of bottom-up, popular mobilization. Thirdly, this new

definition accounts for the need of intermediation in modern clientelistic networks. Electoral clientelism requires vast mobilization structures that can no longer be served by Scott's dyadic relationship.

Necessary Distinctions

The more recent understanding of clientelism develops the concept around a market equilibrium of offer and demand, in the political sphere. The offer side may be taken to represent the political parties' offer, which can be either programmatic, or clientelistic. Consequently, the demand side then becomes constituted by the voters' willingness to consume either programmatic, or clientelistic supplies of goods and services. Therefore, an analysis of contemporary political clientelism usually follows a transactional logic. This approach to the issue is rooted in clientelism's transition into the urban space. This is the first distinction that needs to be made—between *rural* and *urban* forms of clientelism. These labels do not encapsulate as much the spatial differences, as they do the process's evolution, and its adaptation to new environmental constraints. Hopkin (2001:3) also captures this distinction when he refers to 'old' and 'new' clientelism, or traditional and modern forms of patron-client linkages. The 'old' or traditional manifestations started off at the periphery of political preoccupations, as a practical, natural way of organizing the community around the local boss. With the development of national electoral systems, this localized, personalist, hierarchy-instituting relationship started to mutate.

It evolved both intensively, and extensively. The extensive development of clientelism is exemplified by Holston's notion of 'insurgent citizenship' (2008), in reference to the clients' emancipation tendency in Brazil. This horizontal extension is achieved through trans-communitarian social ties that link people of the same social status. This process refers mainly to the pyramidal base of the system—the clients, but also to the brokers, or the patrons, as they become integrated under the different political parties' umbrella. Thus, urban clientelism shows also an intensive development, as vertical ties have not disappeared, but rather intensified, and perfected the ways to monitor, and constrain their targeted supporters. Although the new structures constrain the client even more, they have become increasingly harder to grasp to the average clientelistic base—an 'anonymous machine politics' (Kitschelt 2000). Therefore, in many instances, brokers/mediators become essential in maintaining a necessary dyadic, face-to-face, trust relationship in areas where

traditional social norms are still in place. This study will focus mainly on the political model of modern clientelism, but will test it against the background of both urban, and rural social environments.

A second distinction that needs to be made is between *long-term* forms of clientelistic relationships, and *short-term* ones. The traditional understanding of patron-client linkages presupposes long-term, iterative interactions. Such instances are consolidated over time. As Auyero's depictions of Argentinean instances of clientelism (1999, 2000), these are cases in which the contingent direct exchange of goods and/or services for votes, and general political support, develops into actual relationships. Such social ties affect the exchange logic, as emotional, sentimental factors intervene to support the continuation of clientelistic patronage networks, to the disadvantage of indiscriminate programmatic distribution of benefits. This emotional dimension of loyalty, which goes beyond pure interest, resembles very much the sincere support any party may receive from its electorate. Therefore, long-term, iterative interactions blur the line between independent party supporters and clients of a machine politics. Still, as Stokes observes, 'in the minds of clients, the instrumentalism underlying the friendship is never far behind' (2009:613). Therefore, an assessment of the presence/absence of clientelistic interaction, although more difficult, is still possible.

Reversely, short-term interactions between suppliers and consumers in the clientelistic market, are void of emotions, and do not imply any other behaviour prescriptions beyond the subject of the exchange. For example, exchanging a vote for a sum of money on the Election Day, doesn't imply continuant political support from that voter. Consequently, it doesn't imply continuant supply of goods and/or services from the elected representative. Therefore, such non-iterative transactions are primarily driven by the circumstantial interest each party has in obtaining what the other has to offer. They are generally cheaper, compared to long-term patronage. Still, when the stakes are high, they can reach exponential surges, such in the case of Kuwait's 1996 parliamentary elections, when the price of a vote reportedly surpassed 3,000 dinar (10,000\$) (Agence-France Press 1996 in Schaffer 2007). But, even if these are short-term forms of clientelistic interaction, they carry broader consequences. Because the transaction is fully consumed on the Election Day, the elected representative becomes freed from any responsibility he might have had towards his voters, be they clients or independent supporters, during his term in

office. The social contract between the public dignitaries and the electorate becomes null and void. This paper will account for both long-term and short-term forms of political clientelism.

Case Selection

There are three different lineages that would recommend Romania as a country in which patron-client linkages might play an important social role, distorting democratic accountability. Firstly, Romania is a Latin country, of Roman descent that makes it related to Italy and Spain—in which cases clientelistic practices have been widely accounted for (Graziano 1973, Galt 1974, Chubb 1983, Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984, Walston 1988, Hopkin 2001, Hopkin and Mastropaolo 2001). To the extent that Latin American countries are also Latin societies, there lies supplementary evidence of clientelistic practices in such social environments (Rothstein 1979, Fox 1994, Leeds 1996, Auyero 1999/2000, Caldeira and Holston 1999, Caldeira 2000, Goldstein 2003, Arias 2004/2006, Arias and Rodriguez 2006, Holston 2008). These Latin roots may be seen as the source of a generally extrovert behaviour, and strong social ties within the community. The horizontal ties are further amplified by the orthodox religion, which is based on the nexus of small communities. Such strong reliance on the community is usually a contributing factor to the development of clientelistic hierarchies, given the inclination to trust local, known faces, over regional, or national political characters. Also, the typical openness, and intensive communication amongst the members of a community, constitutes a good basis for predictability and monitoring—two of Kitschelt and Wilkinson's main attributes of clientelism.

A second favoring historical path is constituted by the Ottoman's Empire influence, starting with the 15th century, and lasting until the end of the 19th century. Although never incorporated in the Ottoman Empire *per se*, the territories of present day Romania—Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania, were intermittently vassals of it. During that time, a vertical, rather than a communitarian social order developed. The price of the internal autonomy was steep, and therefore the local rulers had to maintain scarcity and obedience amongst the population, in order to be able to pay the dues to the sultan. This status as a vassal population, eroded the communities' self-awareness, and paved the way to a political disengagement. The most influential event of this historical phase is the Phanariote epoch, during which, some of the

Greek wealthy merchants, residing in the Phanar neighborhood, in Istanbul, were appointed rulers of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. This period lasted for the most part of the 18th century, and it brought about a mercantilist perception of social interactions (Djuvara 2009).

Finally, Romania is a post-communist state. Like other post-communist states of Eastern Europe, it has a legacy of collusive intertwinement between the public and the private sphere. Salient issues of electoral fraud, and manipulation of the voters, persist in the contemporary democratic regimes of this region (Kitschelt et al 1999, Myagkov et al 2005, Tucker 2007, Grodeland 2007, Pacek et al 2009). Gledhill (2010) and Grosescu (2004) suggest that the nation-wide clientelist networks, established under Ceausescu, made the transition into post-communist Romania, almost intact. If we take as reference Medina and Stokes' (2007:70) distinction between economic monopoly—'over goods that the patron controls independent of the outcome', and political monopoly—'over goods that he controls only if he retains office', an interesting relationship arises in these cases. In post-communist countries, there is a correlation between economic monopoly and political monopoly. Most examples of local bosses' power range (Volkov 2002, Varese 2005) include both economic, and political monopoly in their area, which makes them not only desirable, but necessary allies for national leaders. Therefore, although in such cases local bosses are intermediaries in the electoral mobilization, they hold a particularly strong vantage point in the clientelistic chain.

'Symptoms' of Clientelism

Kitschelt asserts that 'it is pretty safe to conclude that clientelism prevails in a polity if we find that parties are programmatically incohesive and that experts also attribute high scores of corruption to that country' (2000:871). Therefore, one can assume there are two 'symptoms' of clientelism: **corruption** and **political incohesiveness**. In terms of the first proxy—**corruption**, one can find convincing evidence of high levels of corruption in Romania, despite efforts to fight it after the accession to the EU. According to the Global Corruption Report 2009 produced by Transparency International, the corruption perception index (CPI) was 3.8 for Romania, which positioned it on the 70th place out of the 180 countries included in the study. The Global Corruption Barometer 2009, also assembled by Transparency International, showed how the general opinion in Romania was inclined to consider

the Parliament as the single institution most affected by corruption, and respectively, the Legislature was nominated as the most affected sector.

But, this type of assessment of the Romanian corruption, and of corruption in general, is problematic on two accounts. Firstly, as Wantchekon (2002) points out, ‘current measures of corruption are subjective assessments by foreign investors and businessman’, and thus, aren’t necessarily reflective of the citizen’s point of view. Secondly, even if the corruption measurement does indeed reflect the nationals’ perception, it is still a subjective assessment, which may, or may not be reflective of the actual reality. Olken (2009) has compared the corruption perceptions of villagers in Indonesia about a road-building project in their village, with the reality of corruption measured through a model of missing expenditures in that same project, based on data of expenditures and costs. He concluded that villagers’ perception of corruption is positively correlated with the reality of it, but that the magnitude of this correlation is small (Olken 2009).

Consequently, empirical research on corruption shouldn’t be based solely on perception indexes, but on more objective measurements, such as the disparities between the expenditures on certain public projects, and their actual costs. Golden and Picci (2004) have assembled such a model to measure corruption in Italy, through the difference between the physical quantities of public infrastructure, and the cumulative price the government pays for public capital stocks. They assert: ‘where the difference is larger between the monies spent on infrastructure and the existing physical infrastructure, more money is siphoned off to mismanagement, fraud, bribes, kickbacks, and embezzlement; that is, corruption is greater’ (Golden and Picci 2004).

The second ‘symptom’ of clientelism outlined by Kitschelt (2000) was the level of **political incohesiveness**, or programmatic incohesiveness. This again is a subjective assessment. There are two axes of political incohesiveness. The first is that between the political parties—the political offer, and the ideological and programmatic positions they adopt. The second is that between the electorate—the political demand, and the ideological and programmatic preferences they hold.

Considering the 1st axis of political incohesiveness (political parties—ideological/programmatic position), we can find evidence of incohesiveness in the actions of the Romanian political parties. Downs (2009) considers that the last

legislative election, in 2008, 'was further evidence of a Romanian party system that is failing to produce alternatives with clear ideological distinctions. If such avowed adversaries as the PD-L and PSD could agree to share power, opportunism and self interest were seemingly trumping fidelity to enduring policy positions and campaign promises'. Not only, have PD-L (the liberal democrats) and PSD (the social democrats) been 'avowed adversaries', but they are ideologically antagonist, as PSD scores 3.6 points on the left-right scale of ideological positioning (with 1=left, and 10=right), and PD-L scores 6.5 on the same scale (Comsa 2009). On the following elections—the presidential race in November 2009, the alliance between the same leftist PSD, and the rightist PNL (the national liberals), whose score is by 0.2 points greater than that of PD-L on the left-right scale, constructed an even larger ideological stretch. Still, these aren't sufficient evidence of ideological inconstancy, as large coalitions may be formed for the sake of better governance, and stability.

For the second axis of political incohesiveness (electorate—ideological/ programmatic preferences), we find rather conflicting evidence. On one hand, we witness a rate of 57, 2% of the Romanian population which claims that their electoral choice is based on the programs which the candidates are promoting (BCS 2009a). This would not only lead us to believe that clientelistic practices are only affecting the choices of a minority of the population, which would mean that electoral outcomes aren't changed significantly by it, but also, that the Romanian electorate has a strong ideological positioning. This finding is reflected to a certain extent by the fact that 52% of the Romanian electorate has an ideological preference (Comsa 2009). On the other hand, up to 41% of the electorate can't /won't position themselves ideologically, and 5% vote contrary to their ideological beliefs (Comsa 2009). Comsa (2009) also observes how the abstract ideological choice of the voters is reflected in their political choices, but when it comes to specific programs, voters' preferences are surprisingly homogenous, disregarding the diverging abstract ideological preferences. Thus, on this axis again, further research is needed, in order to properly assess the level of ideological commitment of the Romanian electorate.

Along this latter axis, apart from ideological inconstancy, or indifference, we also find evidence of low levels of interest in politics and activism. The World Values Survey (WVS) from 2005 shows that 68.1 % of the Romanian electorate isn't interested in politics, and over 60 % would never, under any circumstance sign a petition, join a boycott, or attend lawful/peaceful demonstration. These data show

that the Romanian electorate is detached from the political process, and little hope is pinned on the outcomes generated by it. Still, as my research on the presidential elections from 2009 seems to suggest, the Romanian electorate is highly interested in the confrontation between the candidates, and high interest is generated by the electoral campaigns themselves. Thus, while the political system itself doesn't appeal too much to the average voter, the persona of the candidate is of great interest, and fuels extensive public debates, which would suggest that there is a highly personalistic attachment in the process of casting votes. This type of low interest in the political system, coupled with a high attractive power of the candidates' charisma is a prolific setting for clientelism.

Formal Electoral System (FES) and Parallel Electoral System (PES)

Once a party, or a candidate wins elections, there's a choice to be made on how to distribute the state's resources to the population. Through the lenses of a 'responsible government party model', this choice is dictated by the platform on which a party/candidate has been elected — *programmatic political action*. Therefore, theoretically, the partisans/voters of that party/candidate will receive more resources, simply because their policy preferences will be enacted, not because they are personally rewarded for their support. Although policy choices may comprise an ideological bias, as elected representatives devise laws meant to satisfy their electorate's political preferences, they are not discriminately applied, so even people who haven't voted for that party/candidate may benefit from them. Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) concur: 'Programmatic linkage therefore directs benefits at very large groups in which only a fraction of the members may actually support the candidate'. Hence, this type of political exchange, between the politicians and the voters, is indirect, and indiscriminate.

Considering clientelistic interaction as a form of electoral mobilisation, we must account for another logic of distributing resources—the *clientelistic political action*. Through this type of exchange, specific voters receive specific benefits, as a reward for their support. The beneficiaries are selected based on their voting behaviour—did they, or didn't they vote for the candidate who has, or is supported by somebody who has monopoly over the resources. Thus, it is a *conditional, discriminate distributional pattern*. The resources take the form of either material, or immaterial—patronage. The first category of resources usually constitutes the basis

of short-term, non-iterative interactions, as for example one-off exchanges on the day of the vote. Schaffer (2007:2) provides a vast, and diverse list of examples of material incentives used in political clientelistic transactions worldwide:

‘soap, tires, chairs, sarongs, watches, chickens, shingles, cement, whisky, coffins, haircuts, cigarettes, fertilizer, bicycles, funerals, vasectomies, dictionaries, fumigators, Viagra, Oxycontin, television sets, free rent, rugby balls, dried meat, mobile phones, birthday cakes, electric fans, cooking oil, bags of rice, barbed wire, corn grinders, plastic sheeting, washing machines, plastic surgery, teeth cleaning’ etc.

The second category of benefits, streams from a longer-term, iterative relationship. Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007:11) name in this category benefits such as ‘public sector jobs and promotions or preferential, discretionary access to scarce or highly subsidized goods such as land, public housing, education, utilities, or social insurance benefits (pensions, health care), and specific procurement contracts to private enterprises’.

Most studies concerned with political clientelism have incorporated this distinction between programmatic and clientelistic exchange (Kitschelt 2000, Piattoni 2001, Schaffer 2007, Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, Stokes 2009), although not all agreed on the range between these two benchmarks. Based on the conceptualization of the two types of exchange, a useful correspondence can be established between them, and the level of regulation (R), as well as the predictability of the benefits’ distribution (P) (based on Kitschelt 2000, and Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). In the case of programmatic distribution of resources, the level of regulation is usually high ($\nearrow R$), as well as the predictability of the process ($\nearrow P$)— it’s generally known who will get what. If we take the promulgation of legislation, for example, it is always made public, by being published or otherwise. Therefore, theoretically, it’s a transparent process. Clientelistic distributional patterns, on the other hand, have an inverse relationship with regulation and predictability. The more selective, and conditional the distributional process is, the less regulated ($\searrow R$), and subsequently, the less predictable it is ($\searrow P$).

Extrapolating this correlation from distributional patterns, to the electoral process itself, we may reasonably infer that programmatic linkages build up a Formal Electoral System (FES), while clientelistic linkages cumulate into a Parallel Electoral

System (PES). This conceptualization is useful, because very seldom we find elections or democratic regimes, in which there are either exclusively programmatic, or exclusively clientelistic linkages at play. We often find instances, in which the two are intertwined, and clientelistic exchanges take place in parallel with the programmatic ones. Obviously, they can't both have the same efficiency, as they are in an inverse relationship to each other. Still, no democracy will entirely forgo, at least the appearance of programmatic distribution of benefits.

Programmatic Exchange: $\uparrow R \rightarrow \uparrow P$ – FES (Formal Electoral System)

Clientelistic Exchange: $\downarrow R \rightarrow \downarrow P$ – PES (Parallel Electoral System)

In this line of thinking, with the hope of achieving a better grasp of reality, Schaffer (2007) substitutes a continuum to the simple dichotomy between programmatic and clientelistic exchange. He nominates four different distributional strategies instead of the above mentioned two. At one end of the continuum he posits *allocational policies*—indiscriminate distribution of rewards, followed by *pork-barrel spending*—channeling material benefits to selective districts. The pork-barrel spending is equivalent to the targeted public spending, and is indeed an often used mean of 'buying' political support. Even more, in the case of Romania, a study has already proven its effectiveness (Pop-Eleches and Pop-Eleches 2009). Towards the other side of the range, he positions *patronage*—iterative, material and immaterial support. Finally, at the other extreme, his model envisages *vote buying*—non-iterative, one-off exchange at the election time.

Allocational policies are components of the FES, as members of parliament (MP), and local officials, enact the platforms on which they were elected. Pork-barrel spending is also part of the FES, as long as nobody proves the connection between discriminate channeling of resources to districts, and conditional exchange of resources for vote—patronage. Any government might have motivation to pour more resources in one area, than another, for regional development, local infrastructure, housing projects etc. These are all legitimate projects, and while the local officials might receive more funding because of their relationship to the national executives, this doesn't make them primarily clientelistic in nature. Thus, the present paper judges clientelistic linkages to be those that are particularly focused on electoral mobilization. Finally, patronage—long-term clientelistic interaction, and vote buying—short-term clientelistic interaction, belong to the PES, or the system of clientelistic

exchanges. These are the two sets of processes that constitute the subject of the present research paper.

Empirical evidence of the PES

For this preliminary assessment, I mostly based my conclusions on the secondary analysis of the data provided by the social research institutes—IMAS, BCS (Social Research Bureau), CIS (The Independent Center for Social Studies and Polls), AEP (Permanent Electoral Authority), BEC (Central Electoral Bureau), SER (Romanian Electoral Studies, Soros Foundation) and others. I also used secondary data collected from politicians' blogs, or journalists' blogs. Other valuable secondary data were the videos, and the pictures I found on different websites, which are clear testimonies of the conditional exchanges taking place, in different parts of Romania, during electoral periods. I also produced primary data, by conducting 23 oral, open, unstructured, as well as semi-structured interviews with young party members and professionals, during the period of 20th of December 2009—29th of January 2010.

According to the article 55 of the Law nr.35/2008 for the election of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, the informal exchanges of goods and service for votes is punishable by law. Still, the range of '*goods with symbolic value, bearing the logo of different political parties*', which may be transacted during electoral periods, leaves a grey area that is interpreted by each party as it pleases, with the following goods being granted for electoral purposes throughout the 2008 local and legislative elections, and the 2009 European and presidential elections: buckets, eggs, footballs, mobile phones, oranges, ice-cream, chopped lamb meat, glasses, different plastic bags filled with unknown content, and the list could go on.

Both pecuniary exchanges, and the trading of goods for votes, are examples of short-term interactions between suppliers and consumers in the clientelistic market. But, they may follow different logics of action. The distribution of goods with symbolic value (e.g. oranges, ice cream, buckets) is random, or area based. In other words, it's non-discriminatory. This would seem to make it more expensive, as the distribution of goods is not conditioned on political preference, and the outcome (the vote) is hard to be monitored. Thus, many of the beneficiaries, may end up voting for another party, or candidate. Still, when it comes to ice cream, or oranges, the cost-ratio is not too high, as the goods aren't expensive, and they serve well as a

remainder of other flows of goods or services that party may be willing to grant to its voters.

If the exchange consists of higher value goods (e.g. glasses, mobiles, lambs), or money, than these are usually discriminately distributed. These would seem to be less expensive, as the beneficiaries would be selected on the basis of predictability—greater probability to vote for the purveyor of those benefits, or monitoring mechanisms (e.g. taking a picture of the ballot-paper). But, again the situation might be different, as the goods are more expensive, and there are also additional costs for selecting, and differentiating the recipients, from the general population. Thus, the discriminatory distribution of goods, and money, is also more costly, besides being more efficient, due mainly to the extra costs of brokerage. Not only are the intermediaries costly, in terms of time, and physical resources, but they also create extra risks of being discovered. And, while many people have knowledge of these practices², they are still illegal, as showed above.

If the distribution of money, or goods, would follow a pre-established pattern, or a pre-configured matrix of people, being both selective, and discriminate, then these would no longer be one-off exchanges, but rather clintelistic networks. The political representative, which I interviewed, implies that these are the desirable ties. It starts with a snowballing socialization—the election volunteers try to include their friends and colleagues into the transaction, and ends with a known list of available persons for electoral transactions. This is neither long-term interaction, because it is not a constant relationship (e.g. employment, public contract, taxation benefits), but it is nor a clearly short-term interaction, as it becomes the bases of iterative exchanges. Thus, distinguishing between the instances of short-term clientelistic interaction, the long-term ones, and the ones in between—the hybrid ones, is one of the goals of this study, as both are assembled and supported by different drivers, and different mechanisms.

Finally, **local politics seems to carry more significance** than the national one, in the Romanian setting. Different strings of evidence support this inference. On one hand, I consider the turnout data. According to an IPP (Public Policies Institute) study (Alexandru, Moraru, and Ercus 2009), the overall trend of Romanian turnout for

² see Annex 1 for a compounded list of informal methods to obtain and monitor votes, which were communicated to me by young party members and other interviewees

elections is decreasing, with local elections turnout surpassing since 2007, the national elections one (Annex 2). This suggests that local politics mobilize better a generally disillusioned electorate, giving it a sense of familiarity and control. This also suggests that there is a poor feed-back from national authorities.

Trying to answer the question of whether incumbents can buy political support through targeted public spending, Pop-Eleches and Pop-Eleches (2009) have uncovered an interesting relationship between governmental measures (national level politics), the local government (local politics), and the voters. This study showed how, through targeted public spending, the incumbent governing coalition increases its support from the part of program beneficiaries. But, the electorate offers this increased trust, and political support to the local representatives, or the local governmental structures, and not to the central government, which was in fact responsible for the respective policy of targeted public spending. On the other hand, local politics seem to carry more weight than national politics because rural turnout is higher than urban turnout (Alexandru, Moraru, and Ercus 2009) (see Annex 2). Higher rural turnout is correlated with higher interest for local politics. Rural voters are overall more vulnerable to party mobilization due to smaller community structures, and fewer channels of unbiased information. The degree of control from the part of the patrons is significantly higher in rural settings.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to outline the evolution of the clientelistic relationships, and how they impact upon democratic practices in the contemporary settings. It has also attempted to disentangle the different forms of clientelistic linkages—short-term, one-off exchanges, from long-term, iterative transactions. It has suggested that the non-iterative transactions are easier to trace, because of their purely mercantilistic nature. The long-term ones, which are closer to average partisanship, are more expensive in terms of time spend on the consolidation of the broker-client relationship, and in terms of the value of the transacted goods—public employment, public contracts etc. The iterative exchanges can be better monitored, and hence, have greater predictability in terms of the electoral mobilization potential they hold. Still, as the empirical evidence gathered in Romania shows (Annex 1), a wide range of methods of monitoring one-off exchanges, on the Election Day, have been perfected as well. This implies a great risk for democratic

accountability, as the transaction is fully consumed on the Election Day, the elected representative becomes freed from any responsibility he might have had towards his voters, be they clients or independent supporters, during his term in office.

Finally, this study has proposed a new conceptualization of the dichotomy between programmatic platforms and clientelistic ones. The question is not whether an electoral system is programmatic or clientelistic, as informal exchanges usually take place in parallel with the programmatic ones, but whether or not clientelism prevails. Therefore, the programmatic political action belongs to the Formal Electoral System (FES), and the clientelistic electoral mobilization belongs to the Paralell Electoral System (PES). A candidate/party may make use of both types of electoral action, but it's victory will ultimately depend on the one which is more prevalent in that specific electoral setting. Both long-term clientelistic relations, and short-term electoral transactions belong to the PES. In the case of Romania, the empirical evidence testifies to a high incidence of short-term, non-iterative exchanges, which have a high effectiveness due to their relative low-costs, the general disenchantment of the electorate with the political sphere, and the improvement of the monitoring mechanisms. Further analysis is needed to understand the scope and impact long-term clientelistic relations might have on the Romanian electoral system.

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Annex 1: Known Methods of ‘Stealing’ Votes

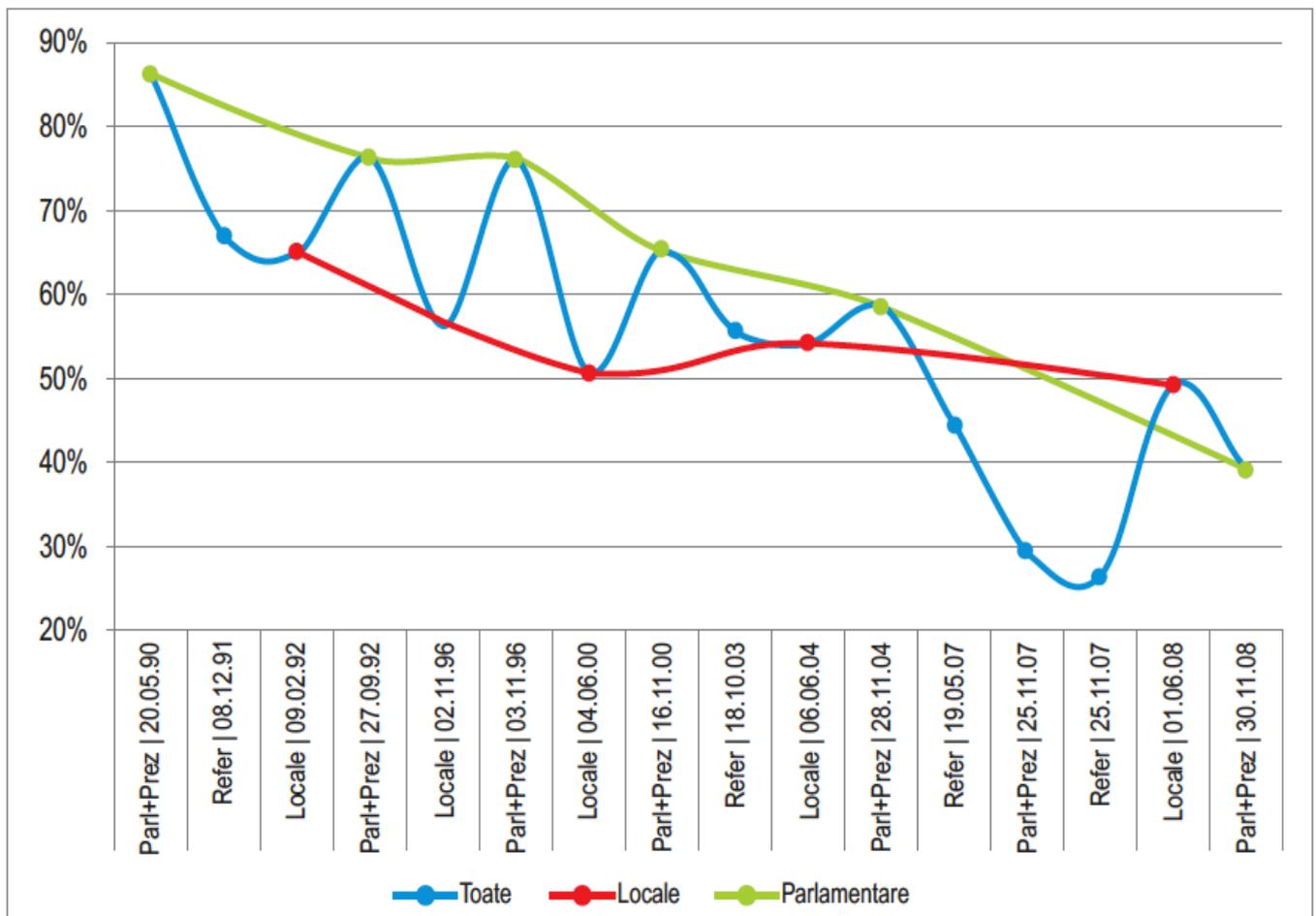
1. **“Photo” Method.** Entering the polling booth with small cameras, or mobiles with incorporated camera, in order to take a picture of the ballot-paper. This procedure is used by those who want to monitor the vote of the persons to whom money or other benefits they’ve promised.
2. **“Unstamped Ballot-paper” Method.** Giving to voters unstamped ballot-papers (which will make their vote null). This method will be used in those sections where it is known that most votes will be in favour of for the opponent.
3. **“Voted Ballot-paper” Method.** Giving to voters, already voted ballot-papers. Similar method with the preceding one.
4. **“Typography” Method.** Distributing a greater number of ballot-papers than the real one. Implies the illegal printing of ballot-papers, which will reach the voting station through a member of the elections commission from that polling station.
5. **“Shuttle” Method.** A voter goes in the polling booth with an already voted ballot-paper, and exits with the empty one, which was handed to him at the polling station. (It’s meant ensure that voters, to whom money or favours have been given/promised, are voting the way the patron wants to. The patron is the one who provides the original voted ballot-paper)
6. **“Blue Shirt” Method.** A person, known by a clothing article, is hired to follow the voter in the polling booth to make sure that person votes the way he/she is ‘supposed’ to. (This practice, like many others on this list, is specifically forbidden by the law)
7. **“Mobile Poll” Method.** The mobile poll, which is used with the approval of the voting section’s president, is used excessively, as a result of numerous written solicitations.
8. **“Crush” Method.** A crowd is intentionally formed at the entry of the polling station, so as to expressly delay the voting process. This method is again, mostly used, in those polling stations where the opponent is known to be favoured.

9. **“Multiple” Method.** The members of the voting commission give to known voters multiple ballot-papers, by signing as present other persons, who don't show up. (This method requires the practitioners to have knowledge of the absent persons' ID numerical codes, and is especially favoured by low turnout rates)
10. **“Morning” Method.** Half an hour before the voting process begins, multiple ballot-papers, which are voted “the right way”, are introduced into the poll. Throughout the day, the members of the voting commission who committed the fraud will sign as present some of the people who didn't show up.
11. **“Fifty-fifty” Method.** Unused ballot-papers are split between the members of the voting commission of the station, and then introduced into the poll. It usually works in small polling stations, where there are no assigned observers.
12. **“Bribe” Method.** Money is given upon the presentation of the proof of how the way people voted (the ‘right’ way). It is usually the complement of other methods presented above.
13. **“PV” Method.** The president of the voting commission has a duplicate of the voting record, and signs it on the way to the BEC (Central Electoral Bureau).
14. **“T-shirt” Method.** The members of the commission wear electoral slogans, or inscriptions on their clothing.
15. **“Bus” Method.** Moving electoral ‘tourists’ from one city to another, in buses, or other vehicles.
16. **“Scatterbrain” Method.** (similar to the “unstamped ballot-paper”) The member of the commission ‘forgets’ to stamp the ballot-paper, thus giving the voter the chance to recast his vote.
17. **“Destruction” Method.** If the “voted” stamps remain at the reach of the commission members, they may stamp some of the ‘wrong’ ballot-papers, once the polls have been open for counting, thus those ballot-papers will be rendered null.

18. **“Stalin” Method.** It is possible that, when the others aren’t paying attention to the final counting process, a member of the voting commission can move some of the ballot-papers to the ‘right’ pile, thus increasing the final number counted votes in favour of that candidate, in that polling station.

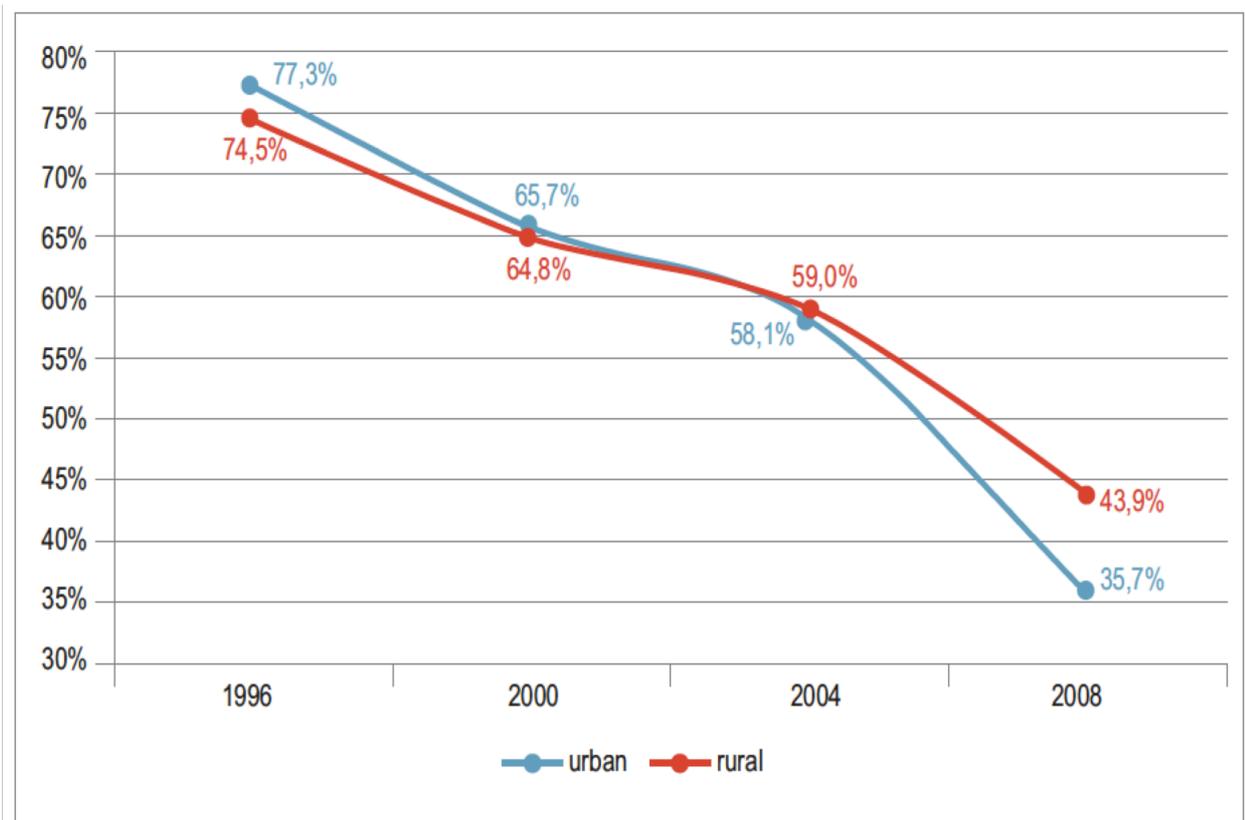
Translation: by the author

Annex 2: Electoral Turnout in Romania

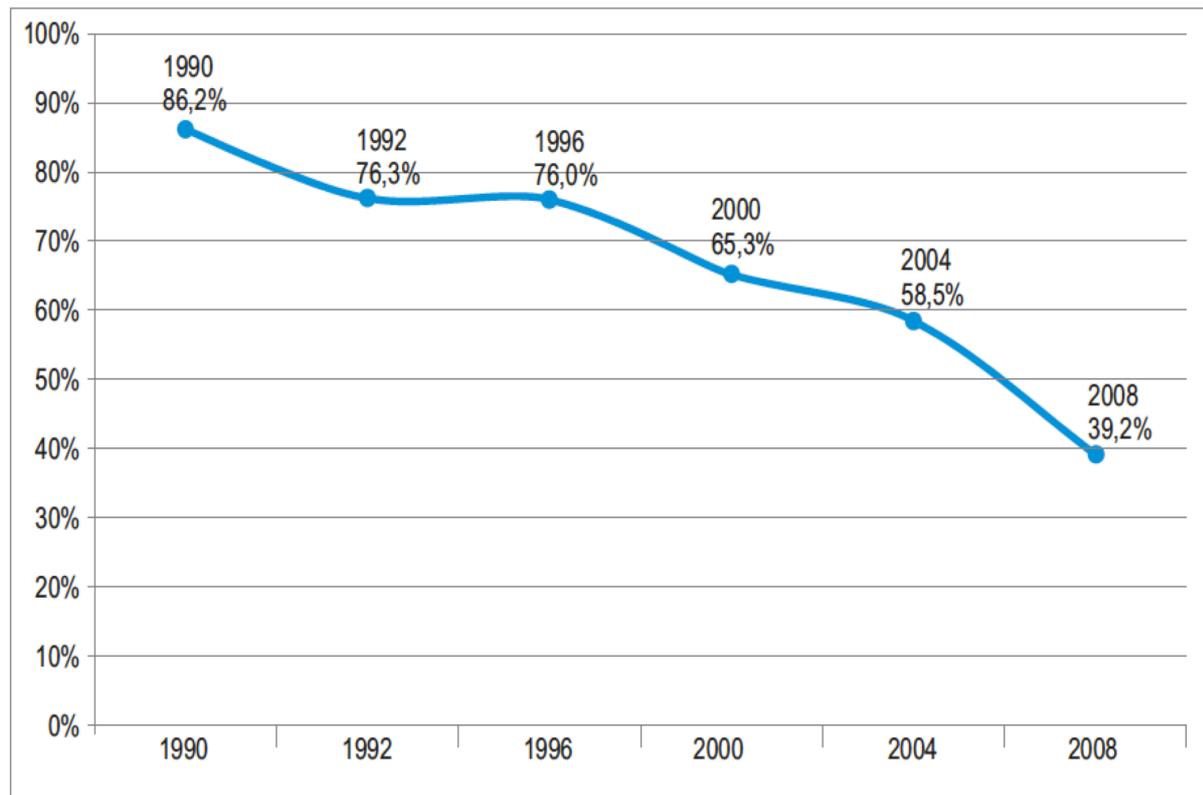


Romanian Turnout for all elections 1990 - 2008

Source: IPP (Public Policies Institute, Bucharest)



Rural vs. Urban Turnout in Parliamentary Elections 1996 - 2008
Source: IPP (Public Policies Institute, Bucharest)



Turnout for Parliamentary elections between 1990 and 2008

Source:IPP (Public Policies Institute, Bucharest)