

The Persistence of Patronage in Mexico. The Case of Acapulco*

[English Version]

La persistencia del clientelismo en México. El caso de Acapulco

A persistência do clientelismo no México. O caso de Acapulco

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Abstract

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Objective: this research is aimed at identifying how patronage erodes the construction of citizenship in the municipality of Acapulco, Guerrero. **Methodology:** through semi-structured interviews it was found that the lack of coverage of political, social, and civil rights in the population, motivates the entry of citizens into client networks in the municipality. The descriptive study is novel because it is carried out at the subnational level and allows an in-depth look at the case. **Results:** it was found that citizens do not actively participate

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in democracy because they do not believe in a real change that benefits them through formal institutions. **Conclusions:** the main findings lie in the fact that citizens become passive agents in the face of democracy, due to the lack of trust in institutions.

Keywords: Citizenship; PatronageClientelism; Citizen Participation; Democracy; Citizen Rights.

Resumen

Objetivo: esta investigación está orientada a identificar cómo el clientelismo erosiona la construcción de ciudadanía en el municipio de Acapulco, Guerrero. **Metodología:** mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas se encontró que la falta de cobertura de los derechos políticos, sociales y civiles en la población motiva el ingreso de los ciudadanos a las redes clientelares en el municipio. El estudio de carácter descriptivo es novedoso pues se realiza en el plano subnacional y permite observar a profundidad el caso. **Resultados:** se encontró que los ciudadanos no participan de manera activa en la democracia porque no creen en un cambio real que los beneficie por medio de instituciones formales. **Conclusiones:** los principales hallazgos radican en que los ciudadanos se vuelven agentes pasivos, ante la democracia, a raíz de la falta de confianza en instituciones.

Palabras-clave: Ciudadanía; Clientelismo; Participación ciudadana; Democracia; Derechos ciudadanos.

Resumo

Objetivo: esta pesquisa visa identificar como o clientelismo corrói a construção da cidadania no município de Acapulco, Guerrero. **Metodologia:** através de entrevistas semi-estruturadas, descobriu-se que a falta de cobertura dos direitos políticos, sociais e civis da população motiva os cidadãos a se juntarem a redes de clientelistas no município. O estudo descritivo é novo, pois é realizado em nível subnacional e permite uma observação aprofundada do caso. **Resultados:** constatou-se que os cidadãos não participam ativamente da democracia porque não acreditam em mudanças reais que os beneficiem através de instituições formais. **Conclusões:** as principais conclusões

são que os cidadãos se tornam agentes passivos da democracia como resultado de uma falta de confiança nas instituições.

Palavras-chave: Cidadania; Clientelismo; Participação cidadã; Democracia; Direitos dos cidadãos.

Introduction

Patronage is a phenomenon that has been studied over the years in different contexts. It has been linked to the deterioration of democracy, citizen participation and the full exercise of citizenship. The latter is the premise that frames this study, the erosion caused by political patronage in the construction of citizenship at the subnational level, mainly in the municipality of Acapulco, Guerrero.

The municipality of Acapulco is characterized by replicating dynamics that have been presented at the subnational level in other studies. Such is the case of the study “The other representation: clientelistic ties at the local level in Mexico” by Flavia Freidenberg (2017), which carries out a micro-political analysis of clientelistic practices in Saltillo, Coahuila. It concludes that, in effect, clientelism becomes an alternative for the community’s inhabitants from those formal institutions that do not immediately satisfy their demands, mainly those communities with the highest degree of marginalization and poverty. The closeness that employers and intermediaries present to their clients generates greater confidence in citizens to choose to be part of a network, which results in a kind of manipulation originating from scarcity (Freidenberg, 2017).

The present study confirms that in Acapulco the persistence of patronage shows that the State is absent in marginalized communities, and this allows the exercise of the particularistic policy, of the patronage bond between employers, intermediaries, and clients, thus wearing down citizenship and the full exercise of rights.

The objective of the research is to identify how patronage erodes the construction of citizenship in the municipality of Acapulco. To achieve this, a qualitative methodology was used, using the semi-structured interview as a tool. It was developed in the municipality of Acapulco de Juárez, Guerrero, mainly in the western area in the months of November to December 2019. The sampling was via networks or “snowball” and the Atlas-Ti version 7 program was used as an instrument to process the information.

In summary, the first section identifies the theoretical-conceptual elements of citizenship, clientelism, democracy and citizen participation that lead to establishing the methodology used in the research. Subsequently, the semi-structured interviews that result in four emerging categories were analyzed: 1) asymmetric relationship of power; 2) attitudes of loyalty; 3) economic vulnerability; 4) instrumental reasoning. Conclusions: the main findings lie in the fact that citizens become passive agents in the face of democracy, due to the lack of trust in institutions.

Democracy and Citizen Participation

Democracy is a political regime that comes from the Greek “demos” (people) and “Kratos” (government), translating it as “government of the people.” A government of the people reflects that all the people who belong to it, participate in making decisions (National Electoral Institute [INE], Institute of Legal Research of the Universidad Autónoma de Mexico [IIJ-UNAM], 2020). In this sense, democracy is characterized by holding free and periodic elections, having freedom of expression, free sources of information, and freedom of association (Dahl, 2004).

In a direct democracy citizens vote directly for the actions that would be carried out to best solve the problems of the population. However, in ancient Greece, the characteristics that voting population had to fulfill, left aside the poor, marginalized, women, sick, and foreigners; this generated division between the social classes of the population (Aristotle, 2004; Rosenberg, 2006; Bobbio, 2007).

There is another type of democracy called liberal, where citizens have economic, civil, social, assembly freedoms and the presence of the free market; the State is only in charge of regulating the participation of individuals and the market (Carter, 2005). In contrast, liberal democracy seeks equality in all aspects of the population’s life: economic, political, social, and cultural (Sartori, 2002; Paramio, 1996; Moya-Palencia, 1982).

Currently, a representative democracy allows citizens to choose their rulers freely. This is how it presupposes a control of power by citizens, as they elect their representatives from a group of candidates that arise from political parties and are elected periodically, therefore, popular power translates into electoral power (Sartori, 2008).

Finally, procedural democracy is based on compliance with procedures focused on elections, citizen participation and the set of actions at the time of the elections – such as guaranteeing free and secret voting – as well as freedom of expression, press, and association. This allows for the process to be freely conducted, with political and social equality (Clarke, Foweraker, 2001).

The relationship between democracy and citizen participation is clear, democracy does not exist without participation by the population. Citizen participation is defined as “those legal activities undertaken by citizens that are directly aimed at influencing the selection of rulers and/or the actions taken by them” (Verba, Nie, Kin, 1978). In countries with a democratic political system, citizen participation and political representation go hand in hand, as they are necessary for democracy to function (Merino, 2013). However, there occur

phenomena that distort democratic representation. To understand these phenomena, delving into the concept of citizenship and its implications in democratic life is necessary.

An Approach to the Idea of Citizenship

The notion of citizenship points to the public space as an arena for defining the rights that cover individuals. This public arena, in principle, guarantees the participation of all citizens on equal terms, which means that rights are constantly alluded to, defended, and expanded. However, in everyday life, the equality of citizens does not materialize, especially when individuals face situations where inequality of power is present.

From an analytical perspective, inequality is inherent in citizenship, because society is dynamic and constantly identifies and appropriates causes that it considers should be taken into account in order to become rights. This means that any state of affairs is subject to inquiry of inclusion and equality. On the other hand, inequality has an explanation as a topic in the public arena, understood as the space where politics and the correlation of forces define what is important for a community:

The exercise of citizenship is manifested in the possibility of dialogue that must exist between the different instances of society. The demands must be received by some instance and later discussed, which does not imply that conflicts are resolved by this possibility of speaking and being listened to. The other side of citizenship is exclusion; when there are others who do not belong to a certain community. (Jelin, 1997, p.193)

The rights implied in citizenship are the result of political battles where, both the inclusion and the exclusion of citizenship, has more of a focus of political confrontation mediated by economic, symbolic, gender, communication, knowledge resources, and use of force. In this line, citizenship is framed in a history of appropriation of rights and resistance to grant or expand them, since it implies exercising, according to Elizabeth Jelin (1997) a “conflictive practice linked to power, which reflects the struggles about who could say what in the process of defining what the common social problems are and how they will be addressed” (p. 194). For example, in Mexico, because of the various civil mobilizations brought by the population seeking a change in the system, and the different economic and political crises that put pressure on the political class,

different reforms were carried out, such as the electoral reform of 1977; that opened the way not only to democratization in Mexico, but to the beginning of various constitutional changes and the beginning of citizen construction.

In this sense, María del Carmen Hernández and Nehiby Alcántara (2017) point out that:

It was not until the last decades of the century in question [the C. XX] that citizenship became relevant as a relational and procedural category and began to operate as a tool for empowerment and domination dictated by the social, political, and economic context. (p.100)

Therefore, the rights of citizens are expanded or restricted by economic, cultural, and social states' capacities as effective citizenship is not only the result of the guarantees provided by law, but also of the ability to make those rights effective. For this, recognizing that poverty and inequality restrict the effectiveness of citizenship is necessary (O'Donnell, 1993, p.170). Likewise, the presence of other phenomena also impacts the effectiveness of rights, as O'Donnell (1993) observes "In Norway, people are treated as all members of the same society, who have the same rights. In Brazil, just to mention one country, the lower social classes are treated and seen as inferior, as pseudo citizens" (p. 170).

In this sense, a review of the way in which people of different social classes are treated in Mexico can show the weighting in the treatment and opportunities for social mobility. For example, ethnic origin, skin color, gender, sexual preference, age, and state of health mark unfavorable conditions that affect the recognition of citizenship rights (Soberanes, 2010).

Likewise, the appropriation and effectiveness of citizen rights are also related to the ability to control and submit power to the public. However, the existence of informal institutions, whose relationships are based on personal loyalties and the arbitrary and capricious exercise of power, deteriorate the construction of citizenship. Practices such as favoring perpetuate patron-subject relations, strengthen the practice of corruption as the axis of the relationship between people, and socialize the individualistic idea of political benefits, destroying the formation of social cohesion.

Addressing the issue of citizenship implies assuming the prevalence of what is public, expressed by rights, and the conditions that make them effective. In this framework, citizenship is a cluster of rights, which are deposited in the individual, but where the State is the source and concessionaire (Marshall, 1998).

In this same situation, Thomas Janoski considers citizenship as a "passive and active membership of individuals in a nation-state with certain universal rights and obligations at a given level of equality" (1998, p.9). However, there is

a gap between the conquest of rights and the effective exercise of these. There are conditions that in practice exclude population groups from the enjoyment of these rights. For this reason, recognizing the exclusion of certain sectors of the population, allows starting the struggle to claim them, even if the individual is part of a certain social group that influences not having access to opportunities because they occur within the framework of a relationship of authority/subordination. This is how exclusion develops through various exchanges between institutions and society that deny individuals participation in the social fabric (Buvinic, Mazza, Pungiluppi, 2004; Vargas, 2011).

Given the dynamic nature of the rights incorporated into citizenship, a margin of exclusion perceived by those who demand the incorporation of new recognitions of rights on issues that they consider relevant, from the public point of view, and whose arena of debate and legitimation occurs in politics (Vargas, 2011). Hence, a review of access to the public agenda is necessary in light of emerging needs that arise in the 21st century. Above all, when citizenship is considered an inherent part of democracy (Weintraub, 1992). In contrast, Durand Ponte (2004), points out the difficulties faced by the construction of citizenship in Mexico as a result of authoritarianism, which takes root in citizens and interferes in the development of a political culture that contributes to the consolidation of democracy, which is why patronage and practices such as transporting voters to the polls have survived through the years.

Regarding this, Jorge Alonso Sánchez (2013) mentions that since the period of alternation of power a simulation of democracy was created, the Mexican system only serves the political class. This position is complemented by those that mention that electoral democracy does not have the capacity to solve social problems and focuses on legitimizing State institutions that, through various authoritarian strategies, contribute to the advancement of capitalist logics, leaving aside the substantive part of the regime: the social values and political culture that shape the success or failure of a democracy, and of course, the construction of citizenship (Rocha, 2015).

Despite the fact that the concept of citizenship, since its formation throughout history, has faced various processes in search of its strengthening, in the 21st century in Mexico its consolidation has not been achieved. This was identified in the interviews as a result of this research; there are various obstacles that prevent its proper development. Among these obstacles, primarily, the breach of political, civil, and social rights by the State. With this, strengthening the political culture, as the subject culture which Mexicans cling to as a consequence of the authoritarian practices of the old Priista regime in Mexico still prevails is impossible. In addition this causes an asymmetric relationship of direct power between candidates, leaders/politicians, and citizens.

Furthermore, the adoption of development models expands or restricts citizens' rights. The case of the Welfare State that expanded social rights, compared to the Neoliberal State that minimized its intervention in society and the economy, and ceded the provision of public services such as health and education to private agents is worth mentioning (Kymlicka, Norman, 1997).

Democracy in its full sense implies the extended existence of other citizenships: civil, social, and cultural [...] the democratic regime introduce the vision of a citizen/agent capable of making decisions that can be very relevant to the public good (not just voting but to participate in the making of collectively binding decisions), it is unjustified to ignore (although this is done by a good part of the dominant theoretical currents today) the classic theme of the social conditions of democracy. (O'Donnell, 2008, p. 26)

In the Mexican experience, we must also consider that politics and democracy have acted in parallel with the presence of chiefdoms. Chiefdoms is a central term around which notions such as patronage, intermediation, hierarchy, informality, violence, authoritarianism, leadership, acceptance, paternalism, and corruption are added (Pasterns, 2005, p. 350), all of them harmful to the construction of citizenship.

The personalistic practice of power, its arbitrary and sometimes capricious exercise, its informal institutional context, and the relationship of loyalty that individuals accept (or to which they are obliged), presents a panorama contrary to the rights of which full citizenship is constituted. The existence of the chiefdom has been persistent even in Mexican democratization. The presence of informal institutions, “socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and applied outside the officially sanctioned channels” (Helmke, Levitsky, 2006, p. 727) allows this practice to be adopted as an option to the allusion and effectiveness of the rights involved in citizenship, and also allows the functioning of institutions that are apparently formal, as are the political parties (Espejel, Díaz, 2020).

One of the most persevering activities within the framework of informal order is clientelism, as it is considered to undermine the performance of formal democratic, market, and state institutions. Clientelism is characterized by being a system of informal politics, a permanent, particularistic and unequal relationship that is composed of three actors: the employer, the client and an intermediary through whom the employer grants material services to customers, goods and services (Acuña, 2009; Audelo, 2004; González, 2019) and where employers have greater power (Audelo, 2004; Schedler, 2004; Cárcar, 2008; Helmke, Levitsky, 2006) and there is an exchange or distribution of economic

or social resources in exchange for political support (Corrochano, 2002; Auyero, Page, Lapegna, 2008).

Clientelism is based on the exchange of favors for votes, where there are authorities that have a political position and regulate the provision of public services and resources, which they have in exchange for electoral support from voters (Auyero, 2001; Trotta, 2003). At the same time, those involved envision this practice as an alternative strategy to cover social security needs that are often not fully covered by the State (Lemarchand, Legg, 1972).

Clientelism can be presented as a mode of subordination and unequal relationship of domination, in which there are informal agreements and promises that may or may not be fulfilled by employers to clients (Audelo, 2004; Schedler, 2004; Cárcar, 2008; Auyero, Page, Lapegna, 2008; Serra, 2016; Eisenstadt, Roniger, 1984). Also as a phenomenon where clients are active, informed agents, who negotiate their support and who choose the highest bidder (Vommaro, Quirós, 2011; Corrochano, 2002; Combes, 2011). Finally, clientelism can be understood as an agreement between two parties. One of them prevails over the other, as they do not maintain an equal social or economic status (Leca, Schemel, 1983).

In this way, clientelism is seen as a means of using power and subordinating a less favored population group. This practice is characterized by unwritten regulations; therefore, people who are in a client network, by not fulfilling their “responsibilities” in the game, will assume the consequences that this act entails (Helmke, Levitsky, 2006). Clientelism moves in the sphere of informal and particularistic order, its presence delays or erodes the formation of citizenship; it generates interactions based on informal rules and promotes values to loyalty rather than to the law. This change has led to a coexistence between informal and formal institutions that contrast clientelism and the construction of citizenship.

Methodology

The methodological approach is qualitative research. Due to the novelty of the research, an exploratory approach is proposed. However, enough information is gathered to propose preliminary explanations about the relationship between client practice and citizenship, as it deepens on perception and experiences regarding clientelism and citizenship of people involved in client activities and repercussions on their perception of citizenship. To do this, information is gathered from direct primary sources through a semi-structured interview. The

design of the interview considers five dimensions: nature of the client network, type of customers, types of loyalties, community networks, and self-perception as a citizen.

The interviews are concentrated in the western area of Acapulco, a region formed by the entire perimeter that covers the foot road from the slope to the Pedregoso neighborhood that constitutes the last colony of Acapulco. In this area there are colonies such as Petaquillas, El Derrumbe, Francisco Villa, Generación 2000, Jardín Mangos, Jardín Palmas, Jardín Azteca, Pie de la Cuesta, Miramar, Playa Luces, Puñalada, Valle de las flores, and San Isidro characterized by being areas with high levels of violence and marginalization in the municipality.

The interviews were applied from November 2019 to February 2020. These interviews were transcribed into a matrix and a thematic analysis was conducted. This involved axial coding of all data prior to the identification and validation of emerging categories. The emerging categories were: 1) asymmetric relationship of power; 2) attitudes of loyalty; 3) economic vulnerability; 4) instrumental reasoning.

The selection of the sample was by nets or snowball sampling. By contacting other participants suggested by the first interviewee, confidence increases and the flow of information is easier; in addition, people who manage a low profile can be found more easily in the context where this phenomenon takes place (Monje, 2013). In this case, the micro-analytical nature of this research demands a limited number of cases in order to observe the details and depth of each of the reflections that underpin this research.

The Atlas Ti version 7 program was used to order the data into codes and categories and interpret the information.

Clientelism and Citizenship in Acapulco

The analysis below is the result of twelve interviews conducted with political leaders and citizens, they were chosen by network or snowball sampling. Six men and six women were interviewed¹. From the information, the answers of the interviewees are described with textual quotations as empirical evidence. The analysis of the research related to each of the categories is presented.

1. At the request of the interviewees, their names have been changed to fictitious names in order to preserve their identity in anonymity.

Asymmetric Power Relationship

For years contexts of social and economic inequality have promoted the prevalence of client relations in small territories, since the economic dependence generated by citizens on informal institutions conditions their full development (Escobar, 2002). Although the responsibility of the State is to guarantee the different social, economic, and civil rights of citizens, empirical evidence highlights a different reality that reflects difficulties in exercising the full right of citizenship.

Among the characteristics previously identified with respect to the concept of citizenship, there is the concession of rights in a balanced way, where differences of diversity are possible, but that guarantee that all the inhabitants of the territory of a nation have the political, social, and civil rights that belong to them. The problem is that some citizens have greater facilities that give them their closeness to the political class that leads the governments, in this case, the municipal government of Acapulco:

Personally, my associate who came to the position in the city council, I have a great relationship with him. And whenever I go to the town hall doors open, I am also the delegate here, the commissioner, so they have to assist me and even I tell them: I am not going to ask anything for me, when I go it is because I request support for the community. But they have never closed the doors to me. (María, personal communication, 2019)

These facilities promote an asymmetrical relationship between the commissioner and citizens who do not have benefits, and between leaders and governors who can take the liberty of assisting, first, their closest relatives with respect to other citizens who are part of long lines to wait to be served. This is a reflection of the rights and benefits that are partially distributed and where social, economic and political security is guaranteed in a particularistic and selective way.

However, asymmetric power relations do not arise unexpectedly. When rights are granted and not recognized and when typical processes of a democracy and benefits to citizens are omitted, they are tipped to one side of the balance. Large sectors of the population are left unprotected and seek a way for their demands to be heard either by formal or informal processes. This is one of the reasons expressed by the interviewees:

In 2018 I did not participate very actively because no candidate suited me, so I decided not to participate. Sometimes you are not satisfied with the things you see in them, because as a citizen you also get tired of seeing all these kinds of situations that have happened. I say, I will not always like the candidate, but the worst is when we want to approach the candidate and they reject us because we look old to them. I think they should be more accessible, especially because they depend on us, on our votes, and when they come to power, they forget. (Jorge, personal communication, 2019)

Being deprived or feeling excluded from the political system — which has political party leaders, candidates, or elected and acting officials as the main processors of demands at the formal level — people turn to informal institutions to make themselves heard.

Loyalty Attitudes

The mistrust generated by the lack of response that citizens have experienced from institutions supported by the government has made people become passive actors regarding the democratic order. It has also led them to develop loyalty attitudes toward social agents or intermediaries that are willing to constantly solve their immediate needs. In this way, interviewees' explanations are that they cannot participate in a government that does not provide immediate and effective responses to their demands, but they are loyal to those agents who support them:

The candidate approaches me, talks to me and one can already see the confidence that he can provide. The first thing I tell them and that I ask most of them is that I don't want money. I don't want things for myself, but I do want them to help people. The one who does it is the one I'm going with and all my people too. With the one who listens to us because he is going to see the problems we have and help us with that. Especially with medicine or something for people who can't walk. Because it was the first thing he was told, we don't want money, we want him to help us. (Susana, personal communication, 2019)

Regardless of the procedural nature of democracy, whether the government complies with reliable electoral institutions or whether the filters are increasingly tightened when voting, the main characteristic of why citizens choose to agree to give their political support is precisely because phenomena such as clientelism and the figures that are part of it have created a whole system that covers the basic needs of the people who are part of a network, for which political favor ends up translated into votes:

Well, I have always liked being able to help society. I believe that helping society without looking at what it does and without expecting anything in return is rewarding. I think that helps one a lot and, in the end, it leaves a good taste indeed. I have already been involved in this for about 30 years and people have always approached me for one thing or another. I want to tell you something broadly. When I arrived here, to my community, I used to go around 1 or 2 in the morning and ask for help for people who needed it. I am a person who sleeps with his cell phone beside the bed and if something happens to someone and needs my support, I do not care about the time or the consequence or anything, I will help people. (Juan, personal communication, 2019)

The prevalence of clientelism, both in Acapulco and throughout Mexico, has a lot to do with this way of reaching citizens, with this fieldwork where political party leaders or social managers weave their networks that go beyond an ephemeral benefit, as they focus on the development of a bond that unites the citizen and the client agent with loyalty; beyond the initial objective of the citizen leaving aside the institutions and their procedures to obtain an immediate benefit.

In addition, with the passage of time, new needs emerge, as well as new demands that have been excluded in this concept of citizenship that encompasses rights and obligations. These new recognitions of rights, that have no place within the system, reflect the inability of the State to transform itself and adapt to the accelerated change of the new generations:

It is very complicated because not all people know about this and they do not have the technology. Right now, if people, farmers want to have fertilizer, everything is by computer, internet, accounts, Facebook, photos. You think peasants are going to have Facebook and take a selfie, upload, and download documents and things like this. That is why managers are very important, because indeed we take political leadership and we must also take advantage of the situation to see for one, if I help them, why won't they return the favor? (Tomasa, personal communication, 2019)

These “gaps” left by the State provide the opportunity for, through its agents, clientelism to strengthen its networks day by day through the use of ties such as friendship, social assistance and, of course, loyalty with the citizens. For this reason, it is essential that citizens begin to work on building a strong social fabric, as the points addressed so far reflect a dependency that does not allow them to empower themselves in the face of the institutions that have a duty to support them. Being a citizen is being an agent of change, which not only demands your rights, but also helps your community to advance continuously in its development.

Economic Vulnerability

The strengthening of client networks in the municipality of Acapulco has been caused by the need of the population to obtain economic, material, and political resources. In one of the interviews, the interviewee points out the following:

Well, the truth is that people ask me for money: “I don't have enough to eat,” “my son doesn't have a way to get to school,” “hey, help me pay my electricity bill,” “hey, help me pay my phone bill,” “hey, I don't have money to pay the gas,” “hey, help me with some plates.” People are in great need. There are also those who ask me for uniforms, soccer and basketball balls, especially when the Virgin's Day comes, also celebrations, the bulls, presents. During the town fair, they ask me to help them with different things. It is endless. More managers are needed to be able to help with people because the need is considerable and I would really like it to be a lie and that they would take me for a fool, but I know they need it. (Juan, personal communication, 2019)

Where there is a weak presence of the State in terms of public policies and services, the opportunity for political leaders to “intercede” or conveniently mediate for the marginalized population is stronger, and later, pass the bill for their “social support.”

As the political leader of the community of San Isidro, Acapulco points out:

We manage property tax payments, driver's licenses at a 50% discount and car loan payments. When payments are very high, we meet with the people in charge to somehow get a discount and a benefit for the owner who wants to make the payment and thus obtaining the license plates, paying vehicle ownership taxes

and all that. If someone dies, we visit the family for the possibility of getting the coffin; otherwise we provide support with a coffin free of charge. (Mario, personal communication, 2019)

Additionally, there is other support, as church improvements, fair celebrations, teacher's, mother's, father's and children's day, medical prescription refills, holdings payments and even efforts to improve the convents or churches in each neighborhood. This does not include the continuous support for food supplies, material resources, wheelchairs and/or productive projects or programs that serve as the main attraction for citizens in vulnerable situations.

Instrumental Reasoning

Reflecting on the elements that contribute for citizenship improvement and their responsibility toward their context is important. Alexis de Tocqueville (n.d.) mentioned that a life of association and social collaboration is essential. This model, according to him, is part of the basis of effective governance, as the collective action sphere functions like the most effective intermediary between the State and the civil society.

The capacity for association and cooperation is evident, since in this context, individuals have established different types of client networks: neighborhood-partisan, neighborhood-community, neighborhood-family, partisan-community, partisan-family, partisan-university, neighborhood-committees, partisan committees, and so on, which can be combined according to the context of each arising network. However, the problem lies in the fact that the organization's objective is mainly to request excessive resources without delving into sustainable solutions that include citizen participation for maintaining the solution of their problems. The following reflects their organizational capacity:

Well, there were committees everywhere (...). Before there were neighborhood committees to improve streets, and they were a problem, because the kindergarten committee asked for a projects, the priest asked for another one, the high school committee for another one, and the transportation committee for another one. Then, in a town, I was asked for five different projects in a year and the resources allocated by the city council were not enough for five projects in a single community, so I told them: We'll get into an agreement on your projects and choose the most urgent one because then they do not even want to paint, if you give them the paint. They want everything to be done by the city council. This

way the agreement is between them, they fight among themselves and do not go around saying that I have favorites to manage one project or another. Right now there is already a committee where everyone is involved, the state commissioner, the community leader, the transportation leader, primary, secondary, high school, and priest leaders, the tortilla committee, and so on, so that they can reach an agreement and decide. I know there are many needs, but there is always one that will be of the highest priority. (Jorge, personal communication, 2019)

The problem with becoming instruments for informal institutions generating votes in exchange for economic or material support is that it prevents society from developing bonds of social cohesion and cooperativism that contribute to the support networks' consolidation for the benefit of the community's sustainable development.

For their part, the most informed citizens are also responsible for this collective situation. Although they assume leadership roles in the different municipality communities, they do not act as agents of social change to socialize democratic values such as selfless support for their neighbors and/or community members.

The way these people operate influences social support in exchange for political favors where subjects who accept the conditions of being part of the network also assume the consequences of not fulfilling their part of the deal. Indeed, the phenomenon of clientelism, in addition to eroding democracy and values such as social capital, fosters conflict and the rupture of the social fabric, which is only strengthened in societies with the freedom given by the full enjoyment of those rights. Unfulfilled promises and offers to improve the quality of life that do not come true are a few forms of deception by employers² at the port of Acapulco:

They committed to one thing and came out with another, as usual. They told us that they were going to pave streets, especially two streets that we do not have well done, but they did not comply. They tricked us in order to give them a hand and now that they are in office they have forgotten about us. (Irma, personal communication, 2019)

Thus, it is evident that citizenship and clientelism, although they are contrary concepts that cannot be imagined within the same contexts, in Mexico,

2. An employer, for example, may be a manager or a public administration official to whom the employees turn to without knowing them to solve their needs. It is clientelism without commitment (Schröter, 2010, p. 148).

and particularly in Acapulco, are categories linked on the same plane. However, the presence of one limits the development of the other.

After analysis of the interviews, the conclusion is that, in the municipality, motivations such as economic, material and even labor resources that encourage citizens to be part of a client network, whether neighborhood, family, party, or committee-based, is the result of a social, economic, and political inequality context that foster the continuance of clientelism.

Finally, there are elements of citizenship that are also the responsibility of individuals, in this case, the political culture of subjects prevails against a weak participating political culture. Citizens do organize themselves to request resources, but the problem lies in the fact that this becomes their main motivation: asking without participating or getting involved erodes their citizenship formation and causes permanent damage.

Conclusion

The present micro politics study shows that there is a resistance on the part of the port of Acapulco inhabitants to actively participate in formal acts of democracy, for example, the fact of requesting a resource through the management of institutions or through formal social programs.

For this reason, the more informal institutions or phenomena such as clientelism continue to be present in the population, the greater the damage to citizenship. Among the main reasons that influence Acapulco's citizens in their decision to become involved in a client network are, on the one hand, the economic vulnerability that serves as a problem of dependence on employers who offer immediate answers to their needs; and on the other hand, the lack of options for their development; therefore, the population is forced to depend on the will of political leaders or to decide on the option that best meets their needs and their material or economic resources.

In addition, the loyalty is developed by both grateful citizens with client agents and political leaders or intermediaries with their direct employers. This situation shows two perspectives. The first is: Why do citizens trust more in an employer than in a Mexican State institution? How can a particularistic policy benefit less favored and vulnerable citizens more than the exercise of social programs through official institutions? What is failing that citizens have to choose more between the employer that "supports" and "attends" them immediately, than a bureaucratic institution that slowly processes their demands?

The utilitarian reasoning or instrumental calculation of political leaders, giving value to the citizens because they represent a vote instead of a full being and agent of change, erode the status of citizenship, as it limits and, in the long term, incapacitates the population by appropriating their rights and contributing to the formation of networks that strengthen social cohesion in Acapulco and in Mexico.

Lastly, although clientelism in Acapulco is met with resistance on the part of its citizens, it is also a phenomenon that hinders the strengthening of citizenship. Citizens still lack a full rule of law. Trustworthy institutions and the certainty that their civil, social, and political rights are guaranteed is still far away. Therefore, this form of political participation might continue in practice.

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