The Tragedy of Political Clientelism:
Social Networks and Perverse Incentives in Argentina

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When party leaders distribute rewards and punishments to candidates only based on voter turnout, they develop a system of perverse incentives that encourages candidates competing to mobilize poor voters to use clientelism. Combining qualitative and quantitative data gathered during 24 months of fieldwork in seven municipalities in Argentina, and 6 months of fieldwork in Lima, Peru, this article shows that political leaders reward candidates based on the number of voters they mobilize, regardless of the strategies those candidates employ to maximize voter turnout. Studying the individual decision-making of 137 local candidates in seven municipalities in one election in 2005, and the individual decision-making of 90 local candidates over 16 years (1995-2011) in one municipality, I provide consistent and suggestive findings about the logic of perverse incentives and its unintended consequences: the emergence and consolidation of mercenary candidates. I argue that mercenary candidates who distribute money, small goods, and even alcohol and drugs, to voters in exchange for political participation, represent the unintended consequences of the logic of perverse incentives. The article concludes by examining the implication of this logic of perverse incentives and its unintended consequences for the consolidation and quality of democracy in Argentina and beyond.
One week before the rally, Mario, the local party broker, stopped by Laura’s house. Laura is a single mother with three sons. After asking her about her children, Mario reminded Laura of the upcoming rally and noted that, “a lot of people were waiting to get on a social welfare program like the one she was receiving thanks to him.” The message was unmistakable. If Laura wanted to continue receiving benefits from the welfare program, she would have to attend the rally. She asked Paula, her young teenage neighbor, to look after her five-year old boy, her toddler daughter, and her infant son, Juancito. In exchange, Laura agreed to give Paula some money and whatever she received for attending the rally. When Laura returned home, she realized that Juancito was unusually quiet and unresponsive. Worried, she took him to Mario’s house. Mario drove her to the hospital and waited until she spoke with the doctors. Laura’s baby had serious brain damage. Years later, Laura would learn that Juancito fell from the bed where his siblings were playing. Scared or inattentive, Paula left him quietly in his cradle. Today, Juancito lives in an assisted living community that is paid for by a pension that Mario “helped to get.”

Laura’s story illustrates the complex relationship between poor voters and party brokers. On the one hand, if Mario had not forced Laura to attend the rally, she would have stayed with her children. On the other, if Mario had not taken her to the hospital and secured a pension for Juancito’s care, Laura’s situation would have been even worse.

This paper studies the mechanisms that explain the simultaneous consolidation of clientelism and democracy by studying the relationships between brokers and voters, and between brokers and bosses in Argentina. I argue that while democracy has created new spaces for representation and political accountability, it has also created incentives for cultivating clientelistic relationships. Using network analysis to study the nested relationships between
party bosses, brokers, and voters, this paper reveals a logic of perverse incentives that induces brokers to employ clientelistic strategies to mobilize poor voters. When brokers solve voters’ problems by providing them with material and non-material benefits in exchange for participating at rallies and elections, they are using *clientelism* or *clientelistic strategies*. Clientelism is thus defined as a strategy of political mobilization in which politicians solve or promise to solve voters’ problems in exchange for their political support.

**Existing Explanations**

Classical works study dyadic relationships that “imply a direct relationship between two individuals” which “in turn connotes personal attachment” as the basis of clientelism (Landé 1977). Using Cicero’s words that “there is no duty more indispensable than that of returning kindness,” Alvin Gouldner (1977: 28) argues that clientelistic relationships follow a norm of reciprocity: voters should help those who have helped them. Two recent reviews on the concept of clientelism (Stokes 2007, Hicken 2011) highlight these aspects of clientelistic relationships. Allen Hicken claims that “dyadic relationships, contingency, hierarchy, and interaction” are key elements of clientelistic relationships (p. 290), and Susan Stokes defines clientelism as “the proffering of material goods in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution that the patron uses is simply ‘did you (will you) support me?’” (p. 605). However, existing studies fail to provide an account of how clientelistic relationships are built and sustained over time.

Theories of political distribution recognize that “clientelism requires dense organizational networks to work” (Diaz-Cayeros 2007: 112) because “it is easier and less expensive to buy off the support of those whom your party brokers know best than to buy the support of more distant
voters who are not tied to the party’s organization,” (Diaz-Cayeros 2007: 121) but fail to examine how these networks are created and maintained over time. Instead, recent works (e.g. Stokes 2005, Nichter 2008, Cox 2010, Diaz Cayeros 2007, Stokes et al. 2013, Gans-Morse et al. 2014) have focused on identifying the strategies that clientelistic parties will employ to mobilize different types of voters.

Whereas there have been significant advances in scholars’ understanding of clientelistic electoral strategies, answers to the “crucial questions” (Stokes 2005: 315) of clientelism highlight the importance of networks, but fail to explain them. The literature assumes that networks provide party leaders with information about voters’ electoral preferences and likelihood to turn out to vote. Networks also enable party brokers to monitor voters in case they fail to participate and support the party by attending rallies or voting at elections. Political parties rely on networks of party activists to distribute goods to voters, and thus parties that do not have partisan networks are not able to distribute goods. Networks also enable parties to identify and recruit activists to work for a party candidate in their neighborhoods.

In short, it is networks that make clientelism work; and, yet, we do not know how political parties build networks of party activists and voters. Nor do we fully understand why some parties are able to sustain and even enlarge the size of their networks over time while others fail. Focusing on the logic of perverse incentives that rewards candidates with political promotions based on the size of their political networks, regardless of whether or not candidates use clientelism to build and sustain their networks, this paper seeks to answer these questions.

**Building a Political Network**

To explain the relationship between Laura and Mario, I study the political, partisan, and social networks in which they are embedded and participate daily. Poor voters like Laura
become connected to party brokers like Mario when they look for food to feed their children, construction materials to finish their precarious homes, scholarships to send their children to school, social welfare programs that can help them to make ends meet, and jobs. Party brokers like Mario work to solve voters’ everyday problems in exchange for their political support to advance in their political careers.

The logic of perverse incentives, in words of Mario, “is very simple. You are worth as much as the amount of people you can mobilize. You have a prize, a number. Your number is how many people you can carry to a rally and how many votes you can give in an election.”¹ The number of voters Mario can mobilize to participate at rallies and elections provides party leaders with information about the size of Mario’s political network; and it is the size of Mario’s political network that defines his chances of becoming first a paid party activist, then a party broker, later a party candidate, and eventually, if he continues increasing the size of his political network, an elected, even reelected, political representative.

Activists like Mario begin their political careers when brokers recruit them to represent candidates and parties in their neighborhoods. Recruited activists become paid party activists, or brokers. Activists who continue mobilizing voters for the party but do not receive a salary are defined as unpaid party activists. Party brokers are paid in exchange for their daily work in their neighborhoods solving voters’ problems and mobilizing them to participate in rallies and elections. Paid party activists’ benefits range from municipal employment to access to welfare programs. Voters at the bottom of the pyramid receive goods of small value, such as construction materials, school supplies, and blankets, and are likely to support and remain in the broker’s network as long as they receive something. Otherwise, they will switch their support to another broker who will give them similar goods.

¹ Author interview, November 2005.
Brokers are career-seeking party activists interested in becoming candidates and therefore have incentives to increase the size of their political network to eventually compete for an elected position. Those who succeed in mobilizing voters to turn out at rallies and elections are rewarded with party candidacies, and the most effective get elected as local representatives.

After becoming elected representatives, candidates have access to resources and information and are therefore expected to enlarge or at least conserve the size of their political networks. If candidates fail to turn voters out to rallies, their candidacies will be given to upcoming brokers. This implies that brokers first compete to become candidates, then to get reelected, and finally to get reelected to the same or to a higher office. Figure 1 illustrates the political careers from party activists to elected candidates.

Figure 1

This paper focuses on party activists interested in pursuing a political career and uses information about municipal candidates who succeeded and failed in getting elected and reelected in Argentina. I choose to focus on local candidates for three reasons. First, in order to explain why some brokers are able to mobilize more voters than others, I have to make comparisons between individuals who actually manage to achieve turnout of voters beyond their family and friends. By examining candidates who succeed in getting elected, I am able to differentiate between those activists who have built a political network and those who have not. Second, local candidates are elected representatives and as such they are in charge of legislating based on the demands of their constituency. Failing to represent the demands of their constituents seriously diminishes the quality of democratic representation, as well as increases the potential for social outbursts from those who feel excluded from the democratic process.
Third, in studying elected local candidates I am able to gather systematic data about their political careers, and capacities and preferences to use clientelism.

**Choosing Clientelism**

The first time a party candidate chooses to use clientelistic strategies to mobilize voters, he or she is making a decision that will have “character forming” (Shefter 1977) consequences. Assuming career-seeking candidates are competing to mobilize poor voters, their decisions define their political future. I propose a sequential theory of strategic decision-making in which candidates’ decisions about whether or not to use clientelism to build a political network will have enduring consequences. I examine the situation from the candidates’ points of view since the first time they have to choose how to mobilize poor voters to participate at rallies and elections.

Candidates are divided between those who have the capacity to use clientelism and those who do not have this capacity. Candidates’ capacities vary based on their positions in partisan networks that provide them with access to material and non-material goods. Partisan networks also link candidates with party activists who are capable of distributing goods to voters and monitoring their participation at rallies and elections. Figure 2 illustrates this division between candidates capable and incapable of accessing and distributing clientelistic goods.

**Figure 2**

The left side of the decision tree belongs to opposition candidates that are deeply familiar with the limitations of not having access to resources and its effects on their capacity to turn out voters. Even if voters are interested in their proposals and would prefer to support them, voters are, nevertheless, unable to express their true preferences because they need to secure the flow of
I’m very familiar with voters because I go to them; I talk to them; I walk with them. But I don’t have a reliable following because I don’t have money (la caja) to mobilize them. Voters listen to you, they’re interested in what you have to say, but unfortunately, they aren’t interested in participating in politics. They prefer to go work, to spend time with their families. And unfortunately those who are in politics are in it to make money, so if you don’t have money they are not with you. They are with those who have money.  

As suggested in the testimony quoted above, candidates talk openly about the relationship between money and politics. Indeed, most politicians working in poor neighborhoods are aware of—and some of them actively participate in—the distribution of money whether directly through small amounts of cash, or indirectly through social welfare programs, and public employment at city hall in exchange for political participation.

The theory advanced in this paper predicts that candidates unable to use clientelism would be incapable of building a political network not because voters do not trust or believe in them, but due to voters’ need of solutions to their problems. Hence, candidates unable to solve problems are thus unable to build a political network and fail to mobilize voters and advance their political careers. I define these candidates as resentful if they would prefer to use clientelism, but are unable to use these strategies simply because they do not have the capacity, and as utopist candidates if, in contrast, they would not use these strategies even if they had the capacity.

In contrast, candidates on the right side of the decision tree are candidates capable of using clientelism and thus more likely to build a political network and succeed in mobilizing voters. Yet, beyond having the capacity to use clientelism, candidates must also prefer to use

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2 Author interview, September 20, 2005.
these strategies to mobilize voters. Among candidates capable of using clientelism, I distinguish between *ideal*ist candidates who prefer not to use clientelism, and *pragmat*ist candidates who turn to these strategies to mobilize voters.

You see…he [referring to another candidate] doesn’t have paid party activists. He has friends who know other friends to whom he can say: “*Che,* there will be a rally this week, why don’t we go with Romano [the name of the candidate]?” On the other hand, if I hired activists, I just take out my wallet and say: “Here, I’ll give you $100 and I want you to bring me a bus full of people.” And then what happens? With $500, I secure five or six buses…you buy alcohol and drugs (*frula*), and people turn out.  

This testimony from a local party candidate in Argentina illustrates the difference between pragmatists and idealists candidates described in Figure 1. Whereas both types of candidates are capable of distributing goods in exchange for political participation, only pragmatist candidates turn to these strategies. In this case, the candidate uses money, alcohol, and even drugs to buy voters’ participation at rallies and elections. Idealist candidates, on the other hand, seek to persuade voters to participate through their daily work in the neighborhood, and by using the party’s program. Still, they recognize that it is impossible to mobilize voters without distributing goods.

I went to the neighborhoods of really poor people, people who have worked with me in politics before, people who knew me and respected me, and nevertheless, one of the guys (*muchachos*) whom I had helped in the past asked me for $200 because he wanted to buy some construction materials (*chapas*) for his house. “It’s not that we ask you just because you want us to vote for you, it’s okay if you can’t give us the money, but you know…we are in need.” Today you can’t turn out 20 people unless you buy them.  

I collected several testimonies like this one showing how candidates’ grassroots work

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3 Author interview, September 3, 2005.
4 Author interview, September 29, 2005.
could be easily ignored if another candidate simply shows up and distributes money to voters. Thus, getting to know voters personally and helping them is not as effective as simply giving them money.

I have always worked in very difficult places without many resources. But now what has happened? In the moment of truth they [voters] have turned on us [his political group] for cash: people whom I had come to help at eleven at night, people for whom I had gone to the middle of nowhere to drive a baby girl to a hospital. I could speak of a thousand things: building houses for a girl in a settlement…and collecting cash (la guita) by selling empanadas…I have done everything you can think of. So if you ask me today, strictly from a point of view of efficacy, what do you need to mobilize people? You need to have money. Money is the only thing that you need to win elections and be effective in politics.\(^5\)

Finally, the sequence shown in Figure 2 examines the effects of candidates’ decisions on their political careers. Focusing on candidates who have the capacity to use clientelism (the right side of the decision tree), we observe that differences in candidates’ preferences have significant consequences on their political careers. While preferring not to use clientelism leads to political suicide, utilizing these strategies transforms pragmatist candidates into mercenaries. Mercenaries are party candidates who mobilize voters by using only clientelism, and are able and willing to use money, small goods, alcohol, and drugs to mobilize voters.

The systematic promotion of pragmatic candidates and the defeat of idealist, utopist, and resentful candidates teaches party activists interested in a political career that in order to succeed they need to be able and willing to use clientelistic strategies of mobilization. The logic of perverse incentives is built upon three necessary conditions: a system of rewards and punishments that is blind to the strategies candidates use to mobilize voters, the dynamics of

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\(^5\) Author interview, September 15, 2005.
intra and inter-party competition, and the absence of informal and formal punishment from party leaders and the courts.

First, in distributing career promotions only based on the number of voters candidates mobilize regardless of the strategies they employ, party leaders encourage candidates competing for the support of poor voters to use clientelism. Second, candidates are always competing to mobilize voters with candidates from their party (intra-party competition) and opposition parties (inter-party competition), and thus, candidates able and willing to use clientelism are more likely to succeed in solving voter problems than candidates either unable or unwilling to exchange benefits for political support. Third, if formal and/or informal institutions effectively punished the use of these strategies, we would not observe candidates employing them. Yet, neither party leaders nor the courts prosecute the use of clientelism, enabling pragmatic candidates to continue using these strategies.

The causal argument advanced in this paper sustains that the result of the logic of perverse incentives explains the emergence and consolidation of mercenary candidates. Signaling to party candidates that their value hinges only upon their capacity to mobilize voters empowers mercenary candidates vis-à-vis candidates that reject using clientelism, and explains why voters expect goods in exchange for their political participation. The unexpected consequence of the logic of perverse incentives is the consolidation of mercenary candidates that end up building their own armies of poor voters to trade to whomever gives them more resources for themselves and their followers. In this regard, voters are held perversely accountable to mercenary candidates that are able to negotiate with politicians for rewards and benefits as long as they are capable of mobilizing a large network of party voters.
Case Selection

Using the comparative research method, I study political, partisan, and social networks in two Argentine provinces: Buenos Aires and Córdoba. Argentina’s characteristic features of institutional weakness and political instability (Levitsky and Murillo 2005) are shared by many new democracies in Latin America and beyond. I take advantage of the benefits that country studies provide for building and testing theories in comparative politics (George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2007) while enhancing unit homogeneity (Levitsky and Murillo 2005:15). The case selection is based on the differences in population, housing quality, income, partisanship, and incumbency that studies of vote buying and clientelism (Calvo and Murillo 2004; Brusco et al. 2004; Stokes 2005; Nichter 2008; Weitz-Shapiro 2012) have used to explain variation in strategies of mobilization.

In the last two decades, Argentina’s historically dominant parties, the Radical Civic Union and the Justicialist (Peronist) Party, achieved different levels of electoral support in Córdoba and Buenos Aires. Both are political parties with stable roots in society and solid party organizations which maintain territorial control over municipalities by combining a recollection of shared watershed historical events with clientelistic inducements (Auyero 2000; Levitsky 2003; Calvo and Murillo 2004; Torre 2005; Szwarcberg 2009), creating “communities of fate” (Wellhofer 1979: 171) and “electorates of belonging” (Panebianco 1988: 267). The Radical party governed the province of Córdoba, together with the city of Córdoba and the majority of municipalities in the province since the return of democracy in 1983 until 1999, when the Peronists won the governorship, which they retain today. In contrast, Buenos Aires is a Peronist stronghold. The predominance of the Peronist party among the voters of the Conurbano has been

Table 1 provides socio-demographic and electoral information about the selected cases. The seven cases include municipalities with competitive multiparty elections, competitive two-party elections featuring the Radical Party and the Peronist Party, and elections that are essentially noncompetitive in municipalities dominated by the Peronist Party. Focusing my analysis on seven cases allowed me to carry out the extensive fieldwork necessary for gathering data on individual candidates’ capacities and preferences to use clientelism and on the effects of their decisions on their political careers and the political careers of other candidates in their parties and in opposition parties. It also enabled me to gather information about political, partisan, and social networks in each selected municipality.

Table 1

Although the results presented in this paper derive from seven municipalities, I interviewed local candidates and voters, and attended rallies and political meetings in other municipalities in Buenos Aires, including Malvinas Argentinas, Hurlingham, Avellaneda, Vicente Lopez, Quilmes, Merlo, La Matanza, Morón, Ayacucho, Bahía Blanca, and Pergamino. I also conducted fieldwork across municipalities in the province of Córdoba, including Mina Clavero, Yacanto, Villa Carlos Paz, and San Francisco. Additionally, in 2009, I conducted fieldwork in several municipalities in the province of San Luis. The information I collected in these municipalities supports the findings presented in this paper, and thus I am confident that the selected cases are representative of a larger universe of cases.

Fieldwork and Network Data

I gathered network data between June 2005 and December 2006, before, during, and
after the national election of October 2005. In this election, voters chose 128 national deputies, 24 national senators, 400 provincial legislators, 55 mayors, and 3,738 councilors. Though a midterm election, this election was in many ways more important than the presidential election that took place two years later in 2007, given that President Néstor Kirchner needed an electoral victory in the province of Buenos Aires to secure his place as the leader of the Peronist Party.  

In 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011, I did follow-up field trips to the municipalities of José C. Paz and San Miguel Buenos in Aires, and conducted additional fieldwork in the municipalities of Villa Mercedes, Potrero de los Funes, and San Luis Capital in the province of San Luis in 2009. Data about the political, partisan, and social networks in each selected municipality was gathered through direct participation at rallies, party, civil society (*sociedad de fomento*), health association (*salita*), and school meetings. I also observed legislative sessions at the city councils of José C. Paz, San Miguel, Bahía Blanca, Villa María, Río Cuarto, and Córdoba Capital. I participated in and observed elections in Buenos Aires in October 2005 and in Córdoba in 2006.

I lived in Córdoba for six months during 2006 when the UCR was running a campaign to elect its provincial and local authorities. I was able to attend rallies and party meetings before, during, and after the party primary. I also participated in Peronist rallies celebrating a variety of occasions, such as the inauguration of the city’s remodeled airport, an event attended by President Néstor Kirchner. In addition to party rallies, I attended meetings at city hall.

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*Two years earlier, in 2003, Kirchner won the presidential election with only twenty-two percent of the votes after former reelected President Carlos Menem decided to abandon the runoff election. It was the crucial support of Eduardo Duhalde, former president and governor of Buenos Aires, which enabled Kirchner to become president. Thus, when, two years later, Kirchner decided to challenge Duhalde’s control of the Peronist party in the stronghold province of Buenos Aires by placing his wife Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, at the top of the Front for the Victory’s (FPV) senatorial ballot for Buenos Aires, the province became the center of the battlefield. Duhalde decided to imitate and challenged the Kirchners response by placing his wife, Chiche Duhalde, at the top of the PJ ballot.*
discussions in local legislatures, and other political meetings in the municipalities of Córdoba Capital, Villa María, Colonia Caroya, and Río Cuarto. In each municipality, I conducted in-depth interviews with key informants, local elected politicians, non-elected politicians, voters, and local journalists. This information, together with the experience of living in these districts, enabled me to observe and learn about voter demands and their relationship with local politicians. In addition, I studied the organization of political parties and associations in different neighborhoods of these municipalities.

To test the theory advanced in this paper, I combine information from two datasets. The first dataset comprises the 137 candidates who held elected positions as council members in 2005 in the seven selected municipalities. I conducted 101 in-depth interviews and 36 semi-structured interviews with elected candidates in these municipalities to gather information about their political careers and the strategies of mobilization they employed to mobilize voters. In cases in which I could not interview the candidates directly, I relied upon information provided by key informants who were mostly advisors who had known and worked for the candidates for several years, even decades, and were thus able to provide knowledgeable and reliable information about candidates’ careers, and capacities and preferences to use clientelism. The length of the interviews ranged from two to several hours, during which candidates reflected about their decisions whether or not to use clientelism to mobilize voters.

To provide external validity for my participant and non-participant observations, and in-depth and semi-structured interviews, I consulted the archives of various local independent daily newspapers of various municipalities and regions: *La Hoja* for information on the municipalities of San Miguel and José C. Paz, *La Nueva Provincia* for Bahía Blanca, *El Puntal* for Río Cuarto, and *La Voz del Interior* and *La Mañana de Córdoba* for provincial information.
on Córdoba. I carried out additional archival research in the national newspapers *Clarín, La Nación*, and *Página/12*, and reviewed more than fifty publications from investigative journalists. Table 2 describes the sources of information and the number and types of interviews I conducted in each municipality.

**Table 2**

The second dataset traces the political careers and strategies of mobilization of every candidate elected in one municipality, José C. Paz, since its creation in 1995 until 2011. By studying a single case, I can use thorough and contextualized ethnographic data to represent the whole universe of cases. In spite of the questionable use of a single case to test a general theory (King 1994), José C. Paz is a district that reproduces the relevant causal features of the general domain of urban municipalities in the developing world, and thus fulfills the requirement of representativeness while providing variation along the dimensions of theoretical interest (Gerring 2007: 88). This research strategy echoes a broader trend of empirical work that relies on micro-level data to develop new theories and enhance our empirical knowledge (Wantchekon 2003, Wilkinson 2004; Posner 2004; Kalyvas 2006).

By combining a dataset about the decisions of 137 candidates in seven municipalities in one election in 2005, with the political decisions of 90 candidates over 16 years in one municipality, I provide consistent and suggestive findings about the logic of perverse incentives and its unintended consequences. Archival data, investigative journalistic accounts, and secondary sources provide plausibility to the theory of perverse incentives advanced in this paper. Quantitative analysis provides systematic evidence for my claim that party leaders distribute rewards and punishment to candidates only based on the number of voters they mobilize.
Empirical Findings

Assuming that candidates’ capacities to use clientelistic strategies of mobilization vary based on their positions in partisan networks, I distinguish candidates who are capable of using clientelism from those who are incapable of employing such strategies. Capable candidates must meet two necessary conditions. First, candidates have to be affiliated with parties that held one or more executive office in 2005. Second, candidates have to be affiliated with parties that have access to party networks capable of distributing goods to voters and monitoring their political behavior. In Argentina, only the Peronist and Radical parties have had systematic access to public office and large networks of party activists capable of effectively trading favors for votes.

After distinguishing candidates capable of using clientelism from those incapable, I focus on candidates’ preferences to use clientelism. My criterion for measuring a candidate’s preference to use clientelism is whether he, she, or a designated party activist takes attendance of voter participation at rallies. Candidates who prefer to use clientelism will monitor voters’ participation at rallies so as to avoid the risk that voters will follow the political advice of opposition candidates and “take the goods with one hand and vote with the other” (Szwarcberg 2004, 4). To monitor voter participation at rallies, candidates simply screen voters by taking attendance.

Studying the political careers of the 137 elected candidates in the seven selected municipalities, I find that more than 80 percent meet the two necessary conditions to use clientelism to mobilize voters. Line 1 of Figure 2 shows that only 26 candidates out of 137 were unable to use clientelism to mobilize voters. Among the 111 candidates capable of turning to clientelistic strategies, the division between those who prefer to use clientelism (pragmatist candidates) and candidates who reject the use of these strategies (idealistic candidates) is almost
even, as line 2 on Figure 3 illustrates.

I find that the number of reelected candidates is low, and that pragmatist candidates are more than twice as likely as idealist candidates to get reelected (line 3 on Figure 3). These findings illustrate the two lessons candidates learned when mobilizing poor voters: first, regardless of the strategy they employ, the chances of getting reelected are very low; and second, clientelistic strategies are more effective than non-clientelistic strategies. The fact that only 21.15 percent of candidates got reelected provides further support for a well-known and documented fact of Argentine politics: “While most Argentine legislators are ‘amateur legislators,’ they are nonetheless ‘professional politicians’” (Jones et al. 2002: 358). Studying the Argentine congress, Mark Jones and his collaborators (2002) find that the design of Argentine political institutions encourages legislators to focus on their careers as politicians rather than on the production of public policy or on checking executive powers. Given that reelection decisions for legislators are in the hands of party leaders, and not voters, legislators have a greater incentive to please the party than to please voters in order to advance their political careers.

Focusing on the municipal level, I observed the same dynamic that Jones et al. (2002) found at the provincial level. I also found a similar rate of reelection at the local level to that which the authors found when studying reelection rates in the Chamber of Deputies. Argentina employs a system of proportional representation with closed-listed ballots, making mayors’ decisions about a candidate’s position on the ballot key in determining his or her likelihood of getting elected and reelected. Since candidates are rewarded—in this case with reelection—based only on the number of voters they mobilize, we expect to observe that all reelected

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7 “Since 1983 the average reelection rate for the Chamber of Deputies has been twenty percent, ranging from a high of twenty-nine percent in 1985 to a low of fifteen percent in 1995” (Jones et al. 2002: 658).
candidates employ clientelistic strategies.

**Figure 3**

Candidates recognize the existence of perverse incentives that motivate them to do whatever they can to mobilize voters. When the President of San Miguel’s legislature was asked how they mobilize voters, he responded with a smile: “We do whatever we can to mobilize voters. And I mean whatever.” Fabián Domínguez, a local journalist, who has covered every political event in the district, shared with me how common these responses were:

> When candidates begin talking [about how they mobilized voters] they put you in a very awkward situation; and if it is off the record is even worse, and if they trust you, you just want them to stop talking because it is scandalous. It is at that moment when you ask them to stop talking because it stops being politics and becomes sheer delinquency.  

Candidates can be involved in illegal activities such as gambling, prostitution, and drug trafficking, and employ the resources obtained through these activities in political mobilizations. In this regard, perverse incentives motivate candidates to accept resources and favors from individuals involved in illegal activities in order to increase their possibilities to get elected and reelected. Yet candidates continuously point out that there are unwritten rules (*códigos*) about which strategies are considered acceptable. Thus, for instance, while it is acceptable to offer voters food and merchandise in exchange for turning out at party rallies, marihuana and alcohol are considered unacceptable gifts.

> I am against getting the vote of someone who is drunk and high all day. I am against turning out those voters because they enable any wretch [*infeliz*] to win.

This was the response the President of José C. Paz’s legislature gave me when I was talking with several candidates about the strategies of mobilization they used to turn out voters to

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8 Author interview, September 9, 2005.
9 Author interview, September 6, 2005.
rallies. Interestingly, whereas the majority of candidates that use clientelism recognize and talked about how they distribute social programs, food, and small goods to mobilize voters, they also quickly differentiate themselves from those who use alcohol and drugs and, in some cases, cash to buy turnout. *Mercenaries* are candidates without códigos that use any strategy regardless of their consequences to mobilize voters. Party leaders are well aware of the consequences of the logic of perverse incentives that encourages candidates to mobilize any voter who will turn out in exchange for benefits.

At a rally you can easily distinguish the voters who are there because they agree with the politician who’s going to be up on stage from the other voters who couldn’t tell you why they go if you asked them. The politician notices immediately the types of people, but if he wants votes, he doesn’t care. That is the big problem.  

This testimony from an elected councilman points to the complicity of party leaders as well as their reasons to continue relying on perverse incentives. There are three good reasons to explain why party leaders do not mind the mobilization of voters who have no interest in politics. First, crowded rallies serve to send a signal to the opposition about the strength of the incumbent and make their organization more difficult. Second, the same display of muscle pushes those who might be thinking about leaving the incumbent clientelistic party to start a new party to reconsider their exit strategy. Third, the fact that party candidates can pay voters for turnout and even use resources from the municipality without punishment shows not only the connections between political and partisan networks—the use of public resources for political purposes—, but also, and most importantly, the existence of judicial impunity as no one has ever been charged for using public money to finance political mobilizations.

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10 Author interview, November 7, 2005.
Case Study

“José C. Paz is a giant slum.” Such is how a Peronist councilor from the municipality described the district.\textsuperscript{11} In 2001, the Argentine National Institute of Statistics and Censuses found that almost half of the population of the municipality was unemployed, and 63.2 percent of the residents did not have health insurance. With regard to education, more than half of the residents of José C. Paz had not finished high school and less than ten percent attended college.

The poverty of the district is visible to anyone visiting the municipality. The absence of public spaces and shops is striking. As soon as one moves away from the main square and meeting point in the municipality (which is the food court of a mega-supermarket similar to a US Wal-Mart), one finds unpaved streets and extremely poor housing conditions. There are between 6,000 and 7,000 unpaved streets in José C. Paz; and as Marcelo, a paid party activist, told me, “it is in the neighborhoods with unpaved streets where politicians come to look for votes.”\textsuperscript{12}

My fieldwork observations, statistical data from censuses, surveys, and testimonies from social workers, and politicians from different parties, document the extent of structural poverty. José Mondovi, President of the City Council, provided this description of the social situation of the municipality:

There isn’t anyone here who isn’t aware that people in this district have to walk in mud up to their knees. And I’ll tell you, it’s inhuman to live like this. There are people who have to walk fifteen blocks without sidewalks or asphalt to take the bus. We are aware of all of this.\textsuperscript{13}

José C. Paz gained national visibility when President Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007) chose it as the location from where to launch his political campaign for the national elections of October 2005. It was the first time that a president decided to have a rally in José C. Paz,

\textsuperscript{11} Author interview, October 5, 2005.
\textsuperscript{12} Author interview, September 21, 2005. In Spanish: “en los barrios de tierra es de donde se saca el voto.”
\textsuperscript{13} Author interview, September 9, 2005.
attracting national media during a political campaign. The stakes were too high to risk failing to display to the president the mayor’s capacity to deliver votes. José C. Paz’s mayor, Mario Ishii, knew from political experience and survey data that the majority of voters in his municipality supported the candidacy of the president’s wife and were thus likely to attend the event. Yet, he could not afford to run any risk.

The rally was an absolute success because it enabled Ishii to display the impressive size of his political network, and also enabled President Néstor Kirchner to signal his commitment to show up and distribute benefits (he delivered housing subsidies) to the poorest voters in the province. During the political campaign, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner went to the municipality three times, thereby providing local politicians with several opportunities to mobilize voters. The level of participation and organization of every rally was impressive. Local party candidates had an assigned space, with their proximity to the stage based on their capacity to mobilize voters. To make the number of mobilized voters visible, activists and candidates distributed t-shirts and hats to voters that displayed the names of and slogans associated with the candidate. Voters were also asked to remain close together near banners that repeated the slogan imprinted on hats and t-shirts in order to give a visual measure of the size of each candidate network.

The argument advanced in this paper claims that candidates who have the capacity to use clientelism but prefer not to use such strategies commit political suicide. As such, the finding that candidates who succeeded in getting reelected used clientelism would support my argument. Still, to substantiate my theory, I must find that candidates who do not use clientelism are less likely to get reelected than candidates who use clientelism. Based on the political careers of candidates in José C. Paz, I find that only candidates who use clientelism get reelected.
From the creation of the municipality until 2011, voters in José C. Paz elected 90 candidates. Out of the 90 candidates, only 19 candidates who used clientelism succeeded in getting reelected, whereas candidates that did not use clientelism failed to get reelected, as predicted. Figure 4 describes the composition of the city council since the creation of the district until 2011. The distinction between the Peronist Party and the opposition presented in Figure 4 denotes the strength of the Peronist party in José C. Paz. Only in 1999, when the Peronists lost the presidency, was the opposition able to elect five out of twelve councilors. Still, on the whole, the pattern of evidence is consistent with the notion that the province of Buenos Aires is a stronghold of the Peronist Party.

**Figure 4**

Explaining the consolidation of the Peronist machine in José C. Paz and the consolidation of clientelism, I argue that Peronist candidates have been very effective in convincing opposition candidates about the value of having access to resources through their connections at city hall. Once elected, opposition candidates are offered opportunities that remain inaccessible to them if they do not begin to participate along the dominant party line and support incumbents. As one councilor said, the convincing discourse incumbent candidates employ is “always the same […] that without money you can’t mobilize anyone, you can’t support your people, etc.”

While opposition candidates can always choose not to support the incumbent, some of them simply decide to compromise their ideals in order to secure their own political promotion. Thus, the logic of perverse incentives explains not only the pressure that candidates face to use clientelism, but also why candidates are likely to alter their original rejection of clientelism once elected. Learning that their probabilities to get reelected, or even to get rewarded after their tenure with a position in city hall, hinge upon their ability to continue mobilizing voters,

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14 Author interview, September 20, 2005.
candidates are endlessly pressured to employ clientelistic strategies of mobilization.

This pressure is how the Peronist party has traditionally co-opted opposition candidates. For instance, the party bought the support of two candidates of the Party for Bonaerense Unity (PUB) after they were elected in 1999. The leading figure and candidate of the opposition party in the district, Sergio Formenti, knew that he was not going to win the election as a non-Peronist candidate, but decided to run out of conviction. Unlike the majority of mayoral candidates in the province, Formenti chose not to also run for the position of city councilor. Most candidates run for the positions of mayor and councilman simultaneously, enabling them to become councilors in case they obtain enough votes to elect local representatives, but do not obtain enough votes to become mayors. Formenti saw this type of electoral strategy as cheating and thus decided only to run for mayor and chose his closest collaborators to be candidates for city council.

The PUB had an extraordinary election leading to the selection of two candidates; however, both candidates decided to abandon the party shortly after getting elected, leaving Formenti without representation—and without power—at city council. To buy the support of these candidates, Peronist incumbents offered them resources to distribute to their voters that would allow them to build and sustain their political networks and move forward in local politics. Joining the Peronist party almost immediately after being elected, PUB councilmen left Formenti, in his words “in the bottom of the sea.”

Since I always had business, I went to see some people who sold [industrial] machinery for businesses. I asked them for a freezer and an oven on credit. And I asked for a space to rent out for the future, to start up. And I got myself a pizzeria and delivered pizzas on a small motorcycle, while these guys [the incumbent candidates] gave themselves the good life. It’s painful. I was a mayoral candidate in 1999, a rookie, but a candidate. After that, going out for a ride to deliver pizzas to houses, people look at you and you know

15 Author interview, September 20, 2005.
that they’re laughing at you. After the campaign, you’re left
broke. You put in the time, the cash that you don’t have.
You don’t dedicate yourself to your things. If things go
badly, you’re broke. So in ’99 I stayed at the bottom of the
sea.16

The fact that candidates who decide to work with the incumbent party end up being
rewarded while those who decide to follow their idealism ended up delivering pizzas, encourages
career-seeking candidates to become pragmatic and work with those who are able to secure them
the stream of resources that will enable them to continue delivering votes. The logic of perverse
incentives explains not only the pressure that candidates face to use clientelism, but also why
candidates are likely to continue using clientelism once elected. Learning that their probabilities
to get reelected, or even to get rewarded after their tenure with a position in city hall, hinge upon
their ability to continue mobilizing voters, candidates are endlessly pressured to employ
clientelistic strategies of mobilization.

During the electoral campaign of October, I observed how party leaders chose to
overlook the despicable methods used by a mercenary candidate who had the ability to mobilize
a sizeable number of voters. Besides threatening, monitoring, and punishing poor voters, this
candidate built a reputation for distributing welfare programs to young females in exchange for
sexual favors, regardless of whether or not they met the prescribed requirements.17 Party
leaders’ decisions to build alliances with mercenary candidates were publicly acknowledged and
discussed by the Minister of the Interior and de facto speaker for the president, Aníbal
Fernández.

Journalist: Is it not strange that the President campaigns to

16 Author interview, September 20, 2005.
17 In commenting about this candidate’s actions, a party activist told me: “To be in politics you have to be willing to
turn a blind eye, but yes, in this case [referring to the actions described above], I don’t know, I guess that you also
have to have the stomach” (tenes que tener estómago). Author interview with a party activist in San Miguel 18
October, 2005.
build a new politics and then has as one of his allies a representative of the old politics [candidates who employ clientelistic strategies of mobilization] to be the mayor of José C. Paz, Mario Ishii?

A. Fernández: Look, one does politics with those who do politics, not with those whom one would like to do politics with.  

Fernández’s reasoning reflects the consequences of the mechanisms described in this paper. The Minister noted that although he would like to build alliances with candidates who do not employ clientelistic strategies, their absence leads him to negotiate with those who do. Still, the Minister does not recognize that this outcome is the result of a systematic logic of incentives that rewards those who “do politics” and punishes those whom he “would like to do politics with.”

What I see as perverse is that today Buenos Aires is run by a checkbook. So, when you have that pressure it’s really difficult. It’s like the woman who gets hit by her husband, with three kids, and so she goes to the social worker. I’ve seen it. She goes and says, “He beat the shit out of me.” And [the social worker] says, “and why didn’t you leave?” “Because I don’t have a place to go…Where do you want me to go?”

Rewarding mercenary candidates reinforces a circle of poverty, power, and domination in which voters’ participation in political rallies and elections empowers candidates who exploit voters’ needs. Living, as they do, in a context of material deprivation, voters who can only get their needs met through mercenary candidates have no option but to support those who have the resources to solve their problems.

Paradoxically, democracy provides voters with a Pyrrhic victory: by supporting mercenary candidates, voters contribute to their election as local representatives. This cycle

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18 This dialogue took place in an informal meeting with reporters during a political campaign. September, 2005. *Radio Mitre.*
19 Author interview, September 29, 2005.
contributes to the stability and consolidation of the logic of perverse incentives that rewards, with election and reelection, representatives who employ clientelistic strategies to mobilize voters.

**The Logic of Perverse Incentives Beyond Argentina**

To test the logic of perverse incentives beyond the Argentine case, I use original data from Lima, Peru. In contrast to Argentina, Peru is a democracy without organized parties or political machines (Levitsky and Cameron 2003, Tanaka 2005, Levitsky 2013). Since the collapse of the party system in the early 1990s, scholars have defined Peru as a “democracy without parties” (Levitsky and Cameron 2003, Tanaka 2005) and a “party non-system” (Sánchez 2009). I carried out fieldwork in Lima over six months before, during, and after the presidential election of 2006. I conducted over forty in-depth interviews with party candidates, operatives, mayors, councilmen, and political candidates. I also interviewed several key informants, and attended over a dozen rallies in poor neighborhoods in Villa María del Triunfo, Villa El Salvador, San Juan de Lurigancho, El Agustino, and Comas.\(^\text{20}\)

The case of Peru demonstrates that even in the absence of political parties, candidates opt for employing clientelistic strategies provided that political leaders reward them only based on the number of voters they mobilized. Hence, the logic of perverse incentives developed in this paper can be also used to understand political mobilization and the use of clientelism and its unintended consequences in countries without political machines. Moreover, the case of Peru shows that given the absence of partisan networks, candidates use clientelistic strategies precisely to signal to party leaders their capacity to mobilize voters. As Paula Muñoz (2013: 5)

\(\text{\textsuperscript{20}}\) I selected these districts based on differences in population, housing quality, and partisanship that quantitative studies of vote buying and clientelism have used to explain variation in strategies of mobilization.
claims, “politicians may engage in clientelism not once they have a viable political machine but because they lack one.”

To study the strategies that candidates use to mobilize poor voters in Peru, I conducted fieldwork at party rallies that took place at soup kitchens (comedores escolares) during the presidential election of 2006. To give an idea of how important these organizations are in Peru, Julio Cotler and Romeo Grompone (2000) estimate that 42 percent of Peruvian households receive food (ayuda alimentaria) through the National Program of Food Assistance (PRONAA); and another food assistance program for pregnant and lactating mothers and children up to six years old, Glass of Milk (Vaso de Leche), is also available to poor families mostly through the soup kitchens.\(^{21}\) Female activists, who work daily at soup kitchens and are in charge of distributing the PRONAA and the Glass of Milk, constitute one of the largest social and political networks in the country. As a result, all party candidates seek their endorsement and political support during elections.

While conducting fieldwork in Lima, I participated in over a dozen party rallies that took place at soup kitchens in poor neighborhoods. At the rallies, I observe the high level of organization that these female activists have in mobilizing and monitoring the participation of their beneficiaries in political events.\(^{22}\) Party candidates negotiate directly with the leaders of these female organizations their support in exchange for benefits for themselves and/or their community. In the case of Peru, I observe how social and political networks of female activists and beneficiaries effectively replace the absence of partisan networks. Being rewarded based on their capacity to mobilize voters; the social leaders of these groups are also perversely

\(^{21}\) See Suárez Bustamante (2003), Alcázar, López, and Wachtenheim (2003), and Alcázar (2007) for more information about the Glass of Milk program.

\(^{22}\) See Szwarcberg (2014) for a richer description of mobilization strategies in these events.
encouraged to engage in clientelistic strategies. And, effectively, we do observe them engaging in distributing goods and monitoring the participation of beneficiaries in political events. Indeed, Cotler and Grompone (2000) show how funding from the PRONAA is strategically distributed to soup kitchens based on their capacity to mobilize voters.

In Mexico, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) succeeded in building arguably the most effective political machine in Latin America. By effectively integrating social, political, and partisan networks within the party, the PRI managed to remain in power for 71 years. Using the recent and groundbreaking works of Beatriz Magaloni (2006), Kenneth Greene (2007), and Alberto Simpser (2013), I found further support for the logic of perverse incentives in explaining the persistence and demise of political clientelism in Mexico.

In explaining how the PRI win the support of poor voters, Beatriz Magaloni (2006) describes a mechanism of rewards and punishments that mirrors the logic of perverse incentives presented in this paper: “autocratic regimes reward with office those politicians who prove most capable in mobilizing citizens to the party’s rallies, getting voters to the polls, and preventing social turmoil in their districts” (p. 8). An alternative explanation provided by Kenneth Greene (2007: 5) focuses on “the incumbent’s resource advantages and its ability to raise the costs of participation in the opposition.” Greene’s claim is central to my argument because it points out that hegemony requires success in avoiding the construction of viable political alternatives. Translating his ideas to network analysis implies the possibility of building non-clientelistic political, partisan, and social networks that are effective in solving problems and mobilizing poor voters.

Explaining why parties manipulate elections, Alberto Simpser (2013) shows that “electoral manipulation emerges as an instrument of political control” (p.8). Distinguishing
between the direct effects of electoral manipulation: “loosely speaking, to its contribution to
winning the election at hand” and its indirect effects, “which refer to the influence of electoral
manipulation on the subsequent choices and behavior of a wide range of political actors” (p.4),
Simpser provides further support for the use of clientelistic strategies of mobilization. By
mobilizing large networks of voters to participate at rallies, parties and candidates succeed in
showing their capacity of mobilization contributing to weaken the organization of the opposition
(Greene 2007). The logic of perverse incentives is consistent with the empirical findings of these
works such as candidates’ need for crowded rallies and inflated turnout numbers.

Conclusions

Laura lives today with a disabled son as a result of attending a rally to continue receiving
a welfare benefit. She continues participating in rallies and elections and voting for candidates
that Mario, now an elected local representative, supports. Laura still struggles everyday to make
ends meet despite receiving a social welfare program, and a scholarship from the government for
his disabled son. Mario still uses clientelism to mobilize voters; and he has even succeeded in
building and sustaining a political network of poor voters who, like Laura, enabled him to get
elected as a local representative. Their relationship, from its origins until the present, illustrates
the findings presented in this paper.

It is the logic of perverse incentives, which rewards party candidates only based on the
number of voters they mobilize, that stopped Mario from being compassionate towards Laura. If
Mario had not forced Laura to participate at the rally, voters could have assumed that they could
receive—or seek to receive—benefits without having to participate in rallies and elections.
Mario could not run the risk of being understanding of Laura’s situation, and thus he strongly
encouraged her to attend the rally. The tragic outcome is hence the result of the logic of perverse incentives that led Mario to force Laura to attend a party rally, and its unintended consequences, the fact that Laura’s son, a healthy baby boy, had suffered an irreparable injury due to negligence that could have been avoided if Laura had not been forced to attend a rally.

This paper finds that career-seeking candidates competing to mobilize poor voters are encouraged to use clientelism to succeed. In rewarding candidates only based on the number of voters they mobilize, party leaders motivate candidates to turn to clientelism. The combination of the electoral success of candidates that employ clientelism, the dynamics of political competition, and the absence of effective punishment, encourages candidates to use clientelistic strategies to mobilize poor voters.

First, candidates learn through experience that those who employ these strategies succeed in their political careers. Hence, while candidates can get elected for reasons that are unrelated to the strategies they employ, the fact that candidates who use clientelism get elected teaches them that the use of clientelism does not hurt their possibilities to achieve their goal.

Second, the dynamics of political competition induce candidates to turn to these strategies. Even when a candidate prefers not to use clientelism to turn out voters, another candidate from his or her party (intra-party competition) or from the opposition (inter-party competition) will employ these strategies and receive the reward of a political promotion for his or her success in turning out voters.

Third, candidates also learn that neither the political parties, nor the justice system, punish the use of clientelistic strategies to mobilize voters. In this regard, the absence of effective punishment teaches candidates that there are no consequences for choosing to use clientelism.
Studying the design of social programs in Mexico, Diaz-Cayeros and his collaborators (2007) demonstrate that around 8,000 children would have been saved if the government had not used clientelism in designing and targeting antipoverty programs. The authors show that clientelism led to the death of innocent children who could have been easily saved if politicians had not use these programs for electoral purposes. “The Zapatistas rose in arms with a variety of demands, among them, they called attention to the state’s utter failure to provide minimum social infrastructure that would prevent deaths from curable diseases such as diarrhea. The clever articulation of the Zapatistas’ demands by Subcomandante Marcos made it transparent that poverty was linked to political corruption, government abuse, and lack of democratic accountability” (p.223).

Clientelism matters because in buying the political participation of poor voters, the quality of political democracy suffers. And that suffering is visible and substantive in the life of innocent children who are dying from curable diseases, or who are becoming handicapped for life. Becoming aware that clientelism kills is important to advance changes that succeed in disassembling the logic of perverse incentives that encourage political candidates to use these strategies. Laura’s son did not deserve to have his future handicapped due to politics, and when that is the result of a logic of incentives that encourages candidates to mobilize as many voters as possible without taking into account the consequences, even the winners lose.
References


Landé, Karl H. 1977. "The Dyadic Basic of Clientelism." In Friends, Followers, and Factions,


Table 1: Selected Municipalities in Argentina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number of low-income households</th>
<th>Local political party system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Córdoba</td>
<td>Córdoba Capital</td>
<td>1,329,604</td>
<td>369,793</td>
<td>Multiparty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Río Cuarto</td>
<td>246,393</td>
<td>42,044</td>
<td>Bipartisan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Villa María</td>
<td>72,162</td>
<td>1,114</td>
<td>Bipartisan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colonia Caroya</td>
<td>13,806</td>
<td>4,018</td>
<td>Bipartisan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Córdoba</td>
<td></td>
<td>443 municipalities</td>
<td>3,308,876</td>
<td>97,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buenos Aires</td>
<td>José C. Paz</td>
<td>265,981</td>
<td>56,004</td>
<td>Single party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>San Miguel</td>
<td>276,190</td>
<td>65,689</td>
<td>Single party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bahía Blanca</td>
<td>301,572</td>
<td>88,260</td>
<td>Bipartisan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 24 municipalities of Buenos Aires (Conurbano)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9,916,715</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total municipalities of Buenos Aires without Conurbano</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,708,369</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Buenos Aires</td>
<td>136 municipalities</td>
<td>13,827,203</td>
<td>508,671</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Argentina</td>
<td>2,291 municipalities</td>
<td>36,260,130</td>
<td>1,442,934</td>
<td>Bipartisan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Population numbers are based on the 2010 national census (National Institute of Statistics and Census of Argentina, INDEC). The number of council members is legally stipulated and varies based on the population of each municipality. By combining educational, occupational, and construction characteristics, the INDEC measures the income levels of Argentine homes. A household that fulfills three of the following five characteristics is classified as low income: (1) a density per room that exceeds three inhabitants, (2) precarious physical conditions, (3) absence of indoor plumbing, (4) children aged between six and twelve years who do not attend school, and (5) more than four members per one employed member and a head of the household who has not finished primary school.
Local political party system describes the local political administrations that the municipality had experienced between 1995 and 2005: Mutiparty refers to the municipality having been governed by three political parties: UCR, PJ, and New Party (only case of Córdoba). Bipartisan refers to having had Peronist (PJ) and Radical (UCR) administrations. Single party refers to having been governed only by one (Peronist) party.
Figure 1: The Political Careers of Party Candidates

- Party Activist
- Paid Party Activist (Broker)
- Party Candidate
- Elected Candidate
- Reelected Candidate

Y-axis: Size Of Social Network
X-axis: Time
Table 2: Data Gathered by the Author between June 2005 and December 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Number of council members</th>
<th>Number of in-depth interviews</th>
<th>Number of semi-structured interviews</th>
<th>Number of key informants interviewed</th>
<th>Archival research (municipal level)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Córdoba Capital</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>La Voz del Interior, La Mañana de Córdoba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rio Cuarto</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>El Puntal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villa María</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>La Voz del Interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonia Caroya</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>La Voz del Interior, La Mañana de Córdoba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José C. Paz</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>La Hoja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Miguel</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>La Hoja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahía Blanca</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>La Nueva Provincia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 2: The process of candidates’ decision-making

(1) Is the candidate capable of accessing and distributing clientelistic goods?

No

(2) Does the candidate prefer to employ clientelism to mobilize voters?

Yes

Does the candidate prefer to employ clientelism to mobilize voters?

No

Yes

Utopist

Resentful

(3) Political Career Political Career

End Continue End Continue

Political Career

End Continue

Political Career

End Continue

Suicidal

Mercenary
Figure 3: Results of Candidates’ Decision-Making

(1) Is the candidate capable of accessing and distributing clientelistic goods?
   N=137
   No
   N=26
   (18.98%)
   Yes
   N=111
   (81.02%)

(2) Does the candidate prefer to employ clientelism to mobilize voters?
   No
   N=22
   Utopist
   Political Career
   End
   N=21
   (15.32%)
   Continue
   N=1
   (0.72%)

   Yes
   N=4
   Resentful
   Political Career
   End
   N=3
   (2.18%)
   Continue
   N=1
   (0.72%)

   Does the candidate prefer to employ clientelism to mobilize voters?
   No
   N=52
   Idealist
   Political Career
   End
   N=9
   (6.56%)
   Continue
   N=39
   (28.46%)

   Yes
   N=59
   Pragmatist
   Political Career
   Continue
   N=20
   (14.56%)
**Figure 4: Party Affiliation of Elected Councilmen in José C. Paz**

![Bar chart showing the number of councilors elected from 1995 to 2011, with years on the x-axis and number of councilors on the y-axis, differentiated by Peronist and Opposition candidates.]

**Note:** Adding the Peronist and Opposition Candidates in each year yields the number of councilmen elected in that year’s election. The total number of councilmen was twelve until 1999, when the city council expanded to twenty members. Councilors elected in the province of Buenos Aires have a term of four years with no limits on reelection. One-half of the city council is renewed every two years. Variation in the number of councilmen elected each year is a result of José C. Paz’s formation: In 1995, the city council had a total of twelve seats, two of which were not elected in 2005, but inherited from the old municipality of General Sarmiento, of which José C. Paz was a part. In 1997, six new candidates were elected. In 1999, the expansion of the number of councilmen to 20 required the election of fourteen councilors that year. Since 2001, ten seats have been elected every two years.