Clientelism and Weberian Values of Bureaucracy:

Understanding the Conceptual Gap

Sevgi Günay, M.Sc.

Leiden University
Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Public Administration
Pieter de la Court Building
Wassenaarseweg 52
PO Box 9555, 2300 RB
Leiden, The Netherlands

Email: sgunay@fsw.leidenuniv.nl
Tel: +31 (0)71 527 5694

Abstract:

This paper aims to carry the general inquiry on the study and the implementation of public values to a new frontier by bringing back the concept of clientelism into the field of public administration.

In the context of public administration, clientelism is the practice whereby politicians and/or bureaucrats, instead of serving the wider collective interest, give in to particularistic demands and distribute divisible benefits (namely public resources, i.e. public contracts, administrative jobs, state aids, local infrastructure investments, etc.) to individuals or groups of individuals in exchange for political support or power (Roniger 1994; Kitschelt 2000; Piattoni 2001, Günay 2007).

By using Weber's description of the ideal type bureaucracy as an analytical benchmark, this paper presents a conceptual (comparative) inquiry into the values (in other words, the rules of the game) that govern public life in two different types of administration: the Weberian ideal-type and the clientelistic type.

Accordingly, the main questions it will try to answer are "How different is a clientelistic bureaucracy than the ideal type bureaucracy? What are the differences between the values and principles governing the two types of bureaucratic administration? Where do clientelistic practices stand in relation to ideal public values?"

The analysis will show that even though an administrative system that is permeated by patron-client networks may physically resemble a Weberian type by the way its body is organized along the lines of vertical hierarchy, division of labor, and specialization, the nature of patron-client relationship distorts and replaces the norms of the Weberian ideal-type bureaucracy.

I. Introduction:

One needs only to have a look around to see that everywhere public bureaucracies have emerged as a dominant element of the contemporary life. Bureaucracies developed into pervasive actors regulating and shaping the social, political, and economic life of nations all around the world. Developed or developing, democratic or authoritarian, western or non-western, virtually all nations have come under the increasing influence of bureaucracies.

Today in daily conversations, the word "bureaucracy" or "bureaucratic" is often used as an adjective loaded with highly negative connotations: to refer to any organization that is perceived to be inefficient, slow, and ineffective. Bureaucracy has come to be synonymous with "red tape," formalities, and never-ending, unproductive paperwork.

For the students of public administration, bureaucracy as a concept rings a completely different bell. The origins of the term in the field suggest us to use bureaucracy more properly to refer to a specific set of structural arrangements, and the specific kinds of behavior that these structural arrangements invoke on individuals (bureaucrats and clients) who interact with them.

In the early days, the study of public administration was concerned about explaining macro issues such as how different parts of government work together and interact. Contemporary thinking on the theory of bureaucracy became more focused on micro issues like how individuals within public (and private)

organizations operate and how decisions are made. A late comer to the theories of bureaucracy has been public service ethics. Whereas organizational thinking has always been a main tenet of public administration, questions on public ethics, issues of accountability, and administrative values made their ways (back) to the frontlines of the field since the 1980s.

Whether macro or micro, organizational or ethical, any theory of bureaucracy and bureaucratic behavior is anchored in the writings of German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920). Weber's analysis of bureaucracy as a form of structure and organization is probably still the most influential account on the subject. Like many other analyses that followed his trail, this paper, too, takes Weber's theory of bureaucracy as the point of departure.

As widely known, in his analysis of the birth of rational bureaucracies in Western societies, Weber (1946, 1964, 1978) introduces his classic notion of the *ideal-type* bureaucracy. Weber presents ideal type bureaucracy as an analytical tool to examine the modern public administration in European states of his time. As a *pure* type, Weber's ideal type bureaucracy consists of a specific set of core features that typify the characteristics of functioning and officials in the most fully developed form of bureaucratic organization.

To make his point clearer, Weber (1978) compares the ancient bureaucracies in Egypt, Roman Empire, China, and the Byzantine Empire with the newly emerging ones in Western Europe during the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries. By doing so, he arrives at two important sets of conclusions.

First, in his piece titled "the Development of Bureaucracy and its Relation to Law," Weber (1978) identifies four critical turning points (or socio-economic processes) that made the development of modern bureaucracies possible. These are the accumulation of wealth through money economy and effective taxation (as a source of permanent income for the state), the "quantitative" development of administrative tasks of a state, the deepening and the development of the quality of administrative tasks, and the recognition of the "purely technical superiority [of bureaucratic organization] over every other form" (Weber 1978: 350).

Second, Weber (1964: 328) observes that there are three different types of authority that make the possession and the execution of public power legitimate in any state organization. The claim to legitimate state authority may be based on legal and rational grounds, traditional grounds, or charismatic grounds.

Drawing on these observations, Weber argues that an ideal type bureaucracy is the one that rests on legal-rational authority and is most likely to come into being as the product of the quantitative and qualitative maturation of public administration in a wealthy state.

However, ideal type bureaucracy is not the only novelty of Weber's theory. As a sociologist ahead of his time, Weber also saw the increasing

rationalization of modern life as the fate of the modern man. He anticipated that the further the capitalist way of life advanced, the greater the degree of formal rational organization on all levels of interaction would become. By the same logic, Weber concluded that as capitalism and economic modernization continued to develop, the system would require expansion of ever more efficient and rational bureaucracies.

Reflecting back on Weber's predictions, the question we face today is: Has it really been so everywhere? Surely, in the twentieth century the world has seen the unrivalled rise of capitalism, global economic integration, and modernization of nations to varying degrees. With the demise of empires and the advent of democracy, more and more states have developed in the path that Weber predicted. But the question still remains: Have they all developed into fully grown rational bureaucracies that operate on Weberian public values?

Many bureaucracies today are a caricature of Weber's ideal type. So what went wrong along the way from monarchies to modern democracies? In many places in Europe, Asia, and Latin and North America, the transition from traditional authority to legal-rational authority has been achieved. Through central taxation systems states gained permanent income, public services expanded to cover public health, transportation, telecommunications, public safety, and even sometimes economic production. Briefly, all the pre-conditions

for the emergence of modern bureaucracies resembling ideal types have been met by many states in different continents and in different cultural settings.[1]

Eventually most bureaucracies look alike in terms of layout and structure. They resemble each other in how the political-administrative nexus is designed and how the administrative tasks of the central (and local) government are distributed along a hierarchical chain of command: separation of powers, ministries, public agencies, layers of sub-national government, etc.

Nevertheless, as students of public administration studying the phenomenon called clientelism would suggest, the differences are rather in terms of substance. The distinguishing feature that makes some bureaucracies a rather distorted image of the ideal type stems from the fact that they operate on a different set of public principles and values.

Drawing on Weber's analysis of ideal type bureaucracy, this paper aims to carry the general inquiry on the study and the implementation of public values to a new frontier by bringing back the concept of clientelism into the discipline. The main question that drives this paper is "How different is a clientelistic bureaucracy than the ideal type bureaucracy? What are the differences between the values and principles governing the two types of bureaucratic administration? Where do clientelistic practices stand in relation to ideal public

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[1] For example, in the United States public administration as public activities witnessed a boom in the 1920s and 1930s. To meet the demands of an industrializing and urbanizing country, the US government soared. Public transport, public health, and public safety the number of paved highways increased tenfold in the 1920s (Shafritz et al. 2004: 5). The legacy of bureaucratization is not exclusive to democratic regimes, as one recalls how the public sectors in the Soviet Union grew to colossal dimensions.

values?" Accordingly, this paper will present a conceptual and comparative inquiry into the values or rules of the game that govern public life in two cases of administration: the Weberian ideal-type and the clientelistic type.

II. Concepts and Definitions:

For purposes of clarification, this section presents the concepts that are central to the analysis. It also provides a short literature review on clientelism for readers who are not familiar with the literature.

Patronage & Clientelism:

Clientelism as a concept of political science owes its roots to the anthropological studies conducted on patronage (patron-client relationships) in local and micro settings. Mainly for the reason that patronage was first studied by sociologists and anthropologists as a type of interpersonal relationships, the classic definition of patron-client relationships has been customarily depicted in a traditional agrarian cultural setting.

Patronage is commonly known as the personal and informal networks of exchange whose sole function is to (re)produce effective ways of promoting the interests of patrons and clients. In its most basic form, patron-client relationship resembles a transaction (Zwart 1994). The exchange involves reciprocity and voluntary participation, but also a degree of exploitation (Kaufman 1974). The logic of exchange between patron and client(s) dictates asymmetric but

mutually beneficial and open-ended transactions (Roniger 1994b: 3-5; Kitschelt 2000: 849).

In other words, patronage refers to a specific type of social structure in which dyadic (two-person) and vertical bonds are formed between individuals of unequal power and socioeconomic status with the aim of extracting mutual benefits through exchange of favors. Even though patron-client ties come into being between a relatively much more powerful patron (such as a local notable or landlord) and a client of lower socioeconomic ranking and influence (such as a peasant), neither the patron nor the client is forced into the exchange relationship. On the contrary, patron-client ties derive their legitimacy from the voluntary nature of entry as well as the expectations of reciprocity in the exchange of goods and services (Lemarchand 1981: 15; Powell 1970: 412-13). In that sense, the nature of the patron-client relationship is based on neither coercion (the threat of a gun) nor formal authority (the authority of the state). It is based on a direct exchange of benefits or services by both sides of the dyadic tie (Graziano 1976: 152).

In addition to the asymmetrical, reciprocal, and voluntary character of patron-client relationships, scholars of clientelism have also stressed the "diffuse, particularistic, face-to-face quality" of such relationships (Lemarchand 1981: 15). All being equally distinctive qualities, the diffuseness of the patron-client relationships yet deserves a closer look. The diffuseness indicates that the dyadic tie is not restricted to fulfillment of one specific, narrowly defined

function, meaning that it has the capacity to grow more functions, as opposed to a dyadic relationship bound by a contract which would lay out clear-cut specifics of the function leaving no room for functional flexibility for the contractors (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1981: 276-77).

Research on patronage flourished during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Its growing popularity among political scientists gave way to countless books and articles dedicated to the examination of clientelism in settings as diverse as Southern Europe (e.g. Italy, Portugal, Spain, Greece), Eastern Europe (Poland), Western Europe (Britain, France, Ireland, Belgium), the Middle East (Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon), Africa (Senegal), Asia (China, India, Thailand, Japan), North America (USA), and Latin America (Columbia, Mexico, Peru, Brazil).[2]

Simultaneously, researchers began to realize that clientelism has a varying nature that assumes different forms across time and space (Eisenstadt and Roniger 1980: 49) and as a consequence it is not only limited to stable, hierarchical, face-to-face relations (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007: 4-5). What scholars have identified as "old" and "new" clientelism has opened new alleys for research and called for a theory explaining how, when, and why the "old" became "new."

Eisenstadt and Roniger (1980: 49) were among the first to observe that there has been a transformation from limited dyadic interpersonal connections to a broader selection of more institutionalized social relations and

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[2] For a comprehensive bibliography see Roniger (1981) and Scott (1977).

organizations. They also noted it was not a mere coincidence that this transformation of clientelism took place in societies undergoing mass and rapid socio-economic transition.

In a similar way, Caciagli and Belloni (1981: 36) have argued that socioeconomic developments like "rapid urbanization, the shift of the work force from agricultural to other economic activity, and widespread popular exposure to mass media" facilitated the transition once they coincided with the extension of the scope of state activities and its public enterprises. Major societal changes like rapid urbanization triggered the increase in volume and character of public demands thus giving way to the growth of public bureaucracy. Caciagli and Belloni (1981: 37) further argued that the new clientelism "is inherently tied to the modern, conservative, mass-based party" because the new clientelism requires the use of an "organization," a function that local notables as old patrons can no longer fulfill since their resources are insufficient for the needs of a mass society or even for a category of citizens.

The view put forward by Caciagli and Belloni (1981) became widely accepted and found recognition in the works of Eisenstadt and Roniger (1981, 1984), Özbudun (1981), Roniger (1994a, 1994b), Güneş-Ayata (1994a), Martz (1997) and Piattoni (2001). For example, Martz (1997: 11), in his analysis on the roots of clientelism in contemporary Columbia, emphasized the importance of "rampant statism," while Güneş-Ayata (1994a, 1994b) and Özbudun (1981) in

their studies on Turkish politics drew attention to the transformational power of center-periphery relations.

In addition, Scott (1969), Martz (1997), and Piattoni (2001) have shown us how democracy transforms patron-client relations through electoral competition and party politics.[3] Not only democracy strengthens the clients' bargaining power with patrons and brokers (Piattoni 2001: 7) but it also broadens the scale of clientelistic networks from local connections with face-to-face character to the national level of hierarchical political machines (Scott 1969: 1158), connecting masses of clients with a few patrons (*mass clientelism*). To borrow Piattoni's expression, clientelism has become "more and more bureaucratized and impersonal" (2001: 7), and within such a trend it is very likely to involve entire categories of persons in the role of both patrons and clients.

Bureaucratic Clientelism:

In the context of a bureaucratic organization, patronage ties become institutionalized into *bureaucratic clientelism*. Bureaucratic clientelism is the practice whereby politicians and/or bureaucrats, instead of serving the wider collective interest, give in to particularistic demands and distribute divisible benefits (namely all public resources, i.e. public contracts, administrative jobs, state aids, local infrastructure investments, etc.) to individuals or groups of

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[3] This recognition led to the widespread use of the concept "broker." Broker, as Boissevain (1974) has most eloquently defined, is someone whose career is built on his capacity to establish a contact between clients and patrons.

individuals in exchange for political support or power (Roniger 1994b; Kitschelt 2000; Piattoni 2001, Günay 2007).

Bureaucratic clientelism forms a web of exclusivity for outsiders (e.g. citizens, businessmen) who seek access to state jobs, services, or public decisions through a small group of insiders (e.g. local politicians, bureaucrats, members of parliament) within the state ranks. Consequently, both as a political phenomenon and a social structure, bureaucratic clientelism makes sure that not only votes but any type of decision-making in public administration becomes an instrument of exchange: from a birth certificate to a residence permit, from public housing to a state development project.

Accordingly, the *"clientelistic" bureaucracy* refers to the type of bureaucracy that is found in societies where "the modern state has come to be seen as the ultimate *patron*" (Martz 1997: 11; emphasis as in the original). As mentioned above, the organization of a modern mass-based party with its both vertical and horizontal links across the nation provides the perfect "apparatus" of bureaucratic clientelism. The utilization of a party organization gives the new patrons endless opportunities to acquire tangible benefits (including public resources and public offices) and to distribute these benefits (instead of their own personal wealth) to a mass clientele (Caciagli and Belloni 1981).

The Ideal-type Bureaucracy:

As mentioned earlier, Max Weber's definition of bureaucracy is an analytical as well as a structural one: It uses an "ideal type" approach to separate from the real world the core features that characterize the most fully developed form of bureaucratic organization (Shafritz et al. 2004: 15).

According to Weber's description, the ideal type embodies the "purely technical superiority [of bureaucratic organization] over every other form" (Weber 1978: 350). Just as machines are superior to non-mechanical means of production, the rational model is the unrivalled champion over "any form of collegiate, honorific or avocational administration" (Weber 1978: 350). A fully developed, hierarchical, rational bureaucracy produces the most precise, reliable, standardized results in the most economical and quickest (in short, the most efficient) way possible, solely relying on the fact that its officials are professional, trained, disciplined, and full-time salaried bureaucrats.

As discussed earlier, Weber classifies legal-rational authority as the source of authority on which the ideal type bureaucracy operates. As opposed to traditional or charismatic authority, the legal-rational authority gives the ideal type the most meaningful framework to work within because it rests on the belief that those who govern are bound by the same written rules which gave them the authority to govern. Legal-rational authority makes the rule of law possible (not for some but for everyone), and the decisions of the administration reliable, consistent, informed and logical.

The core features of the ideal type bureaucracy can be summarized as follows (Weber 1946; 1964: 329-334):

1) A bureaucratic administrative staff employed by the legal authority runs the organization;

2) The organization is based on the principles of continuity, hierarchy, specified competence, and efficiency;

3) The organization is divided into offices that specialize and carry out official functions bound by rules;

4) These rules, which regulate the conduct of an office, are technical rules—prescribed courses of action whose primary goal is to attain efficiency. Thus, specialized training is necessary for officials to be able to apply these rules in a fully rational manner;

5) It is thus imperative that "only a person who has demonstrated an adequate technical training is qualified to be a member of the administrative staff," and "hence only such persons are eligible for appointment to official positions" (Weber 1964: 331);

6) The entire administrative staff (from top to bottom) "should be completely separated from ownership of the means of production or administration" (Weber 1964: 331);

7) All administrative decisions and rules are produced and documented in writing, even in cases of "oral discussion" (Weber 1964: 332).

It is important to note that Weber's description of the ideal type bureaucracy is neither a depiction of reality nor a declaration of normative preference. It is simply "an identification of major variables or features that characterize bureaucracies" (Shafritz et al. 2004: 6). The fact that some of these features may not be present in a given bureaucracy does not necessarily mean that the organization is non-bureaucratic. Instead, it implies that the organization may be an immature rather than a fully developed bureaucracy.

III. The "Clientelistic" and the "Ideal" Type: Two Worlds Apart?

Of all the seven points listed in the previous section, the last three deserve particular attention because they touch upon the main aspects of clientelism that are in direct contradiction with the rational model of bureaucracy.

In contrast with the ideal-type of bureaucratic conduct, clientelism is highly personalistic and exists without a formal contract. In a clientelistic bureaucracy, the rules of the "legal-rational" game are bended towards achievement of the clientelistic deal between the patron and the client(s). Accordingly, the logic of clientelism dictates that the patron (e.g. a high ranking bureaucrat looking for employment for his client) should do whatever in his power to keep his promise to the client regardless of what merit or expertise the client has to offer to the public agency.

From Weber's point of view, in a clientelistic bureaucracy, the bureaucrat (the patron) defies the rational authority by several ways.

First, the bureaucrat disregards the rule that in recruitment and promotion of public administrators merit and expertise (should) triumph over political alignment, personal connections, kinship networks, or ethnic background. Thus, by basing his selection of personnel on the wrong criteria, he is most likely to hire someone who is incompetent for the task. By hiring incompetent employees, in the end he eventually damages the efficiency and reliability of the department. (2 & 5)

Second, he further challenges the separation of the ownership of the means of production or administration from the officials holding office (Weber 1964: 331) as he treats the "office" as his own personal property by giving it to whomever he wants. He abuses the legal-rational authority entrusted upon him by making an arbitrary choice. In the confines of his territory, he also transforms the legal authority into traditional authority, by hiring or promoting staffs based on personal loyalty. (1 & 6)

Finally yet importantly, the bureaucrat acting as the patron changes the manner by which all administrative decisions and rules are produced (that is the documentation in writing, even in cases of "oral discussion" (Weber 1964: 332). He deliberately ignores to document an important administrative decision by sealing off an informal, personal (off-the-record) deal with the client. (7)

An administrative system that is permeated by patron-client networks may physically resemble a Weberian type by the way its body is organized along the lines of vertical hierarchy, division of labor, and specialization. However, as

we learn from Weber, an "ideal-type" would be an empty shell without the values in which it is embedded. Where legal-rational authority and the principles of efficiency, equal treatment, and non-ownership of office cease to exist, the ideal type is no longer possible to attain.

IV. Conclusions and Beyond:

Clearly, clientelism falls beyond the graces of ideal public order. According to some, it is a practice, which is assumed to be "at best para-legal and probably always somewhat immoral" (Blondel 2002: 241).As vividly put by Robert Merton,

> [clientelism] violates the code of selecting personnel on the basis of impersonal qualifications rather than on grounds of party loyalty or contributions to the party war-chest; bossism violates the code that votes should be based on individual appraisal of the qualifications of candidates and of political issues, and not on abiding loyalty to a feudal leader (Merton, 1976: 23).

More importantly, in sharp contrast to the ideal type bureaucracy, "the norms of rationality, anonymity, and universalism are largely absent from the patron-client nexus" (Lemarchand and Legg 1972: 151). Since clientelism represents bending public decision-making to promotion of individual interests of both patrons and clients, clientelism implies how responsive the structures of public-decision can become towards particularistic interests instead of universalistic concerns.

Traditionally, the driving idea behind the rational model of administration has been an endeavor to disconnect bureaucracy from the public it serves. In order to achieve a bureaucracy that is impartial, disciplined, and efficient (or in other words, to make administrative agencies look more like ideal-types), "it was necessary to insulate them from the vagaries of the political process" (Denhardt 2004: 43). For the ideal type, "dehumanization" of public bureaucracy is not only necessary but also an inevitable outcome. In Weber's own words (1978: 351), "its [the bureaucracy's] distinctive characteristics, which make it so acceptable to capitalism, are developed all the more completely the more it [the bureaucracy] 'dehumanises' itself."

Even though Weber might have implied the inevitability of such a societal and administrative transformation, he was at the same time sensitive towards "the inhuman consequences of modern industrial capitalism," in particular, what he called the iron cage of rationality. One might suggest that Weber, in the end, counted on the rise of charismatic leaders to bureaucratic positions to inspire others in breaking away from the limitations of the cage (Denhardt 2004: 30).

The city boss, as described in *The City Boss in America* (Callow Jr., 1976: 3-11), and by Robert Merton (1976) in "the Latent Functions of the Machine," fulfilled that charismatic leadership role in a time of rapid social change, industrialization, mass migration, and urbanization. The mechanism the city boss created, the *political machine*, was not the most honest or the most efficient but it was simply "a way of getting things done." The machine was an extra-

legal political organization parallel to the government created for coping with the complex urban needs of the American society that began in the late 19th century (Callow Jr. 1976). Callow describes the city boss as a man of brokerage who granted administrative favors to city-dwellers in exchange for loyalty and greater political power:

> The machine flourished because it provided material and psychological incentives and obligations, and a system of rewards called patronage, oriented not toward realizing such aspirations as "good government" or programs for the "public interest" but toward satisfying the craving for the things men crave: for money, power, prestige, respect, security, and order…Here universal suffrage provided a vast potential army of the political faithful where a favor would get a vote…(Callow Jr., 1976: 6).

In the American society of the early twentieth century, the city boss prevailed and succeeded because he attended to the peculiarities of each of his clients. Owing to his personal relationship with his clients, the patron can guarantee the special treatment that every client is looking for: the special favor that made the client enter the patron-client tie in the first place. While clientelism violates the principles of rational bureaucracy (impartiality and equal treatment), at the same time the patron humanizes and personalizes the bureaucracy by using ethnic, religious and class loyalties (Callow Jr. 1976: 3-6).

However, the problem today is contemporary public values are not have expanded to include good government and representativeness as well. The government, or particularly bureaucracy, is no longer praised for simply "getting

things done." Values such as democracy, responsiveness, and representativeness weigh as heavy as the values of ideal type bureaucratic organizations (such as efficiency, competence, and impartiality). As the 2008 presidential elections in the United States have shown, the public still welcomes the arrival of charismatic leaders like Barack Obama to turn things around, but nonetheless, does not want to be promised quick results that come at the expense of good governance, legality, accountability, rationality, responsiveness, and social equity.

Since the writings of Max Weber, new perspectives in public administration have attempted to bridge the perceived gap between conflicting public values. One of these, the New Public Administration, which emerged in the 1960s as a critique of rational model of administration, advocates a humanistic approach to public administration. The New Public Administration sees the rigid impartiality in the execution of public services as a serious impediment to achieving social equity because equal and impartial treatment of citizens by bureaucrats ignores the particular needs and unique circumstances of different people (Denhardt 2004).

Likewise, representative bureaucracy emerged in the 1970s to remedy the responsiveness problem of public agencies. According to representative bureaucracy, public offices should be filled with public administrators representative of the population so that administrative decisions and policies are in line with the desires of the public (Meier and Nigro 1976: 458).

In a sense, the New Public Administration and representative bureaucracy movements can be seen as attempts to reverse the disconnectedness between public agencies and citizens. They present fresh views on bureaucratic organization and bureaucratic behavior while they try to tackle the issue of conflicting public values.

However, while these views correctly pin down the issues of dehumanization of public bureaucracy and conflicting public values, the question of whether they have the capacity to replace clientelism as a viable strategy in bureaucratic relations yet remains to be seen and requires further research.

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