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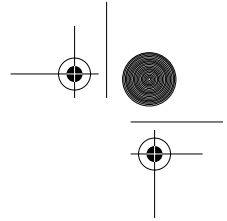
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# Changes in Clientelism and Urban Government: A Comparative Case Study of Naples and Marseilles

CESARE MATTINA

## Abstract

*This article discusses changes to political clientelism and forms of urban government in Naples and in Marseilles in the period from the 1960s to the 2000s. From a socio-historical, comparative perspective I show that, even in two Southern European cities, the expansion of political clientelism does not depend principally on cultural factors, but rather on politico-institutional processes. The generalization of clientelistic relationships and the increase in policies for redistributing resources on the basis of clientelistic criteria go hand in hand with two historical trends that were evident in the 1960s and 1970s. Those decades were a period both of demographic development and of welfare state expansion at both central and local levels, the latter leading to the distribution of public resources to growing masses of individuals and social groups. In this phase, clientelistic redistribution policies promoted the integration and the upward social mobility of sections of the middle classes and some strata of the working classes in the local and national political system. From the late 1970s and early 1980s onwards, however, these policies were less and less able to promote this upward mobility and social integration. The article ends with a favourable account of some of the new urban management policies conducted by new political leaderships.*

## Introduction

In a context where political leadership and urban government in Western Europe have seen a renewal (Bagnasco and Le Galès, 2000; Borraz, 2000; Genieys *et al.*, 2004), two great Southern European cities, Naples and Marseilles, have undergone major changes in the last twenty years. The death, in 1986, of the mayor of Marseilles, Gaston Defferre, and the bitter defeat of the Socialist Party by the rebel mayor Robert Vigouroux in the 1989 municipal elections ended a period of 36 years of Socialist municipal government.<sup>1</sup> In Naples, a great political transformation took place in 1993 and 1994: the Christian Democratic and Socialist leadership, which had held power in the city for ten years, was directly embroiled in the political and financial scandals of the *Mani Pulite* [Clean

Translated from the French by Karen George.

<sup>1</sup> Following the death of Gaston Defferre in May 1986, the Socialist former Deputy Mayor Robert Vigouroux was appointed acting mayor of Marseilles. In the 1989 municipal elections, he decided to put himself forward with a personal list, rebelling against the Socialist Party, who preferred another candidate. Vigouroux won these elections by a landslide; but six years later, expected to win very few votes, he decided that he would no longer stand in municipal elections. From 1995, a new right-wing leadership was established in the city, around the new mayor, Jean-Claude Gaudin.

Hands] inquiry. In 1993, the former Communist Antonio Bassolino, at the head of a left-wing coalition, was elected as mayor (Allum and Cilento, 2001). His discourse of the 'resurrection' of Naples was based on raising moral standards in public life, on efficient and enlightened management of institutions, and on citizens reclaiming the identity of their city (Cilento, 2000).

These changes profoundly challenged the models of political and social regulation and urban government that had been operating in similar ways in Naples and in Marseilles for some three decades. In both cities, as several writers have stressed, the influence of clientelism on political behaviours, on the structuring of political parties, and on the running of local government was strong (Allum, 1973; Sanmarco and Morel, 1985). Both these cities have provided fodder for a continual background discourse in the local and national press on the hold exercised by a power system over the city, as well as on widespread corruption. Magistrates' inquiries into illegal funding of parties in Marseilles (the 'Urba Affair' in 1988), and into corruption in political and business circles and electoral corruption<sup>2</sup> in Naples (the Naples section of the *Mani Pulite* inquiry of 1993–4) brought these representations into the foreground of politics and the media. However, in the same period, political and financial scandals linked to the illegal funding of parties and to practices involving corruption and misappropriation of public funds blew up in several European countries, so this cannot be seen just as a specific feature of Southern Europe (Pujas and Rhodes, 1999).<sup>3</sup>

The aim of this article is to go beyond the media hubbub and the frequent confusion surrounding the meaning of the term 'clientelism' and to contribute to thinking about political clientelism as a form of government and of political regulation in the urban setting. In particular, I shall be focusing on the nature of changes to clientelism between 1960 and 1970 and in the two succeeding decades. An increasing number of writers share the view that, contrary to developmentalist theories, clientelism does not disappear with the advance of modernity, but adapts to historical changes (Briquet, 1998; Piattoni, 2001). In the past, a large part of anthropological and political science literature in both English and Italian analysed clientelistic phenomena in Southern European contexts from an essentially 'cultural' point of view, one which some have described as 'culturalist' (Piattoni, 2003). The existence of clientelism was seen principally as the consequence of family- and clan-based political cultures that were founded on networks of ethnic solidarity and influenced political practices and behaviours (Banfield, 1958; Pitt-Rivers, 1963). Starting from comparative work in two cities in Southern Europe (Mattina, 2003), I shall show that the development of political clientelism, even in Southern European societies, is not principally a cultural issue. It depends rather on historical processes that are more political and institutional in nature. The process by which clientelistic relationships became widespread and policies for redistributing resources on the basis of clientelistic criteria became more numerous went hand in hand with two historical trends of the 1960s and 1970s, both of which I have been able to confirm: a period of demographic development of the city on the one hand, and welfare state expansion at both central and local levels, leading to the distribution of public resources to growing masses of individuals and social groups, on the other.

Through these clientelistic redistribution policies, an urban leadership reshaped and reclassified social groups within the city. In Naples and in Marseilles, following the

2 'Electoral corruption', as referred to throughout this article, does not necessarily involve either bribery or manipulation of election results. It is an offence (covered by the Electoral Codes in France and in Italy) presupposing exchanges of votes or promises of votes for services, goods or money between politicians and electors. Obviously, it is almost impossible to prove.

3 In France, it very quickly became evident that the 'Urba Affair', involving the funding of the Socialist Party, was much more than a Marseilles affair, and had significance at the national level. In Italy, the illegal system of funding parties and various political tendencies also affected several cities in Northern Italy, such as Milan, Genoa and the cities of the Veneto (Musella, 2000).

example of other Italian and French cities of the period,<sup>4</sup> clientelistic redistribution policies were a factor in political and social regulation: they promoted the integration and the upward social mobility of sections of the middle classes and some strata of the working class in the local and national political system. They also proved to be a means of consolidating the social positions of certain strata of the middle class and of professionals (doctors, lawyers, journalists, tradesmen, etc.), as well as confirming their status as notable figures. However, in the succeeding period, starting in the years 1975 to 1980 in Marseilles and in the second half of the 1980s in Naples, the growing scarcity of public resources for redistribution made it impossible for elected representatives to resolve problems through clientelistic redistribution. From the 1980s onwards in Marseilles, and starting in the 1990s in Naples, clientelism has become less and less a factor in governing the city. Thus, Naples and Marseilles have been increasingly normalized.

This historical process will be explained using a comparative analysis of these clientelistic phenomena and their impact on urban government. Firstly, I will present a socio-historical analysis going back to the 1920s of the relationship between the expansion of clientele relations in a given society and the gradual increase in institutional capacities for redistributing clientelistic resources (such as public sector jobs and social housing). Secondly, I will show how, in the 1960s, during a period of massive redistribution of public resources, a system of urban government was set up that was based on development of the loyalty of several sections of society to a political leadership. The article will end with illustrations of how this system of urban government based on clientelistic redistribution changed and eventually collapsed. Changes in the public resources to be redistributed were in themselves determinants of a shift in clientelistic practices and, in the end, influenced the exercise of leadership and new forms of urban government.

### Growth in urban welfare and the expansion of political clientelism

If we confine ourselves to a minimal definition with no pejorative connotations, clientelistic relationships between elected representatives and their electors in democratic regimes involve the exchange of goods, resources and services for votes (or promises of votes) and political support. Therefore, in order for exchanges of this type to take place so that, over time, a clientelistic relationship can be established, it is necessary for there to be goods and resources to redistribute. In democratic regimes the goods redistributed by local politicians to their political clientele (or potential clients) are decreasingly likely to be the sort of personal goods offered by a patron or landowner in a traditional patronage relationship (military and political protection, goods in kind, etc.), and increasingly likely to be goods belonging to the local or central public sector<sup>5</sup> (public sector jobs, social housing, pensions, subsidies, etc.) (Fantozzi, 1993). This change in clientelistic resources has been highlighted in the historical and political science literature that traces the passage from 'the clientelism of notable figures' to

4 Here one thinks not only of other cities in Italy and Southern France – Nice (Tafari, 2003), Toulon, Palermo (Chubb, 1981), Catania (Caciagli, 1977) – but also of cities in Northern France – such as Lille (Bleitrach *et al.*, 1981; Tafari, 2003) – or in Belgium (De Winter, 1995; Deschouwer and De Winter, 1998).

5 This is why we prefer to use the term 'political clientelism', rather than 'patronage'. The latter refers to an asymmetrical relationship of dependence between a patron (in general, a landowner) and clients (often peasants or tenant farmers). Even though this type of relationship has not disappeared from our societies, it seems to us marginal by comparison with the relationship of political clientelism that can be observed in a contemporary urban context. It must not be forgotten that electors have the ability and the power to promise a vote in exchange for a service and then to cast that vote differently once they are alone in the voting booth.



'party clientelism' (Gribaudo, 1980; Papadopoulos and Vaner, 1989). By a slow, gradual process, we thus pass from clientelistic exchanges concentrated around a notable local member of parliament (and his limited entourage) to a noteworthy extension of various 'publics' to whom public goods may be directed.

In both Naples and Marseilles, the increase in public sector resources, such as public sector jobs and services and housing benefits, seems to have been the driving element of an expansion in clientele relations. As the capacities of local and national politicians to distribute these goods through their discretionary powers grew, the possibilities also increased that personalized and clientelistic relationships would be established between elected and electors. Obviously, this was done in completely different ways in the two cities. Even though the process was similar, a socio-historical comparison will reveal the differences, including those of time scale.

### Municipal socialism and the expansion of clientelistic resources in Marseilles

The election of the Socialist Siméon Flaissières as Mayor of Marseilles in 1892 (1892–1902 and 1919–31) and the period known as 'municipal socialism' are moments that reveal how clientelistic practices and policies expanded and took root in the city. Unlike previous, free-market-oriented municipal councils (dominated by the great families of the industrial and merchant bourgeoisie), Flaissières' municipal government proved very attentive to the aspirations of most of the working-class population and developed municipal social services. Jean Viard (1995: 262) notes how 'for the first time, the municipal authority, which traditionally took little interest in living conditions, and the voluntary sector associations dealing with mutual assistance, joined forces. This original merger forms the basis of the local socialist tradition'. The period of municipal socialism is therefore the one that, historically, inaugurated an increasingly wide-ranging distribution by the municipality and its elected representatives of collective and individual goods and services to electors. Despite still limited means, they began to distribute collective services (district sewerage systems, improved transport, access to schools), to take on staff at the town hall, and to award different kinds of social assistance. The end result of all this was to alter the role and the function of elected municipal representatives, of the mayor and his deputies. The growing possibility of distributing services that were both collective and personalized was a factor that generated the mediating function of elected representatives between institutions and the local population.

The early 1930s was a period of exponential growth in the clientelistic logics of hiring town hall staff. One of the players in this phase was Simon Sabiani, an almost mythical character in the political history of Marseilles.<sup>6</sup> From 1929 to 1935 he was the all-powerful First Deputy Mayor of Marseilles, dominating the city's political scene (Rochu, 1983: 53–4). Sabiani's power base was in the Vieux Port and Panier districts and around the Rue de la République (Jankowskij, 1989; Vaucoret, 1978). His influence was very strong in all spheres of public life and administration. His power system was based on relationships involving the exchange of services with the populations of Corsican and Italian origin in those districts. It was during this historical phase that Marseilles Town Hall hired a large number of Corsican employees, since Sabiani controlled all echelons of municipal administration. Thus, in 1933, he declared to a local daily newspaper: 'we'll be hiring more people, and as long as I'm there, it'll be my friends and only my friends. They'll be first, and others will come after them, if there is any room left'.<sup>7</sup>

6 Originally a Communist, then an independent, during the war he slid into collaboration with Nazi Germany. He is particularly famous for his relationships with the Marseilles underworld and especially with François Spirito and Paul Venture Carbone, gangsters and drug traffickers who were also his electoral agents.

7 Statement to the daily *Petit Marseillais* of 11 June 1933, quoted in Attard-Maraninchi, 1997.



Despite the decline of municipal socialism in the following period, habits had taken hold, practices had become institutionalized, and local politicians in Marseilles gradually took on the role of benefactor and social worker. Some created veritable personal fiefdoms through clientelistic practices targeted at particular strata of the working class stripped of their traditions of struggle (Chenu, 1981: 128–9). Some population groups, concentrated around municipal employment, formed a real pressure group around the mayor, with a view to gaining material advantages.

### **The weakness of municipal institutions and concentration of clientelistic resources around leading national politicians: the case of Naples**

The era of municipal socialism in Marseilles had no equivalent in Naples at the same period. It is not until after the war, or even the 1970s, that we see a real expansion in the powers and spheres of competence of Naples Town Hall. For a long time, it was essentially central government that ensured the allocation and redistribution of resources. Thus, it was notable national politicians elected to the Italian Parliament who managed to channel public funds from central to local level (Galasso, 1987).

The unification of Italy did nothing to alter the weakness of municipal authority in Naples, a legacy of the pre-unification period. Throughout the entire post-unification period, liberal central government allocated only minimal resources to a densely populated, ill-equipped city, while also making draconian demands that it maintain a balanced budget. Chronic failure to observe annual budget limits, embezzlement scandals, and other corrupt practices in Naples Town Hall often resulted in increased control by central government over the municipality (Mascilli Migliorini, 1987). The scarcity of municipal goods and services intended for the population did not create conditions in which exchange relationships between local politicians and residents could become generalized. Consequently, clientelistic relationships expanded much more gradually than in Marseilles. Several historians have shown how political clientele functioned around notable figures in Naples, detailing methods of vote gathering and exchanges of goods and services around various forms of political support, promised votes and political careers (Allum, 1973; Musella, 1994). However, in the period from 1860 to 1950, relationships involving clientelistic exchange were concentrated within the limited circles of notable figures who were essentially rural in origin and from the *rentier* class or the local petite bourgeoisie or middle class. These were exclusive relationships with doctors, lawyers and politicians, who exchanged their votes and political support for the MP's intervention to obtain advantages for a particular group or personal favours, or to channel public funds to his own constituency. Unlike Marseilles, for a very long time, institutions did not open up their resources to a wider public beyond the limited clientele surrounding notable figures at national parliamentary level.

In Naples, therefore, the expansion of clientele relations and of clientelistic redistribution policies was a process that emerged essentially during the post-war period. From the 1950s onwards, clientelistic policies became generalized, at the time when public policies for the development of the Mezzogiorno were being set up and when the Christian Democrats were taking an increasing hold on the political system in Southern Italy (Allum, 1978).

### **Municipal welfare reaches a high point and clientelistic policies become generalized**

From the post-war period to the early 1980s, two phenomena can be observed in both cities: demographic expansion and the generalized presence and initiative of the public sector, in the form of both central government and local authorities. In parallel to an expansion in the numbers of local government officers and in the remit of the town halls, the 1970s saw clientelistic relationships becoming generalized around parties and

leaders and the clientelistic logics of redistribution of public resources such as — and in particular — jobs and social housing being extended more widely.

In Marseilles, natural demographic expansion and successive waves of immigration increased the population, which rose from 670,000 to 920,000 inhabitants in the period from the early 1950s to 1975 (Roncayolo, 1996). In Naples we see almost the same phenomenon: the population of the municipality went from 900,000 inhabitants in 1951 to 1,200,000 in 1971. This major demographic expansion is paralleled, in both cities, by developments in the tertiary sector linked to public and private administration and to managing the services necessary to support this urban growth (amenities, schools, hospitals, etc.). Between 1954 and 1975, 70,000 jobs were created in Marseilles. The fall in the number of manual workers and shopkeepers was extremely significant — as was the rise in the number of clerical workers, service personnel, intermediate professionals, managers and public servants. From 1962 to 1990, Marseilles lost 54,000 jobs in industry, out of 104,000 — equivalent to 51% of the workforce (Donzel, 1998). Despite some efforts to develop iron and steel, shipbuilding, mechanical and aeronautical engineering industries, Naples developed around the tertiary sector, providing departmental services to central government and to local and national bureaucracy. As far as industry and production were concerned, in the 1960s there was a marked gap between large-scale factories like the ILVA steelworks at Bagnoli (broadly subsidized by the public authorities) with its 6,000 workers, and a myriad small artisan and trade activities. At that period, there were almost no medium-sized enterprises. Gradually, even the small artisan activities that had traditionally been characteristic of the city underwent a significant decline (Belli and Sciarelli, 1986).

The process of expansion in municipal welfare and the increase in capacities for redistribution of typically clientelistic resources (such as public sector jobs and social housing) did not occur in the same way or on the same time scale in the two cities. Marseilles Town Hall played a bigger political role and had larger allocations and greater powers than its Naples counterpart. Up to the 1970s, Naples Town Hall played a political role that was by and large secondary as far as redistribution of goods and services was concerned. The most important thing was the granting of resources by central government and by the Mezzogiorno Fund — grants which went through financial institutions and banks controlled by the Christian Democratic central government and by the clientele of the Gava family (Allum, 1974; Caprara, 1975).

In Marseilles, during a period of demographic growth and creation of large-scale amenities for the city, the staff of the Town Hall increased from 4,000 in 1953 to 11,000 in 1977 (there are currently around 12,000) (Donzel, 1998). Even from the 1960s, there were great opportunities for the public authorities — and in particular those of the municipality — to allocate clientelistic resources. In the middle of that decade, the Town Hall controlled, directly or indirectly, about 50,000 jobs: municipal jobs, jobs with the Marseilles Transport Authority and in some port enterprises, taxi businesses, and semi-public companies (SEMs), plus public sector and parapublic sector jobs in bodies where it controlled the management committees (the mayor chaired the Public Hospitals Board), in social welfare bodies close to the *Force Ouvrière* trade unions, and in the administration of social housing (Sanmarco and Morel, 1985).

In Naples (and throughout Italy), for a long period after the war, the Town Hall's situation did not improve, either in terms of its autonomy, remit and powers, or financially. It was not until 1972, with a taxation reform that included the abolition of the obligation to balance the budget, that a slight improvement in financial grants can be noticed; and it was in the 1970s that Naples Town Hall saw an increase in its remit and its capacities to implement local policies, as well as in its numbers of municipal staff.

In both Naples and Marseilles, the growth in the number of local government officers resulted more from a political desire to increase their remit and the corresponding number of tasks they performed than from a response to population increase. In Naples, for example, the percentage increase in employees was markedly higher than the



increase in inhabitants for the same period. Even after the big decrease in population recorded from 1975 onwards, staff numbers continued to increase: thus, the number of employees of the Naples municipal administration and related bodies (municipal enterprises, service provision establishments) went from 8,000 in 1970 to 10,000 in 1981, climbing to 20,000 in 1993 (Sciarelli, 1994).

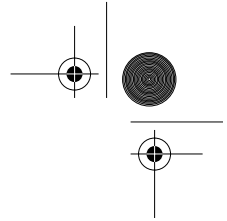
Historically, the gradual growth in services produced by the Town Hall represented an opportunity to redistribute resources to a large number of people within the orbit of municipal institutions. It is from this era that the creation of a true system of urban government through clientelistic policies dates, with the possibility of extending the number of individuals in receipt of social services and of assistance and therefore often of handouts (Anderlini, 1983). With regard to Naples, it has been noted that in a context of relative poverty and unemployment, the extension of the remit and of spending possibilities proved, in a disorganized town hall, to be an opportunity to increase income redistribution networks (Becchi, 1994). In France, too, town halls were often among the biggest employers in a *département* or a region. Several writers have noted that the municipal apparatus can be an excellent tool for creating a local clientele, because of the power of elected representatives over the award of grants to associations, and over the allocation of social housing and other goods (Jobert and Sellier, 1977: 210–11; Lorrain, 1989a; 1989b). In a comparative perspective, it can also be noted that studies conducted in various American cities have shown the importance of resources like public sector jobs for the exercise of political influence by an urban leadership (Lowi, 1964).

### Clientelistic policies and redistribution of resources: logics of political regulation in Naples and Marseilles

The process by which clientelistic redistribution policies became generalized in the 1960s and 1970s was not a phenomenon without consequences for urban government in these two cities. In both, during that era, clientelistic policies became a real lever of government. Through clientelistic redistribution policies, the political leaderships — an alliance between socialists and centrists in Marseilles; essentially Christian Democratic in Naples — forged alliances with individuals, social groups, occupational groups and ethnic groups. Through clientelism, these political leaderships forged bonds, created new social hierarchies, confirmed and consolidated the status of notable figures, and engendered mechanisms for social and political inclusion and exclusion. For example, mechanisms for clientelistic allocation of social housing allowed local politicians, especially in Marseilles, to shape the social and electoral composition of territories. The control of the mayor and his office over recruitment, promotions, and appointments to the town hall and ancillary services led to the creation of a bond of loyalty between the municipal staff and the mayor.

At that time, these clientelistic redistribution mechanisms were not only a lever of urban government, but also a fundamental factor in political and social regulation. From the point of view of this article, the political regulation reflects the capacity of a political leadership to shape the social composition of a city, to channel the social interests of groups, to manage — and, as far as possible, pacify — conflicts, while privileging some groups and individuals to the detriment of others. Thus, talking about political regulation helps us to understand the ways in which public institutions control and manage the balance of a process in action, or re-establish that balance: in a single phrase — how they construct a social order (Commaille and Jobert, 1999).

The concept of political regulation allows us to analyse clientelism through the prism of an unequal redistribution of resources, where more advantages are given to certain groups and individuals integrated into the local political system, at the same time as others are excluded from it. Therefore, the questions tackled here relate to the criteria for clientelistic redistribution of resources and to the consequences that it may have for



the political order within the city. Which, therefore, are the groups privileged by the political leadership? Very often in social science, clientelism is viewed as a relationship between vote-hungry politicians and strata of the working class seeking services and favours to improve their social condition. By this reasoning, the 'poor' would be the main beneficiaries of clientelism. Yet, as we shall see from two working-class cities like Naples and Marseilles, it has to be taken into account that the beneficiaries of clientelistic policies are very often primarily the middle classes and the petite bourgeoisie, who support the incumbent political leadership.

### The availability of clientelistic resources and discretionary power of redistribution

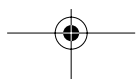
It seems there are 18 posts, and in practice 15 of them might be filled. You must be able to do something. . . .<sup>8</sup>

During the period of major demographic expansion in Marseilles and in Naples, policies for redistributing public resources were at the centre of central and local government activity. In this phase, two spheres in particular — those of housing and public sector employment — represented fundamental factors in improving the life of populations and opening pathways for individual and collective social mobility. In Marseilles, choices about allocating these resources to individuals were made by the public authorities, in particular the Town Hall. In Naples, national Christian Democratic MPs closely controlled the choices made in recruiting into the central bureaucracies as well as into public sector enterprises and private businesses generously subsidized by central government. Therefore, the focus of this article is the logics of allocation of social housing and capacities for recruitment to the town hall (in Marseilles) and to public sector enterprises (in Naples). Using archive materials from the mayor of Marseilles' office (in particular, exchanges of letters, allocation lists, notes made by elected representatives and by technical officers), and using legal documents from the Naples magistrates' office about cases involving illegal party funding, corruption and misappropriation of public funds, we have been able to reconstruct common political practices and discretionary capacities for redistribution.

As in other French cities, the mayor's office in Marseilles has always had a great deal of latitude in distributing the important resource of municipal public sector jobs. Officially, direct recruitments to the Town Hall (those which are not subject to competition) pass through the mayor's office, as do those into all its ancillary services. The mayor and his office manage policy choices relating to an enormously important area — that of the working conditions of municipal and paramunicipal employees; appointments, moves, promotions and honorary positions are all opportunities for the mayor to satisfy requests from the broad municipal public. This remit thus gives the mayor and his office real power over pathways of upward social mobility for individuals and families. Indeed, despite the gradual change in legislation and the increase in public competitions that limit hiring on any kind of clientelistic basis, the discretionary — even arbitrary — nature of recruitment in town halls has always been significant in extent. In the case of allocation of low- or very low-skilled jobs (dustman, road mender, hospital porter, gravedigger, canteen lady, etc.), for which there has always been strong social pressure in Marseilles, the factors in discriminatory choice are very random, and even public competitions do not escape broadly discretionary logics.

In Naples, power over recruitment in local authorities is historically less important than in Marseilles, and in this sphere the mayor has much less latitude. Rather, the

8 Extract from a letter addressed to the mayor by Professor Carcassonne, Vigouroux's Socialist deputy mayor, recommending someone to him in the competitive recruitment of a second-category highway security worker. Series 803W104, Personal files – Vigouroux, deputy mayor, 1980–86, Marseilles Municipal Archives.



system of clientelistic hiring operates through public sector enterprises or private businesses controlled by the major leaders of the Christian Democratic or Socialist Parties. From the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, these enterprises became a favoured channel for satisfying political clientele. Although this system frequently provides evidence of the existence of agreements and arrangements between different parties for control of enterprises, it also shows the logics of the growth of competition between the different leaders for control of recruitment. From various magistrates' inquiries, it seems that the Christian Democrat leaders Paolo Cirino Pomicino and Alfredo Vito, as well as the Socialist Giulio Di Donato, were the politicians who most often managed to obtain satisfaction in the matter of hiring. The system of nomination to enterprises in the years 1987 to 1992 confirms the waning influence in Naples of the old leader, Antonio Gava, in the economy and in business, when faced with competition from other leaders.

### Clientelism as a factor in political and social regulation

Our field study, when situated within an historical comparative analysis, highlights the fact that political clientelism has been a factor in political and social regulation in both Naples and Marseilles. Clientelistic redistribution policies had three simultaneous functions: they promoted the upward social mobility of certain strata of the working class, including manual workers, and of the petite bourgeoisie; they created the conditions for certain sections of the middle class to consolidate their social position and even rise to notability — some doctors, lawyers, shopkeepers and public servants made themselves notable by building a role and a function as intermediaries between public sector institutions and the population; and they marginalized those sections and groups in urban society that profited very little or not at all from the clientelistic redistribution of resources.

In Marseilles, it was above all within a middle class of public sector employees — of central government, of local authorities, the Town Hall and its ancillary services — and within certain sections of private sector manual workers — the children of the old immigrant communities (Corsicans, Italians, Armenians, Spaniards, Greeks, Jews and later the *pieds-noirs* or French Algerians) — that bonds were formed and clientelistic practices established, becoming customary expressions of social need. Giving advantages to certain families and not to others, prioritizing certain associations for receipt of grants, shaping the (social and electoral) make-up of territories through policies for allocating social housing, promoting social distinction between individuals and between groups through symbolic and material advantages (the award of City Medals, visits by local politicians to ethnic associations, job promotions within the Town Hall, etc.) — all these elements demonstrate the importance of clientelistic policies as a factor in reshaping and reclassifying local society.

This came about because, in the period 1960 to 1975, city government in Marseilles was essentially based on an almost systematic use of clientelistic policies. Such means are to some extent coherent with the institutional, political and social history of Marseilles. The same sections and groups that I have singled out as the main beneficiaries of clientelistic policies were those that made up the alliance and the social bloc around Gaston Defferre in the 1960s, both within the institution of the municipality and within Marseilles urban society. This social bloc consisted of the alliance between certain strata of the proletariat (concentrated around the French section of the Workers' International/Socialist Party — the then French Socialist Party — and the *Force Ouvrière* trade union), a petite bourgeoisie of public sector workers, and a middle class concentrated around the local centre-right and the professions (lawyers, doctors, chairs of associations, etc.). Proletarian and subproletarian strata linked to the Communist Party and the new waves of North African immigration were essentially excluded from the socialist power base and from clientelistic redistribution policies.

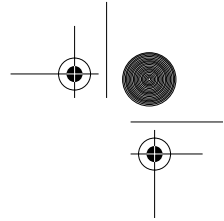
Within the Italian political system, links have already been highlighted between clientelistic policies and the reshaping of society. Alessandro Pizzorno (1978; 1980)

has demonstrated the consolidation, in a mediation role, of a petite bourgeoisie dependent on political parties and in particular on the Christian Democratic Party. Other writers, looking at the 1980s, have noted interrelationships between the existence of political clienteles and the rise of social strata through careers in local administration and in occupations related to building and public works (architects, surveyors, small businesses, etc.) during the period of reconstruction after the earthquake (Jedlowki, 1990). In Naples, from the 1950s right up to the 1980s, we find clientelistic policies similarly functioning as a means of promoting and socially consolidating social categories and individuals. The clientelistic policies set up through the system of redistribution of public funds in building and public works businesses under the Lauro administrations (1953–62) and in the period of the Gava family's power (1962–75) accompanied the social rise of a middle class. The period of the Communist municipal council (1975–83) and those that followed led to an accrual — even though a slow one — of capacities for the institutional redistribution of resources.

The capacity of clientelistic policies to regulate the city emerges in very similar ways from the historical processes observable in both cities: in the 1950s, access to employment in the public sector (especially central government) and in the private sector; gradual improvement in housing conditions, with a large-scale input of quality housing units (in Naples, more often in the private sector than in social housing, unlike Marseilles); the upward social mobility of classes in the petite bourgeoisie and of a section of the industrial proletariat. However, it should be noted that the capacity of clientelistic policies to promote integration and upward social mobility was greater in Marseilles than in Naples. In the latter city, despite the impact of upward mobility and social reshaping on certain categories of the population, clientelistic policies excluded much broader strata, in particular the urban subproletariat. In Naples, marginalized categories and strata of society claimed their rights of access to housing and employment through strongly conflictual, sometimes violent, actions, especially from the 1970s and 1980s. Very often, in Naples, clientelistic policies were used as a means of pacifying violent social conflicts. These conflicts were manifested in the sphere of employment and resulted from high unemployment and major job insecurity. Clientelistic policies in the area of employment were made through relationships of both conflict and cooperation between the public authorities and an organized — though multiform — unemployed workers' movement, which in Naples has a long-standing tradition going back to the early 1970s (Ramondino, 1977; Liguori and Veneziano, 1982). Mechanisms of clientelistic recruitment and funding of vocational training courses with an essentially welfare function were used by all political formations in national and local government to pacify conflicts linked to mass unemployment and resulting protest. Nowadays, the city of Naples is still a frequent site of sit-ins, peaceful or violent demonstrations, and roadblocks, aiming to extend funding for training courses and to obtain unemployment allowances. This aspect of clientelistic policies, as a tool (not always an efficient one) of conflict regulation, seems to have played a bigger role historically in Naples than in Marseilles.

Differences between models of political regulation in the two cities are also expressed in time differences relating to the influence of clientelism on city government. The era of political regulation through the clientelistic distribution of resources began in Marseilles in the early 1960s and continued until the years 1975 to 1980; in Naples, it began in the early 1960s, drawing to a close only in the very early 1990s. During the 1980s in Marseilles and in the early 1990s in Naples, however, clientelistic practices and policies were strongly challenged both by changes in urban government and by a wave of judicial inquiries which — actually, more in Naples than in Marseilles — involved many politicians of local and national standing. Thus, we see a decline in political regulation through clientelistic redistribution, which had the consequence of considerably accelerating the renewal of the leadership and of modes of urban government.





## The decline of traditional clientelistic resources and changes to clientelism in urban government

In periods of economic expansion and of full employment and access to work and housing for a large number of individuals and families, clientelistic channels represented a means of integration and a way for some strata of the working class and the petite bourgeoisie to move upwards towards better social conditions. However, starting from the second half of the 1970s in Marseilles and from the late 1980s in Naples, the situation became increasingly difficult. The effects of economic and social crisis made themselves felt in both cities: against the background of a depopulation movement,<sup>9</sup> we see a growth in unemployment, the departure of petit bourgeois and middle-class populations from social housing, and a gradual dilapidation of housing estates. Elected representatives began to have fewer and fewer goods and resources to distribute to the population: Marseilles Town Hall, for example, significantly reduced its recruitment, the building of social housing declined strongly from 1975, and a political and technocratic willingness to stabilize the budgets of public institutions and to alter strongly rooted behaviours took hold. In Naples, from the late 1980s, the public resources of central government funding for the Mezzogiorno development policy did not flow as freely as before. Magistrates' inquiries were to reveal, from 1993, that some of these funds had been misappropriated for illegal party funding and other corrupt practices (Barbagallo, 1997).

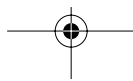
Scarcities of public resources and the consequent inability of local politicians to appease the electorate did not automatically translate into a disappearance of clientelistic practices and exchanges. Rather, they created a contradictory tension: elected representatives no longer had, as before, a large quantity of goods to distribute, but the voters' habit of appealing to local politicians to obtain a service remained rooted in urban society. This would give rise to a diffuse dissatisfaction in some of the population, and to politicians feeling powerless to resolve their electors' problems. Therefore the change was not so much in clientelistic practices, but rather in clientelistic redistribution policies. Because of the contraction in resources, they began, on the one hand, to dwindle, and on the other hand, to become less and less effective as a means of political regulation and of urban government. At the same time as this phenomenon was manifesting itself, new political leaderships were taking hold in both cities, organizing a systematic denunciation of clientelistic practices and accentuating their public policy capacities in urban renewal.

### Shrinking clientelistic resources and development of a symbolic response from elected representatives

Questioned on their attitude when faced with personal requests from voters, the elected representatives interviewed in Marseilles and Naples showed caution: although, on the one hand, they declared a great readiness to listen to these requests, on the other hand they insisted on making it clear to electors that they could not promise anything and that they were not bound to honour any resulting obligation.<sup>10</sup> When a voter appeals to a local politician for help in obtaining a job, in most cases the politician starts making approaches: according to the particular situation, he or she writes either to those who chair local authorities or to the chairs and managing directors of certain private businesses to recommend the person concerned as a candidate. However, the politician

9 Marseilles went from 920,000 inhabitants in 1975 to about 800,000 in 1990. Naples, following almost the same trend, went from 1,200,000 inhabitants in 1981 to 1,050,000 in 1991.

10 About fifty partly pre-coded interviews were conducted with elected representatives of all shades of political opinion, at different electoral levels in Naples and in Marseilles. The questions focused mainly on their representations of their actions and of their experience in day-to-day contact with voters (Mattina, 2003).



is aware of the social pressure that exists in the employment sphere and also knows that all his or her colleagues are making exactly the same approaches for voters who come to appeal to them. The chances of obtaining results following a personal approach are, therefore, often practically nil, especially in the sphere of employment. Thus, starting from the late 1970s in Marseilles and from the early 1990s in Naples, personal interventions by local politicians became less and less effective. More and more voters accumulated letters of recommendation from elected municipal or district representatives without ever succeeding in obtaining satisfaction of their requests. The politicians' interventions and recommendations increasingly assumed an essentially symbolic value, seeming to show the voters that there was genuine concern for them.

Files from the Marseilles archives, some judicial papers from Naples, and the various accounts I recorded make it plain that a very large number of letters of recommendation have the sole objective of demonstrating to the voter symbolically that there has been some intervention on his or her behalf. In the 'personal files' of Robert Vigouroux<sup>11</sup> from the 1970s (the era when he was Deputy Mayor to Gaston Defferre), there are whole series of letters of recommendation, clearly routine and systematic in nature and very probably doomed to failure. As far as personal files on requests for jobs are concerned, it is clearly apparent that, after receiving a letter asking to be hired at the Town Hall or the Marseilles hospitals, Vigouroux would send the services concerned a generic request with an expression of support so vague that it had no chance of succeeding. From the late 1970s, an increasing number of approaches of this type can be found. They involved the playing out of the following scenes by several actors: the elector comes to see the elected representative, or writes to him or her, in the hope of obtaining a service; the elected representative (or notable figure) gives the person concerned a generic letter of recommendation and sends him or her to the decision maker, asking the latter especially to give the person a response; the decision maker (to be specific, the mayor or his office) cannot or will not hire and, to use administrative language, 'acknowledges receipt' by sending two letters of reply (negative, obviously), to the elected representative and to the elector. The reply from the institution or business is very important, even though it is negative, since it shows the elector that, despite the refusal, there is genuine concern about his or her situation.

This system of 'false' letters of recommendation is indeed widespread in Naples and in Marseilles at all levels in the course of recommendation and political support. The mayor's office and political leaders' duty offices use the same strategy with municipal employees, people in the public eye, municipal councillors and activists, who constantly appeal for all sorts of favours and preferential treatment. This is a kind of game that, in the great majority of cases, does not have any concrete result. However, it has a symbolic significance, explained by the need to maintain a certain level of hope and expectation in the role of elected representatives and in the possibilities of their satisfying citizens' requests.

In the end, the shrinking of traditional clientelistic resources alters the elected representative's ability to respond when faced with unofficial and personal requests. The role and the function of notable figures — or the process by which elected representatives become notable — are therefore increasingly impaired. The lack of effectiveness of their interventions to some extent deprives them of their aura and affects a fundamental dimension of their activity and social role: their capacity for mediation, understood as the power to fill the communication voids that exist between different sections and sectors of society (Gribaudo, 1980). Elected representatives increasingly find themselves exercising a symbolic mediation role. They continue to manage to put social actors in contact, with a view to creating and/or managing cooperative and conflictual relationships in urban society, but their ability to resolve voters' concrete

<sup>11</sup> 'Personal files' are named files that contain all requests from voters who asked, on various bases, for favours and services from the deputy mayors of the Defferre municipal council or from the mayor's office. Series 803W101-119, Personal files – Robert Vigouroux, deputy mayor, 1983-6.



problems and to redistribute resources is increasingly affected. Therefore the function of notable figures, of which two fundamental aspects are clientelistic practices and the capacity to distribute resources, is called strongly into question.

### New public management versus clientelism?

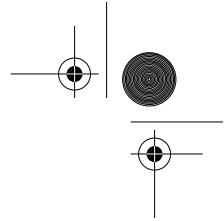
In 1989 in Marseilles and in 1993 in Naples, municipal leaderships that were very different from earlier ones took hold: doctor and former prominent Socialist Robert Vigouroux broke with the Socialist Party and won the municipal elections with a personal list of candidates; Antonio Bassolino, first a national cadre of the Italian Communist Party and then of the Democratic Party of the Left, became Mayor of Naples.<sup>12</sup> In a context in which new urban policies flourished (Gaudin, 1993), other models of management and of urban government found a place in these cities. The model of political regulation altered, and modes and instruments of political legitimation also changed. With these new leaderships, a dialectic of conflict was also established between the new public management, inspired by urban renewal policies, and clientelistic practices.

In Naples and in Marseilles, each of the two newly-elected mayors set up an urban development strategy based on ambitious projects and on internationalizing the city. Following the example of other port cities like Barcelona, they developed major projects for port planning (Rodrigues-Malta, 2001), urban renewal of city centres, transport network development, improvement of the living environment, tourism development and cultural policies. These strategies and their political communication corollaries became important instruments of a new legitimation (Pinson and Vion, 2000).

The 1989 municipal elections in Marseilles marked a turning-point: the emergence of the issue of international positioning (Pinson, 2002). Even though Vigouroux merely elaborated pre-existing ideas, already developed in the period from 1986 to 1989 (Morel, 2001), he carried through a series of projects and created a series of infrastructures by setting up a logic of efficiency and results. At the institutional level, after the backwardness that had built up during the Defferre era, in 1992 the new mayor's administration managed to negotiate the creation of a community of *communes* which was to become, in 2001 under Mayor Jean-Claude Gaudin, the Urban Community of *Marseille-Provence-Métropole* (Donzel, 2001). The creation of the Euroméditerranée National Interest Programme was also a result of Robert Vigouroux's actions. In the logic typical of urban governance, central government piloted and coordinated a major programme of local development with the aim of attracting private businesses into a huge area next to the port of La Joliette and of promoting urban renewal in a part of the city centre (Dubois and Olive, 2004).

In Naples, Mayor Antonio Bassolino invested even more than his Marseilles counterpart in the resurrection of the city after the 'opaque years of the 1980s' — which had been characterized by the uncontested power of the Christian Democratic Party and of the Italian Socialist Party — and in bringing corruption into the open through judicial inquiries. Bassolino made policy investments in re-appropriating his city's identity on behalf of its inhabitants and in enhancing the value of the city's cultural heritage. From the first months, he carried through a programme for opening up public parks, gardens and fountains and getting them running again. He created the conditions for exploiting monuments in the historic city centre, through the creation of numerous pedestrianized streets and squares. The local newspapers constantly reported this activity on Bassolino's part, seen as a great novelty by comparison with the unassuming, invisible actions of earlier mayors. Some of the literature has noted the great success of these symbolic policies from Bassolino's Town Hall (Cilento, 2000; Mattina and Allum, 2000). At the 1997 municipal elections, Antonio Bassolino was elected with 73% of the votes. In

12 Antonio Bassolino was mayor of Naples from 1993 to 2001. In 2001 he won the regional elections, thus becoming president of the Regional Council of Campania.



addition to the legitimation that he derived from the introduction of directly elected mayors, from 1993 he also derived legitimation from a display of the new public management: urban renewal through cultural policies, involvement in development projects, managerial capacity in the reform of municipal bureaucracy.

Thus, in Naples and in Marseilles, under Vigouroux and Bassolino as mayors, a model of urban management took shape, characterized by the fact that redistribution policies of a clientelistic type came to a halt. Urban policies were no longer conceived solely as an exercise in internal mediation, stabilizing an electoral base by distributing advantages to the different sectors of local society. The shrinking of traditional clientelistic resources and the shift in channels of redistribution between central government and local authorities constitute reasons for this change.

To this must be added the construction of a new leadership legitimacy through a constant rhetoric of denouncing clientelistic practices: 'We cannot, or should not, get elected and run a municipality with the aid of big promises and small gifts, because that doesn't lead to any good for that municipality. From this angle, electioneering — clientelism — seems impossible to me' (Vigouroux, 1991: 119). With these words, as well as an attack on 'the dinner party set, the barons and baronets of professional politics', Robert Vigouroux suddenly started using a language of denunciation — an attitude to Marseilles politics that was all the more surprising because he himself had been a Socialist municipal elected representative since 1965 and one of the greatest enthusiasts for clientelistic practices on the part of notable figures in the Defferre era (Mattina, 2003). During his campaign for the 1993 Naples municipal elections, the candidate Antonio Bassolino made a violent denunciation of the corruption of the Christian Democratic and Socialist political system. Words of disapproval of the 'gang of four' — Paolo Cirino Pomicino, Giulio Di Donato, Francesco De Lorenzo and Antonio Gava, the Naples leaders responsible for the city's bankruptcy — reverberated through his various election meeting venues. At the end of his speech, he would declare that, if he were elected, Naples Town Hall would join the public prosecutor in court actions against corruption. Alongside the new image of mayors as pragmatic and oriented towards forward-looking projects for the city, this rhetoric of denouncing clientelistic practices represented one of the key instruments for legitimation of the new leaderships. Consequently, 'clientelism' must be openly rejected and become a fact consigned to the past, to be held up as a real contrast to new models of management and of governance.

## Conclusions

In his works on the Italian regions, Robert Putnam (Putnam *et al.*, 1985; Putnam, 1993) has gone right back to the Renaissance in tracing the reasons for the relative absence of civic culture in Southern Italy, when compared with the Northern regions. Clientelism and corruption are said to be merely the natural and inevitable extension of a history unchanged over time and of a political culture inclined to these behaviours. In contrast with this kind of classically culturalist explanation — still very much in vogue in some academic circles — this article has tried to present a more institutional explanation of changes to political clientelism in the urban setting. Political clientelism is closely linked to the capacity of elected representatives occupying positions in public institutions to distribute public resources that may improve the living conditions of populations, whether on the basis of rights or of preferential treatment. These legitimate aspirations for upward social mobility on the part of the population are therefore frequently the driving force behind a political form of collectivization through self-interest. It must not be forgotten that, in an electoral democracy, people very often address their most private and personal concerns to an elected representative. These aspirations may clash with the interests of elected representatives, who historically are embroiled in a constant



process of professionalization of politics (Offerlé, 1999) and therefore need electors' votes in order to be re-elected.

Starting from the examples of Naples and Marseilles, we have indeed seen that, in historical periods of demographic and economic expansion, increases in public spending and greater possibilities for public institutions to redistribute resources, there is considerable growth in clientelistic relationships as well as clientelistic redistribution policies. On the other hand, when these resources dwindle, clientelistic policies cease to have the same impact and are less efficient. The capacity of institutions in universal suffrage regimes (or at least those where suffrage is gradually extended) to redistribute resources therefore goes hand in hand with the extension of political clientelism.

Naples and Marseilles seem to be pertinent examples for countering a culturalist explanation of political clientelism, since it is precisely in these two Southern cities, with their reputation for culturally and traditionally rooted clientelism that it has changed, becoming — as in other cities — just one explanatory variable among many. Clientelism in these two cities has in fact been profoundly altered: it is no longer currently a decisive factor in urban government and in political regulation, as it was in the 1960s. Contrary to Putnam's theses, clientelism is therefore neither a homogeneous, univocal phenomenon nor a historical inevitability. Not only has it survived modernity and change, but, of its own accord, it has also altered its practices, its forms, and its influence on political parties and on public policy, on urban government, and on the way power in the city is structured.

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