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VOTE SELLING, PARTY SERVING AND CLIENTELIST BENEFIT-SEEKING: CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL CLIENTELISM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis focuses on a less explored aspect of the political clientelist exchange: the role of citizens in political clientelism. It offers an original theoretical argument on the divergent clientelist engagement of citizens and probes the derived assumptions while using empirical data from the Western Balkan region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia). The thesis argues that one may distinguish between different types of clients when focusing on the services that they provide in return for the benefits which they obtain. As a result, the study distinguishes between clients who offer only electoral services to political parties in return for petty clientelist benefits (electoral clientelism) and clients who offer extended political services relevant for the building of party organizations in return for grand clientelist benefits (patronage). Party services provided in the past are thus best seen as a form of non-material resource that may be utilized in clientelist bargaining by citizens-clients and which is converted to material benefits through clientelist transactions. The author thus proposes that the variations of citizen engagement are prompted by the individual clients' divergent resource bases, with the resource base being consisted of both non-material and material resources relevant for political clientelism. Clients who are after grand benefits engage in political clientelism while providing extended party services (and thus accumulate political resources) in comparison to clients who extract petty clientelist benefits; and clients who are better-off in material terms engage in clientelism in order to obtain benefits of higher material value in comparison to poor clients.

These assumptions are tested against survey data from the Western Balkan region while examining the differences between clients involved in exchanges of votes for benefits and in citizen-initiated clientelist transactions (multivariate logistic regression analysis). Qualitative data consisted of semi-structured interviews with citizens is used in order to describe the main differences between the two sets of clients. The thesis also relies on original fieldwork conducted in the region consisted of expert information collection.

The thesis also aims to contribute to conceptual advancement in understanding the varieties of political clientelism. Beside developing a distinction between different types of benefits and services exchanged through clientelism (i.e. petty and grand benefits/services), the thesis offers a typology of clientelist exchanges and corresponding patron and client strategies of engagement. Following the typology, citizens engage in political clientelism through vote selling, turnout selling, abstention selling, party serving and clientelist benefit-seeking. The first three types are characteristic for the one-off electoral exchanges while the latter two for the iterated exchanges of patronage.

Key words: clientelism, patronage, political participation, political mobilization, Western Balkans

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INTRODUCTION

Many citizens across the world vote at the elections and surrender political support to candidates and elites when the latter deliver (or promise to deliver) particularistic material benefits. This phenomenon of citizen-elite linking, present globally and in different contexts and cloaks, is usually denoted as political clientelism. Political clientelism is often colloquially seen as a form of corruptive behavior that carries the same negative socio-economic consequences attributed to corruption (for an overview on the negative consequences of clientelism see Hicken 2011, 302-304). In addition, political clientelism is sharply distinguished from the desirable form of democratic politics, programmatic, or issue-based politics (Kitschelt and Wilknison 2007), as it is argued that it manages to turn democratic accountability on its head when making citizens accountable to politicians rather than the other way around (Stokes 2005).

In social sciences, political clientelism is conceptualized either as an exchange relationship (Scott 1972; Chubb 1982; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Hilgers 2012a) or a strategy of political mobilization pursued by political parties (Shefter 1994; Stokes 2007; Kopecký et al. 2012), or, alongside the previous, strategy of political participation of citizens (Piattoni 2001; Nichter 2018), or as a form of distributive politics (Stokes et al. 2013). All these conceptualizations however agree that clientelism is based on a particularistic exchange between two actors (patrons and clients) who find mutual advantage in the transactions underpinning the exchange and who command unequal resources, a notion that makes the relationship hierarchic. This basic understanding of the clientelist association is mirrored in politics with the unequal command of resources between political elites and citizens, the position of citizens as subordinates to elites in clientelist exchanges, and the politicized distribution of tailored benefits conditioned with political support. The two most prominent manifestations of political clientelism are the exchange of votes at the elections for material benefits (i.e. vote buying and selling) and the exchange of broader political support and assistance for benefits (i.e. patronage).

Clientelist exchanges have intrigued social and political scientists for several decades and have been studied in several different contexts and historical periods, including both mass democratic and pre-democratic manifestations. The seminal volume edited by Schmidt et al. (1977) from the "first wave" of study of clientelism, covers a geographical area encompassing Southeast Asia, Africa the European Mediterranean and South America. The contribution of Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984) is even more broad: apart from the areas covered in the volume by Schmidt et al., it also overviews countries from Eastern Europe, the former Ottoman territories, the Middle East, Central Asia, the Far East, North America, and even Ancient Rome. More recent influential edited volumes, that focus on clientelism in democratic contexts, have studied the European countries in a historical perspective (Piattoni ed. 2001), as well as contemporary India, Africa, Latin America and post-communist Europe (Kitschelt and Wilkinson eds. 2007).

Citizen engagement in political clientelism represents the less explored side of the clientelist exchange in contemporary political science in comparison to the theme of engagement of political parties. The last three decades saw a proliferation of studies that more exclusively focused on the strategic calculations of political parties engaging in clientelism for electoral purposes (e.g. Shefter 1994; Brusco et al. 2004; Chandra 2004; Stokes 2005; Kitschelt and Wilkinson eds. 2007; Nichter 2010; Szwarcberg 2013; Stokes et al. 2013; Gans-Morse et al. 2014; Mares and Young 2016). In the same period, and apart from some notable exceptions (e.g. Nichter and Peress 2017; Nichter 2018), the role of citizens in political clientelism remained undertheorized and less subject to empirical inquiry.

On the other hand, it is well documented in the literature that not all clients participate in political clientelism in the same way. Some clients sell votes, others sell their turnout or abstention during elections for a one-time benefit, and many engage in clientelism continuously to extract benefits for a longer period. How can we distinguish between these different sets of clients? Why are some clients in position to continuously extract clientelist benefits from political patrons, while others participate in clientelism only incidentally? What does this divergent engagement mean for scientific inference and policy intervention? When a state policy targets vote buying and selling does this

mean that other manifestations of political clientelism remain unaddressed? These are only some of the problems related to citizen engagement in political clientelism addressed in this thesis. The thesis aims to offer a theoretical argument backed with empirical evidence from the Western Balkan region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) on the divergent engagement of citizens in political clientelism.

My theoretical argument states that clients who engage in delivering extended (i.e. grand) services to political parties obtain non-material resources that are subsequently used in clientelist bargaining to extract clientelist benefits of a relatively higher material value (i.e. grand benefits). In contrast, clients who engage in electoral (petty) services can only extract benefits of a comparatively lower value (i.e. petty benefits). In addition, I also argue that relatively better-off clients (in terms of material resources) find no use of petty benefits and direct themselves to extraction of grand benefits, while the opposite is more frequent with the poor. Finally, I propose that in societies where political clientelism is widespread and patrons distribute benefits of different material values we would find it difficult to predict individual-level clientelism on the basis of material resources and instead, we should pay attention to the socialization of citizens in specific social networks to account for it.

The intention of this introductory chapter is to outline the theoretical and empirical achievements in the literature on political clientelism regarding clientelist engagement of citizens and the corresponding gaps in knowledge; to present the main research questions addressed in the thesis, the main theoretical argument, the context of inquiry as well as the methods of inquiry and the data used. The chapter is closed with a presentation of the structure and contents of the thesis.

What do we know about citizen engagement in political clientelism?

The contemporary literature on political clientelism has approached to the issue of the characteristics of clients through focus on the problem of who do political parties target with clientelist benefits (i.e. who are the most effective targets from the point of view of political parties?). There are three main theoretical debates regarding this

problem. The first is concerned with the socio-economic profiles of clients. Researchers typically expect that political parties disproportionately target the poor citizens who value clientelist benefits more highly than their wealthy counterparts. Political parties have limited resources to devote to clientelist exchanges and they seek to engage the available resources with a view of securing as much as possible electoral support. In this sense, the votes of the poor come cheapest in the market: taken in regard that political parties have limited resources for clientelist exchanges and that they will seek to capture as many votes as possible, the most effective strategy for parties is to engage with the poor. This theoretical expectation has found empirical backing by several studies on clientelist targeting during elections conducted in Argentina and Brazil (e.g. Brusco et al. 2004; Stokes 2005; Nichter 2010).

A second debate addresses the question of the political affiliation of clients. Some authors posit that political parties find it most cost-effective to target weak supporters and swing voters (e.g. Stokes 2005) while others that they target core supporters by inducing their turnout (e.g. Nichter 2010). The argument behind the first claim is that rational political parties would rather invest in attracting the votes of their unsecured voters than needlessly wasting resources on the party base who would turn out to vote anyway. The second claim is backed with the argument that the monitoring of voting choices is a resource-demanding operation, so parties prefer to distribute benefits to clients who are trustworthy but who hold low propensity to vote and would welcome incentives to turnout at the polls. These theoretical expectations have recently been refined in two directions. In the first direction, outlined by Stokes et al. (2013), political parties indeed aim to target swing voters with clientelist benefits, but clientelist brokers (i.e. the intermediaries between patrons and clients) have a different calculus than party bosses and modify the distribution towards core voters. The argument thus states that political parties prefer to target swing voters but, in practice, this objective is not fulfilled as the clientelist distribution is mediated by brokers in direction to core voters. In a second direction, Gans-Morse et al. (2014) claim that political parties rely on portfolio of strategies which are directed at different types of electoral clients. Political parties engage in vote buying when they intend to stimulate opposing or indifferent voters to switch their votes, in turnout buying when attempting to stimulate core voters

who hold low propensity to turnout at the elections and in abstention buying when attempting to demobilize indifferent or opposing voters.

Finally, some researchers consider that political parties rely on clientelist exchanges where the clients' conduct at the elections is easiest to be monitored (Brusco et al. 2004; Stokes 2005, 2007). Following this claim, political parties find it most cost-effective to engage with citizens who reside in small communities where brokers' insertion in social networks will provide them with necessary information on the clients' conduct, an operation that will make political clientelism worthwhile.

There are three principal problems with these accounts. First and foremost, the outlined theoretical expectations are derived while exclusively considering the manifestations of political clientelism that are electoral in character and most frequently on only one manifestation of political clientelism, the practice of exchanging material benefits for votes (i.e. vote buying and selling). At the same time, it is also acknowledged in the literature that political clientelism is not only utilized by political parties in the electoral process but also in the process of building party organizations (Kopecký and Mair 2012) and that political parties and citizens also maintain clientelist linkages which are not strictly electoral in type (a form of clientelism known in the literature as patronage, or more recently, relational clientelism, see Nichter 2018). In this sense, we know very little about citizens involved in other types of political clientelism but the electoral type. Second, most of the accounts come from the countries of South America and more specifically from Argentina and Brazil where the study of political clientelism has significantly advanced in the last two decades. As a result, we know very little about whether the findings from South America can be extended to other political, economic and cultural contexts.

Finally, and perhaps most crucially, the outlined theoretical expectations are derived while considering the strategic calculations of political parties and with a lack of consideration of the strategic calculations of citizens engaged in political clientelism. Most of the political science literature seems to take for granted that the clients are passive subjects in clientelist exchanges (Nichter and Peress 2017) who typically engage for the pettiest of benefits. On the other hand, there is a vibrant strain of ethnographic literature who paints a diverse picture of the client (Pellicer et al. 2019), emphasizing

that clientelism can also represent an integral part of the coping strategies of citizens (Auyero 2001). At the same time, some authors (e.g. Piattoni 2001; Hopkin 2006) have pointed out to a strengthened capacity of clients in clientelist bargaining as a result of democratization and modernization. Contemporary clients are thus sometimes seen as agents who are not forced to enter clientelism but who are capable to negotiate their engagement. But even in the early studies of clientelism, Scott (1972) has posited that the balance of power in the clientelist relationship is subject of the balance between the resource bases of patrons and clients and that it may swing to any of the two directions and thus reshape the relationship and the engagement of the two actors.

To recapitulate, the contemporary literature of political clientelism is predominantly concerned with the electoral manifestations of the phenomenon, as well as with the research question of who do parties target with clientelist benefits in line with their strategic calculations. This research orientation offers an incomplete picture of who the clients are – it focuses on the most cost-effective clients from the point of view of political parties and predominantly in the context of the electoral contest. Therefore, the puzzle of citizen engagement in political clientelism remains only partially addressed.

At the same time, it is theoretically plausible to assume that the "rules" of the clientelist exchange are not equal between electoral clientelist exchanges and those based on long-term linking. For one, the problem of monitoring is less present in the latter as patronage clients continuously signal political support (Nichter 2018) making voting in election day only a trivial presentation of one's political affiliation. In long-term linkages, political parties do not need to invest in clientelist monitoring as they are much more certain in the affiliation of their clients in comparison to electoral exchanges. Second, because long-term clients are extensively affiliated to political parties, the puzzle of who do parties target in terms of political affiliation should be largely straightforward in the patronage forms of linking. Finally, if parties utilize clientelism to develop party organizations and not solely for electoral purposes they might find less use of the poor (and less educated clients) as they would require clients who are willing to engage extensively and who have basic capacities to support the activities of the party at the grass roots level as well as its interests in the state

institutions. These notions show that further probing in the peculiarities of long-term (relational) clientelist linking could be of use for our overall understanding of the phenomenon of political clientelism.

Research questions

The main research question that this thesis seeks to untangle is why do some clients engage in one form of political clientelism over the other forms? More specifically, we know that some clients are in position to continuously extract clientelist benefits from political patrons, while others participate in clientelism only incidentally. Then, are there any differences between these two sets of clients and which are they?

A third question closely connected to the previous two and addressed in this thesis is the question of who the clients in the Western Balkan societies are. More specifically, who are the clients participating in different forms of clientelist linking? This study will provide an answer to the question regarding 1) clients engaged in exchanges of votes for benefits and 2) clients engaged in citizen-initiated exchanges.

Additional questions appear from the overall social context of inquiry. Which is the character of political clientelism in the Western Balkan societies? Given that the literature on political clientelism informs us on the existence of clientelist exchanges of different types it is important to determine which exchanges are predominant in the countries of the Western Balkans. This will also show us the possibilities for citizen engagement in political clientelism in the region.

Thus, this thesis considers four interconnected research questions:

1. Why do clients engage divergently in political clientelism?

2. Which are the differences between clients engaged in different forms of political clientelism?

3. Who are the clients in the societies of the Western Balkans?; and

4. What is the character of political clientelism in the Western Balkan region?

The argument

I offer the following theoretical arguments regarding the research questions addressed in this study. In this section I will only briefly outline my theoretical points, while a more detailed elaboration is available throughout the chapters of this doctoral thesis.

Political parties that practice clientelism have at their disposal limited resources to allocate to clientelist exchanges. These resources are consisted of material benefits of different values. Rational political parties would seek to distribute the more valuable benefits to clients who offer more extended political services and vice-versa, i.e. they would aim to "match" the contribution of their clients with benefits of an adequate value. Rational clients would also seek to offer services that will be cost-beneficial relative to the sought material benefit(s). I simplify these points by introducing the distinction between petty and grand benefits and services, and I further claim that petty benefits go together with petty services, and that grand benefits go together with grand services. By petty services I consider those services which are less time consuming from the point of view of clients (i.e. clientelist services in the electoral contest), while by grand I denote those services which are more time consuming (i.e. participation in party organizations). There are two crucial distinctions between clients that appear as a result of this theoretical outlook: we should expect that clients who hold lower level of material resources will be more frequently engaged in forms of clientelism that return petty benefits, while the opposite will be the case with clients that hold higher levels of material resources (as they would find less use of petty benefits); *and* the engagement of those clients who are after petty benefits will be characterized by petty services, while that of clients who are after grand benefits by grand services. I argue that past party services are best seen as a form of non-material resource that can be utilized in clientelist bargaining by citizens-clients and which is converted to a material benefit through the clientelist transaction. These points answer the first two research questions posed in the previous section, i.e. the puzzle of why citizens engage in political clientelism in different ways, as well as which are the crucial differences between clients engaged in different modes of clientelist linking.

Next, regarding the research question on the character of political clientelism across the Western Balkans, this study aims to show empirically that political clientelism is characterized by the presence of several different exchanges, some characterized by short-term and others by long-term duration. Political parties in the region use clientelism for both electoral purposes and broader political purposes such as the building of party organizations. This opens space for divergent engagement by citizens-clients.

Finally, regarding the issue of who are the clients in the Western Balkan societies, I shall argue that they cannot be predicted by relying on the standard socio-demographic variables employed in the research on political clientelism, such as material resources, education and residence. Political clientelism in the Western Balkans seems omnipresent, to a point that it crosscuts across all socio-economic groups. Instead, clientelist engagement is better predicted by what I call non-material resources relevant for clientelist engagement. Through my multivariate statistical analysis, I show that first, citizens engaged in party organizations possess political resources that puts them in position to extract grand clientelist benefits, and, second, that citizens who possess networking resources are the typical clientelist targets. I also probe the assumption that relatively better-off clients engage in forms of clientelism that return grand benefits in comparison to the poor. I am not able to corroborate this assumption fully with the multivariate analysis, but I do offer qualitative data that suggests that this could indeed be the case.

The context

The thesis focuses on citizen engagement and political clientelism in general as practiced in the Western Balkan region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia). The Western Balkan countries have only limited experience with multiparty democracy, following several-decades long one-party rule and socialist political and economic systems which were disbanded in the early 1990s. Clientelist exchanges became prominent in the last three decades in each of the six countries. Across the region, clientelist exchanges are used as both political mobilization and participation strategies and hold broader effects on distributive politics. Yet, the countries of the Western Balkans have not been in the focus when it

comes to the study of political clientelism. In a similar way, political clientelism has not been in the focus of area specialists engaged with the region. This thesis aims to fill this lack of systematic knowledge on Western Balkan political clientelism through a focus on citizen engagement. Chapter 2 of the thesis presents relevant information on the context of the region, while Chapter 3 focuses more closely on the overall character of political clientelism in the Western Balkan countries.

Methods of inquiry and sources of data

This study approaches citizen engagement in political clientelism in the Western Balkans while relying on several sources of data and while utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry. I rely on secondary data sources to describe the broader Western Balkan context in Chapter 2, where I discuss the level of political and economic development of the countries in the region, as well as their electoral and party systems, and the character of political parties. In Chapter 3, where I describe political clientelism in the Western Balkans, I rely on my own fieldwork in the region consisted of expert information collection, as well as on secondary sources of data. Finally, in order to empirically establish the differences between clients engaged in petty vote selling exchanges and clients engaged in grand exchanges of patronage (Chapter 4) I utilize survey data gathered by the project "Closing the gap between formal and informal institutions in the Balkans" (INFORM, 2017, N=6040). I use INFORM's survey data to develop multivariate statistical models that probe the likelihood of engagement of citizens in political clientelism through two modes: exchange of votes for benefits and citizen-initiated clientelist transactions; and I compare the findings of the two models. In addition, I use data from semi-structured interviews with selected respondents from the survey also gathered by INFORM (2018, N=120) to describe the divergent engagement of citizens in political clientelism across the Western Balkan region. INFORM's semi-structured interviews data base offers a rare overview of citizens' experiences, perceptions and attitudes on political clientelism. The two types of data and the related findings are used to support the main argument of this doctoral thesis. Chapter 4 offers more insights on how these two sources of data were utilized for this doctoral thesis.

The approach that I use in dealing with these different sources and types of data follows Seawright's integrative multi-method approach for research in social sciences

(2016, ch. 1). The integrative approach can be opposed to the approach of triangulation: the former utilizes different methods "to support a single, unified causal inference," (Ibid., 8) whilst the latter involves "asking the same question of causal inference using two different methods, and checking that the same substantive conclusions are produced by both" (Ibid., 4). In this sense, I use the quantitative findings as evidence on the significance of non-material and material individual-level resources for the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism, while I use the INFORM qualitative data to "fill-in the blanks" in regard to the causal mechanism behind the effects. My own fieldwork data, on the other hand, is used to "map" the universe of clientelist exchanges present in the Western Balkans. All these data sources are thus used in different ways, with a goal to test a unified theory in different aspects. In an earlier stage of research for this doctoral thesis I used the qualitative data, and particularly the data obtained through my fieldwork in the region, to further develop my logistic regression models, the choice and coding of variables used, as well as to inform the theoretical expectations assessed empirically through the present statistical models.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1 of this thesis develops a conceptual and theoretical framework relevant to the study of the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism. This is done in three steps. In the first step, I direct efforts in defining political clientelism and in delimiting it from other phenomena with which it can be empirically conflated (i.e. programmatic politics, other forms of non-programmatic politics, traditional clientelism, corruption and nepotism). I argue in favor of a definition of political clientelism that at its center has the element of exchange. This is perhaps at odds with the contemporary literature on political clientelism that typically understands the phenomenon as a strategy of political mobilization. In this thesis, the understanding of political clientelism as being per se an exchange between two actors represents an entry point in conceptualizing the varieties of clientelist engagement by citizens. On the other hand, I follow most of the contemporary literature in deriving a delimitation line between clientelism and the group of "neighboring" phenomena with which it is sometimes conflated. In a second step, I construct a typology of clientelist exchanges and corresponding strategies of engagement by patrons and clients. I follow the

contemporary literature when distinguishing between one-off electoral exchanges and iterated relational exchanges of patronage. Beside vote, turnout and abstention selling (i.e. strategies of engagement of electoral clients) which are well known in the literature, I introduce the concepts of party serving and clientelist benefit-seeking (i.e. strategies of engagement of patronage clients). In a third step in Chapter 1, I elaborate the theory on the varying engagement of citizens in political clientelism.

Chapter 2 presents the context of the Western Balkans. I use several indicators to conclude that the Western Balkan countries are at intermediate levels of democratic and economic development compared to the global outlook. I offer some insights on the main deficits related to the practice of democratic governance across the region. Further on, I describe the specifics of the electoral and the party systems of the Western Balkan countries. Chapter 2 is largely intended to familiarize the reader with the overall social, political and economic context of the region.

In Chapter 3 I focus exclusively on the character of political clientelism in the Western Balkan countries. In deriving an understanding on the character of political clientelism in the region I utilize findings from my fieldwork consisted of expert information collection conducted specifically for this doctoral thesis. I find that the Western Balkan countries differ very little in terms of the patterns of clientelist exchanges present on the ground. Across all countries of the region, political parties use clientelism not only for electoral purposes but also for purposes of building party organizations. Likewise, clients engage in political clientelism while providing both electoral and broader party services. I offer evidence in support of the notion that petty benefits go together with petty services, and that grand benefits go together with grand services. Chapter 3 thus includes findings on both the supply and the demand side of political clientelism in the region and attempts to discuss how these findings relate to the theory outlined in Chapter 1.

Chapter 4 presents the multivariate statistical analysis on survey data that seeks to probe the theoretical argument that clients engaged in forms of political clientelism that return grand benefits possess different types of non-material resources than their counterparts engaged in clientelism for petty benefits. I show this when comparing the effects of several independent variables on two forms of engagement by citizens, the

exchange of votes for benefits and citizen-initiated transactions (i.e. a strategy of citizen engagement which I term clientelist benefit-seeking). I find that citizens who can initiate a clientelist transaction hold non-material political resources in comparison to citizens who are engaged in clientelism through vote buying and selling who do not possess such resources. In Chapter 4 I also use qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews with selected survey respondents to show that the resources relevant for clientelist bargaining are obtained by clients when they perform services for political parties. I use both sources of data to corroborate the single theoretical argument that the variations of clientelist engagement are best explained by citizens' decisions to acquire leverage in clientelist bargaining. Citizens that "aim high" in regard to extraction of clientelist benefits perform extended services for political parties, while citizens who "aim low" are contend with performing only petty electoral services. I offer some (mainly qualitative) evidence that these citizen decisions are prompted by varying socio-economic backgrounds (i.e. differences in individual material resources).

The concluding chapter summarizes the contributions of this thesis regarding the conceptual, theoretical, methodological and empirical aspects in studying the phenomenon of political clientelism. The chapter also outlines the study limitations as well as the policy implications of the empirically noted variations of clientelist engagement. I conclude the thesis with a brief discussion on the prospects of a research agenda directed at citizen engagement in political clientelism. I argue that a focus on citizen engagement reveals many aspects of the phenomenon which are often overlooked when political clientelism is studied as strategy of political mobilization performed by political parties.

Chapter 1. VARIATIONS OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL CLIENTELISM: A CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter offers a conceptual and theoretical framework for studying the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism. In the following, I develop an argument on the divergent engagement of citizens in clientelist exchanges conducted in the political arena. Some clients engage in vote selling exchanges, others offer more extended services to political parties in order to obtain clientelist benefits, and another set of clients are even successful in initiating clientelist transactions in their own volition. Why do some clients engage in a specific type of clientelist linking over others? Which are the preconditions that drive citizen engagement from a given type of a clientelist exchange to another? Are there significant differences between vote selling clients and clients that engage in more durable clientelist exchanges?

Until now, political clientelism has been studied to account for its persistence and cessation (e.g. Shefter 1994; Piattoni ed. 2001; Kitschelt and Wilkinson eds. 2007; Stokes et al. 2013; Nichter 2018), the strategic calculations of political parties in deciding which voters to target with clientelist benefits (e.g. Cox and McCubbins 1986; Dixit and Londregan 1996; Brusco et al. 2004; Stokes 2005; Gans-Morse et al. 2014), the party organization behind clientelist political mobilization (e.g. Stokes et al. 2013; Szwarcberg 2013; Camp 2015), the role of voters in the maintenance of durable clientelist exchanges (e.g. Nichter 2018) and the varieties of clientelist linking in elections and beyond (e.g. Gans-Morse et al. 2014; Nichter 2010, 2018; Mares and Young 2016, 2018; Yıldırım and Kitschelt 2020). However, we still know very little on the point of view of citizens engaged in political clientelism as well as on the factors accounting for citizen engagement across different manifestations of the phenomenon.

This chapter presents a feasible theoretical argument to account for the varieties of citizen engagement in political clientelism. The argument holds that clients engage in political clientelism to obtain benefits of different material value, with some clients obtaining more valuable benefits than others. Engagement in political clientelism is understood as the range of services that clients provide. I thus derive that we may distinguish between clients that engage in clientelism with electoral *and* party-

organizational services, as well as between clients who are after more valuable *and* less valuable benefits. Clients who obtain more valuable benefits are characterized by possession of non-material political resources relevant for clientelist bargaining (i.e. non-material resources obtained by pro-active participation in party organization activities) and by possession of higher levels of material resources (i.e. better-off clients find no use of petty clientelist benefits but do find use of more valuable clientelist benefits).

To advance the argument, the chapter firstly offers an extended definition of political clientelism (Section 1.1.). Because political clientelism represents one of the contested concepts in political science and related disciplines (Hicken 2011; Hilgers 2012b), I develop a detailed conceptualization to arrive at conceptual clarity, relevant for this study and for the study of political clientelism in general. I do so by advancing a formal definition of political clientelism, by discussing its main defining elements and by delimiting it from other phenomena which is sometimes empirically conflated. In line with the "classical" literature on clientelism, I opt to conceptualize political clientelism as an exchange relation in the political arena, conducted for purposes of political mobilization and participation.

In a second step, I develop a typology of exchanges in political clientelism, as well as corresponding patron and client strategies of engagement (Section 1.2.). I differentiate between electoral and patronage exchanges, with the former being pursued by political parties for electoral objectives and the latter for building and maintaining party organizations. Following the literature, I derive three strategies of engagement of patrons in electoral exchanges: vote buying, turnout buying and abstention buying; and two strategies of engagement in patronage: rewarding loyalists and request fulfilling. To these five strategies of patron engagement I derive five corresponding strategies of client engagement: vote selling, turnout selling, abstention selling, party serving and benefit-seeking.

In a third step, I outline my theory on the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism (Section 1.3.). When political parties pursue a dual objective through political clientelism (electoral and building of party organizations), they distribute benefits of different material value for their clients, with the clients involved

in electoral exchanges capturing benefits with lower value than clients engaged in patronage. My argument states that we may distinguish between these two sets of clients based on the services that they provide, a decision motivated by the benefits they wish to obtain. Citizen engagement in political clientelism takes the form of party serving and benefit-seeking when clients are after benefits of a higher material value and takes the form of vote, turnout and abstention selling when clients are content with petty benefits. This means that these two sets of clients should be distinguished by their affiliation to political parties (the former are more closely aligned to party organizations) and by their socio-economic background (the former hold higher levels of material resources enough to find no use from petty benefits). In addition, my theoretical argument states that when we consider both types of exchanges it is more difficult to predict citizen engagement in political clientelism as an outcome of poverty and instead we should look at the socialization of citizens in specific social networks to account for it.

This chapter represents the first systematic attempt in the literature to outline a theoretical framework on the varieties of citizen engagement in political clientelism. With this, I seek to advance our understanding on the phenomenon of political clientelism in general, and more specifically, on the role of citizens in the overall dynamics of clientelist linking.

1.1. Defining political clientelism

When defining political clientelism two challenges emerge. The first challenge is to strike a delimiting line between political clientelism and other phenomena with which it is sometimes empirically conflated (e.g. programmatic politics, other forms of non-programmatic politics, corruption, nepotism and "traditional" clientelism). A second challenge relates to the main defining elements of the concept and here the goals are to eschew conceptual stretching regarding the unit of analysis as well as of one sub-manifestation of political clientelism over others, and, most relevant to this thesis, to provide conceptual clarity on the role of clients in political clientelism. I will address these two general problems in turn and then I will present my own definition of political clientelism.

The contemporary literature on political clientelism has directed significant efforts in developing satisfactory solutions regarding delimiting political clientelism from "neighboring" phenomena. A group of scholars (e.g. Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, 7-10; Stokes et al. 2013, 7; Nichter 2018, 9) distinguish between political clientelism and other forms of political mobilization and distributive politics (primarily programmatic politics) on the basis of the following criterion: if a particular distribution of politicized benefits is conditioned on political support then we are talking about political clientelism, otherwise we are considering other forms of political linking that may be either programmatic (issue-based) or non-programmatic (distribution of non-conditional benefits and pork-barrel politics). This criterion seems satisfactory in delimiting political clientelism from other forms of political linking and I will thus include it in my definition.

Clientelism can also be sometimes conflated with a group of "neighboring" phenomena that fall under the rubric of particularism (Mungiu-Pippidi 2005), primarily with corruption and nepotism. The logic on how to delimit political clientelism from corruption and nepotism is similar as in the case of the delimitation between political clientelism and other forms of politics. Both corruption and nepotism do not involve the demand for political support and services for any of the actors participating in the transaction, and, as such, do not represent a case of political clientelism. This logic of differentiation between political clientelism and other phenomena underscores the fact that political services performed by clients are a useful cut-off point from which we may base the study of the clientelist phenomenon in contemporary democratic politics.

In addition, political clientelism can be sharply distinguished from traditional clientelism by the services that clients provide. Traditional clientelism refers to the pre-democratic manifestations of linking between patrons and clients that consist of exchanges of mutually beneficial benefits and services. The services that clients provide in traditional clientelism are however not of a political character, in the sense of mass democratic politics. Clients in traditional clientelism support patrons in different ways, by offering labor, professional and military services (Scott 1972), but traditional clientelism in the strict sense of the word does not involve electoral services or services in building and maintaining party organizations. Thus, we may delimit political and

traditional clientelism by the political services provided by the clients which are characteristic to the former.

The definition of political clientelism that I advance in this thesis also seeks to overcome three general problems that appear in the contemporary literature on the phenomenon regarding conceptual stretching over different units of analysis, conceptual stretching of one sub-manifestation of political clientelism over others and the acknowledgement that political clientelism also represents a strategy for engagement of citizens. First, the concept of clientelism has been stretched in the literature to denote – at different times – dyadic relationships, organizational characteristics of political parties and state systems (Hilgers 2012b), making it difficult to determine the analytical level that the analyst is overviewing when describing a phenomenon as "clientelist." For the sake of conceptual clarity, it is important to determine with which unit of analysis we are dealing when considering political clientelism. The definition advanced here addresses this problem by fixing political clientelism at the micro-level of social interaction: in general, political clientelism represents a dyadic exchange relationship between political parties and citizens that is used for purposes of political mobilization and building a party organization (political parties), as well as political participation and interest fulfilment (citizens). Drawing from this understanding, political clientelism does not represent a characteristic of organizations and state systems, rather it is an exchange between two specific actors – political parties and citizens – that has ramifications for the overall dynamics of political mobilization, building of party organizations and political participation in a given polity.

The second problem of conceptual clarity present in the contemporary literature on political clientelism relates to acknowledging the varieties of exchanges that we identify as instances of the phenomenon. Scholars who focus on clientelism as a relationship between two actors often base their inferences on a specific variety of clientelist linking (most commonly, vote buying, e.g. Brusco et al. 2003; Stokes 2005), leading to conceptual stretching of one variety of clientelism over the whole universe of clientelist exchanges (Nichter 2014). My definition overcomes this problem by acknowledging a variety of clientelist exchanges: I underline this notion when explicitly including the different benefits and services exchanged by political parties and citizens.

The different objects of exchange which we may observe empirically signal the presence of different sub-types of clientelist exchanges beyond the most known manifestation of political clientelism – the exchange of votes for material benefits.

Finally, there is a lack of conceptual clarity regarding how we should conceptualize the role of citizens in political clientelism. Some contemporary conceptualizations on the phenomenon view political clientelism as a non-programmatic strategy of political mobilization pursued by political parties (e.g. Shefter 1994; Stokes 2007; Stokes et al. 2013), while others also acknowledge a citizen participation component in clientelist linking (e.g. Auyero 2001; Piattoni 2001; Nichter 2018). My definition follows and advances the latter strain of literature while emphasizing the fact that political clientelism represents an avenue of interest promotion also for citizens and by acknowledging the variety of services that clients offer to political parties. Political clientelism, thus, is not only a non-programmatic strategy of political mobilization but also a non-programmatic strategy of political participation, depending on the specific point of view held by either of the two actors in the clientelist exchange conducted in the political arena.

Prior to understanding political clientelism as a strategy relevant for the fulfilment of the specific interests of the two sets of actors, we need to acknowledge that both goals of political mobilization and participation are achieved through an exchange which holds specific characteristics in comparison to other exchange relationships. The "classical" conceptualizations of clientelism developed by scholars interested in political development in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. see the papers from the volume by Schmidt et al. eds. 1977) view (not necessarily political) clientelism primarily as an exchange relationship characterized by a dyadic structure, asymmetric transactions and contingency on the behavior of actors. In this sense, my definition of political clientelism returns to the more "classical" conceptualization of the phenomenon by emphasizing the notion that clientelism is primarily an exchange, which, when includes political services delivered from the side of clients can be identified as instance of the "political" manifestation of clientelism (in contrast, when no political services are part of the exchange, we speak of the "traditional" manifestation of clientelism). Thus, my understanding of political clientelism is derived from the more

abstract concept of clientelism, which, in simplest terms, represents an asymmetrical exchange between two actors who find mutual benefit in their association.

Drawing on these points, I take that political clientelism represents the exchange of particularistic material benefits (goods, favors, information, and opportunities) from the side of political parties, in return for political services (voting and participation in elections, engagement in party mobilization activities and, most broadly, promotion of party interests) from the side of citizens. Understood from the point of view of political parties, political clientelism is one of the available strategies for political mobilization in elections, as well as for building a party organization. Understood from the point of view of citizens, political clientelism represents a strategy for political participation and fulfilment of particularistic interests and needs.

The above conceptualization allows me to study the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism (the research focus on this thesis) as variations of the services offered by clients, relative to benefits provided by political parties. The definition is specific in order to address several long-standing dilemmas in defining political clientelism present in the literature. In what follows, I present a more thorough discussion on the characteristics of the clientelist exchange in the political arena.

1.1.1. Deriving the concept of political clientelism from the conceptual category of clientelism

My approach in conceptualizing political clientelism follows Sartori's framework for concept building which relies on prescribing additional properties or attributes to a sub-category (in this case political clientelism) to a category which stands at higher level of abstraction (in this case clientelism) (Sartori 1970, 1041). In this sense, if one seeks to arrive to a definition of political clientelism, one only needs to specify the object of exchange from the side of clients: if clients provide political services to reciprocate for a particularistic benefit, then we speak of political clientelism. In contrast, whenever a clientelist exchange has nothing to do with political mobilization or participation we speak of what some authors have branded as "traditional" clientelism. In this conceptualization, the conceptual category of clientelism stands higher at the "ladder of abstraction" than the conceptual category of political clientelism, which is further defined by object of exchange offered by clients to political patrons.

In understanding clientelism as an exchange, and correspondingly, in understanding political clientelism as an exchange conducted in the political arena, I follow an influential strain of literature on the phenomenon that appeared in the first decades following the Second World War. This strain of literature, developed by sociologists and anthropologists interested in the social, economic and political developments of the post-colonial world, focused on the micro-level logic of clientelist association in the traditional rural setting. In a number of studies from this first wave of interest in the phenomenon, clientelism was primarily understood as a dyadic exchange relationship between two actors of unequal social status and standing, in which, in broad terms, the patron provides protection and means of subsistence for the client, who reciprocates with expressions of loyalty and assistance (e.g. Powell 1970; Lemarchand 1972; Scott 1972; Landé 1973; Graziano 1976). In this depiction, the clientelist relationship does not necessarily enter the realm of mass politics, a characteristic which, on the contrary, is key for the contemporary political manifestation of clientelism.

In a seminal definition from this first wave of interest in the phenomenon, Scott defines the patron-client relationship as an "exchange relationship between roles [that] may be defined as a special case of dyadic (two-person) ties involving a largely instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socioeconomic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client) who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron." (Scott 1972, 92, insertion in brackets [...] is mine). Scott's conceptualization of the clientelist relationship differentiates between different resources that patrons and clients may exchange, with some resources being more and others less relevant for contemporary democratic political mobilization and participation. In Scott's conceptualization, the patron may possess the following varieties of "patronage" resources: 1) specific knowledge and skills that could be of use to clients (recognizable in the roles of lawyers, doctors, literates, local military chiefs, teachers etc.), 2) property that could be indispensable to the livelihoods of clients (such as land, factories, shops etc.), and 3) office-based property that is derived from the patron's command of a public office (discretionary power over employment and promotion in the public sector, social service assistance, welfare,

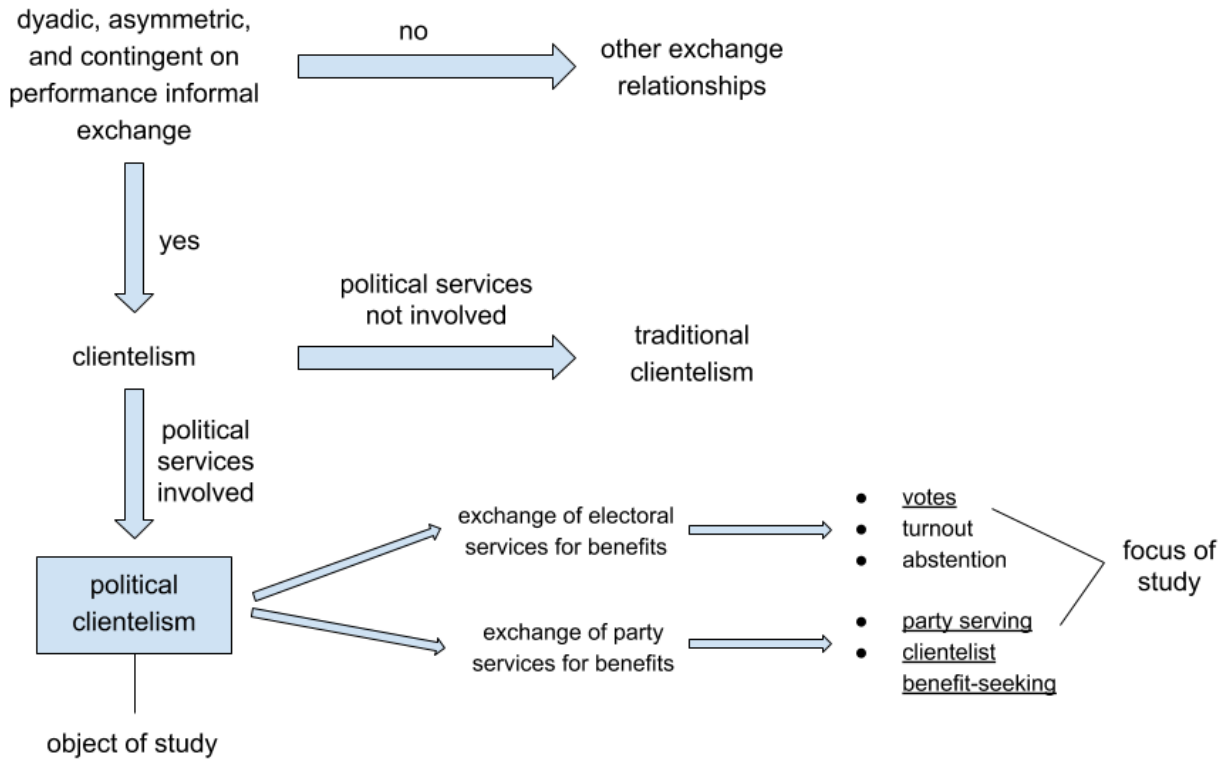
licensing, permits etc.). Resources in the types 1) and 2) are more characteristic for traditional (non-political) clientelism while resources under the type 3) are consistent with the understanding of contemporary political clientelism proposed in this thesis. By the same token, the client seeks to reciprocate the patron by offering own resources. Here, Scott makes a distinction between three types of resources of "clientage": 1) labor-services and economic support (such as those provided by an employee with specific skills or a rent-paying tenant), 2) military and fighting duties (such as those provided by warriors to their chiefs) and 3) political services, which Scott divides on electoral (votes) and non-electoral sub-types (canvassing, grass-roots political mobilization and the like). In the same way as in the conceptualization of the resource base of patronage, types 1) and 2) of the resource base of clientage are more characteristic for traditional (non-political) clientelism while type 3) is more characteristic for contemporary political clientelism.

Adapting Scott's framework on the variations of the resource bases of patronage and clientage to the question of interest (i.e. delimiting political clientelism from the conceptual category of clientelism), I propose that a sufficient criterion to distinguish between clientelism and political clientelism is the character of support that clients perform to reciprocate for the benefits distributed by patrons. This assessment is empirically grounded. One of the most prominent practices of clientelist political mobilization – vote buying – often relies on distribution of benefits which are not directly derived from a party's position in office in return to votes. In addition, there is a rather broad list of resources that political parties practicing clientelism may utilize in their mobilization efforts that may overlap with Scott's sub-types 1) and 2). Thus, if one aims to rely on specific "patronage" resources as a delimiting criterion between clientelism and political clientelism, one would not end up with a satisfactory solution. Instead, focusing on what clients should provide in return for obtaining clientelist benefits provides us with a clear-cut delimitation between clientelism and political clientelism, i.e. clients engaged in political clientelism provide political services to their patrons. By political services, I understand not only the act of voting in elections, but also those practices that demonstrate allegiance to a political party: attendance at rallies, display of party symbols, public proclamations of political allegiance, party activism, canvassing

during election campaigns, defense and promotion of party interests in state institutions, etc.

Figure 1.1. summarizes the discussion relevant for defining political clientelism while deriving it from the broader conceptual category of clientelism. It outlines the necessary elements needed to consider one phenomenon as a phenomenon of political clientelism. In addition, it outlines the different services that clients deliver in the framework of clientelist exchanges (discussed in section 1.2. of this chapter). The main object of interest in this thesis is political clientelism, while the study is further focused in Chapter 4 on three specific varieties of political clientelism: the exchange of votes for benefits, party serving and citizen-initiated clientelist exchanges (clientelist benefit-seeking) (shown in Figure 1.1.).

Figure 1.1. Conceptualization of political clientelism and its varieties



1.1.2. Other approaches in defining political clientelism

Some of the conceptualizations on political clientelism present in the literature also emphasize the characteristic of exchange in the political arena as a main defining element (e.g. Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Hilgers 2012a). Kitschelt and Wilkinson define political clientelism as a "particular mode of 'exchange' between electoral constituencies as principals and politicians as agents in democratic systems" (2007, 7), with three crucial elements that delimit clientelism from programmatic (issue-based) politics: contingency of the exchange, certain predictability of behavior of actors and heightened monitoring performed by clientelist political parties to ensure compliance of clients and predictability of voting behavior. However, the understanding of political clientelism as being per se an exchange - from which I build my conceptualization - is less characteristic for the contemporary definitions of the phenomenon. Most scholars opt to describe political clientelism as a strategy of political mobilization (e.g. Shefter 1994; Stokes 2007; Kopecký and Mair 2012) and less frequently as being also a strategy of political participation (e.g. Piattoni 2001; Auyero 2001; Nichter 2018). To cite an example from the first group of scholars consider the definition placed forward by Stokes, who defines electoral clientelism as a method of political mobilization which consists of "proffering of material goods in return for electoral support, where the criterion of distribution that the patron uses is simply: did you (will you) support me?" (2007, 605). An example of the second group of scholars, who, in addition of understanding clientelism as a method of political mobilization, also acknowledge that political clientelism may represent one of the avenues of interest promotion of citizens is the definition of Piattoni. Piattoni defines clientelism and patronage as "strategies for the acquisition, maintenance, and aggrandizement of political power, on the part of the patrons, and strategies for protection and promotion of their interests, on the part of the clients" (2001, 2).

There is at least one crucial advantage in understanding political clientelism as an *exchange* conducted in the political arena: such conceptual preliminary allows us to unify the two currently divided (in the literature) analyses of parties' and citizens' strategies into one framework through which we may focus on citizen engagement as an outcome of an exchange relationship. Focusing on political clientelism as either a

political mobilization strategy or political participation strategy draws the analyst to unnecessarily focus on one of the two actors in the relationship, which, as repeatedly acknowledged in the literature, is highly contingent on the actions of both sets of actors. The quid-pro-quo character of the clientelist phenomenon demands understanding of the actions of both sets of actors which result in mutual interaction (the exchange). Simply, patrons do not distribute the same set of benefits to all their clients and clients do not reply with political support of the same type to the different types of benefits distributed. Therefore, a focus on the exchange represents a conceptual necessity if we wish to truly grasp the logic behind both party and citizen engagement in political clientelism. I shall further develop these points in the next sections of this chapter where I disaggregate political clientelism in different types of exchanges and when I will outline my theory on the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism.

1.1.3. Further fixing of the concept: defining elements of political clientelism

At its most basic level, political clientelism represents an exchange relation in the political arena characterized by several peculiarities that distinguish it from other (formal or informal) exchanges between social actors. The reliance on exchange as a method of linking between political parties and citizens represents a point of differentiation between political clientelism and the normatively desirable form of democratic linking – programmatic politics.

By social exchange I understand the "voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring and typically do in fact bring from others" (Blau 1964, 91). In line with most on the literature, I adopt three defining elements of all exchanges that can be branded as political clientelism: 1) asymmetrical character of exchange, 2) dynamics of the exchange that relies on contingency of actors' performance, and 3) dyadic structure of the exchange in which the specific actors appear as individuals or collectives.

The first of these three elements – the asymmetrical nature of the clientelist exchange – has received two different readings in the literature. For the studies of the traditional forms of clientelist linking in the post-colonial world, the asymmetry was provided by the more-or-less fixed status roles between the two actors participating in

clientelism. Patrons were thus seen as individuals with higher social status and clients as individuals with lower social status. For these reasons, scholars have emphasized the importance of normative and affective motivations for citizen engagement in clientelism (e.g. Scott 1972, 99). In a second reading, it is not the status roles that fuel the asymmetry of the exchange but rather the transactions that underpin it (Hilgers 2012a, 10-11). The transactions are highly asymmetrical in comparison to the formalized economic exchanges in which the actors tend to exchange goods that are of compatible value. In political clientelism, the actors exchange benefits for services and the relative values of both objects of exchange are highly divergent. To provide a rather typical example of a clientelist exchange in the political arena, a given amount of cash typically outweighs the relative value of an individual vote, making the clientelist transaction worthwhile from the point of view of vote selling citizens. My understanding of the characteristic of asymmetry in political clientelism aligns with this second reading: the benefits and services exchanged between patrons and clients are incompatible in terms of their relative value but are still mutually beneficial for both sets of actors. This understanding of asymmetry in political clientelism allows us to adopt the characteristic as a defining element beyond societies that are characterized by fixed status roles.

The second of the three defining elements of the clientelist exchange – contingency on the performance of actors – accounts for the underlying dynamics of the association. Given that the clientelist exchange is highly informalized (Helmke and Levitsky 2006, 15-16), there is always a level of uncertainty that the transaction will go through if both actors' do not fulfil their end of the bargain. For this reason, we characterize the outcome of the clientelist exchange as highly contingent on actors' performance.

I identify three divergent instances in the literature on how contingency works in political clientelism. All three understandings are quite novel and are based on a modified principal-agent (i.e. voter-politician) framework. In the first instance, Stokes models the clientelist relation as an upside-down principal-agent accountability, i.e. "perverse accountability" (2005). In this reading, and contrary to the standard principal-agent framework in democratic politics, citizens assume the role of agents while political elites – the role of principals. While in programmatic politics, citizens punish

misbehaving political elites, in clientelist politics elites punish misbehaving voters who fail to fulfil their end of the clientelist bargain. For this reason, according to Stokes, clientelism promotes an upside-down logic of accountability which holds negative consequences for democratic politics. In a second instance, and contrary to Stokes, Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007) rely on the standard division of roles in the principal-agent model. Citizens assume the role of principals and elites the role of agents, while both actors are concerned with the predictability of each other's conduct and with possible defections from the exchange. This framework permits space for citizen action – clients also strategically align to the actions of patrons and inform their voting choices to the stimulus provided by the clientelist network. In this reading, clients may defect if they assess that the conduct of patrons is unfavorable for their engagement. A third account, which seems to reconcile the two provided by Stokes and Kitschelt and Wilkinson, is proposed by Nichter (2010). Nichter starts from the notion that not all elites and citizens are engaged in clientelism the same way. He compares commitment problems of citizens and elites in two sub-types of clientelist political mobilization: electoral clientelism (short-term, within-campaign exchanges) and relational clientelism (long-term, iterated exchanges). He argues that the citizen-commitment problem is characteristic for both electoral and relational clientelism, while the elite commitment problem is characteristic only for the latter. Nichter assumes that in linkages of relational clientelism, where benefits and political support is continuously exchanged, citizens may also hold political patrons accountable as a part of an iterated game. In this sense, the conceptual differences between Stokes and Kitschelt and Wilkinson are not conflicting, but rather emerge from the notion that their studies focus on different types of clientelist linking – Stokes is focused on electoral clientelism, while Kitschelt and Wilkinson on relational clientelism. The added value of Nichter's approach is that it manages to arrive at an understanding of principal-agent linking across the diversity of clientelist exchanges.

The present study adopts this third understanding of how contingency works in political clientelism - some forms of clientelist linking are relatively more contingent on the performance of clients, while others make contingency relevant for both sets of actors. It is worth noting at this point that the compliance of actors is ensured in political clientelism by a mixture of promises of benefits and threats of sanctions (Mares

and Young 2016; 2018) which theoretically may move in both ways – from patrons to clients, as well as from clients to patrons. These two mechanisms – rewards and sanctions – work in favor of sustaining the clientelist exchange even when transactions are conducted over a longer period. Still, for a clientelist exchange to be successful both sets of actors must play their part.

The third element of the clientelist exchange – the dyadic structure – roots the clientelist exchange at the micro level of analysis of society and politics. My definition emphasizes two key actors relevant for the clientelist association (the patrons and the clients) but I do not adopt the notion that clientelism is necessarily a face-to-face direct relationship between the two primary actors as some of the definitions on traditional clientelism hold. In conditions of contemporary mass democracy, we do not need to expect that patrons and clients will relate to each other directly, rather, the exchange will be sustained by (as often argued in the literature) intermediaries which are conceptualized as clientelist brokers (Auyero 2001; Stokes et al. 2013; Schwarzenberg 2013; Camp 2015). Intermediaries function as lower-level patrons (in their relationship with clients), and, at the same time as higher-level clients (in their relationship to upper-level patrons) (Scott conceptualizes such groupings as patron-client pyramids, see Scott 1972, 96). The relations within such groupings are sustained by the same quid-pro-quo logic as in the ideal type of a patron-client relations (the purely dyadic one consisted of a chief-patron and a client). The need for intermediaries is practical from the point of view of both patrons and clients: they ease the flow of resources, control the clientelist network and provide access to the network for the clients. Despite these complexities of contemporary clientelist networking, the dyadic structure prevails in political clientelism because at all levels of the clientelist pyramid two actors establish an informal contract which is exclusive to those involved. One may think of a clientelist network as a set of partial dyadic transactions.

Thus, when we define clientelism as a dyadic exchange relationship we conceptually capture all relevant exchanges that would take place in the patron-client pyramid: between clients and intermediaries, as well as between intermediaries and patrons. We assume that the network has been built by political patrons seeking to utilize clientelism as a strategy in their political mobilization efforts. The goal of such a

network is to sustain and develop the patron-client linkage between the political party and the citizen. The network is set up to deliver benefits to the bottom of the pyramid and political legitimacy to the top, making the top-level patrons and the lowest level clients the primary two actors in the relationship, while the intermediaries a derivative needed to sustain the relationship.

My conceptualization of political clientelism holds that both actors – patrons and clients – can be individual or collective. A political party often functions as a collective patron, with no single individual able to stand out from the group of upper-level patrons. A group of citizens brokering an agreement to build a road in their community in return for political support act as a collective client, providing that the benefit is particularistic to that group and, at the same time, is conditioned with political support. All such cases would still be cases of political clientelism if the client is conditioned to provide political support for the individual and collective benefit it receives.

1.2. Varieties of political clientelism: how the exchange varies in contemporary democracies

This section disaggregates clientelist exchanges in two sub-types and derives five specific strategies of patrons' and clients' engagement in political clientelism. The two sub-types of exchanges in political clientelism can be distinguished through two general dimensions of variation: the durability of the exchange and the objects of exchange. Within those clientelist exchanges characterized by iteration, longevity and involvement of more grand objects of exchange we further distinguish between transactions initiated by patrons and transactions initiated by clients. I will address these three dimensions of variation – the durability of the exchange, the object of the exchange and the actor initiating the transaction – before proceeding with what I argue to be a comprehensive typology of clientelist linking. The proposed typology works well in capturing all relevant manifestations of political clientelism identified in the literature.

1.2.1. Durability of clientelist exchanges

The element of durability represents one of the most prominent sources of variation of clientelist exchanges identified in the literature, with scholars typically distinguishing between short-term and long-term exchange relationships (e.g. Scott

1972, 100; Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984, 252-256; Gans-Morse et al. 2014; Nichter 2010, 2018). This distinction was recently applied to contemporary political clientelism in the studies of Nichter (2010, 2018) and Gans-Morse et al. (2014), who differentiate between electoral and relational clientelism. Electoral clientelism is understood as an episodic phenomenon that involves one-off exchanges of benefits and services during election campaigns (Nichter 2018, 27). Such exchanges do not entail iteration and hold no obligations for any of the actors after the commitments of the exchange are fulfilled. In contrast, relational clientelism involves contingent exchange of benefits and services which is valid beyond election campaigns, i.e. the clientelist relationship is consisted by number of transactions which are not necessarily connected to election cycles (Nichter 2018, 70).

Nichter's analysis holds that those clientelist exchanges that are identified as relational clientelism present a dual credibility problem (prompted by the iterated character of the exchange): political elites are concerned with the possibility of opportunistic defection by citizens in their delivery of political services and citizens are concerned with the possibility of opportunistic defection by political elites in their delivery of particularistic benefits (Nichter 2018, 5). In this analysis, citizens are important in addressing this dual credibility problem and they do so – first, by signaling their own credibility (through declaring public allegiance to political parties), and second, by screening the credibility of clientelist elites (through actively requesting clientelist benefits) (Ibid.). Nichter's argument is thus largely focused on explaining the persistence of clientelist exchanges that are characterized by longevity and the reason for this is seen in the actions of citizens, more than this is the case with the actions of elites. Contrary to this dynamic of long-term clientelist linking, electoral clientelism presents a single credibility problem – only political elites distributing particularistic benefits are concerned by the possibility of opportunistic defection by citizens.

The short-term exchanges of political clientelism (i.e. electoral clientelism) have received much more interest in the political science literature than durable exchanges. Several studies have focused on vote buying as a political mobilization strategy that clientelist political parties pursue during election campaigns (e.g. Brusco et al. 2004; Stokes 2005; Stokes et al. 2013; Nichter 2014), and some studies have, in addition to

vote buying, analyzed also turnout buying (Nichter 2010; Stokes et al. 2013). Gans-Morse et al. (2014) have also included abstention buying and double persuasion as sub-strategies that fall under the rubric of electoral clientelism. Double persuasion denotes delivering benefits to both stimulate electoral participation and influence voting choices (thus, a combination of vote and turnout buying).

Beside the study of Nichter (2018) which is exclusively concerned with relational clientelism, there are not many other studies in political science which focus on the durable modes of clientelist exchange. Some exceptions include Nichter and Peress's (2017) study on request fulfilling by political parties, Gans-Morse's et al. (2014) identification of a specific party targeting strategy as rewarding party loyalists and my own study on clientelist benefit-seeking performed by citizens (Bliznakovski 2018). Instead, durable exchanges of benefits and services between patrons and clients have been more extensively documented by ethnographers (for a literature review see Pellicer et al. 2019). In addition, some authors (e.g. Hilgers 2012b) have opted to conceptualize clientelism exclusively as an iterated exchange, while others (e.g. Stokes et al. 2013) have used the term "patronage" to denote those clientelist exchanges which take place between political patrons and party members.

Before proceeding with outlining the other dimensions of variation of clientelist linking, I want to take note of an additional distinction that recently appeared in the political science literature which is relevant for understanding the differences in the dynamics between short-term and long-term clientelist exchanges. This is the distinction between positive and negative inducements employed in political clientelism. Following Mares and Young (2016; 2018), positive inducements denote all incentives in form of rewards that political parties distribute to citizens, while negative inducements include all threats of sanctions and actual sanctions distributed from parties to citizens. In Mares and Young's analysis (2018), citizens that have received clientelist benefits in the past (positive inducements) will be targeted with threats (negative inducements) during election campaigns, while citizens that have not received such benefits prior to elections will be targeted with offers for rewards (positive inducements) during election campaigns. This argument, which is based both theoretically and empirically, reveals an aspect which distinguishes long-term and short-term clientelist linking. Theoretically,

we expect that short-term forms of linking will be based more on distribution of rewards while long-term forms of linking will be based on distribution of both rewards and threats. Both forms of incentives are however present to some extent in all forms of clientelist exchanges.

1.2.2. Objects of clientelist exchange

Political patrons and clients exchange many different benefits and services. The object of exchange is often useful to distinguish between different sub-types of clientelist exchanges. One could find it hard to distinguish between the different exchanges of short-term character that take place during election campaigns (described in the previous section) if there would be no information on services provided by clients (e.g. votes, turnout, abstention). Thus, the object of exchange from the side of clients allows us to effectively distinguish between different types of exchanges relevant for elections – the exchanges for votes, turnout or abstention as electoral services, for benefits. Such differentiation is theoretically and empirically relevant: scholars typically expect that indifferent voters to the political party will receive offers to exchange their votes (if inclined to vote), supporting votes will receive offers to exchange their turnout (if inclined not to vote), while opposing voters will receive offers to exchange their abstention (if inclined to vote) (for overview of these different implications for parties' clientelist targeting strategies during elections see: Gans-Morse et al. 2014; and Nichter 2018, 28).

In addition, one could find it difficult to distinguish between short-term and long-term exchange relationships of political clientelism without differentiating between electoral and non-electoral services that clients provide. Electoral services (voting, turnout or abstention) are characteristic for clientelist exchanges of short-term duration, while both electoral and non-electoral services are a part of the long-term (beyond electoral campaigns) clientelist relationships.

The benefits distributed by political parties also represent a source of variation that could determine the character of a clientelist exchange. From the point of view of political parties, more valuable benefits should return a higher level of engagement by clients, and vice-versa, less valuable benefits are expected to yield clients' services that are less extensive (this is, of course, applicable to polities where political parties

distribute benefits of different values). This interplay between benefits and services exchanged through political clientelism is a factor determining the character of clientelist exchanges, and, subsequently, the character of engagement by both parties and citizens.

Table 1.1. Catalogue of benefits and services exchanged by political patrons and clients

Petty benefits	Petty services	Grand benefits	Grand services
Cash Food Clothes House appliances Transportation to the polls Access to petty public funds (social benefits and services) Other petty favors in dealing with public institutions Medical checks Medicine Covering utility bills	Voting in elections Turnout in elections Abstention in elections	Access to employment in the public sector Access to high-level positions such as seats in managerial boards of public companies Access to grand public funds: scholarships, subsidies, public procurement contracts Other grand favors in dealing with state institutions (e.g. construction permits)	Party activism Participation at party rallies Participation in political mobilization activities Monitoring (information hoarding) of co-citizens regarding political affiliation and participation at elections Defending the interests of the party in the state institutions Defending the interests of the party in online social networks

I propose the distinction between petty and grand benefits and services exchanged through political clientelism to account for the variations in the objects of exchange (see Table 1.1.). Such simplified distinction is analytically useful to underline the trade-offs that both actors experience when engaging in different varieties of clientelist exchanges. Examples of petty benefits are the small amounts of cash, food, clothes, transportation to the polls, house appliances, covering of utility bills, medical checks and medicine, as well as petty favors in dealing with state institutions such as access to social services and benefits. Petty services, on the other hand, consist of the

electoral services characteristic for short-term in-campaign exchanges of political clientelism. These involve voting, turnout and abstention in elections. Such petty services are less costly from the point of view of clients than those services that I characterize as grand - they do not require significant engagement from citizens nor are time consuming as the group of services that I designate as grand.

Grand benefits, on the other hand, include access to employment in the public sector and position in managerial bodies pf public companies, access to public funds of greater material value such as scholarships, subsidies and public procurement contracts, as well as various grander favors in dealing with state institutions (typical example are construction permits). To such grand benefits clients reply with more extensive party services, including but not limited to party activism, participation in party activities such as rallies and meetings, support in political mobilization activities (e.g. canvassing), defending and promoting the interest of political parties in state institutions (in the case of those clients that hold state positions) and in the online social networks, as well as information hoarding of co-citizens. These non-electoral services to political parties are significantly more costly for clients than those characteristic for electoral clientelism – clients should demonstrate significant engagement and surrender their time and resources in supporting the political party.

1.2.3. The actor initiating the clientelist exchange

The initiative for establishing a clientelist transaction may come from two sources: from those delivering clientelist benefits (patrons and brokers within political parties) and from those providing clientelist services (clients). This is an important dimension of variation that is often overlooked in the literature (exceptions include the studies by Powell 1970; Nichter and Peress 2017; and Nichter 2018). When clients initiate exchanges, they do so by approaching the holders of clientelist benefits with requests for specific benefits. In contrast, when political parties make the first move, they offer a finite set of benefits which clients may either accept or refuse. In this way, when clients request benefits, they establish a higher level of control over the character of the exchange and subsequently may arrive at receiving a benefit that is suited to their specific needs and interests. Initiating a transaction from the side of the client thus brings the client more closely to receiving a tailored benefit – the character of the

benefit and its value from the point of view of the recipient could affect one's decision to engage or disengage from political clientelism.

Recognizing the fact that some clientelist transactions are initiated by political parties while others from the side of citizens is also important for understanding the overall dynamics of clientelist linking. Citizen-initiated clientelist transactions represent an important push to perpetuate the durable type of clientelism, as the analysis of Nichter (2018) holds. I address this variation in my typology of clientelist exchanges by distinguishing between durable exchanges initiated by political parties and durable exchanges where transactions are initiated by citizens.

1.2.4. Types of exchanges and actors' strategies in political clientelism

Table 1.2. outlines two general types of exchanges in political clientelism. I distinguish between one-off electoral exchanges that take place exclusively during election campaigns and which by definition involve simultaneous transactions of petty benefits for electoral services and iterated exchanges of patronage which take place irrespective of elections and where the transactions are asynchronous and typically involve grand benefits and extended political services.

Table 1.2. Types of exchanges in political clientelism

Objective of patrons	Strategies of patrons	Type of exchange	Strategies of clients	Objective of clients
Electoral support	Vote buying Turnout buying Abstention buying	**Electoral clientelism:** - one-off exchange of petty material benefits for electoral services - takes place exclusively during election campaigns - transactions are simultaneous	Vote selling Turnout selling Abstention selling	Extraction of petty benefits
Building and maintaining a party organization	Rewarding loyalists Request fulfilling	**Patronage; relational clientelism:** - iterated exchange of grand benefits for party services - takes place beyond election campaigns - transactions are asynchronous	Party serving Benefit-seeking	Extraction of grand benefits

The two types of exchanges are made possible by the strategic orientations of political parties who practice clientelism. Parties may either practice clientelism to fulfil electoral objectives or for the purpose of building and maintaining the party organization. In the first case parties need electoral supporters while in the second loyal party workers. To attract the two groups, political parties distribute benefits of different material value, making the benefits which I denoted as petty more characteristic for electoral exchanges and the grand benefits more characteristic for the exchanges of patronage. Electoral exchanges involve the following strategies of engagement for patrons: vote buying, turnout buying and abstention buying; while the exchanges of patronage the strategies of rewarding loyalists and request fulfilling. This corresponds to three strategies of citizen engagement in electoral clientelism: vote selling, turnout selling and abstention selling; and two strategies of engagement in patronage: party serving and benefit-seeking. In the following, I describe these five sub-types of exchanges and I relate them to corresponding strategies of the two actors consisting the clientelist dyad.

1.2.4.1. Electoral exchanges

The different types of electoral exchanges may be distinguished by the services that clients provide: votes, turnout or abstention in elections. The exchange of votes for immediate benefits during election campaigns probably represents the most prominent clientelist practice worldwide. In the literature, it is often assessed as a specific political mobilization strategy performed by clientelist political parties, and, as such, it is typically denoted as "vote buying." Nichter defines vote buying as the "distribution of rewards to individuals or small groups during elections in contingent exchange for vote choices. Rewards are defined as cash, goods (including food and drink), and services. Post-election benefits, employment, public programs, and transportation to the polls are not considered [vote buying] rewards." (Nichter 2014, 316, insertion in brackets [...] is mine). This definition is valuable because it seeks to delimit vote buying from other clientelist strategies of political parties, and, in addition, is constructed through extensive survey of the literature on vote buying in political science.

Following Nichter, we may establish three key criteria of differentiation between exchanges of votes for benefits and those clientelist exchanges that involve other client

services. First, the exchange of votes is quite specific in terms of the object of electoral service that clients offer: this criterion allows us to sharply distinguish the exchanges of votes with other clientelist exchanges where the services of clients involve turnout or abstention during elections, or, more extended party services that are part of an iterated exchange. Second, Nichter's definition of vote buying underlines the notion that the exchange of votes tends to involve benefits which are pettier than those characteristic for iterated exchanges (post-election benefits, including employments and access to public funds). Finally, in order to distinguish the exchanges of votes and turnout in elections (which can be sometimes conflated empirically), Nichter explicitly excludes the benefit of transportation to the polls that is more typical for exchanges of benefits for turnout.

The party strategy of vote buying corresponds to the citizen strategy of vote selling in clientelist exchanges. By vote selling I denote the citizen strategy of exchanging one's vote choice for clientelist benefits, with the typical benefits sought by clients in this scenario involving those described by Nichter in the definition above.

The exchanges involving turnout or abstention are thus different in character from those exchanges that involve trading of votes. When turnout buying political parties seek to distribute benefits to non-mobilized party supporters to show-up at the polls (Gans-Morse et al. 2014, 3). This party strategy thus only stimulates turnout of party supporters and has no element of influencing one's vote choice. When turnout selling, clients theoretically maintain the freedom to cast their votes for their preferred political option, a privilege which is not available to vote selling clients. On the other hand, when abstention buying parties seek to incentives their opposing voters to not show up at the polls (Ibid.). When abstention selling, clients thus give up from election day completely. However, there are two crucial similarities between the exchanges involving votes, turnout and abstention. First, the benefits distributed through all such exchanges tend to be quite similar in their relative value, they are, what I denote as petty benefits employed in clientelist exchanges. Second, all these exchanges are of short-term duration, they take place and remain valid only during given election campaigns.

1.2.4.2. Exchanges of patronage

Durable exchanges in which political patrons possess a relevant resource base that encompasses critical state resources, such as employment in the public sector, public funds and state-sponsored services, are typically denoted in the literature as exchanges of patronage. In the literature that overviews political clientelism as a political mobilization strategy, the rewarding of party loyalists with state-sponsored benefits is either assessed as a patronage strategy (Stokes et al. 2013, 7) or as a strategy of "rewarding loyalists" (Nichter 2018, 30; Gans-Morse et al. 2014, 4). The strategy of rewarding loyalists "provides particularistic benefits to supporters who would vote for the machine anyway" (Gans-Morse et al. 2014, 4). Besides being a linkage strategy, patronage also works as resource in party and state organization (Kopecký and Mair 2012). Patronage exchanges are indeed much more than utilizing the clientelism-relevant resources for political support: such durable exchanges contribute in building party organizations (Shefter 1994) and in establishing linkages between political parties and state institutions (Kopecký and Mair 2012). From the point of view of clients, patronage exchanges allow extraction of grander resources relative to the resources available through electoral clientelism.

I use the term "patronage" to denote the specific type of durable exchange of political clientelism and the term "rewarding loyalists" to denote the specific sub-strategy of political parties that is characteristic for the patronage exchanges. In addition, I introduce the concept of "party serving," which represents a strategy of citizen engagement in political clientelism that involves extended party services. Party servants engage in party activism, at the grassroots level of political mobilization during elections, participate at party rallies and meetings, perform information hoarding towards their co-citizens, and, if employed at relevant positions in the state sector, may be engaged in promoting the interests of the party in the state institutions. All these tasks signal extended engagement of party servants in political clientelism in comparison to electoral clients. Therefore, citizen engagement in political clientelism functions very differently from the point of view of the two sets of clients engaged in short-term or long-term clientelist exchanges.

Within clientelist exchange relationships of more durable character, we note a subset of transactions that are initiated by clients (Powell 1970; Nichter and Peress 2017; Nichter 2018). Such transactions typically rely on already established links between political parties and citizens, or, between influential members of political parties and citizens. When parties reply with distribution of benefits upon citizens' requests, they employ the clientelist targeting strategy identified by Nichter and Peress (2017) as "request-fulfilling." When citizens turn to requesting benefits from political patrons, they employ the citizen engagement strategy that I denote as "clientelist benefit-seeking." More formally, benefit-seeking can be defined as a clientelist practice of interest articulation, characterized by citizens expressing demands for specific particularistic benefits towards the holders/providers of clientelist resources (i.e. political parties).

Citizen-initiated clientelist exchanges are an important push to perpetuate clientelism in its durable forms (Nichter 2018). For political parties, citizen initiatives bring valuable information in the process of building clientelist networks. First, when citizens initiate exchanges, political parties learn on the preferences and needs for specific benefits that clients expect – this information aids in the programming of the distribution of clientelist benefits. Second, when citizens request particularistic benefits, they signal commitment for engagement in clientelism. Benefit-seeking clients know very well that they must reciprocate for the desired benefit and parties utilize this expectation in their political mobilization activities, as well as in their internal organization. From the side of citizens, benefit-seeking also represents a channel through which they screen the credibility of political patrons (Nichter 2018). In addition, benefit-seeking allows citizens to articulate what they exactly need, in terms of a clientelist resource, and thus puts them in higher level of control than in the patron-initiated transactions. Simply, for a given set of citizens, clientelist engagement becomes worthwhile only when specific desired benefits are involved. A citizen who is better-off in material terms could perhaps make no use of a clientelist offer consisted of petty cash in return for a vote, but could still be tempted to accept a grander benefit such as, to give some examples, a public procurement contract, access to long-term employment in the public sector, or an "grand" administrative favor.

The "catalogue" of benefits that can be obtained through citizen-initiated clientelist exchanges is without any limits, however, benefits exchanged through this route tend to be grander than those exchanged through exchanges of electoral clientelism. The same goes with the services through which clients are expected to reciprocate to receive a given benefit. Very often, benefit-seeking clients become or already are diligent party servants who offer their own individual resources to the goals and activities of clientelist political parties.

1.2.5. Why iterated exchanges are characterized by transactions of grand benefits and services

The typology outlined in Table 1.2. suggests that the exchange of grand benefits and services is more characteristic for the iterated relational forms of clientelist linking. This should not however be seen as an attempt to conflate the two dimensions of variation important for understanding the dynamics of different clientelist exchanges: the dimension of durability and the objects of exchange. Both dimensions are useful for understanding the varieties of political clientelism and can be utilized by researchers for different purposes. However, it seems that the two dimensions of variation often go together in practice. Consider the definition of vote buying provided by Nichter and outlined above (Sub-section 1.2.4.1.) where he explicitly identifies the typical vote buying benefits as being less valuable than other benefits also distributed through political clientelism. More recently, Yıldırım and Kitschelt concluded that the relational forms of clientelist linking more heavily rely on public funds than it is the case with electoral forms of linking (which, in turn, could considerably rely on private sources of political parties and politicians) (2020, 23). The point is that public benefits are more crucial to the livelihoods of clients and in this sense, should be predominantly seen as grand benefits. Eisentstadt and Roniger have also noted that durable relationships in clientelism encompass transactions of benefits and services that are more "critical" (i.e. valuable) from the point of view of both patrons and clients (1984, 253). I will show in Chapter 3 that when it comes to the Western Balkans, in practice, grand benefits (as listed in Table 1.1.) are more characteristic for the durable exchanges of patronage. Still, this does not mean that the two dimensions of variation should be lumped together. The two dimensions account for different aspects in the dynamics of clientelist

linking: the durability dimension refers to the temporal character of the relationship, while the objects of exchange refer to value of benefits and services exchanged. A focus on either of the two dimensions could prove valuable in accounting for different aspects of clientelist linking.

1.3. A theory on the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism

The typology presented above considers five different strategies of citizen engagement in political clientelism. Following the typology, clients may engage in political clientelism through vote selling, turnout selling, abstention selling, party serving and clientelist benefit-seeking. One could distinguish between these five types when overviewing the time-frame of exchanges (thus, distinguishing between short-term and long-term exchanges), the objects of exchange (thus, distinguishing between engagement in petty and grand exchanges and by the specific services delivered by clients) and the origin of the initiative for a clientelist transaction (thus, distinguishing between transactions initiated by political patrons and transactions initiated by clients). The crucial question that follows is why some clients participate in each mode of exchange over others? What accounts for the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism?

The explanation advanced in this thesis holds that we should consider three types of individual resources to account for citizen engagement in political clientelism and for its variations. The first type of resources can be conceptualized as non-material resources of a political type. Political resources stand for the overall leverage that clients acquire through delivering services to political parties. As argued above, services can be of an electoral type or can extend beyond the parties' immediate electoral needs (clients offer services that are relevant for the building of party organizations). The second type of resources are also of a non-material type and relate to citizen/client capacity to participate in social networks, i.e. to the socialization of the citizen in a clientelist network. I term this group of resources as networking resources. The third type of resources relevant for clientelist engagement are the individual material resources that citizens/clients possess. In brief, I argue that clients who have accumulated political resources from their participation in party organizations hold

greater leverage in clientelist bargaining and are more capable to extract grander clientelist benefits. Regarding networking resources, I argue that citizens who have networked with individuals close to clientelist networks are more likely participants in political clientelism: they have access to decision-making within clientelist networks, their profile is "screened" by political parties and they might hold higher leverage in clientelist bargaining as a result of the previous trading of favors with other citizens (including those close to clientelist networks). Finally, regarding material resources I eschew the idea that in societies where political parties distribute clientelist benefits of a substantially different value we should expect disproportionate engagement of the poor. Instead, I argue that political parties will direct petty benefits to the poor (and to poor will welcome them) and that will direct their grand benefits to the better-off (who will also welcome the more valuable clientelist benefits). I expand on these claims by the end of this section and I turn them into propositions that will be empirically assessed in Chapter 4.

As argued throughout this chapter, clients across the world engage in political clientelism with a view of obtaining benefits of a different material value and I offered the simplified distinction between petty and grand benefits to capture this notion. To obtain either of the two, clients need to reciprocate to patrons while delivering political services that can also be of a petty or a grand type. Thus, I argue that clients are motivated to provide different volumes and types of services to political parties in accordance to the prospects for extraction of clientelist benefits. If clients assess that political parties are credible in their possession and distribution of patronage resources, they will provide political services that correspond to the value of the benefits sought or obtained. This leads us to the notion than one could consider citizen engagement in political clientelism as a strategy through which citizens acquire non-material resources of a political type relevant for clientelism. When clients surrender their votes or engage in party serving, they accumulate political resources relevant for political clientelism. In the one-shot forms of clientelist exchanges, patrons and clients exchange benefits and services simultaneously and thus the acquired political resources are utilized in clientelist bargaining instantly. In the iterated forms of clientelist exchanges, clients attach to political parties for a longer period and perform a range of services and thus accumulate a higher volume of resources. Upon a period of accumulation, clients

bargain with patrons and benefits of different values are distributed to different clients according to the following simplified formula: benefits of relatively higher material value are distributed to clients who provide extended political services while benefits of a relatively lower material value are distributed to clients who provide a lower volume of political services. Put in simple terms, political parties reward their fiercest activists with their most valuable benefits, while direct their petty benefits to their less important clients.

This is derived from one of the basic features of the clientelist exchange, contingency. The exchange in political clientelism is highly contingent on the performance of the two actors. Political parties have at their disposal a limited range of resources of a varying material value that can be directed for political clientelism and they will seek to engage the most valuable benefits with clients who aid the party the most. From the point of view of clients, we assume that they may choose the type and volume of services that they will direct towards a political party while considering the credibility of the party to distribute benefits. In this sense, political parties that have the greatest capacity and credibility in delivering clientelist benefits will attract fierce party servants, and the opposite will be the case with political parties that lack such capacity and credibility.

Drawing on this I develop that first proposition that will be empirically assessed in my analysis in Chapter 4:

Proposition 1: Clients who extract clientelist benefits of a relatively higher material value (i.e. grand benefits) are those clients that are engaged in political clientelism while providing extended services to political parties (i.e. grand services). In contrast, clients who extract petty benefits provide only petty electoral services to political parties.

The argument thus holds that the relative value of benefits distributed towards clients is an integral part of the strategic calculus of citizens when deciding in which type of clientelist exchange they will engage (i.e. the volume and types of services that they will provide).

My theory considers an additional type of non-material resource relevant for clientelist engagement, the networking resources that individual clients possess. Networking resources are acquired through exchange of favors in social networks that do not necessarily need to have a clientelist undertone, as well as in partisan networks that are facilitated through clientelist transactions. As argued in the literature, social networks have an information-exchange function in political clientelism, they are useful in "screening" prospective clients (Calvo and Murillo 2013) and they can be useful for political parties in decreasing the cost of monitoring (Cruz 2019). But networks also have a function for clients: they represent a channel through which citizens can be socialized in political clientelism. Stated in the simplest possible way, the "right" social networks bring clients closer to the centers of decision-making within distributive networks of political clientelism and thus closer to obtaining particularistic benefits. For this reason, individual-level networking resources (understood as having contacts in social network relevant for political clientelism) are important for the possibilities for individual-level clientelist engagement. This is stated in the second proposition that I derive:

Proposition 2: Citizens who possess relevant networking resources are more likely to engage in political clientelism than citizens who do not possess such resources.

The two derived propositions hypothesize on the role of what I claim to be non-material resources relevant for clientelist engagement. However, much of the literature on political clientelism is concerned with predicting individual-level engagement in political clientelism based on individual possession of material resources (see Stokes 2007, 617-619). It is typically considered that the poor disproportionally engage in political clientelism. At the same time my conceptualization of political clientelism encompasses the notion that political parties distribute benefits of different material values. In line with this, it is theoretically plausible to assume that citizens of different socio-economic backgrounds will engage in political clientelism, the poor will go after what I denote as petty benefits, while the better-off will direct themselves in extracting grand benefits. Clients that are less socio-economically vulnerable can afford to disengage from forms of clientelism that are not worthwhile from their point of view but may still be interested to engage in forms of clientelism that bring more valuable returns.

A similar argument has been previously applied to explain why citizens and political parties disengage from political clientelism. When the relative value of clientelist benefits falls, scholars hypothesize that the clients lose interest to participate in political clientelism. However, if clientelist benefits of variable utility are available in a polity, we should expect that clients with higher resource bases will capture grander benefits in comparison to their lower resource base counterparts.

Drawing on this, I develop the next two propositions that will be empirically assessed in Chapter 4.

Proposition 3: Where political parties distribute benefits which significantly differ in material value, citizens from different socio-economic profiles will engage in political clientelism.

Proposition 4: Where political parties distribute benefits which significantly differ in material value, poor citizens will engage in forms of political clientelism that return benefits of a relatively lower material value, while the relatively better-off citizens will engage in forms of clientelism that return benefits of a relatively higher material value.

Propositions 1 and 4 directly relate to the narrower focus of this doctoral thesis, the individual-level factors that contribute to divergent citizen engagement in political clientelism. If we follow these two propositions, we should expect 1) that clients who are after grand clientelist benefits will engage in political clientelism while offering grand services, while the opposite will be the case with clients who are contend with extracting petty clientelist benefits; and 2) that the relatively better-off clients (in terms of material resources) will be engaged in clientelist exchanges that return grand benefits as they will find no use from petty clientelism. Propositions 2 and 3, on the other hand, advocate the idea that where political clientelism is widespread and where patrons offer benefits of substantially different material values, we should not see clientelism as a form of political linking directed at the poor, but rather as a form of linking of those who have been socialized to cope with everyday problems while relying on informal relationships in the state institutions and in the other spheres of society. Political clientelism should not thus be seen only as a survival strategy of citizens but also as an avenue through which one may arrive at socio-economic advancement.

1.4. Summary

This chapter represents the first systematic attempt in the literature to provide a conceptual and theoretical framework for studying the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism. I argued that the variations of citizen engagement are prompted by the individual clients' divergent resource base, with the resource base consisting of both non-material and material resources relevant for political clientelism. I argue that clients who are after grand benefits from political parties engage with extended party services (and thus accumulate political resources) in comparison to clients who extract petty clientelist benefits; and that relatively better-off clients are after benefits of higher material value in comparison to poor clients.

Prior to outlining the theoretical framework, I directed efforts to provide conceptual clarity regarding the phenomenon of political clientelism. I defined political clientelism as the exchange of particularistic material benefits (goods, favors, information, and opportunities) from the side of political parties, in return for political services (voting and participation in elections, engagement in party mobilization activities and, most broadly, promotion of party interests) from the side of citizens. When understood from the point of view of political parties, political clientelism is a strategy of political mobilization and building party organization. When understood from the point of view of citizens, clientelism is a strategy of political participation, as well as means through which one may fulfill particularistic interests and needs.

In a second conceptual exercise, I developed a typology of clientelist exchanges and corresponding patron and client strategies of engagement in political clientelism. I conclude that some exchanges involve transactions or less valued benefits and services (i.e. petty benefits and services) while other transactions involve exchange of more valued benefits and services (i.e. grand benefits and services). This simplified but analytically useful distinction allows me to empirically examine the outlined theoretical argument.

Chapter 4 of this thesis will empirically examine the presented theory on the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism. I will chiefly focus on two modes of citizen engagement – vote selling and clientelist benefit-seeking – but I will also discuss the role of party serving as a precondition for successful benefit-seeking.

With this, I hope to offer a contribution to our understanding of the phenomenon of political clientelism, and, particularly, to the “demand” side of political clientelism.

Chapter 2. THE CONTEXT OF THE CLIENTELIST EXCHANGE: WESTERN BALKANS AS A SITE OF POLITICAL CLIENTELISM

This chapter aims to provide the broader context upon which we shall overview the character of political clientelism in the Western Balkans (Chapter 3) and citizen engagement in political clientelism in the region (Chapter 4). The chapter is intended to provide background information to the reader on the Western Balkan countries, and more specifically, on their levels of political and economic development, as well as on their electoral and party systems. These three themes are chosen deliberately: researchers on political clientelism have already provided theoretical arguments on the relationship between development, electoral systems and party systems and the presence and prevalence of political clientelism in different polities. It is commonly argued in the literature that political clientelism is characteristic for poor countries, though more recently this theoretical conviction begins to lose ground in the light of empirical evidence. Secondly, it is sometimes argued that political clientelism is more characteristic for polities that employ electoral rules that facilitate personal voting, such as plurality systems in comparison to closed-list proportional and open-list proportional in comparison to closed-list proportional systems. Lastly, some researchers argue that political clientelism is more characteristic for party systems where ideological cleavages are not prominent. Where political parties rely on clearly distinguishable ideologic platforms, it is expected that they will chiefly turn to programmatic politics as the main method of political mobilization. I present these three arguments in more detail before I turn to considering the Western Balkan region. The three arguments are not however provided in order to systematically test their explanatory power but rather as points which I shall follow in structuring the presentation of the context of clientelist exchange overviewed in this thesis.

The relationship between development and political clientelism has been most typically conceived as monotonically negative one – as a country develops the overall presence of clientelism is expected to drop. This argument is equally relevant for both economic and political development. Researchers expect that political clientelism will be predominant in poor countries in comparison to the wealthy (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Stokes et al. 2013), as the citizens in the former will value clientelist benefits

more highly than citizens in the latter. By the same token, it is expected that political clientelism will be more prevalent in younger democracies, as political parties simply lack credibility in their policy promises and instead turn to clientelism and targeted goods for electoral gains (Keefer and Vlaicu 2007; Keefer 2007). However, these patterns are not always empirically visible when comparing different countries. For instance, Kitschelt and Kselman (2013) empirically found that development (operationalized as the level of national income and duration of democracy) has a curvilinear relationship with the overall presence of clientelism when considering a total of 88 countries. They argue that political clientelism is most prevalent in countries at intermediate levels of economic and political development due to 1) greater capacity of middle-income countries in terms of fiscal and administrative resources, a situation that allows more credible commitment of state resources by ruling political parties for clientelist exchanges; and 2) experience with democracy that contributes to strengthening of the organizational networks of political parties, thereby raising the likelihood for clientelism to thrive.

Some scholars expect that political clientelism will be more prevalent in plurality electoral systems in comparison to closed-list proportional (for an overview see Hagopian 2007, 592), and others that it will be more prevalent in proportional systems that employ preferential voting in comparison to those that use closed-lists (Chubb 1982). Regarding the first claim, it is considered that in proportional systems candidates depend more on their voters than on central party bosses, so they will be incentivized to provide targeted benefits. Where candidates are dependent on party bosses for their participation in the electoral ballot (closed-list proportional systems), party bosses are more capable to incentivize candidates to follow the party program. Similarly, Chubb argues that open-lists proportional systems facilitate intra-party competition between local party leaders and the national party leadership, with local leaders tending to utilize their local insertion in social networks to organize and enforce clientelist exchanges. This pattern is indeed visible in her study of political clientelism in the south of Italy in the second half of the XX century (Chubb 1982, 68). There is one additional reason why political clientelism could be more prevalent in systems that encourage personal voting: political parties find it easier to infer individual voting choices in open-lists proportional representation because they can instruct their clients to follow a given

pattern in marking the ballots. The way the ballot is marked can represent an instrument of verification regarding whether individual clients have complied with their obligations from the clientelist exchange.

Party systems are also seen as a factor of political clientelism. Stokes argues that when rival political parties are closer to each other ideologically, the probability for clientelist exchanges amplifies (2007, 615). By the same token, strong ideological cleavages incentivize candidates to follow party programs thereby strengthening programmatic politics vis-à-vis political clientelism (Hagopian 2007, 597-598). Following these claims, we should thus expect that political clientelism will be more frequently present in countries where political parties do not differ significantly in their ideological platforms.

As I will show throughout this chapter, the Western Balkan countries fit quite well in the explanation on the relationship between political clientelism and development provided by Kitschelt and Kselman (2013). The region is at an intermediary level of political and economic development and I will offer several indicators confirming this in Section 2.1. At the same time, clientelist exchanges are prominent across the six Western Balkan countries but I will leave this issue for chapters 3 and 4. The countries of the region mainly employ proportional representation electoral systems, with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo utilizing preferential voting, while the other four countries rely on closed-list proportional representation in their general elections (shown in Section 2.2). Finally, apart from the highly divisive ethnic cleavages which are present in only some of the countries of the region, the political parties in general are not easily distinguishable in their ideological platforms (shown in Section 2.3.). Most of the important political parties in the region advocate for liberal-democratic reforms, raising living standards and EU integration when mobilizing voters in programmatic terms. These notions provide some relevant evidence for the presented expectations on macro- and meso-level factors on prevalence of political clientelism in polities, but as stated, I will not deal with them in explanatory terms as this fall outside of the scope of this doctoral thesis. Instead, the chapter is mainly intended to serve as a contextual introduction, a necessary step before considering political clientelism and citizen engagement in chapters 3 and 4.

2.1. The Western Balkans: an introduction

The term "Western Balkans" stands for the group of six countries located in the broader region of Southeast Europe: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.[1] The first part of the neologism, "Western," aims to distinguish these six countries from the other countries in the Balkan peninsula who have achieved membership in the European Union.[2] The region's recent history was characterized by social, political and economic transition from socialism to liberal democracy, internal ethnic conflicts and disputes between the states, with five of them (excluding Albania) established as independent following the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s. All six countries are currently established as liberal-democracies and closely cooperate with the European Union on their internal political and economic reforms as part of their efforts to become full members. In this process, some of the countries are assessed as being more successful than others (see Figure 2.1.). Montenegro and Serbia are the most advanced in the European Union accession process, having opened accession negotiations in 2012 and 2014 respectively, while North Macedonia and Albania hold the status of candidate countries for membership since 2005 and 2014 respectively. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are considered by the European Union institutions as potential candidate countries and are thus least advanced in terms of the accession process and the state of liberal-democratic reforms.

Figure 2.1. Map of the Western Balkans, current status regarding European Union accession.
Source: Giammarino (2016)

[1] The total population of the Western Balkans is 17.9 million: Albania 2.9 million; Bosnia and Herzegovina 3.5 million; Kosovo 1.8 million; Montenegro 0.6 million; North Macedonia 2.1 million; and Serbia 7 million. Source: Eurostat (2019).

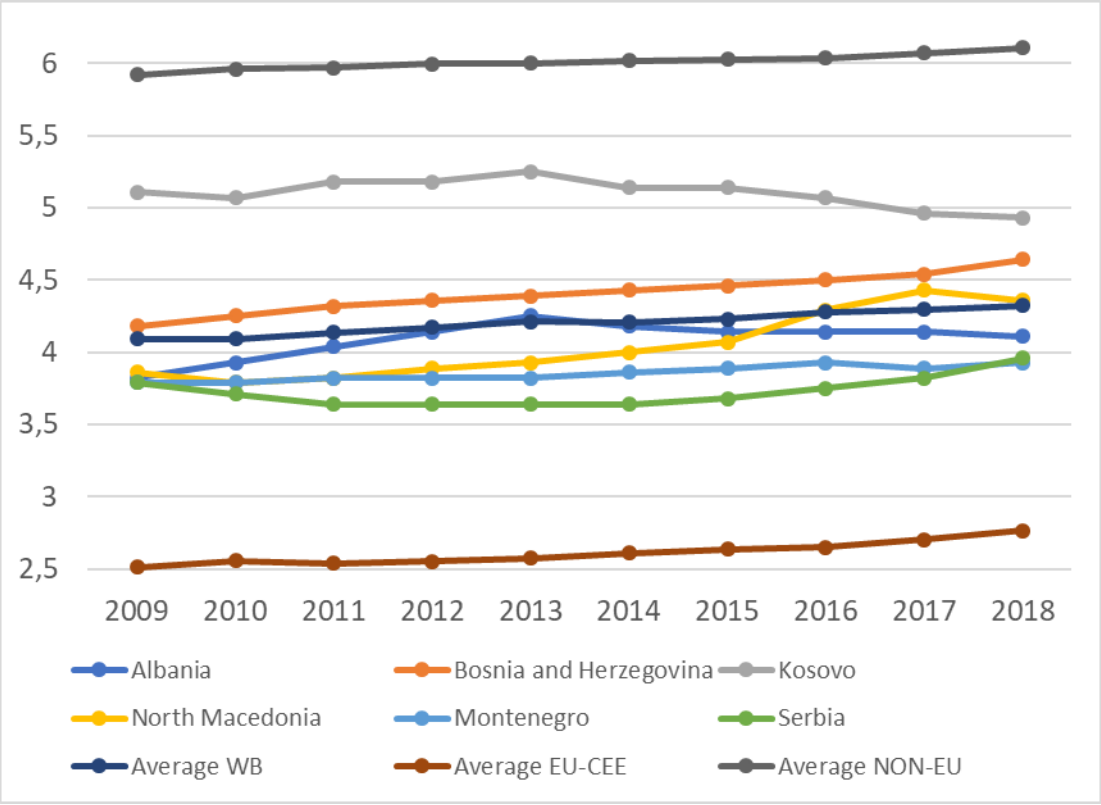
[2] The following countries located in the Balkan peninsula are current (2019) members of the European Union: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania and Slovenia. Prior to 2013, Croatia was also considered a part of the Western Balkan group, but its status changed as a result of achieving European Union membership.

In the early years of transition all the six Western Balkan countries faced armed conflicts that will shape the political and social scene for the years to come. Albania suffered a short-term civil was as a result of a corruption scandal in 1997. Bosnia and Herzegovina was ravaged by an internal conflict in the period 1992-1995 between the three main ethnic groups residing in its territory, the Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats, in which the neighboring Serbia and Croatia also participated. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 following an armed conflict between armed guerrilla groups of Kosovo Albanians and the security forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) (1998-1999). Montenegro participated in alliance with Serbia at the beginning of the Croatian war in 1991 as well as in subsequent episodes in Yugoslavia's dissolution before formally achieving independence from the federation in 2006. North Macedonia faced a short-term armed conflict during 2001 between the state security forces and Macedonian Albanians' armed groups that resulted in reshaping the relations between the majority and minority ethnic groups in the country. Finally, Serbia was involved in wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia until 1995 and in Kosovo until 1999 when NATO performed a military intervention against the country that resulted in withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo. Three of the six Western Balkan countries are strikingly multiethnic (Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Montenegro) and ethnic-based politics is an important part of the national political scene. Albania and Serbia, on the other hand, build their foreign policies while incorporating considerations for the status of Albanians and Serbs in the neighboring countries, making ethnic-based and identity politics an important feature in their domestic political scenes. Kosovo's statehood is disputed by Serbia, North Macedonia's statehood has been until recently disputed by neighboring Greece, while the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina is disputed from within and particularly in the relations between the Serb dominated Republika Srpska (one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's two entities) with the central government. All these peculiarities create conditions for perpetuation of ethnic-based politics which has been a distinctive marker of political life in the region since the transitions from the early 1990s.

2.2. Political and economic development

Despite having democratic political systems, the countries of the Western Balkans are characterized by significant deficiencies in the quality of their democracies. This is visible in Figure 2.2. where I present Nations in Transit democracy scores (a composite indicator considering national and local democratic governance, the electoral process, civil society, independent media, judicial independence and corruption) for the six Western Balkan countries, along with the average regional rating and the average ratings of the former socialist countries who are currently part of the EU (EU-CEE) and those who are not (NON-EU). Even at first glance, it is notable that the Western Balkan region roughly stands between these two groups: democratic performance is significantly lower in quality than in the EU-CEE and significantly higher than in the NON-EU former socialist countries. In 2018, the average score of the Western Balkan countries stands at 4.32, while that of the CEE-EU at 2.77 and that of the non-EU 6.10 (1 indicating best and 7 indicating worst performance).

Figure 2.2. Nations in Transit democracy scores (2009-2018, 1 indicating best and 7 indicating worst performance, source: Freedom House 2018)



This outlook can be corroborated when considering other prominent indicators of political development, such as World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), presented in Table 2.1. According to the 2018 WGI, the Western Balkan countries rank roughly in the middle of the global ranking distribution in the rule of law, control of corruption and voice and accountability indicators. On the other hand, the six countries as a group rank somewhat better in terms of regulatory quality and government effectiveness (apart from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo who seem to lag in the quality of government effectiveness from the rest of the group). Political instability is also a problem for the region. This is reflected in the WGI rankings in the political stability indicator but also in the recent choices of some of the opposition political parties across the region to temporarily disengage from the national representative bodies as a form of protest against incumbent parties: such notable "boycotts" accompanied with public protests against incumbents recently took place in Albania (2017), North Macedonia (2015-2016) and Montenegro (2016-2017).

Table 2.1. WGI percentile rankings with confidence intervals for the Western Balkan countries (data from 2018, source: Worldwide Governance Indicators 2019)

	Control of Corruption			Rule of Law			Regulatory Quality		
Country	**Perecntile Rank**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**Perecntile Rank**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**Perecntile Rank**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Albania	42.31	29.81	49.04	39.42	29.33	48.56	62.02	52.40	71.15
Bosnia and Herzegovina	37.02	23.56	45.67	47.12	33.65	53.85	48.08	33.65	60.58
Kosovo	38.46	21.63	49.04	35.58	25.48	50.48	50.00	32.21	61.54
Montenegro	54.33	44.23	60.58	53.85	44.71	61.06	64.90	54.33	72.60
North Macedonia	45.19	33.17	54.81	46.63	33.17	53.37	71.15	61.06	76.44
Serbia	43.27	31.73	50.00	48.08	35.10	54.81	55.29	40.87	65.38
	Government Effectiveness			**Political Stability**			**Voice and Accountability**		
Country	**Perecntile Rank**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**Perecntile Rank**	**Lower**	**Upper**	**Perecntile Rank**	**Lower**	**Upper**
Albania	55.77	41.83	67.79	61.90	48.10	71.90	54.19	46.31	60.10
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34.62	19.23	48.08	31.90	19.05	44.29	39.90	33.50	46.31
Kosovo	36.54	19.23	54.33	39.52	25.24	53.33	42.36	34.48	49.26
Montenegro	58.65	44.23	70.19	44.76	32.38	60.95	50.25	42.36	57.64
North Macedonia	58.17	41.83	70.19	37.14	24.29	50.48	41.87	34.48	48.28
Serbia	60.58	48.08	70.19	50.00	38.10	63.33	49.75	42.36	56.65

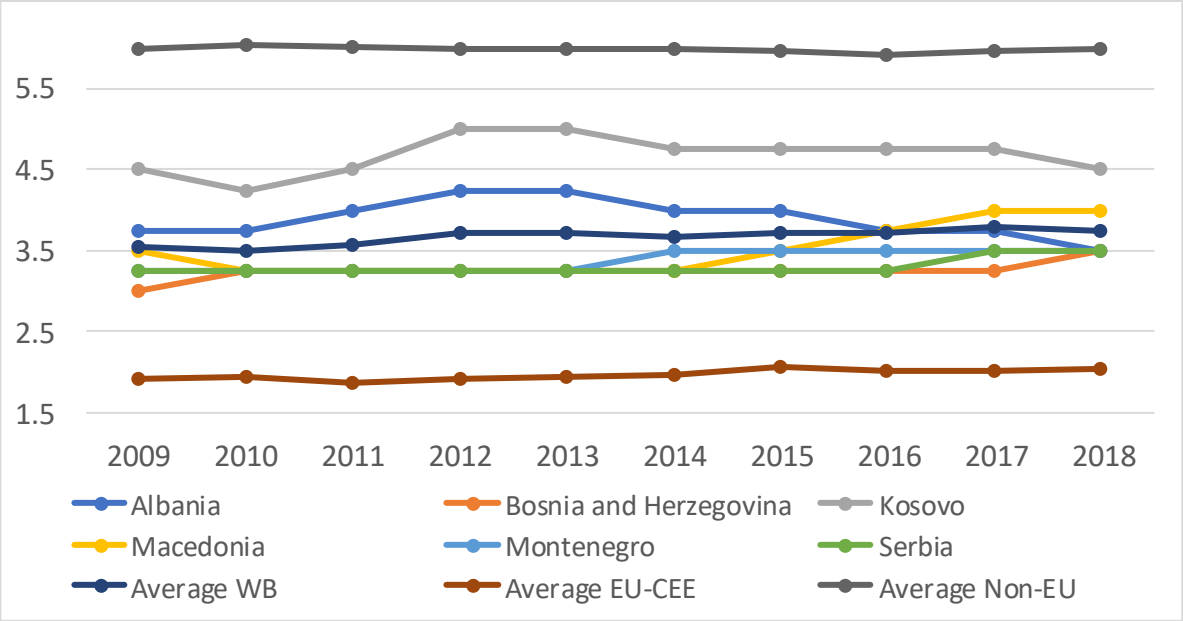
Corruption across all levels of government and administration can be identified as one of the causes for such performance of democratic governance. In a recent strategy on the European Union's enlargement with the countries of the Western Balkans, the European Commission concluded that the six countries as a group "show clear elements

of state capture, including links with organized crime and corruption at all levels of government and administration, as well as a strong entanglement of public and private interests" (European Commission 2018, 3). As conceptualized in the literature, state capture stands for "the appropriation of state resources by political actors for their own ends: either private or political benefit" (Grzymala-Busse 2008, 640). The overall orientation of political elites towards extraction of state resources in the Western Balkan countries cannot be easily disputed as the above assessment of the European Commission shows. Indeed, corruption seems widely present across all levels of government in all the six countries. According to the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), the Western Balkans significantly lags in containing corruption from the more developed liberal-democratic countries in Europe. In the 2018 edition of CPI, Montenegro was ranked best among the six, at the 67th position, followed by Serbia (87th), Bosnia and Herzegovina (89th), North Macedonia and Kosovo (both 93rd) and Albania (99th) (Transparency International 2019).

The quality of the electoral processes in the region can also be described as falling short of the standards practiced in the developed liberal democracies. Elections across the Western Balkans are often burdened with evidence and accusations for electoral fraud, infringements in the voting process (including undue influence towards voters through distribution of clientelist benefits), abuse of office and public funds for electoral purposes by incumbents, isolated cases of electoral violence, unsuitable legal framework to prevent election infringements and lack of enforcement of the existing framework. The conduct of the electoral process has also been a source of tension between government and opposition political parties in several of the Western Balkan countries. For instance, following the 2014 general elections, the main opposition party in North Macedonia publicly denounced the election results as invalid, accusing the ruling party of abuse of the state system for electoral purposes. Similarly, the main opposition party of Montenegro boycotted its participation in the institutions following the 2016 Parliamentary elections, accusing the ruling party of voter coercion and abuse of state power for electoral purposes. The main opposition party in Albania refused to participate in the 2019 Local elections, accusing the ruling party of various abuses in the run-in towards elections. Starting from the end of 2018 and during the first half of 2019,

the united Serbian opposition protested the ruling coalition, also citing electoral infringements and lack of possibilities of a genuine political contest.

Figure 2.3. Nations in Transit electoral process scores (2009-2018, 1 indicating best and 7 indicating worst performance, source: Freedom House 2018)



The deficiencies of the electoral process across the region are noted by international watchdogs. Consider Figure 2.3. which presents Nations in Transit's ratings for the quality of the electoral process of the six Western Balkan countries, including the regional average, as well as the regional averages of the CEE-EU and the NON-EU countries. According to Nations in Transit, Kosovo has the worst quality of electoral process from the countries of the Western Balkans (a score of 4.5 in 2018), with North Macedonia performing better (a score of 4 in 2018) and the other four countries ranked higher (all holding a score of 3.5 in 2018) (1 means best and 7 the worst performance). The Western Balkan average in this measurement thus stands at 3.75, a significantly lower rating than the regional average of CEE-EU which stands at 2.05 for 2018, as well as significantly higher rating than the regional average of the non-EU post-communist countries (an average of 5.98 in 2018). In sum, the Western Balkan countries seem to perform much better than the former socialist countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and significantly worse than the CEE-EU (i.e. around the middle of Nations in Transit electoral process rating). The figure also reveals that this performance is an

entrenched trend - none of the Western Balkan countries have received a better score than 3 (Bosnia and Herzegovina) since 2009 and most of them gravity around a single score, signaling only incremental changes in the quality of the electoral process across the region in the last decade.

Deficiencies in liberal-democratic political development in the region are coupled with several deficiencies in economic development. The World Bank classifies all the six as upper middle-income countries in 2018, with Montenegro having nearly twice the Gross National Income (GNI, calculated according to Atlas Method) per capita of Kosovo ($8400 and $4230 respectively), with the other four countries falling in between (World Bank 2019). Montenegro's GNI per capita is still not even a quarter of the European Union average ($35359) and only one third of that of Slovenia ($24670) and less than Croatia ($13830) and Romania ($11290), but at a similar level to that of Bulgaria ($8860). Despite being a frontrunner in terms of the level of GNI per capita in the region, Montenegro has a staggering nearly a quarter of the population living under national poverty line under the most recent estimate in 2015 (Ibid.). More than a quarter of the population in Serbia and slightly more than 22% in North Macedonia are estimated to be living under national poverty lines in 2016 and 2017 respectively. The lowest estimate in the region is that of Albania, at nearly 14.3% in 2012. Unemployment, and especially unemployment among the youth, is a long-term problem. According to the 2018 International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates, the highest level of unemployment in the region was recorded in North Macedonia (21.5%, a big drop however from the highest ever recorded level of 37.25% in 2005) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (nearly 21%, with the highest ever recorded level in 2006 standing at 31%) (Ibid.). While there is no data on Kosovo, the other three countries perform considerably better (Serbia's level is lowest at 13.5%). The overall impression from these statistics is that economic development is moving in a positive direction in the region, whilst there are still large segments of the populations of the Western Balkan countries that remain vulnerable in socio-economic terms.

Non-market employments which are commonly under state control and therefore represent a patronage resource play a prominent role in the economies in the region. The ILO estimates that more than a quarter of the employed in Montenegro and Serbia

are employed in the non-market sector, while the same is the case with more than a fifth of the employed in Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia and 17% of the employed in Albania (Ibid.). Government expenditure as a percentage of GDP has been highest in 2019 in Montenegro (47.4%), Serbia (42.8%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (42.4%) and substantially lower in North Macedonia (31.6%), Albania (29.5%) and Kosovo (27.2%) (Heritage Foundation 2019). Public debt amounted to staggering 71.2% in Albania in 2019, 67.5% in Montenegro and 61.5% in Serbia, while the comparable statistics stand at 41% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 39.3% in North Macedonia and only 20.9% in Kosovo (Ibid.).

In sum, given the political and economic indicators presented, one may argue that the Western Balkan countries roughly stand at an intermediate level of political and economic development. As I will argue more thoroughly in chapters 3 and 4, political clientelism is characteristic for the countries of the region in both frequency as well as regarding the varieties of clientelist exchanges present on the ground. For now, it is important to take note that the context we are observing is that of a post-socialist and reform-oriented intermediary political and economic development.

2.3. Electoral institutions

Five of the six Western Balkan countries – Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia – are organized as unitary parliamentary republics with strong executive cabinets formally accountable to national parliaments and decentralized directly-elected administrations. Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other hand, is organized as a federal parliamentary republic consisted of two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, and, in addition, the District of Brčko recognized as an autonomous unit. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska have their own entity governments, with the Federation being further subdivided into ten cantons with their own governments. Both main entities also have decentralized government units at the local level. This overall setup means that within Bosnia and Herzegovina there is one government and parliament at the central level, two governments and parliaments at entity level, one government and parliament at district level and ten governments and parliaments at cantonal level. Thus, elections across the region are conducted on two levels (central and local) in all the unitary

Western Balkan republics and on four levels in Bosnia and Herzegovina (central, entity and district, cantonal and local).

At the central level, the voters in Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia directly elect the members of national parliaments (who then appoint the executive cabinet), as well as the presidents of the republics. The voters in Albania and Kosovo directly elect only the members of parliaments, while both government cabinets and presidents of states are appointed by the elected representatives. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the voters directly elect the members of the three-member Presidency, the members of the central, entity (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska) and Brčko District parliaments, as well as the members of the cantonal parliaments in the framework of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Voting rights for participation at the Bosnia and Herzegovina's elections are formally conditioned on residence in constituencies that mimic the ethnic divide. For example, the Bosniak and Croat members of the Presidency are elected by the voters in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, while the Serbian member is elected in Republika Srpska. Members of entity parliaments are elected by entity residents, and the same is the case with members of the Brčko District and cantonal parliaments. At the local elections, the voters in the Western Balkan countries elect the members of local-level representative bodies, as well as the mayors of local government units in Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia (in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia mayors are appointed by local representative institutions).

In the parliamentary elections, all the countries in the region currently employ proportional electoral systems, with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo employing preferential voting while the rest rely on a closed-list system. Some of the countries use thresholds for parliament entrance (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), while others do not (Kosovo and North Macedonia). Montenegro and Serbia have specified rules for ethnic minority lists that allow them to enter parliament without achieving the threshold. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo have institutionalized guaranteed seats for minorities, and Bosnia and Herzegovina has also established compensatory seats aimed to guarantee proportional representation between the three constitutive ethnic groups.

There are considerable differences regarding the number of electoral constituencies with Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia having a one nation-wide multi-member constituency, Albania has 12 and North Macedonia six multi-member electoral constituencies. Bosnia and Herzegovina's electoral constituencies overlap with entity, cantonal and district borders depending on the level in which elections are held.

The number of parliament members is also variable between the countries. Albania's parliament consists of 140 members, that of Bosnia and Herzegovina of 42 members, Kosovo and Macedonia 120 members, Montenegro 81 members, and Serbia 250 members of parliament. In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the parliament consists of two chambers, the lower chamber is elected directly and consists of 98 members, while the higher chamber is es elected by cantonal representative bodies (58 members). The National Assembly of Republika Srpska consists of 83 members.

Where direct elections for central-level presidents are held (all of the six apart from Albania and Kosovo), a plurality system with two rounds is either adopted (Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) or first-past-the-post system in the presidential elections for the three-member presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the president of Republika Srpska.

The rules for local elections generally mimic the proportional systems employed at the central level in each of the countries, with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo employing preferential voting and the others closed lists, while Albania, Montenegro and Serbia use thresholds for entering local government representative bodies. In the cases where mayors are directly elected (Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia) a plurality system is adopted.

Table 2.2. below offers a full overview of the electoral rules across the region.

Table 2.2. Electoral systems in the countries of the Western Balkan (sources: national electoral codes and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance IDEA)

	ELECTORAL SYSTEM FOR CENTRAL REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS	ELECTORAL SYSTEM FOR PRESIDENT	ELECTORAL SYSTEM FOR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE INSTITUTIONS
ALBANIA	• Proportional system (closed lists) • 3% threshold for political parties, 5% threshold for party coalitions • 12 multi-member electoral constituencies • 140 members of parliament • 4-year term	• President is elected in the parliament with a 3/5 majority of members • 5-year term	• First-past-the-post system for mayors • Proportional system (closed lists) for members of local representative bodies, 3% threshold for political parties, 5% threshold for coalitions • 61 local government units • 4-year term
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	• Proportional system (open lists) for most members of parliaments of BiH, FBiH, RS, the cantonal parliaments and district parliament • 3% threshold • Multi-member constituencies that overlap with entity, cantonal and district borders • Compensatory and mandatory seats for ethnic groups • 42 members of BiH parliament • 98 members FBiH parliament • 83 members of RS parliament • 10 cantonal assemblies with variable number of seats (21-35) • 4-year term	• First-past-the-post system for three Presidency members • Voters in FBiH elect the Bosniak and Croat representatives (voters may vote in either of the two contests), voters in RS elect the Serb representative • Simple majority for • RS president and vice-presidents, the candidate with most votes is elected as RS president, while the top two candidates from the other constituent peoples are elected as vice-presidents • 4-year term	• Proportional system (open lists) for members of local representative bodies, mayors are elected by local representative bodies • 143 local government units, 79 in FBiH and 64 in RS • 4-year term

KOSOVO	• Proportional system (preferential voting for up to five candidates) • Single multi-member nationwide constituency • Mandatory seats for ethnic minorities • 120 members of parliament • 4-year term	• President is elected by the parliament with 2/3 majority in first two rounds of voting, and with a simple majority in a third round • 5-year term	• Two-round plurality system for mayors • Proportional system (preferential voting for up to one candidate) for members of local representative bodies • 38 local government units • 4-year term
MONTENEGRO	• Proportional system (closed lists) • 3% threshold for candidate lists (special rules for candidate lists of ethnic minorities) • Single multi-member nationwide constituency • 81 members of parliament • 4-year term	• Two-round plurality system • 5-year term, term is limited to two consecutive elections	• Proportional system (closed lists) for members of local representative bodies, mayors are elected by local representative bodies • 3% threshold for candidate lists (special rules for candidate lists of ethnic minorities) • 24 local government units • 4-year term
NORTH MACEDONIA	• Proportional system (closed lists) • 6 multi-member electoral constituencies • 120-123 members of parliament • 4-year term	• Two-round plurality system • 40% turnout in second round required for election • 5-year term, two terms maximum	• Two-round plurality system for mayors • Proportional system (closed lists) for members of local representative bodies • 81 local government units • 4-year term
SERBIA	• Proportional system (closed lists) • 3% threshold for candidate lists (minority lists exempted from threshold) • Single multi-member nationwide constituency • 250 members of parliament • 4-year term	• Two-round plurality system • 5-year term, two terms maximum	• Proportional system (closed lists) for members of local representative bodies, mayors are elected by local representative bodies • 3% threshold for candidate lists (minority lists exempted from threshold) • 174 local government units • 4-year term

In sum, the countries of the Western Balkans have formally established rules that guarantee elections according to basic democratic standards. The proportional systems employed across the countries of the region ensure participation of minority groups and different segments of the population in central and local representative bodies. As shown in the introductory section of this chapter, some researchers expect that political clientelism will be more widely present when electoral rules facilitate preferential voting. If that is the case, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo should have higher levels of political clientelism than the rest. However, the survey data that I present in Chapter 4 does not corroborate this expectation. Electoral rules might have no effect whatsoever on the presence of political clientelism in the region, but this should be taken as a preliminary assessment as the question falls outside of the scope of this doctoral thesis.

2.4. Political parties, competition and main issue cleavages

It is worth noting at this point that electoral rules coupled with the ethnic diversity on the ground have given birth to party systems characterized by different levels of fragmentation. This is best visible when one compares Bosnia and Herzegovina with the rest, as Bosnia and Herzegovina has the most fragmented party system in the region (see Table 2.3.). In the early 2000s Serbia's party system was also significantly fragmented due to a cleavage between the pro-Western and anti-Western political forces, a feature which is less and less present in Serbian political life. Albania's party system is characterized by two major political parties taking turns in government while that of North Macedonia of two major parties which typically establish a coalition with the election winner in the ethnic Albanian political camp. Montenegro is a special case of all Western Balkan countries, as well as in the whole of Europe, as it is continuously governed by one political party since the first multiparty elections. Montenegro's governments include one major party and junior coalition partners. In Kosovo, there are currently three major and several smaller political parties that manage to enter parliament. As I will show throughout this section, political parties are indistinguishable in terms of the left-right ideological divide, but ethnic-based politics dominates political life across the region in programmatic terms.

Table 2.3. Effective number of parties in the Western Balkan countries (source: Gallagher 2019)

Elections	Electoral level	Parliamentary level	Elections	Electoral level	Parliamentary level
Albania			Montenegro		
2001	3.18	2.6	2002	2.84	2.57
2005	10.46	3.75	2006	3.36	3.16
2009	3.18	2.6	2009	3.19	2.47
2013	3.61	2.78	2012	3.44	3.18
2017	2.94	2.55	2016	4.16	3.66
Average	**4.67**	**2.86**	**Average**	**3.40**	**3.01**
Bosnia and Herzegovina			North Macedonia		
1996	4.33	3.41	1998	5.04	3.09
1998	6.02	4.59	2002	4.13	2.81
2000	7.75	7.29	2006	5.29	4.06
2002	8.03	7.95	2011	3.63	2.91
2006	8.9	7.17	2014	3.43	2.86
2010	9.92	7.67	2017	3.24	2.8
2014	9.42	7.6	**Average**	**4.13**	**3.09**
2018	10.68	8.73	Serbia		
Average	**8.13**	**6.80**	2003	6.43	4.8
Kosovo			2007	5.56	4.55
2001	3.24	3.22	2008	3.73	3.48
2004	3.32	3.08	2012	6.32	4.87
2007	4.88	4.19	2016	3.57	3.23
2010	5.02	4.36	**Average**	**5.12**	**4.19**
2014	5.22	5.18			
2017	3.86	4.14			
Average	**4.26**	**4.03**			

Ethnic-based politics is prominent in all countries of the region following the fall of socialism and has great effect on political parties and political competition. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia, inter-ethnic cleavages frequently dominate the political scene as the biggest political parties exclusively represent their own ethnic groups. Political competition in Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided in three ethnic contests (a feature that promotes fragmentation), but three major parties have established themselves as leading in their ethnic camps: the Bosniak Party for Democratic Action (SDA), the Serbian Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) and the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ BiH). The main cleavage in the country is thus the ethnic cleavage mirrored in the inability of ethnic political leaders to agree on a mutually acceptable solution on how to reform the complex and often deadlocked political system of the country (Donais 2013).

Political life in the Bosniak ethnic bloc has been dominated by the SDA who typically wins most votes in its bloc during general elections. A second important

political party in the Bosniak bloc is the declaratively multiethnic Social Democratic Party (SDP), who won the largest vote share from the Federation of BiH in the elections for the state parliament in 2000 and 2011. In the Serbian bloc, prior to the 2006 elections, the biggest party was the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) and afterwards the SNSD who continuously leads the government of Republika Srpska to present day. SNSD and SDS are the main rivals in the elections in the Serbian bloc and typically form larger pre- or post-election coalitions to establish control of the Republika Srpska government. In the Croatian bloc, the situation is more straightforward: the biggest party since the first elections following the civil war has been the HDZ BiH. More recently (elections for members of the of the Bosnia and Herzegovina presidency in 2006, 2010 and 2018), the dominance of HDZ BiH has been broken by a single candidate participating in the elections for Croat member of the presidency through the declaratively multiethnic political parties SDP (2006 and 2010) and the Democratic Front (2018). The major political parties of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as their affiliations to party families in terms of declared ideological position, membership in the European federation of parties and origins (dimensions chosen while following Mair and Mudde 1998) are presented in Table 2.4. below. The table also shows the terms of participation in central government.

North Macedonia's party system is also characterized by competition in closed ethnic blocs. The two largest ethnic-Macedonian parties, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) and the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) take turns in leading the government, but in all cases the government is supported by a junior coalition partner from the bloc of ethnic Albanian political parties. This is not a consequence of institutionalized rules as it is the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina but represents a pattern which was established given the multi-ethnic composition of the population. In the last two decades, the biggest ethnic Albanian political party in the country has been the Democratic Union of Integration (DUI) who continuously participates in government apart from the 2006-2008 term.

Table 2.4. Major political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina by party families and by participation in central government (*as election winner; RS = Republika Srpska government; P = seat in the Bosnia and Herzegovina's Presidency; if not indicated otherwise term in governance refers to participation in the central government in Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Political party (acronym)	Left-right orientation; declared ideology	Affiliation in European party federation	Origins (year of establishment)	Participation in central government
Party of Democratic Action (SDA)	Conservatism; Bosniak nationalism	European People's Party (observer member)	Established as an Islamic religious Bosniak party in the wake of Yugoslav dissolution (1990)	1996-1998*; 1998-2000*; 2002-2006*; 2006-2010; 2010-2012; 2014-2018*; 2018-present*
Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SDP)	Center-left; social-democracy	Party of European Socialists (associated member)	Successor of the League of Communists of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992)	2000-2002*; 2010-2014*
Serb Democratic Party (SDS)	Right-wing; Serbian nationalism; secessionism	None	Established by former Bosnian Serb war leader Karadžić as a party supporting unification of the Serb community with Serbia (1990)	1996-1997 (RS)*; 2000-2002 (RS)*; 2002-2006 (RS)*
Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD)	Right-wing; Serbian nationalism; secessionism	None	Established by a group close to long-term leader Dodik who opposed the establishment of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the SDS (1996)	1997-1998 (RS); 1998-2000 (RS); 2006-2010 (RS)*; 2010-2014 (RS)*; 2014-2018 (RS)*
Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ BiH)	Center right; conservatism; Christian democracy; federalism	European People's Party (observer member)	Established as political party of Bosnian Croats who supported secession from Bosnia and Herzegovina (1990)	1996-1998 (P)*; 1998-2002 (P)*; 2002-2006 (P)*; 2014-2018 (P)*
Democratic Front (DF)	Center-left; social democracy; civic nationalism	None	Splinter from SDP (2013)	2018-present (P)*

The ethnic cleavage also dominates Macedonian politics, but another prominent cleavage was also shaped within the ethnic Macedonian camp in the past decades. VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM disagree on many important issues connected to the symbolic character of Macedonian statehood, particularly in relation to the name dispute with Greece. SDSM has advocated for a compromise on the name issue, with its government striking a deal with Greece in 2018 to change the name of the country while adding the prefix "North" to Macedonia, a move that was severely disputed by VMRO-DPMNE. Otherwise, both parties declaratively support North Macedonia's European Union integration and liberal-democratic reforms. The major political parties of North Macedonia are presented in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5. Major political parties in North Macedonia by party families and by participation in central government (*as election winner)

Political party (acronym)	Left-right orientation; declared ideology	Affiliation in European party federation	Origins (year of establishment)	Participation in central government
Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization - Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE)	Center-right; conservatism; Christian democracy; Macedonian nationalism	European People's Party (associated member)	Established by anti-communist Macedonian nationalists (1990)	1998-2002*; 2006-2008*; 2008-2011*; 2011-2014*; 2014-2017*
Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM)	Center-left; social-democracy	Party of European Socialists (associated member)	Successor of the League of Communists of Macedonia (1991)	1992-1994; 1994-1998*; 2002-2006*; 2017-present
Democratic Union for Integration (DUI)	Center-right; conservatism; Albanian nationalism	None	Established by members of the paramilitary National Liberation Army (NLA) (2001)	2002-2006; 2008-2011; 2011-2014; 2014-2017; 2017-present

Starting from the period when the idea of Montenegrin statehood gain prominence (the end of the 1990s) an ethnic cleavage of a higher salience was also gradually developed in Montenegro. This is the cleavage between the political parties in

Montenegro who advocate for Montenegrin breakaway from Serbia and those who advocate for unionism. Still, the political dynamics in Montenegro is an irregular appearance in contemporary Europe, given that since the first multiparty elections at the beginning of the 1990s to present day only one political party has led the central government. Montenegro's political scene has been dominated for three decades by the rebranded former communists, the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) who pragmatically moved between positions on issues related to Montenegrin statehood, being an advocate of a federation with Serbia during the 1990s to successfully spearheading independence in 2006. The main rival of DPS prior to independence was the Socialist People's Party (SNP), and since 2012, the Democratic Front, a coalition of several pro-Serbian parties. The most important political parties of Montenegro are overviewed in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6. Major political parties in Montenegro by party families and by participation in central government (*as election winner)

Political party (acronym)	Left-right orientation; declared ideology	Affiliation in European party federation	Origins (year of establishment)	Participation in central government
Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro (DPS)	Centre-left; social-democracy; Montenegrin nationalism	Party of European Socialists (associated member)	Successor of the League of Communists of Montenegro (1991)	1990-1992*; 1992-1996*; 1996-1998*; 1998-2001*; 2001-2002*; 2002-2006*; 2006-2009*; 2009-2012*; 2012-2016*; 2016-present*
Socialist People's Party of Montenegro (SNP)	Centre-left; social-democracy; unionism of Montenegro and Serbia	None	Splinter from DPS, opposing secession of Montenegro from Serbia (1998)	/
Democratic Front (DF)	Right-wing; conservatism	None	Established as a coalition of several pro-Serb parties who oppose the DPS rule (2012)	/

In those Western Balkan countries where inter-ethnic cleavages are not prominent (Albania, Kosovo and Serbia), identity politics is still an important part of the national

political scenes. The political debate in Albania is often structured around the issue of the status of ethnic Albanians in the neighboring Kosovo and North Macedonia, while the same is the case with Serbia regarding the status of ethnic Serbs in Kosovo and Republika Srpska. Serbia is particularly engaged over the issue of the statehood of Kosovo, with a similar trend being also visible in Kosovo. The government of Serbia considers Kosovo as being part of the state, while the governments of Albania and Kosovo see the latter as an independent nation. These issues are prominent in all three countries but this does not mean that a cleavage is developed as all major political actors in Albania, Kosovo and Serbia hold uniform views in regard to the idea that ethnically kin groups in neighboring countries should be supported as a matter of state policy and that the issue of Kosovo should be resolved according to ethnic interests. Still, the disagreements between the three states lift ethnic issues high on the political agenda.

Since the first multiparty elections, two major parties have taken turns in governing Albania, the Democratic Party of Albania (PD) and the Socialist Party of Albania (PS) who typically establish control of the government while including junior coalition partners (see Table 2.7.). The Albanian party system thus approximates a two-party system, where only PD and PS seem to have the opportunity to form governments. There is not a single issue-dimension that received a high level of salience in Albanian politics in recent years. The two major parties publicly support European Union integration and liberal-democratic reforms. Instead, the political contest is characterized by valence competition: PS and PD typically accuse each other of incompetence and corruption in the run-in to elections. Political life is thus centered around personal conflicts of party leaders, contributing to a low level of internal-party democracy, frequent boycott of opposition parties of the institutions and disputes over election results and electoral rules (Murati 2013).

Since Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence from Serbia in 2008, two big political parties have dominated the political scene of Kosovo, the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), but following the 2017 elections, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) has also established itself as an important political actor in the country. Another important political party in recent

years who advocates for unionism of Kosovo and Albania has been the movement Self-determination (LV). And, similarly, as in Albania, there is not a major long-standing issue cleavage that dominates political life, and instead, political elites exclusively turn to personal politics and mutual accusations in the public sphere as means of attracting votes. The main political parties in Kosovo are overviewed in Table 2.8 below.

Table 2.7. Major political parties in Albania by party families and by participation in central government (*as election winner)

Political party (acronym)	Left-right orientation; declared ideology	Affiliation in European party federation	Origins (year of establishment)	Participation in central government
Socialist Party of Albania (PS)	Center-left; social-democracy	Party of European Socialists (associated member)	Successor of the Party of Labour of Albania (1991)	1991-1992*; 1997-2005*; 2013-present*
Democratic Party of Albania (PD)	Center-right; conservatism	European People's Party (associated member)	Established as an anti-communist party (1990)	1992-1997*; 2005-2013*
Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI)	Center-left; social-democracy	None	Splinter from the PS (2004)	2009-2013; 2013-2017

Serbia's party system has been characterized by heavy fragmentation following the October 2000 revolution against the regime of Slobodan Milošević until only recently (2014) when the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) established itself as an almost dominant party in the Serbian political scene. The first post-Milošević elections in 2000 brought a landslide win for the united democratic opposition under the name of Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) consisted of the Democratic Party (DP), the Democratic Party of Serbia (DPS), G17+ and several smaller political parties. This coalition of parties disbanded for the next election cycles, in which the hard-core nationalist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) obtained the largest share of votes (general elections in 2003 and 2007), but the coalition of DP and DPS together with smaller political parties managed to form governments in both occasions, ousting the SRS in long-term opposition. In 2008, the coalition around DP was successful in winning and forming a government. Starting

from the 2012 elections, SNS, splinter party from the SRS, slowly began to establish domination over Serbian political life, establishing governments in three occasions together with Milosevic's former party, the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). At the 2014 elections SNS obtained the majority of the in the Serbian parliament and nearly half of the popular vote, a tally which was repeated in the 2016 electoral contest. Both SNS and SPS have successfully broken with their nationalist and authoritarian pasts and are currently depicted as moderate pro-European political parties. The coalition around the DP, formerly the ruling party of Serbia, has suffered landslide defeats in the past two election cycles.

Table 2.8. Major political parties in Kosovo by party families and by participation in central government (*as election winner)

Political party (acronym)	Left-right orientation; declared ideology	Affiliation in European party federation	Origins (year of establishment)	Participation in central government
Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK)	Center-right; conservatism; Albanian nationalism	European People's Party (observer member)	Established from the moderate movement for national liberation (1989)	2001-2004*; 2004-2007*; 2007-2010; 2014-2017
Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK)	Center-right; conservatism; Albanian nationalism	Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (full member)	Established from former members of the political wing of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) (1999)	2001-2004; 2007-2010*; 2010-2014*; 2014-2017*; 2017-present* (part of PANA coalition)
Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK)	Right-wing; conservatism; Albanian nationalism	None	Established from several smaller parties with the former KLA commander Haradinaj as leader (2001)	2004-2007; 2017-present* (part of PANA coalition)
Self-determination (LV)	Center-left; social-democracy; Albanian nationalism; Kosovo-Albania unionism	None	Established by merger of several smaller parties and as a continuation of KAN (Kosovo Action Network) (2005)	/

The main cleavage in Serbian politics has traditionally been structured around the dispute between nationalist and pro-European forces and has been visible is specific issues such as the treatment of the past in relation to Serbia's military operations in the 1990s, the cooperation with the Hague Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the issue of Kosovo. However, all current major parties hold a stance against the statehood of Kosovo and all apart from SRS declaratively advocate for European Union integration and liberal-democratic reforms. The political parties of Serbia are overviewed in Table 2.9. below.

Table 2.9. Major political parties in Serbia by party families and by participation in central government (*as election winner)

Political party (acronym)	Left-right orientation; declared ideology	Affiliation in European party federation	Origins (year of establishment)	Participation in central government
Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS)	Left-wing; social democracy; Serbian nationalism	None	Successor of the League of Communists of Serbia, established by Milošević (1990)	1990-1992*; 1992-1993*; 1993-1997*; 1997-2000*; 2008-2012; 2012-2014; 2014-2016; 2016-present
Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	Right-wing; Serbian nationalism; Euroscepticism; pro-Russia	None	Established as an ultranationalist party of later convicted war criminal Šešelj (1991)	1997-2000
Democratic Party (DP)	Center-left; social-democracy; pro-Europeanism	Party of European Socialists (associated member)	Established as opposition to the Milošević regime (1990)	2000-2003* (part of DOS coalition); 2007-2008; 2008-2012*
Serbian Progressive Party (SNS)	Center-right; conservatism; Serbian nationalism; pro-Europeanism	European People's Party (associated member)	Splinter from SRS (moderate pro-European wing) (2008)	2012-2014*; 2014-2016*; 2016-present*

The above overview of the political parties in the Western Balkan countries shows that the major issues on which parties build programmatic political mobilization are generally tied to inter-ethnic challenges, or, in some cases, to intra-ethnic

disagreements over how to approach challenges connected with ethnicity and national identity. Apart from this, political parties in the Western Balkans in general support liberal-democratic reforms and EU integration and typically make raising living standards an important part of their programs. But we are unable to observe the traditional socio-economic cleavages that are more salient in the developed democracies. Western Balkan political parties do not represent any specific socio-economic groups and politics is not extensively burdened with the left-right ideological divide. Most political parties carry an ideological tag only declaratively so the column on left-right ideological dimension in my tables 2.3. to 2.8. should be taken with caution. Ideology was perhaps more important in the region at the beginning of the 1990s when the first political parties were established, either as successors of the former communist parties that enjoyed political monopoly for decades (e.g. PS in Albania, SDP in Bosnia and Herzegovina, DPS in Montenegro, SDSM in North Macedonia and SPS in Serbia) or as their fierce opposition (e.g. PD in Albania, VMRO-DPMNE in North Macedonia). In the subsequent phases of democratic consolidation, many of the overviewed parties appeared as splinter parties from the bigger ones (e.g. LSI in Albania, DF in Bosnia and Herzegovina, SNP in Montenegro, SNS in Serbia), but in most cases the fragmentation was caused by personal disagreements between party leaders than substantial ideological differences. Many of the political parties rely on extensive nationalist platforms (e.g. SDA, SDS, SNSD and HDZ-BiH in Bosna and Herzegovina, AAK in Kosovo and SRS in Serbia) while some appear more moderate in regard to ethnic nationalism who is still an important part of their ideological agendas (e.g. LDK in Kosovo, DPS in Montenegro, VMRO-DPMNE and DUI in North Macedonia, SNS in Serbia). A portion of the political parties overviewed here attempt to forge cross-ethnic linkages with voters, but this rarely turns into proper cross-ethnic political mobilization (e.g. SDP and DF in Bosnia and Herzegovina, SDSM in North Macedonia). Finally, several of the minority parties appeared as successor of former armed groups who participated in the conflicts of the region (e.g. PDK and AAK in Kosovo, DUI in North Macedonia), while other were formed as political wings of armed groups (e.g. SDA, SDS and HDZ BiH in Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Thus, even though political parties carry a declarative ideological tag, they approximate themselves ideologically, a state of affairs that seems to open space for political clientelism as well as for valence competition. During electoral contests and

beyond political parties in the region typically accuse their rivals of incompetence and corruption as a part of their broader mobilization efforts. In addition, political clientelism is widely present as a mode of non-programmatic linking between political elites and citizens in the region as I will show in chapters 3 and 4. Prior to that, it is important to note that beside reliance on ethnic issues on the programmatic side, political parties across the region also typically rely on charismatic leadership in their political mobilization efforts. The most successful political parties in the region in recent years – such as the PS in Albania, the SDA, SNSD and HDZ BiH in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the DPS in Montenegro, VMRO-DPMNE in North Macedonia and SNS in Serbia – have successfully combined charismatic public image and strong party authority with identity-politics and targeted inducements to voters, supporters and economic agents to achieve long-term incumbency in their countries. This mix of identity and non-programmatic politics under a strong party leadership currently represents the mainstream across the region. The most prominent leaders of major political parties, such as Edi Rama from PS in Albania, Bakir Izetbegović (and prior to him his father Alija Izetbegović) from the SDA in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Milorad Dodik from SNSD in Republika Srpska, Dragan Čović from HDZ BiH in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Milo Đukanović from DPS in Montenegro, Nikola Gruevski from VMRO-DPMNE in North Macedonia, and Aleksandar Vučić from SNS in Serbia, have all enjoyed or still enjoy a long-term "untouchable" status at both party leadership and central government institutions for an extended period of time. Thus, the most successful political parties in the region rely on a mix of nationalism, political clientelism and charismatic leadership. From this context we shall further explore political clientelism and the clientelist engagement of citizens in the next two chapters of this doctoral thesis.

2.5. Summary

This chapter provided the context for overviewing citizen engagement in political clientelism in the Western Balkans. The Western Balkan countries are, as a group, at an intermediate level of political and economic development, with institutionalized liberal-democratic formal institutions and deficiencies in their functioning. Electoral institutions in the countries of the region in general ensure the conduct of elections

according to basic democratic standards, as well as representation of different ethnic groups and segments of the population in government across different levels. The most successful political parties in the region combine a charismatic public image and strong authority of the party leader with identity-politics and political clientelism. The next two chapters of this doctoral thesis overview more closely political clientelism in the Western Balkans.

Chapter 3. POLITICAL CLIENTELISM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS: NOTES FROM THE FIELD

The possibilities for citizen engagement in political clientelism in a given society are constrained by the available modes of engagement characteristic for that society. In countries where political parties turn to clientelist exchanges solely for electoral purposes we should expect proliferation of short-term (in comparison to long-term) clientelist linking and citizen engagement that will be mostly tied to electoral services. Where political parties pursue broader goals (e.g. building of a party organization) while relying on clientelist exchanges we should expect to observe a dynamic which is more characteristic for long-term clientelist linking. In a similar way, if citizens, and particularly citizens-clients, are content with extracting petty benefits from political clientelism (perhaps because of severe poverty), we should expect proliferation of forms of linking where political parties have the upper hand in the exchange. Conversely, where citizens engage in clientelism for specific tailored benefits that answer to needs that go beyond the basic material needs, we would most likely overview a proliferation of exchanges where citizens possess a stronger bargaining power and where they would actively negotiate their engagement as well as the benefit that will be received in return.

The goal of this chapter is to describe political clientelism in the Western Balkans. This is a necessary step before proceeding with a study on the determinants behind the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism (the topic of Chapter 4). In Chapter 1 I proposed a typology on the variations of citizen engagement while following the literature on political clientelism. In the present chapter I shall return to the proposed typology by applying it to the Western Balkan region. In Chapter 2 I described the current context of the Western Balkan countries. I showed that the region can be overviewed as being at an intermediary level of political and economic development, relevant to the global outlook. I also stressed the fact that corruption is a pressing problem for the Western Balkan countries, and this notion should lead us to expect that political clientelism is present on the ground. Chapter 2 also focused on the electoral and party systems in each of the Western Balkan countries and this revealed a context of programmatic political mobilization that is often guided by ethnic cleavages and

nationalism. The overall conclusion is that political competition in the region is less concerned with socio-economic issues than this is the case with identity issues. Still, citizens aspire to advance in socio-economic terms, and it is political clientelism that manages to build a "buffer" against the lack of credible programmatic offer on socio-economic advancement.

This chapter is based on my fieldwork in the Western Balkan region. The goal of my fieldwork (described more thoroughly in the next section of this chapter) was to identify the present practices of political clientelism in the region, the types of exchanges forged by political parties and citizens, as well as the available modes of engagement for clients. The fieldwork consisted of expert information collection.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 3.1. describes my fieldwork in the region, the motivation behind it, as well as the approach adopted in presenting the gathered information and evidence throughout the chapter. Section 3.2. presents several general points on the character of political clientelism in the region, while in sections 3.3. and 3.4. I focus on the supply and the demand sides of clientelist linking. In those two sections I attempt to thoroughly describe the perspective of political parties (patrons) and the citizens (clients) regarding engagement in political clientelism. As I aim to show in this chapter, political clientelism in the Western Balkans is characterized by a variety of exchanges, conducted for different purposes from the side of political parties (who utilize clientelism for both electoral returns and for the purposes of building party organizations) as well as by divergent engagement by citizens (who act as electoral or patronage clients and thus contribute to one or the two goals pursued by political parties). I also use the fieldwork findings to establish evidence on the main proposition advanced in this study, the notion that clients who offer and perform extended services for political parties (i.e. patronage clients) are in position to extract grander clientelist benefits in comparison to electoral clients.

3.1. Description of fieldwork

My fieldwork took place between June 2018 and February 2019, a period in which I made extensive residencies in the Western Balkan countries. The research was consisted of expert information collection through the instrument of semi-structured interviewing. My respondents were all national experts in the field of political

mobilization and participation in their countries from different profiles: social scientists and researchers from academia (with disciplinary backgrounds in political science, sociology, economics and anthropology), the think-tank sector, election observers, investigative journalists, NGO activists, political parties' officials, and members of the staff of international organizations. The sole criteria for participation in the research was a demonstrated expertise in the broad theme of political mobilization and participation in their countries. In total, I conducted 72 interviews across the region, and most of them took place in Serbia (23) and North Macedonia (14), followed up by Bosnia and Herzegovina (11), Albania (10), Kosovo and Montenegro (seven interviews each). More information on my fieldwork as well as on the semi-structured interview guide that I used in the discussions with my respondents is available in Appendix A.

One electoral contest took place during my fieldwork, the general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina in October 2018. I deliberately scheduled my fieldwork in the country for that period and I closely followed the election campaign through the media, and I visited several pre-election rallies. This was particularly useful for deriving an understanding of how political clientelism works during elections. Similarly, in all the countries I attempted to follow daily politics and informally exchange conversations with citizens. In Serbia I was lucky to participate at a party canvassing activity, conducted on the street, despite no elections were on sight soon. The experience of spending at least one month in each of the countries was very influential in building an understanding of the overall dynamics of political life in the region.

The findings that I present below are my own interpretations of what I received as information from my respondents as well as from the additional observation activities that I conducted. I refrain from using the names of the respondents, but I provide information on their profiles where necessary. Where possible, I corroborate my findings with publicly available information from the media, though the reader should take note that most of the publicly available evidence presented throughout the text was firstly introduced to me by the respondents. Where this was not possible, the reader will have to rely on my own assessment that the received information was indeed credible.

There are two principal reasons why I decided to study political clientelism in the region while relying on experts' assessment. First, there is not much written in the

academic literature on political clientelism in the Western Balkans, and there is little information available on the variations of exchanges at regional or country levels. A recent edited volume by Cvejić (2016) considers clientelist relationships between political and economic elites in Serbia and Kosovo but the focus of the studies within the volume is not on clientelism as a mode of political mobilization and participation (i.e. a relation between citizens and political elites), which, on the other hand, is the primary concern of the present study. Another recent publication, the book by Brković (2017) focuses on clientelism as a strategy of coping with everyday problems by the citizens in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an aspect which reveals much on the motivations behind citizen engagement but which still falls short on providing a comprehensive account on political clientelism as a mode of political participation (and thus, short of the ambitions of the present study). The studies by Imami et al. (2018) on election cycles and the allocation of mining licensing in Albania and the one by Uberti et al. (2019) on the same topic in Kosovo show that politicians in the two countries opportunistically allocate mining permits as a part of broader efforts of clientelist political mobilization, findings which reveal that there is a wide variety of clientelist exchanges present on the ground. A study by Tadic and Elbasani (2018) on patronage appointment in Kosovo show the recourse of Kosovo's political elites on patronage appointments both pre- and post-independence. A book by Komar (2013) focuses on voters in Montenegro, but only briefly considers clientelism as a motivation for political participation by the citizens. In sum, political clientelism in the Western Balkan region has been only occasionally studied by researchers in different aspects, however, to my best knowledge there is not a single study that focused on the whole region and from the perspective adopted in the present study, i.e. citizen engagement in political clientelism as a mode of political participation. This made the need for comprehensive fieldwork even more pressing for the present project.

Second, political clientelism is an elusive phenomenon. The informal and exclusive-to-the-participants character of the clientelist exchange, as well as its illegal or semi-legal status, creates numerous obstacles for outside observers to fully grasp its dynamics, the points of view of participants, and the motivations and ideas underpinning any relationship that can be described as clientelist. Yet, clientelist exchanges follow basic patterns, which, when regularized on a broader segment of society, may obtain

the status of a "open secret," known best to those involved but still understandable to those on the outside who are relatively close to clientelist networks. The status of political clientelism in the Western Balkans can be described in these terms: most of the population has no first-hand experience in clientelist dealings but still, it is a phenomenon on which everyone has heard something about, i.e. an "open secret." For this reason, experts' assessments are a valuable short-cut to arriving at an understanding of the character of political clientelism in each of the countries from the Western Balkans. By interacting with experts, I aimed to take advantage of the local knowledge on political clientelism. My overall impression from the fieldwork is that the exercise has been very useful in revealing the character of Western Balkan political clientelism. For instance, I initially had no idea whether the six countries of the Western Balkans differed between themselves regarding the types of exchanges present on the ground, as well as the clientelist strategies of political mobilization and participation implemented by patrons and clients. However, this chapter will generally argue that the six countries differ very little in this respect and this is the first broad finding of my fieldwork.

3.2. The scope of political clientelism in the region

It was my first fieldwork interview when I learned about Dragan Marković - Palma (in literal translation from Serbian Palma stands for "palm tree"). Palma is a well-known Serbian politician and businessman, who became the epitome of political clientelism in the country when a video appeared online where he openly distributed cash to the citizens of the town of Jagodina as part of the so-called "Reception of citizens" organized by the city administration. My respondent insisted that I must see the 20-minute video, shot by Palma's political party United Serbia and published openly on the party's YouTube channel.[3] The recommendation from the respondent was spot on, as I was in for a proper spectacle of political clientelism.

The video shows a lengthy cue of citizens waiting to enter the local government premises on a cold day in December 2017, meet Palma, discuss their daily misfortunes and receive a one-off aid in cash ranging from 25 to 100 euros. The criteria for

[3] The video can be accessed on the YouTube channel of United Serbia: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBdUqdvKqZo&t=5s.

distribution of these benefits are publicly unknown but from the video one may conclude that the number of members of the family, unemployment status and health problems raises the amount of cash received. It is also unknown where this money comes from, though Palma claims that they are allocated from the local budget. The video showcases the local patron as he single-handedly decides on the amount that each citizen receives upon a brief conversation where the citizen outlines his/her daily problems. Palma encourages his co-citizens to request assistance in a time of need (including requests for employment), offers transportation with municipality cars to the elderly and insists that his administration is the one from the whole of Serbia that works best in addressing citizens' needs. He decides on the amount of the aid for several citizens before leaving the stage, upon which the employees in the local administration continue the distribution. The video continues with interviews from the present citizens who describe how they will spend the cash and who are thankful to Palma for his assistance.

The intention of this "spectacle" is rather obvious. The idea is to present a politician who cares about his citizens, who is approachable, credible and generous to assist them in a time of need. And Palma is indeed no regular politician, but for different reasons. He is also known for his business empire: it is widely considered in the Serbian public sphere that he practically owns the town of Jagodina. In the past, he has been accused of "shady" cooperation with the Serbian underground, but he was never in a position to have to defend these claims in court. While the suspicion over the origin of Palma's wealth intrigues the Serbian public sphere for two decades, events such as the "Reception of citizens" bring political returns. Palma's political party United Serbia is continuously in power in Jagodina since 2004 to present day and Palma himself is currently a member of the national parliament and part of the ruling coalition at the central level led by the SNS.

Palma's "Reception of citizens" is an excellent introduction to political clientelism in Serbia and in the region of the Western Balkans. It illustrates the fact that political clientelism is highly normalized and not always limited to secretive deals and that, moreover, it can even be a public spectacle aimed to provoke sympathies among the electorate. It also shows that political clientelism is not limited to election times, as the last local elections in Jagodina and the national parliamentary elections in the

country prior to the video both took place in 2016 and there is no electoral contest in sight for the next two-and-a-half years. For serious clientelist politicians like Palma the campaign is ongoing, and the hearts and minds of the electorate are continuously won with distribution of material benefits.

Public instances of political clientelism are not limited to Serbia. During a pre-referendum rally that took place in September 2018 in the town of Kriva Palanka, North Macedonia, the prime minister Zoran Zaev from the SDSM pledged that it will lobby with the private companies to provide cash "bonuses" for their employees as a means to stimulate turnout in the high-stakes referendum.[4] Long-term ruler Milorad Dodik from the SNSD in Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, said at a pre-election rally in the town of Gacko (general elections 2018) that those who will vote for the rival opposition party, the SDS, will be "thrown out of their jobs," a statement which provoked standing ovation from the rally attendees.[5]

Benefits and threats of a clientelist undertone are a standard part of the political "folklore" in the Western Balkan countries, even when it comes to public events. The public instances of clientelist dealings indicate a certain normalization of political clientelism in the region and show that the phenomenon is widespread both in supply and demand. My respondents without exception agreed that political clientelism is widely present in their countries to a point that it affects electoral and political outcomes in a significant way.

Numerous evidences in support of the claim that political clientelism is widespread in the region can be offered. For instance, major clientelist affairs have been present across the region in the past several years. Following the 2010 general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the media reported that approximately 150 citizens in the town of Cazin protested when vote buying fees remained unpaid by the People's Party for Work and Betterment, a party with a proven clientelist track record in the country (Karabegović 2010). The affair "Snimak" ("The Recording") which rocked Montenegro in 2013 publicly disclosed an audio recording by a member of the ruling DPS

[4] Zaev's statement can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63qu5t7nDn8&feature=youtu.be.
[5] Dodik's statement can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmmB0NW_JOI&feature=youtu.be.

and former head of the state employment office elaborating at an internal party meeting a plan for employment of 8000 DPS supporters, concluding that "one employment is equal to four votes" in the run to the local elections (i.e. employing one person from the family brings the whole family to the polls on election day) (Al Jazeera Balkans 2013). Despite being an important public scandal, "Snimak" was not followed up by an investigation from the Montenegrin authorities. In North Macedonia, the 2015 "Wiretapping Affair" featured a number of publicly disclosed recordings showing abuse of power and corruption, with one of the recordings showing a senior official from the ruling VMRO-DPMNE organizing a massive operation of party-sponsored employments in different branches of government and across various institutions, as well as intimidation towards opposition party members employed in the state administration (Radio Slobodna Evropa 2015). The judicial institutions in the country began to address the infringements revealed with the "Wiretapping Affair" only after the change of government in 2017. In April 2018 the Kosovo authorities indicted eleven members of the ruling PDK for party-sponsored employments, based on wiretaps collected by the EULEX mission to Kosovo (a case dubbed "The Pronto Affair") but the indictments did not go to the very top of PDK despite the fact that Kosovo's President and PDK leader Hashim Thaçi featured in the released wiretaps (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty 2018). Another prominent public affair appeared in Albania in 2019 on which the institutions have initially remained silent. The affair consisted of publicly released wiretap recordings of various electoral infringements conducted by the ruling PS in the run-in towards the 2017 parliamentary elections, including a recording which shows the Minister of Interior receiving a demand of 160 euros in exchange for four votes (Tiede 2019).

The presence of political clientelism in the region is also noted by international election observation missions. Consider Table 3.1. which offers an overview of registered practices connected to political clientelism in the last general elections conducted in each of the Western Balkan countries (data provided by international election observation missions by the OSCE-ODIHR and the EU). International observers report the presence of vote buying, voter intimidation and abuse of public resources in each of the Western Balkan countries in the last election cycles. Violations of the

secrecy of the vote are noted in five of the six, while the practice of intimidation of public employees is noted in four of the six Western Balkan countries.

Table 3.1. Practices associated with political clientelism as noted by international election observers in the Western Balkan countries

	Vote buying	Pressure on public employees	Voter intimidation	Abuse of public resources	Violations of secrecy of vote
ALBANIA	x	x	x	x	x
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	x		x	x	x
KOSOVO	x		x	x	
MONTENEGRO	x	x	x	x	x
NORTH MACEDONIA	x	x	x	x	x
SERBIA	x	x	x	x	x
Sources: OSCE-ODIHR election monitoring reports for last conducted general elections in Albania (2017, OSCE/ODIHR 2017a), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2018, OSCE/ODIHR 2018), Montenegro (2016, OSCE/ODIHR 2017b), North Macedonia (2016, OSCE/ODIHR 2017c) and Serbia (2016, OSCE/ODIHR 2016); EU monitoring report for last conducted general elections in Kosovo (2017, European Union 2017).					

The extensive presence of political clientelism in the region seems less of a problem of a lack of legislation than it is a problem of the enforcement of the existing formal rules adopted to combat clientelist exchanges (another point which was prominent in my interviews). In all the countries in the region the exchange of votes for benefits is made a criminal offense, and the punishments are quite severe, but impunity seems to prevail. The criminal codes of Albania (Art. 328, CCRA 1995) and Kosovo (Art. 215, CCRK 2012) stipulate sanctions of imprisonment between one and five years for the participants in exchanges of votes for benefits, with the equivalent punishments in Montenegro (Art. 186, CCRM 2003) and Serbia (Art. 156, CCRS 2005) being set at maximum three years imprisonment. In North Macedonia, the criminal code makes a distinction between exchanges involving "minor" benefits and the rest, with the two participants risking punishment of up to one year (in case of "minor" benefits) or a minimum of five years (in case of grander benefits) (Art. 162, CCNM 1996). The criminal code provisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina differ from the rest in specifying punishment

only for the participant that offers benefits in exchange for votes, which is set to up to three years in prison (Art. 151, CCBH 2003). Similar provisions with similar punishments are also present against voter coercion, abuse of public funds for electoral purposes and violations of the secrecy of the vote. Despite these legal provisions, perpetrators are rarely brought to justice even in the light of publicly released evidence and major clientelist scandals. Impunity for clientelist dealings is thus quite characteristic for the region and seems to open space for political clientelism to further thrive.

Parties and clients establish both short-term and long-term exchanges across the Western Balkan countries, but many of my respondents argued that the iterated exchanges of patronage are more dominant in shaping the overall character of clientelist politics and political life in general. In a recent paper, Yıldırım and Kitschelt (2020) empirically establish that relational clientelism tends to trump spot-market "vote buying" clientelism in middle-income countries with simultaneously more programmatic competition. In addition, relational clientelism requires resources available for distribution through political discretion, and subsequently countries with post-communist legacy are more prone to develop relational clientelism than the rest. The countries of the Western Balkans somewhat fit in this assessment provided by Yıldırım and Kitschelt as I more thoroughly showed in Chapter 2. All Western Balkan countries are middle-income countries where political elites enjoy discretion in distribution of public funds (a feature that might be a consequence of post-communist legacy). However, my assessment on programmatic competition in the region was more skeptical: in Chapter 2 I argued that the dominant mode of programmatic politics in the region is nationalist politics and thus I maintain that it is difficult to speak of a traditional programmatic competition (left-right ideological divide) when assessing the region. Still, it should be clear that relational clientelist politics demands extensive use of public funds as a source of clientelist benefits and a corresponding demand for grander benefit provided by the intermediate economic development. My assessment thus slightly differs from the theoretical and empirical arguments provided by Yıldırım and Kitschelt in their recent paper.

Across the region, political parties extensively rely on clientelist exchanges to strengthen party infrastructure and this opens space for different services that clients

may provide. At the same time, clientelist resources are limited and the party must strategically allocate the distribution for optimal returns in terms of acquired services. Political parties in the Western Balkans thus distribute tailored benefits to their clients according to the relative value of the services provided. I will attempt to advance these notions in the next two sections where I offer findings on the character of the clientelist supply (the parties' offer in terms of access to clientelist engagement and the benefits provided) and demand (the citizens' propensity to engage and the services offered) in the region.

3.3. The clientelist supply

The major political parties in the region with no exception practice political clientelism. It is a strategy that is used for both electoral purposes and for purposes of building a party organization. My respondents frequently noted that political parties do not limit to clientelist dealing in election times and that clientelist strategies are used for broader political mobilization that goes beyond electoral purposes. In most of my interviews I directly asked my respondents to gauge the presence of different clientelist exchanges in their countries and I repeatedly received the answer that long-term exchanges involving distribution of state resources to clients (patronage) trump over electoral vote buying in a significant way. This indicates that political parties heavily invest in the party organization through clientelism and this brings dual benefit to political parties: organizational and electoral. Parties engage with their clients also for solely electoral purposes, but this seems to be a smaller fraction of the total clientelist exchanges in both the region and the individual countries.

And indeed, political party membership is "booming" in the region: some 13.3% of respondents in Macedonia, 10.1% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 9.7% in Serbia, 9.6% in Montenegro, 9% in Kosovo and 7.9% in Albania have declared to be current members of political parties in the INFORM survey. This is a comparatively high frequency of party membership as a portion of the population on the national level. The average in 27 European democracies (2004-2009), Western Balkans excluded, stands at 4.7%, with only Austria and Cyprus having more than 8% of the electorate (i.e. more than the level of Albania) being members of parties (van Biezen et al. 2012). However, the dominant public perception is that party membership, activism and loyalism are almost entirely

driven by clientelist motivations. My respondents typically established a direct equation between party and clientelist engagement and generally considered that it is a very rare occurrence for citizens to join political parties (especially when it comes to membership in the most important political parties in the Western Balkan countries) out of programmatic motivations. In public life across the region, party engagement is viewed rather cynically: there is a widespread belief that people join political parties in order to promote and fulfil particularistic interest and this is a part of the overall offer of political parties. According to the INFORM survey, the citizens of the Western Balkans agree with an average higher than 7 on a 1-10 scale that it is a widespread practice for one to become a member of a political party in order to get a job in the public sector (1 means that it does not occur at all and 10 that it occurs all the time, source: INFORM survey). Albania and Kosovo present on average lower levels of agreement with the statement than the rest in the INFORM survey, 6.43 and 5.77 respectively; with Serbia topping the group with an average mean of agreement at 8.38.

Often, my respondents used the term "obtaining party membership for a [benefit]" to denote political clientelism in their countries. A video which appeared online in North Macedonia was shot at a party meeting in the Roma-dominated Municipality of Šuto Orizari, showed the SDSM member of parliament and future mayor convincing the citizens at a party meeting to obtain a party membership card because it can assist them in obtaining social benefits, health benefits, official documents from state institutions, to escape traffic fines, to obtain employment, before concluding that it can be useful for "any needs in everyday life" and that the party membership card is equivalent to a "second ID" in the country.[6] This is a suitable illustration on how political parties motivate the citizens to join in the party organizations, and moreover, it indicates that there is a significant clientelist supply.

Political parties across the region engage in the distribution of various benefits in order to assist their clients. From the discussions with my respondents I may only conclude that the list of possible clientelist benefits distributed by political parties is close to endless. Political parties distribute cash, food, clothes, house appliances, firewood, medicine, tools; organize medical checks, transportation, cover utility bills for

their clients; mediate employment in the state institutions and public companies, as well as the access to managerial board positions in the latter; broker the receival of scholarship at the universities and lodging in student dormitories; assist their clients in obtaining agricultural subsidies, public procurement contracts, social benefits, construction permits and other state permits, etc. An affair revealed in the town on Gusinje in Montenegro in 2016 publicly disclosed a notebook of the president of the Municipality of Gusinje which contained a list of benefits to be distributed to different voters of the ruling DPS (Vijesti 2016). The list, among other benefits, contained plans to promise release of penitentiary prisoners to their families in exchange for political support, as well as a plan to return a previously sized gun to a citizen by a police officer and DPS member. The Gusinje example illustrates that political parties distribute benefits with view on the needs of clients, i.e. the fact that benefits can be "tailored." The same conclusion can be drawn regarding the list of possible threats of sanctions that political party may utilize to "discipline" their clients. Likewise, sanctions can be tailored to target the individual needs of clients. The almost endless list of benefits distributed by political parties in the Western Balkan countries (and in my fieldwork I was not able to locate substantial differences between individual countries) indicate that clientelism is attractive for different socio-economic groups. I shall return to this issue in the next section.

Some of these benefits are made available through party funds, but most of them (and the more attractive ones) come from funds which are public, and which are obtained through a party's command of the state institutions. My respondents generally considered that the present most active clientelist machines in their countries are the incumbent political parties, precisely because their incumbency status provides them with access to the most attractive patronage resources. Conversely, opposition parties lack the resources to perform clientelist political mobilization that would answer to the "demand" for clientelist benefits at the level of society. However, this does not mean that opposition parties give up on clientelism all together at a point when they face constraints because of their opposition status, nor it means that they rapidly lose their long-term clients. The promise of future prospective extraction of clientelist benefits

[6] The statement from the SDSM official can be viewed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXmKdeRsQY4&feature=youtu.be.

represents an important instrument for clientelist political mobilization used by opposition political parties across the region. I discussed this issue with a long-term activist in North Macedonia whose party has recently managed to form government at central level and seized power at local level following more than a decade-long opposition status. This activist has been a member of the same party for more than 25 years and has remained active in the local party organization when the party has been both a ruling and an opposition party. During the 2000s he utilized his influence in the party to advance in the ranks of local public company, a status from which he was gradually relegated once his party moved to opposition at both central and local level. Furthermore, the activist claimed to have been facing severe intimidation at the workplace by the company's management who were gradually replaced by members from the rival party. Spending many years without "protection" and in hiatus in terms of extraction of clientelist benefits, my respondent was now looking forward to the next four years when his party will be in power at the central and local levels that would bring him and his family in position to acquire state-sponsored benefits. In a sense, he justified this expectation by the fact that the last decade has been quite difficult for his well-being and from the fact that "others" (i.e. rival party members) took advantage (in a clientelist sense) of the rival party's incumbency.

My respondents also generally concurred that there are no major clear-cut non-clientelist parties in their countries. Despite declaratively taking a stance against clientelism of the ruling political parties, the main opposition parties across the region were generally evaluated by my respondents as unwilling to deal with clientelism in their own ranks. Most of my respondents expected perpetuation of clientelist exchanges even after and if a change of government would take place in their countries. This pattern was visible during my fieldwork in North Macedonia. Despite obtaining an excellent election result in 2016 on the background of a promise for curbing the party employments in the country (as a part of an overall program to put an end to the state-party conflation), the ruling SDSM has been increasingly viewed in the public as perpetuating the corrupt and clientelist style of governance of its predecessor in government, the VMRO-DPMNE.

When it comes to electoral clientelism, which in the Western Balkans consists less of distribution of state-sponsored party-mediated benefits and more of party-sponsored benefits, my respondents maintained that it is done by almost all major political parties in their countries. However, it was also widely argued that the distribution of benefits of electoral clientelism is subject to the level of resources that a given party possesses. Incumbent political parties were seen as resource-richer than opposition parties in this regard and as more capable to implement political clientelism of the electoral type. This was perceived as a difference in outreach, as it was widely assessed by my respondents that all parties pursue vote buying but that incumbent political parties can service more clients than opposition ones. In my interviews with party activists in North Macedonia and Serbia, the respondents confirmed that their parties have conducted vote buying and turnout buying from an opposition status, but also uniformly claimed that at the same time the rival ruling party had greater capacity to engage in vote buying. This is so, in the eyes of my respondents, because ruling parties utilize their incumbency status to extract state resources through corruptive deeds that are then used not just for personal gain but also for filling party funds.

In sum, the supply for political clientelism in the region is substantial. Through clientelism political parties target electoral gains, but, more importantly, aim to make advancements in the building of party infrastructure at the grass-roots level. As described by one of my respondents, a former party activist in Serbia, iterated clientelist exchanges of patronage represent a "long-term investment" for political parties, through it they seek to engage citizens in party membership for a longer period of time, a strategy which is also reflected in electoral contests. Taken all, it seems that patronage or relational clientelism where political parties and voters establish long-term exchanges of benefits and political support represents the dominant mode of political clientelism in the region, with electoral clientelism being only a secondary (in presence, scope and effect) mode of clientelist linking. The next section looks more closely at the demand for political clientelism at the societal level.

3.4. The clientelist demand

As shown in Chapter 2, a significant portion of the Western Balkan population is socio-economically vulnerable. This creates a demand for clientelist benefits, but in the

context of the Western Balkans this demand seems to differ across different socio-economic groups. My respondents were generally able to draw a clear difference between the demand of the "poor" and of the "middle class" (these terms were used in some of my interviews). Relating to the distinction from Chapter 1 on petty and grand benefits distributed through political clientelism, one may thus state that the first type is more characteristic to satisfy the demand of the lower socio-economic strata while the second of those groups that stand higher on the socio-economic ladder.

Within the rubric of petty benefits distributed across the Western Balkans we include cash (both distributed for vote buying purposes and as social aid as in the example of Palma above), food packages, clothes, house appliances, firewood, medicine, transportation (to the polls as in turnout buying as well as for other purposes), the covering of utility bills, etc. The outgoing price for selling a vote in the Western Balkan countries also suggest that cash is predominantly used to engage poor voters. The findings of my fieldwork as well as the data available in the INFORM semi-structured interviews (see Appendix C) indicates that the outgoing price of one vote in the region ranges from 16 to 50 euros in Albania, from 15 to 50 euros in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from 8 euros upwards in North Macedonia and from 50 euros and above in Montenegro (due to lack of information I was not able to always determine the possible price of a vote in Kosovo and Serbia as well as the upper bounds in Montenegro and North Macedonia). In all the Western Balkan countries, the Roma communities, which are more socio-economically disadvantaged than the rest of the population, were discussed as the "typical" targets of vote buying with the pettiest benefits, such as food packages, clothes and house appliances. One respondent in North Macedonia delivered a testimony of distribution of firewood in a rural area which was directed specifically to families who had difficulties to obtain firewood by themselves due to poverty.

In contrast, party-mediated employments in the state-sector were discussed extensively by my respondents as a resource attracting the higher socio-economic groups, and the same goes for the positions in the managerial boards of public companies, the various state permits and the public procurement contracts (public procurement contracts in particular were seen as a clientelist resource attracting the "wealthy" individuals and families who run private companies).

Thus, to my respondents, the idea that different socio-economic groups engage in clientelism with view to obtain different benefits in character and relative value was not controversial at all. “Everyone has a price,” as one of my respondents in Serbia readily noted, before explaining that the “poor” would welcome petty benefits from political parties, such as cash, food and other goods, while the “middle class” would engage in clientelism for benefits of a relatively higher value, such as access to employment in the state sector, part-time positions in management boards of public companies, construction permits, or public procurement contracts.

The relatively high levels of unemployment in the Western Balkan countries (as shown in Chapter 2) seem to influence the fact that employment in the state sector represents the most demanded clientelist benefit in the region. This is the answer I repeatedly received when prompting my respondents to rank the benefits distributed according to frequency. My respondents with no exception agreed that citizens-clients typically engage in clientelism for employment in their countries. Many of my respondents further noted that voting at the elections is simply a petty service for one to obtain employment. Instead, it was argued that clients typically offer more in terms of services to obtain the grander benefits of political clientelism.

By the end of this section I focus on three specific themes connected to the demand side of political clientelism in the Western Balkan countries: the leverage that clients acquire by participation in party serving, the exchange of favors through social networks that can represent an entry point for clientelist engagement, as well as the citizen-initiated clientelist exchanges.

3.4.1. Party services as leverage in extracting clientelist benefits

From the previously presented information on the character of political clientelism in the Western Balkan region, one may conclude that the dominant form of clientelist linking is patronage, or relational clientelism, which when understood as a strategy of engagement by citizens takes the form of what I term to be “party serving.” The services that party servants deliver are numerous and can be divided for analytical purposes on services connected to electoral mobilization (including those of a clientelist type) and services connected to the broader functioning of the party organization. I describe these two groups of services in turn.

Within the first group of electoral mobilization services one may include: canvassing, support in implementation of election campaigns, participation at pre-election rallies, preparation of so-called "lists of secured voters," as well as activities connected to monitoring of the performance of other clients: monitoring of turnout for specific clients, monitoring of voting choices and the more subtle monitoring of the political affiliation of co-citizens in the run-in towards elections. Some of the outlined services, i.e. those connected with the clientelist monitoring of lower-level clients are typically assessed in the literature as services provided by the so-called brokers, intermediaries tasked by political parties to forge clientelist exchanges. At the same time, it is also considered in the literature that brokers unite the two functions of distribution of benefits and clientelist monitoring (see Stokes et al. 2013). Many of the party servants that I consider in this study (which perform activities of clientelist monitoring) do not in fact perform the activities of distribution of benefits or brokering of clientelist exchanges, and, consequently, should not be viewed as clientelist brokers.

In the following I describe some of the electoral mobilization services that party servants provide to political parties. The practice of preparation of the so-called "lists of secured votes" consists of tasking the patronage clients to convince a given number of their friends, relatives and acquaintances to support a political party prior to election day upon which a list is delivered to the party which contains the names and contact information of the "secured voters." The turnout of these voters on election day is then carefully monitored and in case of abstention the patronage client contacts the absentees prior to the closing of election day to convince them to appear at the polls.

Three prominent techniques are used in the region to monitor the voting choices of the electoral vote selling clients and often this task of "verification" is a part of the responsibilities of patronage clients. A prominent practice in monitoring voting choices is the practice of photographing of filled-in ballots with mobile phones inside voting booths and the "evidence" of voting is often delivered to the party servants who participate in collecting information on the performance of electoral clients. The photographing of ballots represents an infringement of the secrecy of the vote which is criminally prosecuted in all the Western Balkan countries. Another illegal but present practice is the so-called "Carousel voting," which consists of distributing filled-in ballots to vote

sellers, whose task is to obtain non-filled ballots who are returned to the party activist (i.e. the party servant) while the filled-in ballot is placed in the voting box. This mechanism ensures compliance of clients in vote buying operations. Finally, political parties also instruct clients to mark ballots in a specific way or in specific colors to reveal voting choices, and party activists (i.e. party servants) inside polling station committees keep track of the performance of clients. It was reported that, in Serbia and Montenegro, voters have drawn on ballots and that the electoral rules allow this under the condition that the choice of the voter can be decisively determined (Janković 2017; Cvetković 2017). Since 2009, the Electoral Commission of North Macedonia considers all ballots filled in different colors invalid, to prevent tracking of voting choices.[7]

The monitoring of turnout is a simpler operation than monitoring of voting choices and political parties across the region frequently apply it on election day. Again, patronage clients are best fit to perform this activity due to their insertion in social networks. Local party activists inside polling station committees and around the premises where voting is held typically prepare lists registering turnout of their co-citizens. The evidence of turnout by itself does not represent a basis for prosecution in the countries of the region but is often seen as scandalous in the public sphere.

Finally, patronage clients are best fit to infer the likely political affiliation of their co-citizens. Again, their insertion in social networks is crucial for successful inference of affiliation. During my fieldwork in North Macedonia, my respondent informed me on a practice in a local party headquarters to visually monitor the party affiliation within a small town. My respondent claimed to have witnessed a map of the town where local party activists painted the houses presented on the map with different colors, thereby easily accessing which families are party supporter, opposers or swing voters. Such monitoring is not only done at the level of community but also in the workplace where patronage clients often hold managerial positions. An affair that appeared in Montenegro in 2018 featured the former director of a cultural institution sending an email by mistake to one of the employees which contained information of the political orientations of all the employees in the institution (Vjesti 2018). The inferred

[7] The decision of the State Electoral Commission can be accessed at: https://old.sec.mk/arhiva/2009_pretsedatelskillokalni/2009/fajlovi/upatstva_pravil/upatstvo_za_glasacki_livcinja_popolneti_so_flomaster.pdf.

affiliations of the employees were registered on a sheet while adding the symbols "+" and "-" thereby indicating party supporters and opposers.

The second group of services delivered by clients (i.e. services connected to the building and maintaining of party organizations) take place irrespective of elections. Patronage clients must be present at party activities, such as meetings, rallies, promotional events, conventions etc. In these cases, political parties take careful evidence of the attendance of each client. Furthermore, patronage clients holding state positions are tasked to defend the interests of the party in the state institutions. Patronage clients are also often tasked to defend party interests in the online social networks, and this is sometimes characterized by specific instructions delivered by the party on the Facebook posts and Twitter threads where the clients should engage.

All activities of party servants are carefully monitored by party organizations. The preparation of lists of secured voters, the participation at party activities, the client's performance in defending the interests of the party in the state institutions and in the online social networks can be easily assessed by party organizations. Those party servants which are fiercest in their political support and most successful in completing the party tasks come first at the cue in extracting the grand clientelist benefits.

3.4.2. The exchange of favors as an entry-point in extracting clientelist benefits

When it comes to the demand for political clientelism many of my respondents across the region frequently opted to discuss the issue as connected with a cultural propensity to engage, described as a certain recourse to informal contacts in dealing with everyday problems institutionalized by past habits, customs and practices. In the predominantly Slavic-speaking countries of the Western Balkans these informal practices of influence are institutionalized in everyday speech by the term "veze" (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), "vrski" (North Macedonia) or štela (Bosnia and Herzegovina) (see Brković 2017; Brković and Koutkova 2018; Stanojevic and Stokanic 2018; Otten 2018). "Veze" and "vrski" in literal translation mean "connections," a practice that can be more formally defined as "the use of informal contacts in order to obtain access to opportunities that are not available through formal channels" (Stanojevic and Stokanic 2018, 58). The meaning of "štela" is quite similar, it refers to

"people, relations and practices implicated in obtaining public or private resources through a personalised connection" (Brković and Koutkova 2018, 54).

Many of my respondents argued that the population in the countries of the Western Balkans is simply used to resolve everyday problems while relying on personal acquaintances, friends, relatives and past exchange of favors. The notion that state institutions simply operate ineffectively and arbitrary (feature seen as characteristic for both socialist and the post-socialist periods) widely contributes to the citizens' predisposition to engage in informal dealings. Citizens across the Western Balkans agree with an average of only 4.5 on a 1-10 scale that employment is based on merit, education and experience in their countries (1 means that employment is never based on merit and 10 that it is always based on merit, source: INFORM survey). Furthermore, the respondents in the INFORM survey have predominantly agreed that it is important to have own people in important places or connections in order "to get a job done" with the state institutions with an average of over 7 on a 1-10 scale (source: Ibid.).

My respondents frequently argued that the recourse to connections in dealing with everyday problems (and particularly when interacting with the state institutions) can be a point of entrance for clientelist engagement. It was widely claimed that political parties utilize citizen demands for favors to present demands of counter-favors consisted of handling political support. One of my respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina discussed this illustratively by sharing a story in which a head of a family attempted to broker employment for a family member through a personal connection in a public company. His acquaintance inside the company further reported that the employment can be done under a condition that the extended family supports a given political party in the next election cycles. I received similar examples throughout the other countries of the region.

Thus, the turning to connections in a situation of uncertainty over the outcomes in dealing when state institutions can be an entry-point for political clientelism. I further expand this idea when discussing citizen-initiated exchanges below in this chapter as well as in the analysis in the framework of Chapter 4.

3.4.3. Citizen-initiated clientelist exchanges

Citizen-initiated clientelist exchanges represent the most visible manifestation of the demand side of political clientelism in the Western Balkan countries. When citizens initiate the exchange, they approach the holders of patronage resources with requests for specific benefits, a strategy which I term "clientelist benefit-seeking." The leverage provided via party serving and the past exchange of favors in social circles is instrumental for successful benefit-seeking.

The overall perspective of my respondents on clientelist benefit-seeking in their countries is that, first and foremost, it represents a common phenomenon. Particularly patronage clients with solid track record of achievements in political parties were identified as the typical benefit-seekers. In addition, people possessing informal contacts in relevant institutions and in political parties were also frequently identified as a profile capable to go on and initiate a clientelist exchange.

The notion that citizens need a point of contact to arrive at a position to benefit-seek was very prominent in my interviews. My respondents frequently noted that "you have to know someone" or that "someone has to know you" (i.e. "your" profile, including that of the extended family, past track record in regard to party achievements, etc.) to even be considered for a clientelist benefit. The clientelist exchange, and particularly the clientelist exchange in the iterated form, relies on bargaining between patrons and clients. In this sense, when a client approaches the patron with a demand for a particularistic benefit must have "something" to exchange in return for that benefit. Here, the leverage that clients possess becomes important. Political parties would not want to risk defection by loyal party servants who have significantly contributed to the party organization by refusing to grant the benefit that the client seeks. Individuals in control of state resources would typically not hesitate to assist co-citizens with which they had interaction based on exchange of favors in the past. However, for some benefits (e.g. employment) the ruling political party has a say and in this way an exchange of favors may become an exchange with a clientelist undertone. The reader should consider the previously given example on the head of a family in Bosnia and Herzegovina who approached an acquaintance with a request for assistance in employment and who was confronted with a counter-request for political

support in order to “get the job done.” This is a suitable illustration on how other types of informal exchanges are turned into exchanges of political clientelism. It also shows that clientelist exchanges may be forged even in cases where the client does not have a background of engagement in the party organization. Typically, these exchanges tend to be repeated as political parties will seek to utilize the services of the newly acquired clients beyond election day. Employment positions must be maintained and the key to this is very commonly in more substantive clientelist engagement through party serving. For this reason, citizen-initiated exchanges are most commonly part of patronage or relational clientelism, even when at the moment of initiation that is not the case.

The leverage that benefit-seeking clients possess can also be expanded when clients may guarantee delivery of votes in election day. Typically, individuals coming from multi-member families who can guarantee that the whole family will support the party on election day possess great leverage when attempting to extract clientelist benefits in their own volition. In Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia, I picked up testimonies of whole families submitting demands for benefits to political parties. In an interview with two former officials of a political party in Serbia, the respondents shared a story of a received list of goods demanded by a group of citizens in a Romani-dominated neighborhood with a promise that the whole neighborhood will support the political party.

Successful benefit-seeking is thus dependent on the leverage that a client possesses. This leverage is best seen as a resource that is offered in the clientelist exchange and, which, through the exchange can be converted in a material resource in the form of a clientelist benefit. Two types of such resources are relevant for benefit-seeking. The first are political resources which are acquired through pro-active engagement in the party organization. The second type – networking resources – are acquired by trading of favors through informal relationships in the realm of everyday life. Both types of resources can be instrumental when a citizen attempts to extract benefits that are controlled by political patrons. I further explore clientelist benefit seeking in the next Chapter 4 of this doctoral thesis.

3.5. Summary

This chapter focused on description of political clientelism in the Western Balkans, based on the author's fieldwork in the region consisted of expert information collection. By assessing the character of the supply and demand for political clientelism in the region, I attempted to offer evidence supporting the proposition that clients who offer and perform extended services for political parties (i.e. patronage clients) are in position to extract and do extract grander clientelist benefits. Conversely, clients who only offer limited electoral services (i.e. electoral clients) gain only petty benefits from the clientelist engagement. This is a consequence of the strategic orientations of the main political parties in the region who utilize political clientelism not only for electoral purposes but also for the purposes of building party organizations and stems from the fact that parties command limited resources dedicated to political clientelism as well as material benefits of different values. The dominant image of clientelism in the region is however that of patronage or relational clientelism, and, through it, political parties fulfill a dual goal – they strengthen party infrastructure at the grass-roots level, and they advance in the electoral arena.

Chapter 4. VARIETIES OF CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL CLIENTELISM IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

In Chapter 1 of this doctoral thesis I proposed and elaborated a theory on the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism. My theoretical argument states that clients who engage in delivering extended (i.e. grand) services to political parties obtain non-material resources that are subsequently used in clientelist bargaining to extract clientelist benefits of a relatively higher material value (i.e. grand benefits). In contrast, clients who engage in electoral (petty) services can only extract benefits of a comparatively lower value (i.e. petty benefits). In addition, I also argued that relatively better-off clients (in terms of material resources) find no use of petty benefits and predominantly direct themselves to extraction of grand benefits, while the opposite is the case with the poor. Finally, I proposed that in societies where political clientelism is widespread and patrons distribute benefits of different material values we would find it difficult to predict individual-level clientelism on the basis of material resources and instead, we should pay attention to the socialization of citizens in specific social networks to account for it.

Chapter 1 also provided a typology of clientelist exchanges: in a first-order differentiation I distinguished between electoral and patronage exchanges, with the former being characterized by a one-off exchange of petty benefits and services and the latter by iterated exchange of grand benefits and services. In a second-order differentiation, I distinguished between different strategies of patrons and clients, characteristic for either of the two modes of exchange. Electoral clients engage in political clientelism through vote selling, turnout selling and abstention selling, while patronage clients through party serving and clientelist benefit-seeking.

The present chapter aims to provide an empirical backing to the claim that there are differences in clientelist engagement depending on the benefits sought by clients. Throughout this chapter, I will show, while using both quantitative and qualitative findings from the Western Balkan region, that party servants who have accumulated non-material resources of a political type are in position to extract grand benefits in comparison to non-servants. I will also show that party serving is not a relevant

predictor for clientelist exchanges where the value of the distributed benefits is relatively lower. The findings of this chapter thus aim to affirm the notion that when it comes to clientelist exchanges, petty (grand) services go together with petty (grand) benefits. I will also address the role of networking resources which in the Western Balkans have been informally institutionalized as the utilization of "connections" in coping with everyday problems. The chapter will show that connections are a relevant predictor of clientelist engagement, a notion which underlines the fact that across the region political clientelism is embedded in everyday life to represent one of the most viable strategies to mitigate socio-economic vulnerability and provide socio-economic advancement. Beside these two non-material types of resources relevant for clientelist engagement, I will also focus throughout the chapter on the effect of material resources for citizen engagement in the Western Balkans. In line with the claim that citizens engage in political clientelism to obtain benefits of a different material value, I shall argue that in the Western Balkan countries we cannot corroborate the standard assumption in the literature of political clientelism that the poor disproportionally engage in comparison to the wealthy. Instead, I will offer evidence supporting the notion that different types of clientelist linking are tailored for clients of different socio-economic backgrounds.

In the following, I perform multivariate statistical analysis on survey data to explore the individual-level factors behind two different types of exchanges for which I assume that can be contrasted by the value of benefits distributed. I compare two modes of engagement: the exchange of votes for benefits and clientelist benefit-seeking. The analysis is based on the notion that vote buying involves distribution of benefits that are of lower material value in comparison to citizen engagement in political clientelism through benefit-seeking. Within this framework, I find that clients who can initiate clientelist transactions possess political resources in comparison to clients engaged in clientelism through exchanges of votes for benefits. I derive this finding statistically and then I use qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with citizens to offer further evidence supporting the argument.

More specifically, in this chapter, I empirically assess the following four theoretical propositions derived in Chapter 1:

Proposition 1: Clients who extract clientelist benefits of a relatively higher material value (i.e. grand benefits) are those clients that are engaged in political clientelism while providing extended services to political parties (i.e. grand services). In contrast, clients who extract petty benefits provide only petty electoral services to political parties.

Proposition 2: Citizens who possess relevant networking resources are more likely to engage in political clientelism than citizens who do not possess such resources.

Proposition 3: Where political parties distribute benefits which significantly differ in material value, citizens from different socio-economic profiles will engage in political clientelism.

Proposition 4: Where political parties distribute benefits which significantly differ in material value, poor citizens will engage in forms of political clientelism that return benefits of a relatively lower material value, while the relatively better-off citizens will engage in forms of clientelism that return benefits of a relatively higher material value.

In terms of structure of the chapter, I proceed as follows. Section 4.1. will provide a methodological note on the data and methods used to examine my theory on the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism. I utilize multivariate statistical analysis on survey data to derive the effects of different predictors on citizen engagement through vote buying and selling and through clientelist benefit-seeking. I compare the findings between the two models to derive conclusions on the differences between the two sets of clients. My theoretical argument states that the differences in engagement are prompted by the clients' decisions to pursue a specific benefit of a specific relative value and that for this reason clients are keen to acquire non-material resources relevant for clientelist bargaining. I use qualitative date from semi-structured interviews with citizens to present evidence on this hypothesized mechanism. Section 4.2. will present the findings of the multivariate analysis on survey data, while in sections 4.3.-4.6. I discuss the effects of political, networking and material resources as well as the simultaneous possession of political and networking resources, respectively. In sections 4.3.-4.6. I rely on both quantitative and qualitative findings. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the main findings.

4.1. Data and methods

In my empirical analysis, I use two different types of data. First, I rely on survey data gathered by the project "Closing the Gap Between Formal and Informal Institutions in the Balkans" (INFORM). The INFORM survey data set contains interviews with 6040 respondents from the Western Balkan countries. The main theme covered by the survey are informal practices in the fields of everyday life, politics and economy, with the survey probing experiences, perceptions, attitudes and values of respondents regarding the role of informal practices in society. Several items in the data set report for the experiences, perceptions and attitudes of the Western Balkan population on political clientelism. More information on INFORM's survey and the items used for the research from this doctoral thesis is available in Appendix B.

I use the INFORM survey data to evaluate the effects of several predictors on the likelihood for individual clientelist engagement through two routes: exchange of votes for benefits and benefit-seeking (dependent variables). To arrive at an understanding on the differences between the two sets of clients, my methodological approach consists of comparing the effects of a set of predictors on the probability for clientelist engagement through two logistic regression models with country fixed effects. The first model accounts for clientelist engagement through vote buying and selling, while the second for engagement through benefit-seeking. Vote buying is measured through the survey question: "Have you ever been offered money or a favor in exchange for your vote in elections?" with two possible replies by the respondent, "Yes" or "No" (dependent variable in models VB). Benefit-seeking is measured through the survey question: "Have you turned to a party official/influential for help?" with two possible replies by the respondent, "Yes" or "No" (dependent variable in models BS).

The two dependent variables represent measures of individual-level vote buying and benefit-seeking. My typology of exchanges in political clientelism outlined in Chapter 1 (Section 1.2.4) posits that electoral exchanges (e.g. vote buying and selling) can be distinguished from exchanges of patronage or relational clientelism (e.g. benefit-seeking) by the value of benefits distributed (i.e. by the objects of exchange). I argued that vote buying and selling typically involve petty benefits, while the opposite is the case with benefit-seeking where more grand benefits are at play. These specifications

should be considered by the reader when interpreting the two independent variables employed in the multivariate logistic regression analysis. The two variables certainly do not relate directly to the petty vs. grand benefits distinction, but still represent valuable indirect measures that can be used for empirically assessing the theoretical arguments of this thesis.

Some 14% of respondents in the INFORM survey reported to have experienced a vote buying offer (see Figure 4.1.). More than one-fifth of respondents in Albania (20,6%) and Montenegro (22,5%) and every sixth respondent in Bosnia and Herzegovina (15,4%) answered affirmatively to this question. In addition, 12,5% of respondents in Kosovo, 8,4% of respondents in Serbia and 7,4% of respondents in North Macedonia reported being target of clientelist offers in the past. To put these findings in a broader comparative perspective, a survey conducted in 2002 in Brazil found slightly more than 5% of respondents reporting receiving a vote buying offer in the previous election campaign (Hagopian 2007, 594), while 15% of respondents in Mexico (survey done in 2000, Ibid.) and 7% of respondents in Argentina (survey done in 2001-2002) reported receiving a handout from a party in the previous election campaign (Brusco et al. 2004). Even though the questions between the four surveys notably differ, the comparison of the data allows us to conclude that vote buying and political clientelism in general can be considered as substantially present in the Western Balkan countries (take note that Argentina, Brazil and Mexico are widely considered as societies where clientelism is extensively present).

In the INFORM survey, 9,3% of respondents across the region reported to have initiated a clientelist transaction, with respondents in North Macedonia (14%), Montenegro (13%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (9,7%) answering affirmatively on this question more frequently than the Western Balkan average (Figure 4.1.). Respondents in Kosovo (8,1%), Serbia (7,1%) and Albania (4,5%), in contrast, answered affirmatively in lesser frequencies than the regional average. In comparison, the survey done in Argentina in 2001-2002 by Brusco et al. (2004) found that 12% of respondents turned to an important person (without referring to a political party) for help in the past year.

Figure 4.1. Experience with political clientelism in the Western Balkans (%), source: INFORM

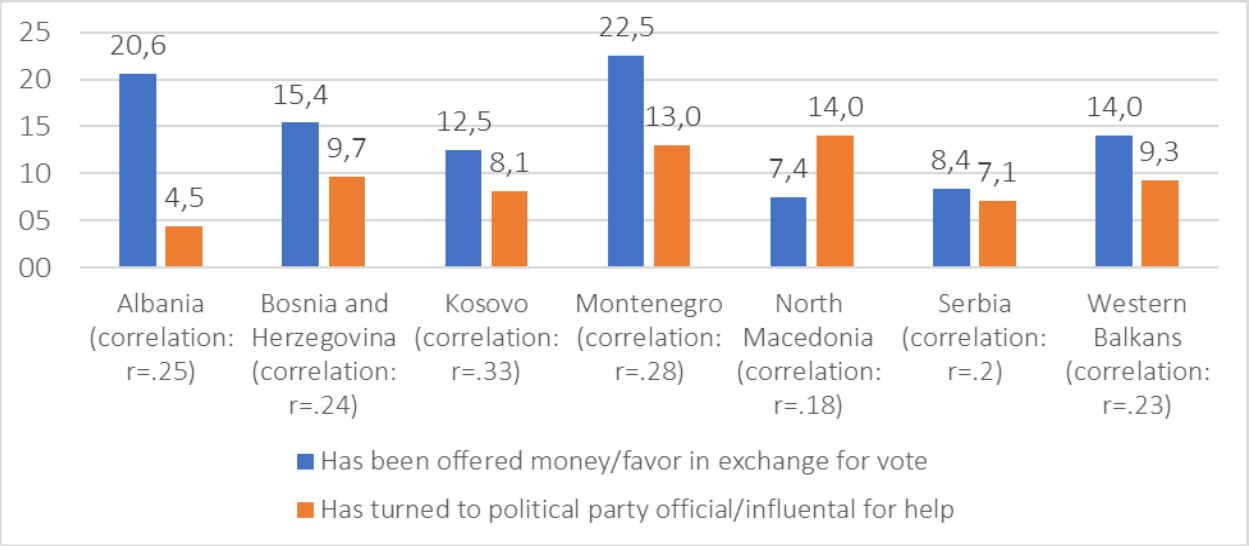


Figure 4.1. also reports the Pearson's correlation coefficients on the relationship between the two dependent variables. At regional level, the two variables present a weak positive relationship (r=.23) with the value of the coefficients ranging between r=.33 in Kosovo and r=.18 in North Macedonia. These statistics show that the association between the two different variables reporting for clientelism is only weak in magnitude, reaffirming the need to approach clientelism as a phenomenon consisted of different exchanges that do not by definition involve the same individuals.

In the two models I use the same independent variables to assess whether, in line with theoretical expectations, the same set of variables will present some differences in effects on the two dependent variables reporting for political clientelism. Political resources are measured through a dichotomous variable, reporting for respondents' current membership in political parties (independent variable party_member). I directed efforts in Chapter 3 to show that party membership in the Western Balkans typically denotes clientelist engagement and I will reaffirm this notion in this chapter while using qualitative data from the INFORM semi-structured interviews (see below). Networking resources are measured through a dichotomous variable reporting for whether the respondent has stated that he/she has a relevant contact in the national, regional or local government to whom it may turn for assistance (independent variable connections).

Figure 4.2. Distribution of independent variables: party membership and connections (%), source: INFORM

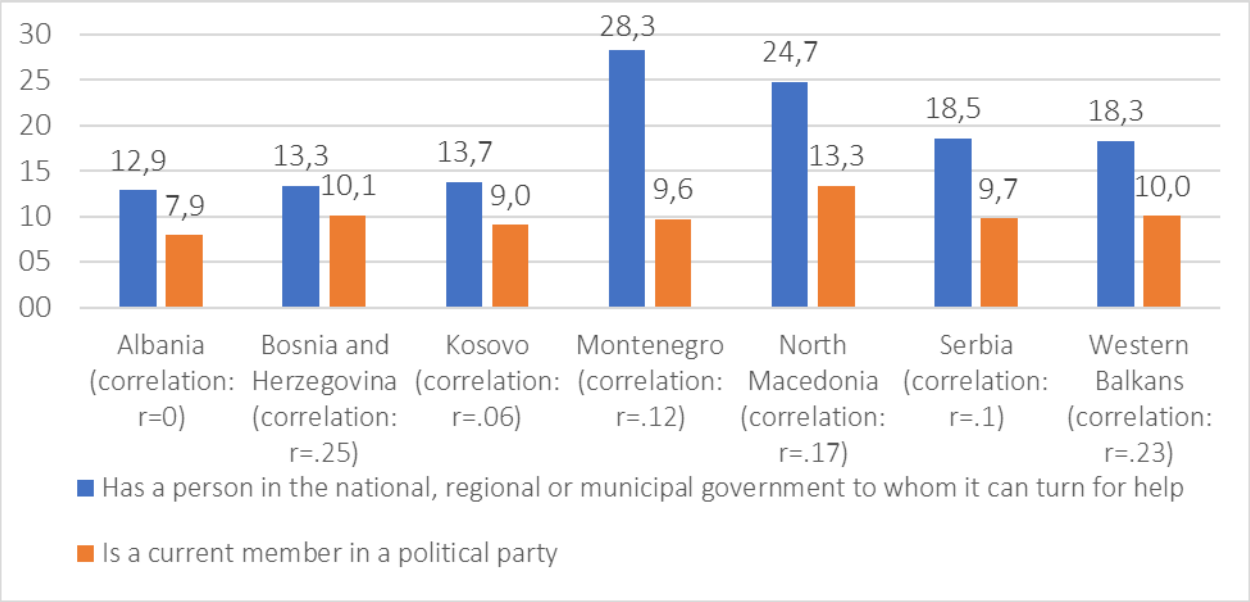
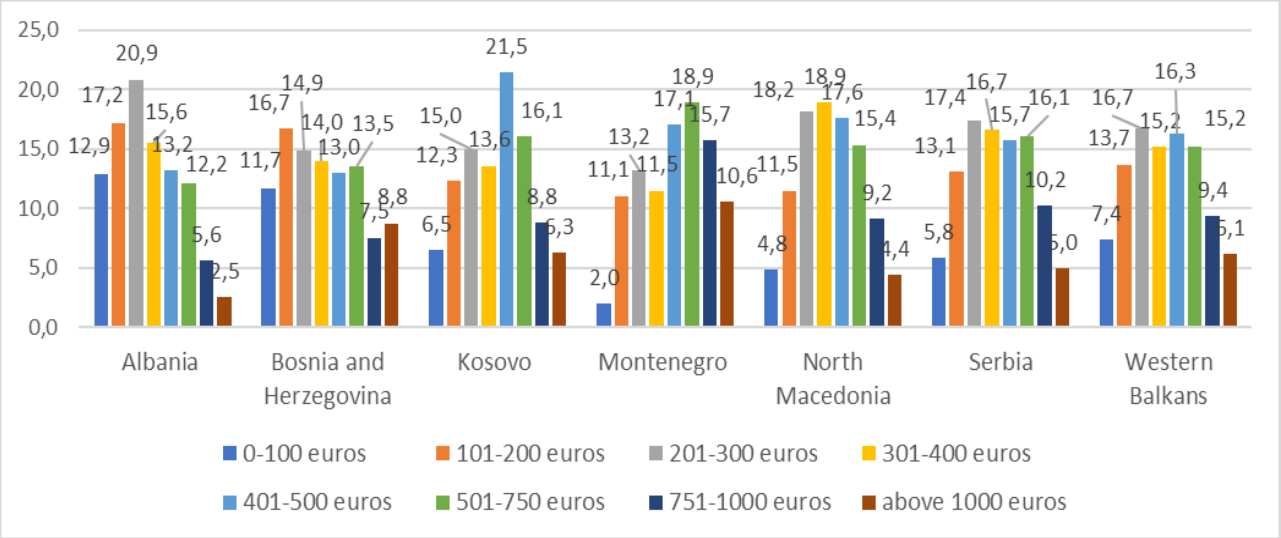


Figure 4.2. presents the distribution of party membership and connections on regional and country levels, along with the estimated Pearson's Correlation Coefficients on the relationship between the two key independent variables. According to the INFORM survey, about 10% of the population in the Western Balkans are current members of political parties, with the highest reported frequencies found in North Macedonia (13,3%) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (10,1%). The respondents in the other four countries reported party membership below the regional average: 9,7% in Serbia, 9,6% in Montenegro, 9% in Kosovo and 7,9% in Albania. In addition, Figure 4.2. shows that about 18,2% of the respondents in the region have reported having an acquaintance in the national, regional or municipal governments to whom they may turn in an hour of need (i.e. access to connections). This frequency is highest in Montenegro (28,3%), North Macedonia (24,7%) and Serbia (18,5%), and substantially lower in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania (13,7%, 13,3% and 12,9% respectively). The two independent variables only negligibly associate between themselves in five of the six countries and on regional level, except for Bosnia and Herzegovina where the two variables present an association of weak magnitude (r=.25). Where association is present (everywhere apart from Albania) it is of a positive direction, indicating that in some cases the two possession of the two types of non-material resources goes together.

I measure material resources through a household income per individual member variable which is coded as a 10-unit variable where each unit corresponds to a decile in the national income distribution. I decided to code the variable in this was in order to achieve some level of comparability between the material resources of individuals in the six countries. Figure 4.3. presents the distribution of household income in the countries of the region, as obtained from the INFORM survey.

Figure 4.3. Household income per month in the Western Balkans (source: INFORM survey)



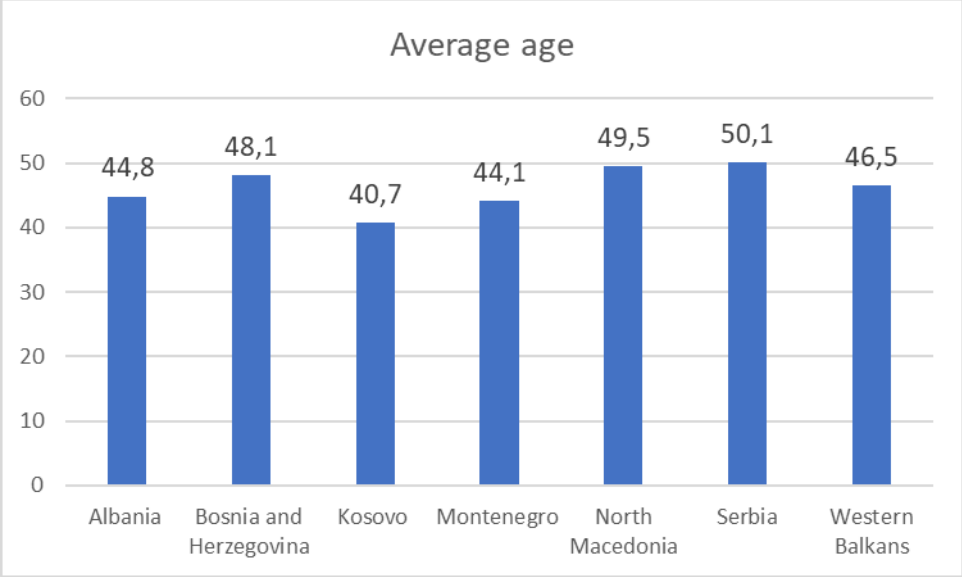
I introduce various control variables in my models (Figure 4.4.). In the literature on political clientelism it is also argued that citizens residing in smaller communities are more likely targets of clientelist parties because monitoring is less difficult to enforce (Brusco et al. 2004, Stokes 2005; 2007). I thus include the variable rural, with rural indicating a village of up to 10.000 inhabitants which most work in agriculture. The employment status of individuals can also be a predictor of political clientelism, a notion derived from the context of the Western Balkans where many of the clients are affiliated with state institutions. Employment status is measured through a five-category variable, reporting for employment in different sectors (public sector, private sector, informal job), unemployment, and inactivity at the labor market (students and the retired) (independent variable estatus). The level of trust in state institutions can also be a predictor of political clientelism at the individual level (once again prompted from the Western Balkan context). As argued by some of my fieldwork respondents,

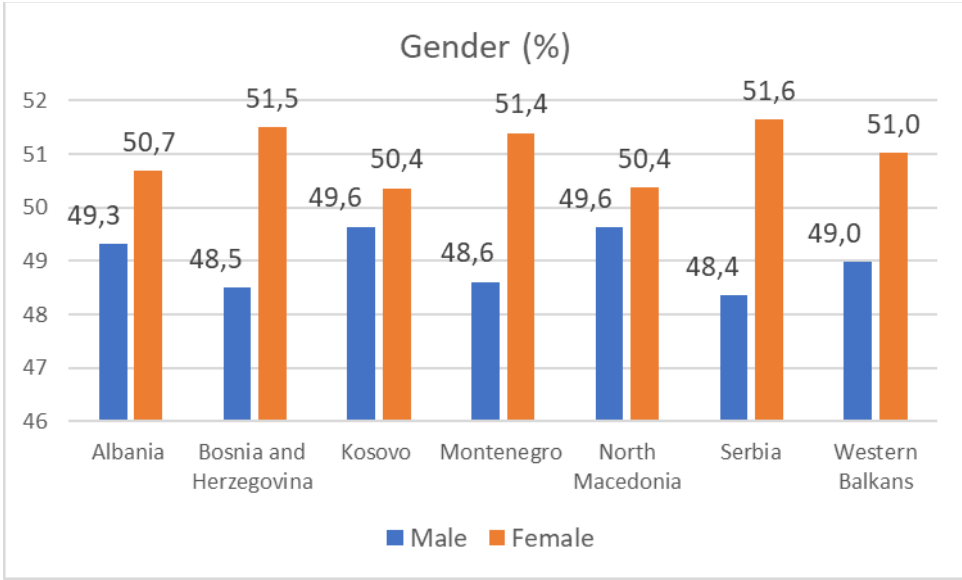
clientelism is a buffer against the ineffective and arbitrary functioning of the state intuitions and people use it as a coping strategy. If the above is correct we should expect that rising trust in institutions will contribute to disengagement from clientelism. I thus add a variable measuring individual trust in state institutions on a 1-10 scale. I also include education (three-unit variable: primary, secondary and university), a female dummy and age. All variables used in my models, as well as the survey items used to design them are reported in Appendix B.

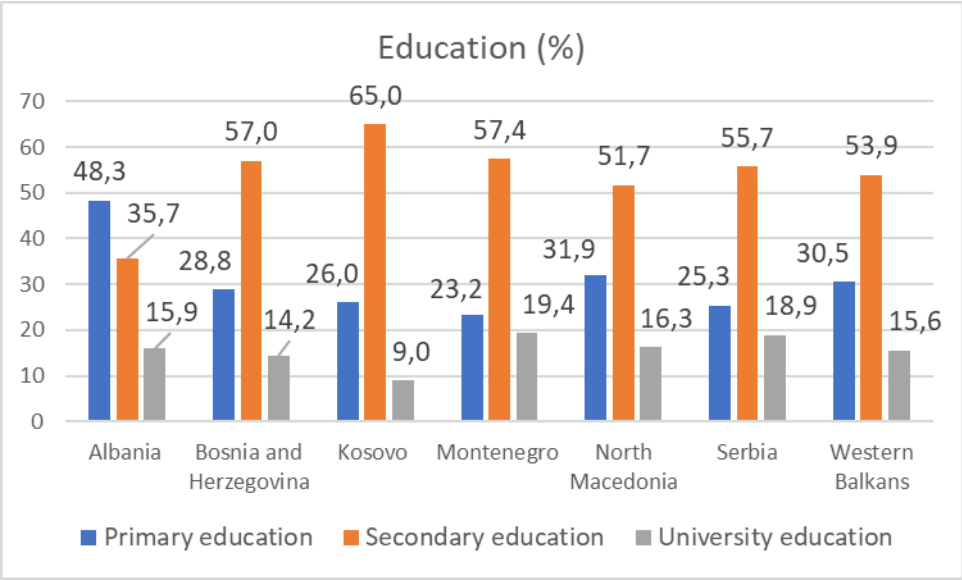
Beside the survey data, I also rely in this chapter on a qualitative data base provided by the INFORM project which consists of a total of 120 follow-up semi-structured interviews with survey respondents (N=20 per country) and additional 90 semi-structured interviews with so-called "informality insiders" (N=15 per country). These interviews are not specifically focused on political clientelism, but rather on different manifestations of informal practices within the Western Balkan societies. However, many of the interviews contain data on political clientelism in the form of personal experiences and testimonies, experiences of friends, relatives and acquaintances of the respondents, as well as statements which report for perceptions on the extent of clientelism in national and local communities and attitudes in regard to exchanges of political clientelism. Throughout the analysis below I use such statements as evidence supporting my theoretical argument and I offer information on the profiles of respondents which is derived from the data available in the interviews and in the INFORM survey data base. Additional information on the INFORM semi-structured interview data is enclosed in Appendix C.

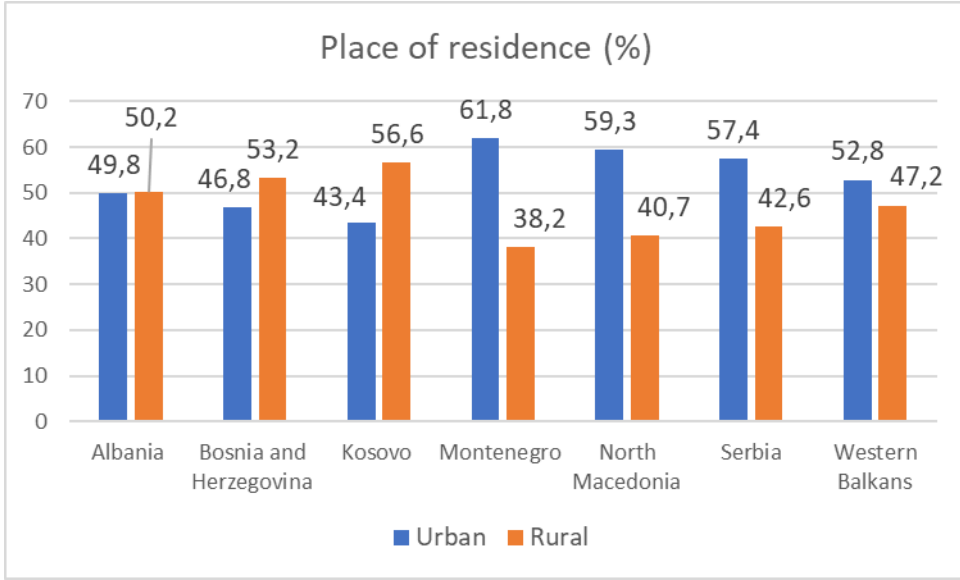
The approach that I use in dealing with these different sources and types of data follows Seawright's integrative multi-method approach for research in social sciences (2016, ch. 1). I use the quantitative data to establish evidence on the significance of different forms of resources for the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism, and I use the qualitative data to provide evidence on the mechanism behind the effects of different forms of resources. The two types of evidence thus jointly support a single theoretical argument in different aspects and should be read together when assessing the empirical work in this chapter on the proposed theory on the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism.

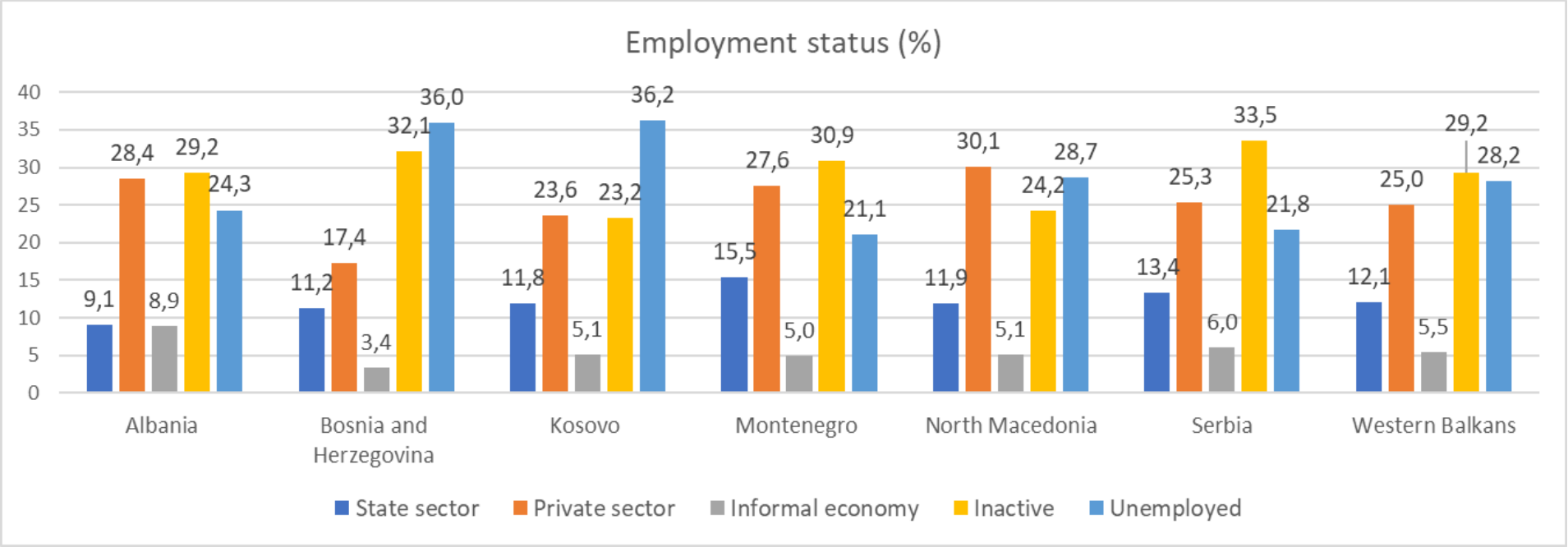
Figure 4.4. Control variables used in multivariate analysis (source: INFORM survey); this page: age, gender, education, place of residence; next page: employment status










Employment status (%)
40
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
9,1
28,4
8,9
29,2
24,3
11,2
17,4
3,4
32,1
36,0
11,8
23,6
5,1
23,2
36,2
15,5
27,6
5,0
30,9
21,1
11,9
30,1
5,1
24,2
28,7
13,4
25,3
6,0
33,5
21,8
12,1
25,0
5,5
29,2
28,2
Albania
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Kosovo
Montenegro
North Macedonia
Serbia
Western Balkans
State sector
Private sector
Informal economy
Inactive
Unemployed

4.2. Citizen engagement across two different types of clientelist exchanges

This section empirically tests the assumption that citizen engagement in political clientelism takes the form of party serving and benefit-seeking when clients aim to extract benefits of a higher value (grand benefits), and, conversely, takes the form of electoral clientelism and more specifically vote selling when the benefits sought are of lower value (petty benefits). The mechanism behind these divergent outcomes is provided by the basic characteristic of the clientelist exchange: patrons engage in distribution of benefits of different value and clients reciprocate correspondingly to the value of the benefits sought or obtained. If the assumption is correct, we should expect that citizens affiliated with political parties through party membership are in a better position to initiate clientelist transactions, while the same does not need to be the case with clients who provide electoral services. I show that this is indeed the case in Table 4.1. where I present my findings from the logistic regression analyses on survey data in two different types of citizen engagement in political clientelism: the exchange of votes for benefits (VB models) and clientelist benefit-seeking (BS models). I provide qualitative evidence obtained from interviews with citizens on the mechanism at play later in this chapter.

Prior to presenting the logistic regression analysis it is however important to consider why citizen-initiated clientelist transactions should be seen as a subtype of relational clientelist engagement that returns grand benefits. First, benefit-seeking allows clients to articulate their specific needs to patrons and here we shall assume that clients will go after their first-ranked needs rather than requesting benefits that are less relevant to their well-being. Second, as shown in Chapter 3, political parties across the Western Balkans distribute benefits of different value to their clients, with the most attractive benefit being access to employment in the state sector. Access to employment in the Western Balkans represents a grand clientelist benefit and many of the testimonies that I received regarding benefit-seeking from my fieldwork respondents (as well as the testimonies from citizens presented throughout this chapter) show that employment is the most frequently requested benefit. These two notions lead us to consider benefit-seeking as a mode of clientelist engagement which is associated with

grand benefits. The opposite is the case with the exchange of votes for benefits. In deriving this notion, I once again rely on the fieldwork findings from Chapter 3 as well as on the assumption that when political parties initiate the exchange, they offer benefits which most often do not answer to the first-ranked needs of clients.

Table 4.1. presents the outputs from eight different logistic regression models. Models VB (1-4) account for vote buying while models BS (1-4) for benefit-seeking. The vote buying models differ in the independent variables, with Model VB (4) including all considered variables. The same is the case with the benefit-seeking models: Model BS (4) represents the full benefit-seeking model. I develop the full models gradually: models (1) include income as a predictor, but exclude connections and party membership, models (2) include connections but exclude income and party membership, while models (3) include party membership and exclude income and connections.

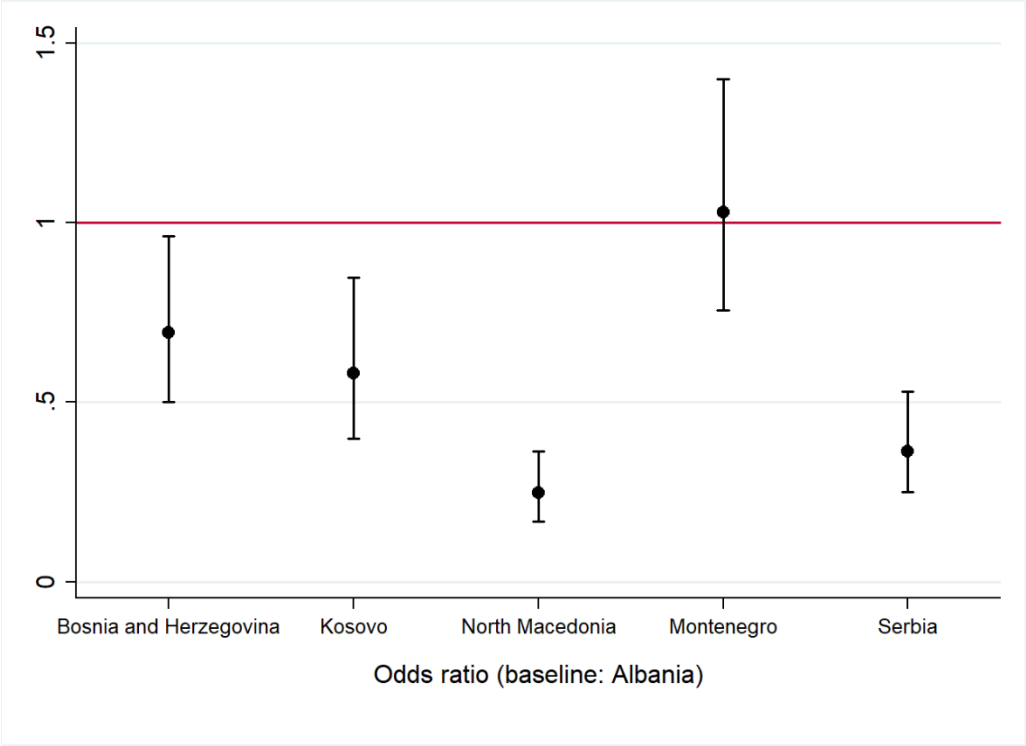
Party membership presents a positive significant effect across all benefit-seeking models where it is included ($p<0.01$), in line with expectations. In contrast, party membership is significant with a lower level of statistical significance ($p<0.1$) in only one of the vote buying models, VB (3), where both income and connections are excluded from the equation. Thus, when income and connections are considered in vote buying, party membership has no statistically significant effect. Connections, on the other hand, is robust in predicting political clientelism across all model specifications, in all models that account for vote buying and benefit-seeking. Having acquaintances in the state institutions to which one may turn in an hour of need contributes positively to the likelihood of clientelist engagement. Income presents a statistically significant effect only in model BS (4), contributing negatively to the likelihood of engagement ($p<0.05$) in line with the standard theoretical expectations in the literature on political clientelism. Education, on the other hand, presents a positive significant effect only in model BS (1) where party membership and connections are not included in the equation.

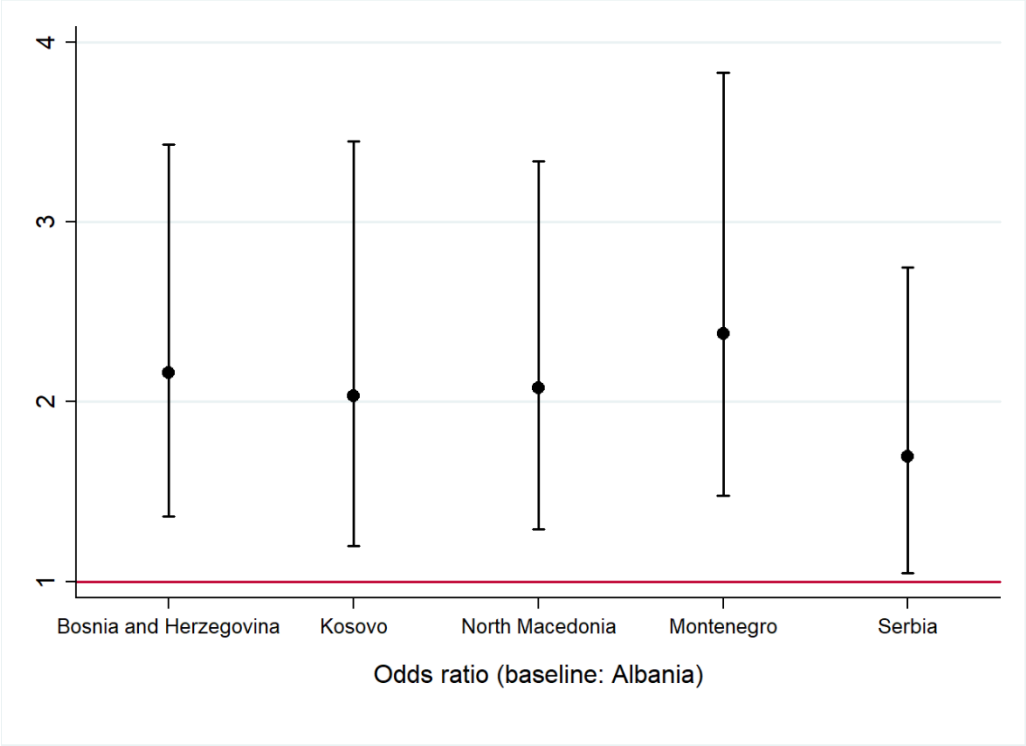
Table 4.1. Logistic regression models on engagement in political clientelism

VARIABLES	VB (1)	BS (1)	VB (2)	BS (2)	VB (3)	BS (3)	VB (4)	BS (4)
income	1.03	0.97					1.01	0.94**
	(0.02)	(0.02)					(0.02)	(0.02)
education	1.03	1.33***	0.96	1.10	1.00	1.08	1.02	1.16
	(0.09)	(0.14)	(0.08)	(0.11)	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.13)
estatus:[i)] private sector	1.18	0.81	1.22	0.85	1.22	0.87	1.28	0.92
	(0.21)	(0.15)	(0.19)	(0.15)	(0.19)	(0.15)	(0.23)	(0.18)
estatus: informal job	1.80**	0.37***	1.46	0.44**	1.42	0.42***	1.70**	0.40**
	(0.45)	(0.13)	(0.35)	(0.14)	(0.34)	(0.13)	(0.44)	(0.15)
estatus: inactive	0.96	0.59***	0.97	0.65**	0.94	0.62***	1.01	0.67*
	(0.18)	(0.12)	(0.16)	(0.12)	(0.16)	(0.11)	(0.19)	(0.14)
estatus: unemployed	1.13	0.98	1.15	1.04	1.06	0.87	1.17	1.05
	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.16)	(0.23)	(0.23)
female	0.71***	0.80*	0.75***	0.84*	0.76***	0.87	0.73***	0.90
	(0.08)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.07)	(0.09)	(0.08)	(0.11)
age	0.98***	1.01	0.98***	1.00	0.98***	1.00	0.98***	1.01
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
rural	0.86	0.98	0.90	1.12	0.91	1.07	0.89	0.91
	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.09)	(0.13)	(0.09)	(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.12)
insttrust	0.88***	0.92***	0.88***	0.92***	0.88***	0.93***	0.87***	0.92***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
connections			1.72***	2.92***			1.76***	2.55***
			(0.19)	(0.34)			(0.22)	(0.33)
party_member					1.29*	3.00***	1.13	2.82***
					(0.18)	(0.38)	(0.19)	(0.40)
Constant	0.92	0.06***	0.94	0.05***	0.95	0.07***	0.85	0.06***
	(0.33)	(0.03)	(0.32)	(0.02)	(0.32)	(0.03)	(0.32)	(0.03)
Country-fixed effects[ii)]	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Observations	4,086	4,091	5,225	5,232	5,289	5,294	3,880	3,884
pseudoR2	0.0669	0.0349	0.0690	0.0627	0.0614	0.0551	0.0753	0.0837
AIC	3264.2	2608.6	4000.6	3124.1	4093	3190.6	3065.1	2365.4
BIC	3365.2	2709.7	4105.6	3229.1	4198.2	3295.8	3177.8	2478.2
Deviance	3232.2	2576.6	3968.6	3092.1	4061	3158.6	3029.1	2329.4

Robust standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1; i) The baseline category for estatus is public sector. ii) The odds ratios from the country effects are presented in Figure 4.5., estimated from models VB (4) and BS (4).

Figure 4.5. Country effects on clientelist engagement (odds ratios with Albania as baseline), vote buying model (top) and benefit-seeking model (bottom)





The findings from the models exemplify the limitations in predicting citizen engagement in political clientelism in the Western Balkans while relying on standard demographic variables such as the level of income, education and place of residence. Simply, political clientelism in the region crosscuts across different socio-economic groups. This assessment resembles to that presented in the seminal study by Putnam et al. (1993) which compares the civic traditions between the developed and less-developed Italian regions in the second half of the XX century. Putnam et al. argued that when it comes to participation in personalized patronage politics in Italy it is irrelevant "who you are" but rather "where you are" (1993, 101). In those regions in Italy where political clientelism was widespread at the time of the study, citizens of different socio-economic background have engaged. We may draw a similar image of the Western Balkans: because political clientelism is pervasive across the region, the group of clients is consisted by people of varying socio-economic background.

The logistic regression analyses predict one opposite effect between two of the categories in the variable estatus when comparing models VB (4) and BS (4). In the full vote buying model VB (4), people holding an informal job have significantly higher likelihood of engagement than those employed in the public sector, while the opposite is the case with the full benefit-seeking model BS (4) where public sector employees have significantly higher odds of engagement than those holding informal jobs (both findings at $p<0.05$). These differences in effects can be explained while considering both material resources and the theoretical argument on the divergent engagement of citizens in political clientelism. Informal workers are more socio-economically vulnerable than public sector employees and therefore should be more likely targets of vote buying which brings petty benefits and less likely participants in benefit-seeking which brings grand benefits. In the INFORM survey, 49,5% of those holding an informal job stated income which locates them within the first three deciles of the national income distribution, while 47,5% of public employees reported income which locates them in the upper three deciles. In addition, public employees should have more relevant informal connections to engage in clientelist benefit-seeking than those holding informal jobs. The former respondents are simply closer to the centers of decision-making in the clientelist networks. In the INFORM survey almost 48.8% of those

employed in the state sector reported to have a connection in comparison to only 22.3% of those holding an informal job.

The variable insttrust which reports for the trust in state institutions by the respondents presents a negative significant effect across all model specifications (at $p<0.01$) as I hypothesized in Section 4.1. It seems that the clients across the Western Balkans are disillusioned with the state institutions. This provides an answer on the motivations behind clients' decision to engage in political clientelism and is consistent with my fieldwork findings from Chapter 3.

I now turn to discussing three of the key independent variables employed in the models. I will focus on the effects of party membership, connections and income in predicting the probability for citizen engagement in political clientelism through vote buying/selling and clientelist benefit-seeking. In the following, all probability estimates are calculated from the full models on clientelist engagement, models VB (4) and BS (4). In the next sections, I also offer qualitative evidence obtained from semi-structured interviews with citizens which serves to illustrate the mechanism behind the derived statistical effects.

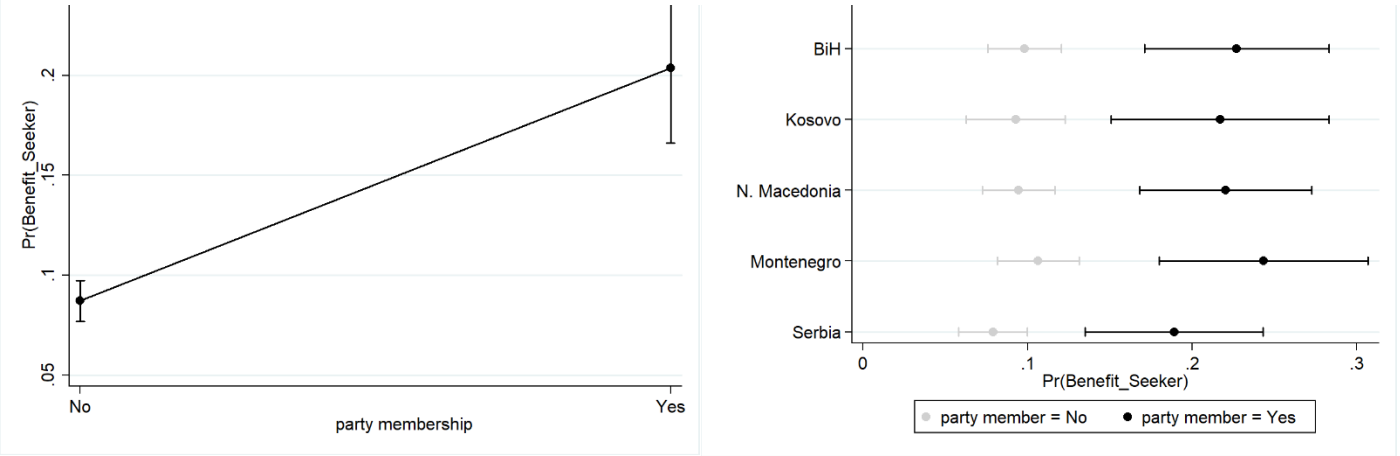
4.3. Political resources relevant for clientelist engagement

Membership in political parties presented no statistically significant effects in the vote buying model and significant positive effects in the benefit-seeking model, in line with the theoretical argument. In the benefit-seeking model, party members are 11,7 percentage points more likely to engage in political clientelism (Figure 4.6., left panel).

The statistically significant difference between the predicted probabilities prevails also when calculated at country-levels though the magnitude differs between the Western Balkan countries (Figure 4.6., right panel). Party members in Albania are almost 7,5 percentage points more likely to engage in benefit-seeking than their counterparts, party members in Bosnia and Herzegovina are close to 13 percentage points more likely, those in Kosovo 12,4, in North Macedonia 12,6, in Montenegro 13,7 and in Serbia slightly more than 11 percentage points. The country level findings on the significant difference in the predicted probabilities for the two groups shows that party

membership is a relevant predictor of benefit-seeking in all the Western Balkan countries. This is not the case when we account for vote buying and selling.

Figure 4.6. Predicted probabilities for clientelist engagement through benefit-seeking of party members and non-members: at regional level (left panel) and at country levels (right panel)



Party membership for the sake of extraction of clientelist benefits is a particularly prominent theme of discussion in the INFORM semi-structured interviews. Party members are simply seen as people with distinct advantages in comparison to non-members. This is perhaps best described in one of the interviews from in Kosovo, where the respondent states that:

> *"Those who are members of political parties or have a relative in the governing party, for them things are going great. I'm not talking about my city alone; I'm talking about the whole of Kosovo. All the employments are done on party basis. People that have barely finished high-school get jobs only because they have relatives [in the party] [...] If you are lucky to have a member of your family with a high position in the party, then everything will be open for you…."* (INFORM_KOS_01)

Some of the interviews contain personal testimonies on party serving, as well as on the benefits that one may obtain by being affiliated to a political party. The following testimony from Serbia illustrates the fact that active and loyal party members are in best position to extract the grand clientelist benefits:

"Researcher: You said before that you believe that party members have better prospects to advance - it is easier for them to get employed etc. What do you think about that? Maybe you have an example of someone who advanced in return for party activism?

Respondent: Well, yes, such things are present. [...] I am also a member of one party. I had personal experiences… I am very aware how much party membership was influential for me. So, I know that in some situations, if I wasn't a member, I would not get the position. This is how it is, and I have no illusions that it was different. It is like I would not get to that important position only by myself." (respondent who reported vote buying, benefit-seeking and party membership in the INFORM survey but who refused to give an answer on income. From the interviews one may conclude that this is a case of a better-off respondent in terms of material resources, currently retired, INFORM_SRB_11)

How can we describe party serving and what are the typical activities of party servants? The INFORM semi-structured interviews contain numerous descriptions on the activities performed. I offer several testimonies, with the first delivered by a respondent in Montenegro:

"Researcher: A lot of people in our survey said that their manager at work asked them to vote for a particular political party. Have you heard anything about that? [...]

Respondent: Yes, I have. I've heard about that and I even have an example from one of my neighbors who was asked to attend at the election rallies of the party as this was practically part of her job description.

Researcher: And what does she do since she got this task as a part of her job?

Respondent: No, this is not [formally] party of her job tasks, but her boss asked her to do it as it was. This is something that is implied because of her position in one of the state institutions." (INFORM_MNE_20)

A similar testimony was reported in an interview in Serbia:

"Respondent: There are a lot of cases, but I will share the last one I've heard of… it is about an acquaintance of mine… she joined a party, and then through the party she got a job in a [local institution], and now she works there. And

then she must attend all their meetings, rallies etc. and she has to share this information via Facebook.
Researcher: Really? She got the job only because she entered the party?
Respondent: Yes, but she has to be active, she has to be available when she gets invited, she has to attend, and she has to have a proof that she indeed attended." (INFORM_SRB_20)

Attendance at rallies and party meetings are some of the activities typically conducted by clients worldwide as a part of the clientelist exchange (Auyero 2001, Nichter 2018). The most active and loyal party servants across the Western Balkans do not only attend rallies and vote in elections but they also partake in activities of political mobilization (a state of affairs which I also describe in Chapter 3). Consider the range of activities described by the following informality insider from Serbia and note that parties indeed track the clients' achievements. The following statement is illustrative of my argument that party serving functions as a strategy through which one may obtain leverage in clientelist bargaining.

"For one to advance, and this depends from one party to the next [...] he/she has to work something for that party. Maybe he/she will distribute flyers or will partake in a 'door to door' campaign, or will have to collect 'secured votes' - that person has to prove that it is working non-stop. And then, party officials make a list of the most meritorious activist. [...] These people are first in the employment cue after the elections, when the party wins power."
(respondent employed at the local administration in a municipality in Serbia, INFORM_SRB_23_insider)

In Chapter 3 I thoroughly described the political mobilization activities performed by party servants in the region. Here I will enrich the description by offering several testimonies from the INFORM semi-structured interviews. The first testimony comes from Serbia and describes the practice of compiling "lists of secured votes." The lists of secured voters contain names, surnames and contact information from voters who the activist managed to persuade to vote for the party. The turnout of the secured votes is carefully monitored at election day and in case of no-show the voters are contacted by party headquarters and "motivated" to vote as soon as possible.

"[Party activists] have to gather votes before elections, [...] they have to gather, it depends from one village to the next, from a minimum of 15 votes and above. [...] I was also offered but I have my own private business and I did not want to enter that whole thing." (respondent from Serbia who reported income at the eight decile, INFORM_SRB_18).

Another respondent in Montenegro described how the "motivations" to turnout at the elections look like.

"I received a call… it was from a person who is an acquaintance... [describes the call] 'Have you gone to the polls? Not yet? Well, come on, we are waiting on you!" (respondent at the fifth decile of income who reported vote buying, benefit-seeking and having connections, INFORM_MNE_01)

Party servants also participate in activities that can be branded as "information hoarding" (Auyero 2001), or clientelist monitoring. During election campaigns, party activists are active in their local communities and rely on their "insertion in social networks and detailed knowledge of the needs of their neighbors" (Stokes et al. 2013, p. 79) to infer party preferences of citizens, as well as to implement intimidation, just as the clientelist brokers described by Stokes et al. do. This is testified in the following excerpt from an interview with a former member of a leadership in political party in North Macedonia:

"… there are party activists who are, let's say, responsible for five buildings or ten houses [in a neighborhood]. And they have a responsibility to 'nurture' this people [i.e. the voters]… in small places they know all the details. They know who for what is up, who is a loyal supporter, [and] who is a swing voter." (MKD_11_insider)

Another instance of party serving combining clientelist monitoring and persuasion in the form of subtle threats was reported in Montenegro:

"Respondent: In the building where I live in there was this person [i.e. neighbor] who had a task to spread stories that voting is not public and that everyone should watch out how they vote.
Researcher: Did this affect the tenants?
Respondent: Well, I think that when people are alerted in this way and if they have an idea to vote for another party than they will at least think about it

twice whether the risk is justified. I personally believe that voting is indeed secret, but I also think that there is fear that it is not." (respondent INFORM_MNE_20)

A member of an opposition party in Montenegro explains that it is quite easy to infer political preferences of voters once the activists are well embedded in the life of the local community:

"Respondent: To give you an example, I went to the [village], here, nearby. I knew how each voter voted.
Researcher: How come? Did you assume or you really knew?
Respondent: I know each person there [laughs]. And I can see exactly who aligns to which side. So, this is the least problematic thing [to know how a person voted]." (INFORM_MNE_17)

Party loyalists are often tasked to show up in a given timeframe on election day to ease clientelist monitoring and to inform the party on their performance on election day. This is described in the interview with an official from a municipal election commission in North Macedonia:

"I've heard an information that from 10AM to 12PM that a given set of voters should turnout. And, because the turnout is checked several times during the day, at 10AM, 2PM, and 4PM before voting is closed, they know how many people showed up until 10AM, 2PM etc., and whether those that were tasked to show up [in the given frame] have indeed done so."
(INFORM_MKD_07_insider)

These numerous different activities of party servants aid in the accumulation of political resources relevant for clientelist bargaining. That political parties do indeed organize evidence on the achievements of their activists (as also shown in the excerpt from the interview with SRB_23_insider above) is confirmed in the following interview conducted with a former member of the leadership of a political party in North Macedonia.

"... you stimulate the activists by making a list [of their attendance in different activities]. And this becomes a 'party CV' which should not be underestimated when the activist will knock on your door looking for employment." (INFORM_MKD_11_insider)

The notion that accumulated political resources are an essential leverage in clientelist bargaining is well understood by the population in the region. Note the following description delivered by a respondent in Serbia:

> *"Researcher: What do you think, is it possible [to get employed] through a political party, or, through personal connections? Can you tell me how does this go?*
> *Respondent: I will tell you how it goes. You can do it through a political party, but you must be engaged for years, you cannot [get the benefit] as a beginner. [If you are a 'beginner'] they will take you in the party, so you just give them your vote. Until you give them the vote and that is all. After that, they will forget you."* (respondent at the first decile of income who reported benefit-seeking in the INFORM survey, INFORM_SRB_07)

In addition, some of the INFORM respondents seem aware that the lack of political resources will bring them in a position where they would have to engage in party serving to reciprocate for a clientelist benefit. This is illustrated in an interview from Montenegro.

> *"... I really think that if I ask for a benefit from a political party that they will ask a counter-favor from me. If I approach the party, that party will asks something from me in the future, and I would not like to be in debt to the favor… this is how things work."* (respondent at the fourth decile of income who did not report party membership, but reported connections and vote buying in the INFORM survey, INFORM_MNE_06)

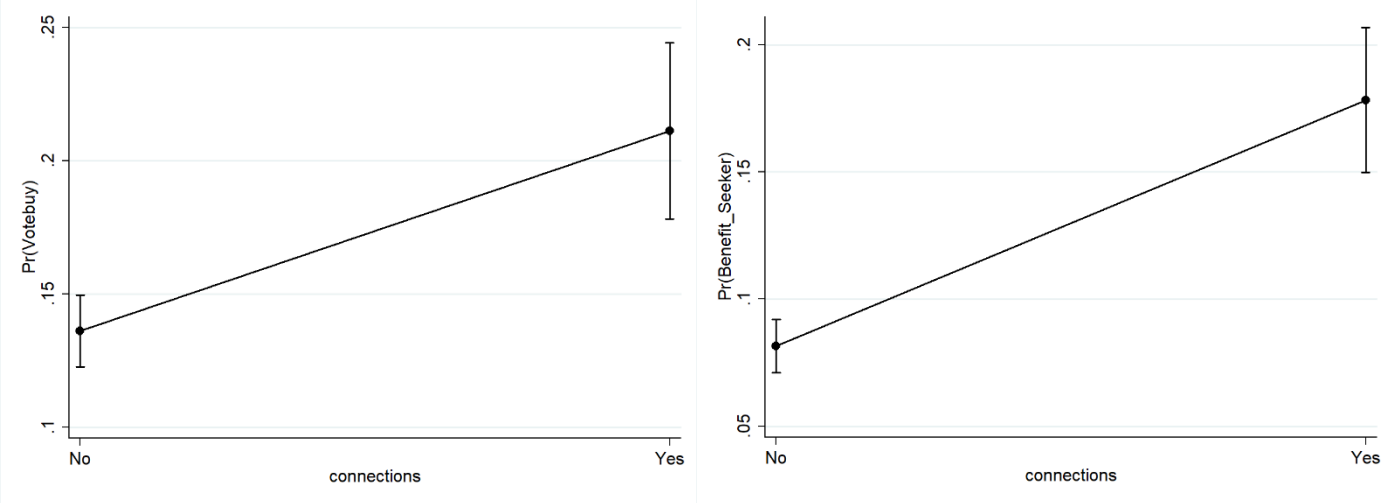
Political resources are thus important in determining the type of citizen engagement in political clientelism. They represent are a prerequisite for successful extraction of clientelist benefits of a grander type while they play no role in the extraction of petty benefits (findings from the two models on clientelist engagement). The statistically significant differences in predicted probabilities between the two groups prevail when calculated at both regional and country levels. Political resources can be accumulated in the past to be utilized as a leverage in the present extraction of clientelist benefits or can be continuously accumulated with an intention of future extraction. Clients accumulate political resources by virtue of their party activism and loyalism. Party activists perform political mobilization activities during election

campaigns, participate in party rallies and meetings and often perform activities of clientelist monitoring (monitoring turnout and votes cast on election day). All such activities count when the bargaining for clientelist benefits takes place: the fiercest party activists are those that can extract grand benefits from political parties across the Western Balkan region.

4.4. Social networking and clientelist engagement

Networking resources are statistically significant and present a positive effect on likelihood of clientelist engagement in both model specifications. People having connections in relevant state institutions are 7,5 percentage points more likely to be targeted with a vote buying offer (Figure 4.7., left panel) and almost 9,7 percentage points more likely to engage in benefit-seeking (Figure 4.7., right panel).

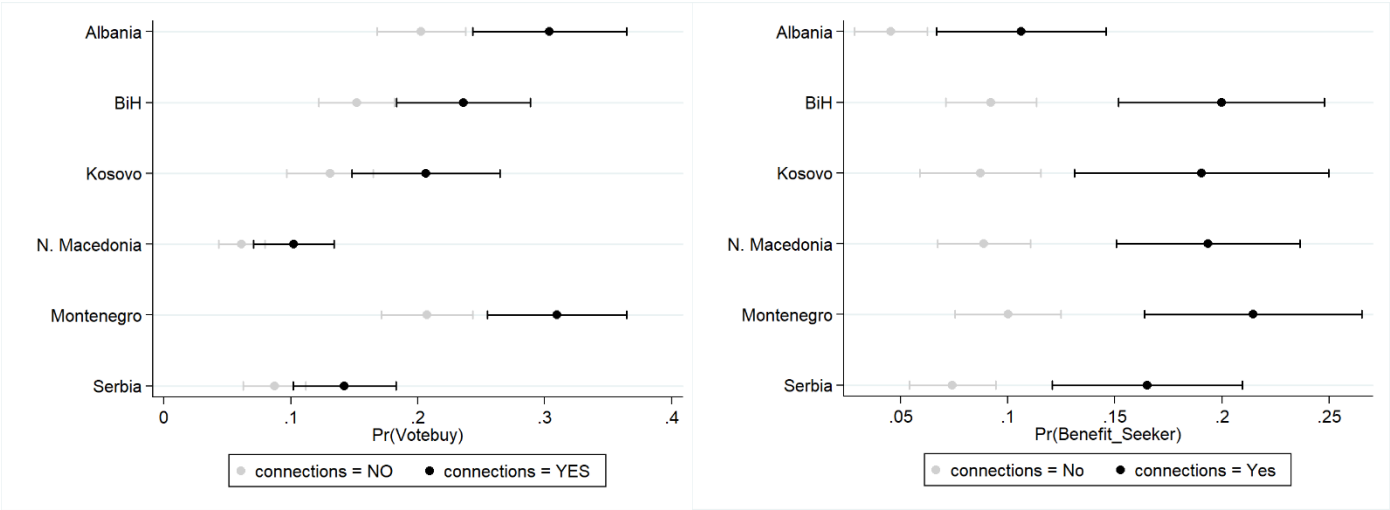
Figure 4.7. Predicted probabilities for clientelist engagement through vote buying (left panel) and benefit-seeking (right panel) of respondents holding connections and respondents with no connections



The statistically significant differences on the probability for clientelist engagement between the two categories from the variable connections are also visible when estimated at country levels. In the vote buying model (Figure 4.8., left panel), the differences in percentage points between connections=0 and connections=1 on the probability of clientelist engagement stands at 10,1 in Albania, 8,4 in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 10,2 in Montenegro (those having connections having higher probability

of engagement), while one could not differentiate in a statistically significant way between the two groups in Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia. In the benefit-seeking model (Figure 4.8., right panel), the differences in percentage points between the two categories in the variable connections stand at six in Albania, almost 11 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more than 10 in Kosovo and North Macedonia, more than 11 in Montenegro and about nine in Serbia (in all cases those having connections hold higher probability of engagement). Connections thus present a robust effect across different countries only in the case of the benefit-seeking model, while the differences between the two groups in the variable connections are not statistically significant in Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia in the vote buying model. This comparative finding shows that connections are not relevant across all Western Balkan countries in predicting vote buying but are relevant without exception in predicting benefit-seeking (a finding that indicates more frequent utilization of connections when clients attempt to extract grand clientelist benefits).

Figure 4.8. Predicted probabilities for clientelist engagement through vote buying, country levels (left panel) and benefit-seeking, country levels (right panel) of respondents holding connections and respondents with no connections



The statistically significant positive effect of connections in the state institutions across the two models indicates that clientelism in the Western Balkan is largely performed while distributing state-sponsored benefits, a notion which was previously

affirmed in Chapter 3. In addition, taken in regard that the "screening" of clients' profiles is typically done through social networks, connections represent a channel via which information hoarding is performed. These two features of connections – facilitating the distribution of state-sponsored but party-mediated benefits and information hoarding – are relevant for both types of citizen engagement in political clientelism analyzed in this chapter. The function of connections as a resource relevant for clientelist bargaining is however more prominent when it comes to citizen-initiated exchanges. When citizens approach acquaintances in state institutions with requests for particularistic benefits, they rely on the past trading of favors and the overall relationship with that acquaintance. Thus, citizens bring leverage which is acquired through social networking into a relationship that may soon turn to an exchange of political clientelism.

The findings on the positive effect of connections on the likelihood of clientelist engagement are not at all surprising when one overviews the qualitative data available in the INFORM semi-structured interviews. I begin by presenting two general statements from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro that underline the omnipresence of the practice of connections in social life and then I move to showing how connections work for clientelist engagement.

> *"Not all connections [veze] are cronyism [protekcije] … Nevertheless, in the society there is a widespread opinion that for everything you must intervene, you have to ease it [podmazat], push it [pogurat]... And, people live in this way…"* (INFORM_BiH_04)

> *"It is my opinion that 90% of all people in Montenegro live in this way [i.e. by relying on connections]. Even when we [the people in Montenegro] do not need a connection we want to show off that we have friends. [...]*
> *Researcher: And how did you feel one you had to do it [get a connection]? [the conversation focuses on the employment of one of the sons of the respondent]*
> *Respondent: Well, I did not have to do it. Honestly, I did not have to do it.*
> *Researcher: It was easier for you in this way?*
> *Respondent: I worked for 40 years in the service in this town and everyone knows me*." (a retired respondent at the tenth decile of income in Montenegro,

who is a party member and according to the interview has access to different connections, INFORM_MNE_17)

These two statements illustrate the extent on the recourse to connections in dealing with everyday problems by the population of the Western Balkans. As I described in Chapter 3, the recourse to connections as a coping strategy when interacting with state institutions is substantially present in the region. Particularly the second excerpt above taken from the interview with the respondent INFORM_MNE_17 shows the relevance of connections when understood as a type of resource that can be utilized in social life. However, not all connections are always part of political clientelism. Sometimes the exchanges that can be described as connections have no political undertone as people basically trade influence in one institution with influence in other state institution or sphere in social life as a part of a relationship of friendship rather than clientelism. Thus, one needs to be careful when assessing connections in the context of political clientelism. If we seek to determine whether a specific instance of use of connections has a clientelist character we would need to determine whether a demand for political support is also part of the relationship, as this represents one of the main features of political clientelism, as argued in Chapter 1.

I offer three more interview excerpts on connections and networking resources in this section. These excerpts show in more detail how connections work. Consider the following excerpt from an interview conducted in North Macedonia:

"Researcher: Can you give us an example on how the institutions work… maybe you have a problem with the local institutions, or a problem at the courts… Which is the typical route that people use… where do they go [when they need a service]?
Respondent: Well, if you have a good relationship with the boss [i.e. a person who is at a higher level in the institutions] you go to him... if not [...] you will find a way to get to him. You will look for 'Janko, or Petko, or Stanko' [an expression in Macedonian for an unnamed acquaintance] to get to him [the 'boss']... you know what I mean. This is how things work.
Researcher: So, you don't need to know him [the 'boss'] in person…
Respondent: If you do not know him in person you will look for connections to get to him [i.e. you will look for an acquaintance that knows him]." (a

respondent at the third decile of income distribution, who is a party member and worked in the past as personal security of the mayor in his municipality, INFORM_MKD_01)

The excerpt shows that different connections are relevant for different spheres of life and that there are stronger and weaker connections. What would constitute as having the "right" connections can vary from situation to situation. A respondent in Bosnia and Herzegovina explains two possible routes for employment in his canton, the first is by party serving while the second through personal acquaintance with the mayor:

"In the canton where I live if you are not a party member or if you do not know the mayor… you will never get employed." (INFORM_BiH_18)

In both instances the respondents are referring to personal acquaintances as a route to arrive to a particularistic benefit. These acquaintances thus must have some leverage in the decision-making within the state institutions or must be connected to a person who holds such leverage. When clients benefit-seek one of the favorable conditions for success in the endeavor is to have the "right" connections (i.e. the "right" networking resources), otherwise benefit-seeking has little prospects to be successful. The last is illustrated by the following attempt for benefit-seeking done in Serbia, not through acquaintances but publicly, at a party meeting:

"I said to them: 'Help me out to find a job.' […] I know that employment goes through parties, this party brings this an investor, other party brings another one [and then people get employed] […] But they all remained silent, they said 'we will see,' etc. From that time five years have passed, and no one invited me again [at the party meeting]." (respondent at the first decile of income distribution, who reported benefit-seeking in the INFORM survey and no connections, INFORM_SRB_07)

Networking is thus a type of non-material resource that can be used by clients in clientelist bargaining. Across both models on clientelist engagement connections play a significant role in determining the probability of the two outcomes. This finding is robust at country-levels, in three of the countries in the vote buying model and in all the countries in the benefit-seeking model. The last finding on the differences between the two models could be understood as evidence on the more prominent role of networking

resources in continuous exchanges that involve more grand benefits and services. Citizens utilize social contacts in the state institutions to articulate requests for particularistic benefits. Political parties' function as "gatekeepers" and decide on the allocation of clientelist benefits upon citizens' requests. In these situations, it is not trivial whether the potential client has networking leverage – those who possess relevant social connections have higher possibility to meaningfully articulate their demands and are easier to be monitored in regard to their support for the party (their background is easier to be "screened" as a result of the knowledge on the potential client by the person who is the target of the request). In contrast, people having no connections in the state institutions simply lack the avenue to request a particularistic benefit, and, in addition, may be identified as less trustworthy clients because the lack of information on their background. The reader should however take note that not all practices of connections are of a clientelist type. If one would want to determine whether connections are a part of political clientelism one would need to identify whether the benefits sought by relying on networking resources are at some point conditioned with political support.

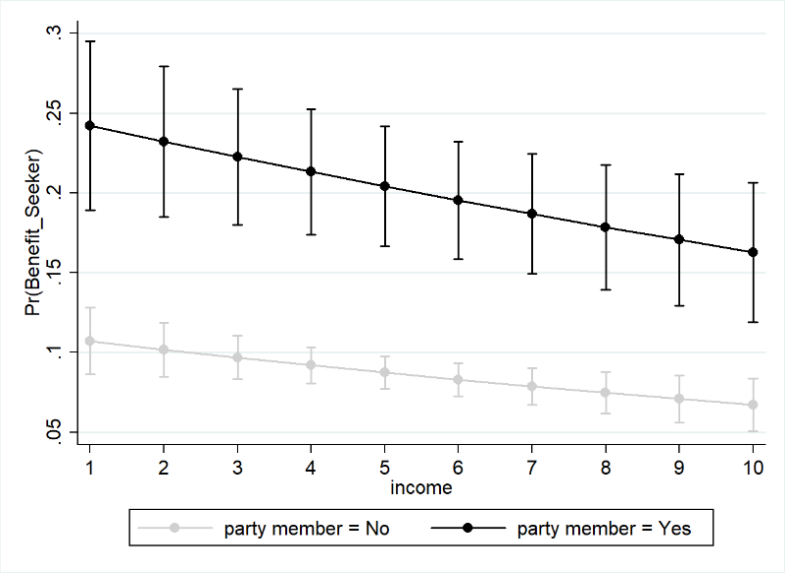
4.5. Material resources and clientelist engagement

In the literature on political clientelism, it is typically expected that a rise in income contributes to disengagement from political clientelism. The empirical exploration in this study finds some backing to this theoretical expectation, though, it should be underlined that the predicted effect is visible in only one of the two models, the benefit-seeking model. Income does not play a prominent role in predicting the probability for citizen engagement through vote buying and selling, a finding which should come as surprise for the literature in political clientelism but which also could be explained by the fact that the survey item does not effectively specify the value of benefits offered (it asks for money or favors, with favors consisting a large group of benefits which may vary in value). I argued in Section 4.2. of this chapter that the lack of statistical significance of income in most of the models simply shows that political clientelism in the Western Balkans is present across all socio-economic groups. In this section, I offer further evidence of this claim. In the following, I derive the probabilities for engagement of different income groups conditioned on the values of the more robust

predictors of political clientelism in my models – party membership and connections. My findings broadly show that if the right conditions are fulfilled even higher income groups hold higher probability of engagement than lower income groups.

For instance, respondents at the ninth decile of the national income distribution who are party members are 6,3 percentage points more likely to engage in benefit-seeking than people at the first income group who are not party members (Figure 4.9.). Moreover, people having income at the tenth decile and who are party members are more than 9,5 percentage points more likely to engage in benefit-seeking than people who are not party members but who hold a corresponding income. Party members at the first decile of national income distribution are 13,5 percentage points more likely to engage in benefit-seeking than non-members at the first decile.

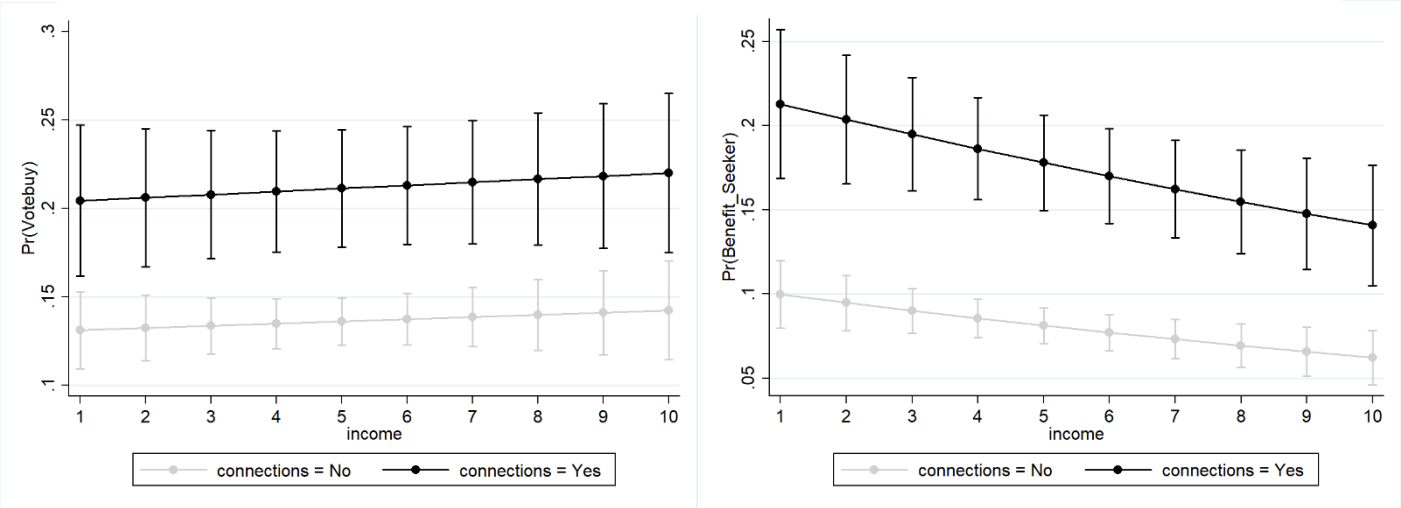
Figure 4.9. Predicted probabilities for clientelist engagement of different income groups, depending on party membership, benefit-seeking model



Significant differences in the probability for clientelist engagement between upper- and lower-income groups, as well as the same income groups, appear when we plot the predicted probabilities of income for the two different categories of connections. Respondents holding income at the tenth decile of the national income distribution and simultaneously holding connections are almost nine percentage points more likely to receive a vote buying offer than people holding income at the first decile and simultaneously holding no connections (Figure 4.10., left panel). First decile

respondents with connections are 7,3 percentage points more likely to receive a vote buying offer than their no-connections counterparts. In the benefit-seeking model, those at the eight decile of income with connections are almost 5,5 percentage points more likely to engage than those at the first decile with no connections, with the difference in the predicted probability standing at almost 11,3 percentage points between the respondents at the first decile (Figure 4.10., right panel). These findings show that if right conditions are fulfilled even higher income groups may disproportionately engage in clientelism in comparison to lower income groups.

Figure 4.10. Predicted probabilities for clientelist engagement of different income groups, depending on connections, vote buying model (left panel) and benefit-seeking model (right panel)



My fieldwork respondents largely thought of political clientelism as uncharacteristic for any specific income group and this is also the case with the respondents from INFORM's semi-structured interviews. Consider the following excerpt from an interview with a respondent in North Macedonia. The respondent clearly distinguishes between benefits of different value who are tailored to the profile (material resources) of different clients.

> *"... [I think] that this [the following] is the biggest irony of all […] no one enters a political party because of ideology. Everyone does it out of personal interest, primarily to get employment. Smaller people [i.e. people with less financial resources] join for employment, the bigger enter for a business [i.e. to earn more money], to get something from public procurement, etc.…"*

(respondent at the eight decile of income who reported party membership and having connections, INFORM_MKD_02)

The quantitative findings above add some evidence to this claim. Another claim which is prominent in both fieldwork and INFORM interviews is that the exchange of votes for benefits is more characteristic for the poor, but we find no evidence that this is the case in the multivariate analysis. I will present a few excerpts from the INFORM semi-structured interviews that discuss the engagement of the poor in vote buying and selling. A respondent in North Macedonia delivers a personal testimony:

"Respondent: When election time comes, different infringements take place… let me tell you in short... the poor are bought with cash [explains the transaction] 'here you go there is some money, vote for that candidate'... I do not want to give out names…
Researcher: Have you seen situations like these in your neighborhood?
Respondents: Yes, I have, but I was also offered… I did not accept it. I went, I voted, but I voted in my own conscience, I did not accept [the vote buying benefit]..." (INFORM_MKD_07)

Unfortunately, this particular respondent who reported a vote buying attempt refused to answer the questions on income in the INFORM survey, so we have no survey evidence on the material status, though at several points the interview suggests that this is most likely a low income respondent (unemployed at the age of 50 with a wife who is also unemployed and one son who had to drop out from faculty because of financial difficulties). Another example of an attempt of vote buying was reported in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

"Respondent: During the last local elections…. my husband came and said: '[the neighbor] is offering us to vote for a party, 30 convertible marks [approx. 15 euros] for a vote'... and I said, 'come on, no way.' I could not believe it, that my husband came with this offer asking me what we should do because it was an offer from our neighbor. I said, 'come on no way!' I would never do that." (INFORM_BiH_07)

As in the previous example, we cannot rely on the INFORM survey for the material resources of this respondent (refusal to report income) but from the interview one may conclude that in this case we are considering a more wealthy respondent (employed

woman at the age of 30 whose husband has a small private business). I offer a contrasting example of a poor respondent (first decile of income, survey data) from Albania who reported accepting a vote buying offer:

> *"We have a very damaged house; it is about to crash… [...] election time came and a group of people came… [...] they said they will help us to fix the house if we would just vote the right way. And we did so…"* (INFORM_ALB_05)

In another interview, an official from a municipal election commission in North Macedonia lists several benefits typically distributed during election campaigns. Note that all benefits are petty, once again indicating distribution of benefits of low material value to electoral clients.

> *"Researcher: So, what do they [the parties] usually distribute?*
> *Respondent: Well, different things. Flour used to be something that was distributed frequently, but now I see [i.e. for the local elections] wood for fire because the winter is coming. Last year the [general] elections were also during winter and they gave out wood. [...] for local elections they typically give out humanitarian aid and, in the general elections they give out social benefits. [...] another thing that is typically offered is cash."*
> *Researcher: How much money is that?*
> *Respondent: Well, from 500 denars [approx. 8 euros] and above. It depends on how many votes you will sell."* (INFORM_MKD_07_insider)

One of the interviews in the INFORM data base described abstention selling during elections. I report it here because, once again, it can be put into context of the material resources held by the potential client. A respondent from Montenegro, at the third decile of income, with attitudes against the ruling party (a characteristic that is quite prominent in the interview) reported an attempt by a state institution official to ease access to social benefits in return for the whole family giving up on their IDs during election day. An ID is needed for voting at the elections and seizing it from the client represents a guarantee that the client will abstain from voting.

> *"I handed the documents [in the relevant institution] and the following happened three or four days before the elections, this man came in my house. [...] I was not home at the moment. My mother and sister were there. And they were confused, thy should have thought to record the conversation… he*

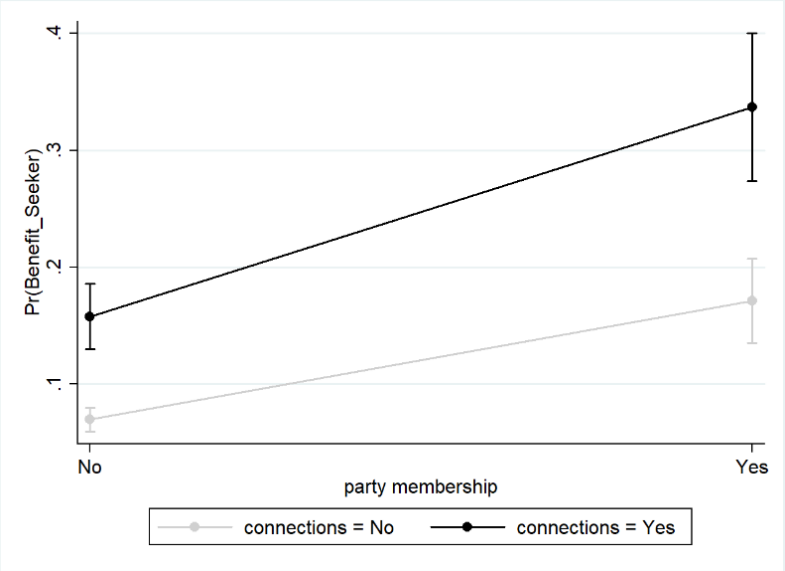
asked am I home and they said, 'she is not here, should we call her to come?' And, he said, 'no need, tell her to come tomorrow in [institution] and bring in all IDs.' They asked 'why do you need IDs from all of us?' He replied: 'it is best that she comes and bring the IDs.'" (INFORM_MNE_11)

In sum, we have both quantitative and qualitative evidence to support the notion that political clientelism is present in the Western Balkans across all socio-economic profiles and we have only qualitative evidence that points out to disproportional engagement of the poor in electoral clientelism. The findings certainly challenge the poor client theory and offer input for building of a theory that will consider citizen engagement in political clientelism for groups holding different material resources. We have some reasons to believe that vote selling should be prevalent with the poor across the Western Balkans and we may state with some level of confidence that specific segments of the highest income groups are disproportionally engaged in benefit-seeking than segments of the lowest income groups.

4.6. Simultaneous possession of political and networking resources

As it can be anticipated by now, the simultaneous command of political and networking resources at the individual level improves the probability for clientelist engagement by a large margin in the benefit-seeking model. Party members who simultaneously hold connections in the state institutions are 16,6 percentage points more likely to initiate a clientelist exchange than party members holding no connections and 26,7 percentage points more likely than people who are not party members and who simultaneously hold no connections in the state institutions (Figure 4.11.). Among those holding connections, party members are still more likely to engage, by a statistically significant difference of almost 18 percentage points. These findings illustrate the notion that the two types of non-material resources when utilized simultaneously can be very conductive for clientelist benefit-seeking.

Figure 4.11. Predicted probabilities for clientelist engagement of different groups within connections, depending on party membership, benefit-seeking model



Consider the following testimony from a respondent in Montenegro, who reported income at the fifth decile, having connections, and both vote buying and benefit-seeking in the INFORM survey (and take note the reliance on both political and networking resources in the benefit-seeking endeavor described in the interview excerpt).

> *"We joined together several people from this street, we're intellectuals, we have a university education… it was me and my family, then [personal name], then [personal name] with his wife. All of us… we have some positions so to say. […] We went to the [person from the] party committee and asked: 'Can we do this?', the reply was 'Yes, we can!' … But I always knew to which person I am going; he is my colleague and I have good relations with him […] All of this [the reparation of the road] was done through personal acquaintances and through the party…."* (INFORM_MNE_01)

The notion that both forms of resources are important for successful extraction of clientelist benefits is well understood by the population in the region. As an example, note the following reply from a respondent in North Macedonia:

> *"Researcher: What do you think that is important [to get a job]?*
> *Respondent: It is important to have people [i.e. to have connections]. Education may play a small role but if you have people and if you have money [i.e. to bribe] you can find a good job.[...]*

Researchers: And what do you mean by that 'to have people'?
Respondent: To have someone that can help you out, to have relatives, I am thinking about those people that can open the door for you [...] relatives, friends, someone who is close to you…
Researcher: And what about the party?
Respondent: Yes, that [the party] is also very important. It depends on how active you are. It depends from which family you come from [...] this is all important [...] how active you are and which family you belong to…"
(respondent from Macedonia who reported first decile of income and experience with both vote buying and benefit-seeking, INFORM_MKD_13)

Those who have accumulated the two types of non-material resources simultaneously are sometimes recognized by a higher social status. I offer one example from Serbia, where the respondent focuses on the clientelist "potential" of medical doctors and lawyers.

"Respondent: So, these [clientelist] skills [...] are most easily visible with people working in medicine, with the doctors, they had the ability to help out their children, so their children were always ranked best in employment contests. And then, another example you can find in my favorite profession - lawyers. The lawyers, simply, dominate everything. Now in [party 1] you do not have a single lawyer; many lawyers instead join [party 2]. You know what I mean…" (insider from the local administration, INFORM_SRB_34_insider)

4.7. Summary

The multi-method analysis of this chapter aimed to provide empirical insight on the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism in the Western Balkan region. Three broad findings were established. First, the quantitative findings on the relevance of party membership for benefit-seeking and the non-relevance for vote buying and selling draws a line of distinction between the two sets of clients. The qualitative data further provides evidence that party membership in the region should be seen as clientelist party serving and offers information on what party serving entails. We have evidence the corroborate the argument that political resources are important for extraction of grand clientelist benefits, in line with Proposition 1 developed in Chapter 1 of this doctoral thesis.

Second, another form of non-material resources relevant for clientelist engagement also presents an expected effect. In line with Proposition 2, networking resources are relevant for both types of clientelist engagement, though I claim that this is for different reasons. In the case of vote buying and selling networking resources offer leverage in the form of credibility in the clientelist exchange, while in the case of benefit-seeking they also offer leverage in the bargaining and this is prompted from the past trading of favors in social networks which do not necessarily have a clientelist undertone.

Third, material resources are less relevant in predicting clientelist engagement in the Western Balkans and this is best seen in the non-effect of income in the vote buying model. Both quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that clientelism is present across all income groups (in the case of the quantitative findings this is derived from the benefit-seeking model), and this is consistent with Proposition 3. However, only the qualitative findings offer evidence on a more frequent engagement of the poor in electoral clientelism so I may only partially corroborate Proposition 4 developed in Chapter 1. In considering this finding the reader should however note that the survey item for vote buying does not effectively specify the value of benefits offered, as it asks for both money or favors, with favors consisting a large group of benefits which may vary in value in the Western Balkans.

The three broad findings offer support for the theoretical argument that citizen engagement in political clientelism differs according to the type of exchange, with the type being determined by the benefits and services exchanged. Grand benefits condition grand services, and grand services imply long term affiliation between political patrons and clients and structuring of the exchange as an iterated game consisted of several transactions of benefits and services. Clients who seek to extract or continue to extract clientelist benefits may do so once they acquire political resources relevant for clientelist bargaining. The most powerful clients are those whose services are most relevant to the party, or, who hold leverage towards party influentials as a result of previous social interaction. The findings underline the importance of non-material resources for clientelist engagement and show that political clientelism is much about socialization in the overall clientelist order. At the same time, the findings complicate

the assumption that rising material resources will eventually contribute to disengagement from clientelism at the individual level – across the Western Balkans higher income groups also engage in political clientelism to further individual socio-economic advancement.

CONCLUSION

This doctoral thesis represents an inquiry towards the less explored side of the clientelist exchange – the client. By focusing on the varieties of clientelist engagement of citizens in the Western Balkan region, the study seeks to advance our understanding of political clientelism as a phenomenon characterized by diversity of exchanges. I firstly established a preliminary distinction between clients involved in short-term electoral exchanges and clients involved in iterated exchanges of patronage. I rely on my fieldwork data to show that electoral clients participate in exchanges that consist of transactions of petty services and petty benefits, while the patronage (relational) clients are engaged in transactions of grand benefits and grand services. The distinctions between petty and grand benefits and services are highly simplified but allow us to conceptualize the basis for divergent engagement of citizens in political clientelism. Next, I used multivariate analysis on survey data to show that clients who can initiate a clientelist transaction hold political resources in comparison to those clients who participate in petty electoral clientelism. I argued (while using data from semi-structured interviews with citizens) that party engagement and party membership are best seen as a vehicle for obtaining political resources that can further be utilized by clients in clientelist bargaining.

These findings underscore the notion that "the client" is not a uniform category and that citizens with different profiles may engage in political clientelism. However, in the context of the Western Balkans the profile of clients cannot be derived while relying on standard socio-demographic variables typically used in the research on political clientelism. Political clientelism is omnipresent in the region to a point that it crosscuts between different socio-demographic groups. In line with this notion, the thesis concludes that clientelist engagement is much about the socialization of citizens in clientelist networks and that such socialization is performed irrespectively of one's socio-economic status. As a result, I argue for a systematic inclusion of what I identify as non-material resources in the study of political clientelism.

The concluding chapter outlines the conceptual, theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions of this study while placing the findings in perspective with previous findings from the literature on political clientelism. I also open a discussion on

the limitations of the thesis and on the implications of the findings on policy actions against political clientelism. The chapter is closed with a discussion on the prospects for a research agenda on citizen engagement in political clientelism.

Conceptual contribution

This thesis shows the advantage of conceptualizing political clientelism as a phenomenon characterized by internal variation. Whether political clientelism will be conceptualized as a strategy of the actors, or a form of distributive politics, or as an exchange of material benefits for political services as I do in this study, the internal variation should be recognized, otherwise researchers risk to extend the findings from one manifestation of political clientelism to all its manifestations. A lack of recognition of the internal varieties within political clientelism represents a problem for both scientific inference and policy intervention. For instance, it is often established in the literature that political clientelism is prevalent among the poor, but this theoretical expectation is typically maintained by considering only one form of political clientelism, the exchange of votes for benefits (vote buying and selling). This thesis goes beyond vote buying and selling and shows that the poor do not need to be the primary actors in all types of clientelist exchanges. Researchers should thus be sensitive on internal variations of political clientelism and should pay attention not to extend findings from one manifestation of the phenomenon to others. A careful conceptual work on the variations of clientelist exchanges in a given society should precede any theoretical work and empirical analysis on political clientelism.

In Chapter 1, I offered a typology of clientelist exchanges and corresponding patron and client strategies. This represents another – connected to the previous – conceptual contribution of this thesis. My typology is built with reliance on previous typologies available in the literature and with a view on the specifics of political clientelism in the Western Balkan context. However, the typology should be broadly applicable. Across the world, political parties utilize political clientelism not only for electoral purposes but also for purposes of building a party organization (a notion which is sometimes overlooked in the literature) and clients engage with different services to obtain a range of material benefits (another notion which is sometimes overlooked). Not all clients can be co-opted with the same benefits: the benefits with a relatively higher

material value can be a motivation for engagement even for those clients who are not poor or vulnerable, and can also be a motivation for providing extended party services that go beyond the typical electoral services characteristic for vote selling. These notions are effectively incorporated in the typology offered in Chapter 1 of this doctoral thesis.

Further on, and even more closely related with the main theme of this thesis – citizen engagement in political clientelism – Chapter 1 offered conceptualization of the different strategies that clients have at their disposal when engaging in political clientelism. Clients may engage in political clientelism while 1) providing electoral services and 2) providing broader political services related to the building of party organization, in addition to the electoral ones. Within 1) I identified three distinct strategies of citizen engagement: vote selling, turnout selling and abstention selling. Within 2) I identified two different strategies: party serving and clientelist benefit-seeking. By party servants, I denoted those clients who participate pro-actively in party organizations with a goal to obtain leverage relevant for extracting clientelist benefits. Clientelist benefit-seeking, on the other hand, denotes the citizen-initiated clientelist exchanges which hold higher prospects to be successful when the client possesses a leverage (non-material resources) relevant for clientelist bargaining. To my best knowledge, this is the first attempt in the literature to conceptualize the strategies of engagement of citizens alongside the strategies of engagement of political parties which have received great attention by researchers in the past.

This study also shows the advantage of understanding political clientelism as a specific type of exchange involving the trade of material benefits for political services. Focusing on clientelism as a strategy of political mobilization or a form of redistributive politics informs as exclusively on the strategic calculations of political parties and state institutions engaged in political clientelism but offers very little regarding our understanding on the strategic calculations of citizens. This problem is not present when political clientelism is conceptualized as an exchange. When we focus on the exchange relation, we incorporate the strategic calculations of both sets of actors as well as their mutual relationship in our conceptualization of the phenomenon.

Theoretical contribution

The main theoretical argument of this thesis can be summarized as follows. Clientelist political exchanges are not straight-forward exchanges of uniform politicized benefits and political services but are subject to bargaining between patrons and clients. Both actors approach the relationship strategically with a view to obtain as much as possible from the exchange. Political patrons seek to convert material benefits to political services, while clients seek to convert political services to material benefits. Each individual client possesses a given leverage from its past interaction with the party as well as from its past interaction with acquaintances close to clientelist networks. In the former case, leverage is acquired through pro-active participation in the party organization, while in the latter case through trading of favors which do not necessarily hold a clientelist undertone. Clients who possess higher leverage are relatively more capable than clients with lesser leverage to extract clientelist benefits of the grand type (i.e. the relatively more valuable clientelist benefits). This is what makes the crucial difference between the two sets of clients - one set is ready to commit their time and effort to acquire non-material resources relevant for clientelism with a goal to extract grand clientelist benefits, while another set of clients is content with providing petty electoral services in return to petty material benefits. The desire to obtain either of the two benefits is, in turn, prompted by the variations in the socio-economic backgrounds of clients (i.e. their individual material resources).

This theoretical argument offers several insights to the global study of political clientelism. First, clients that aim to extract benefits of the grander type are relatively better-off in terms of individual material resources in comparison to those who engage for petty benefits, making political clientelism a practice which is not exclusive to the poor. It is plausible to expect that the rise of material wealth contributes to disengagement from political clientelism in general, but this study argues that this effect is more complicated as it is conditioned on different modes of engagement by citizens in political clientelism. Subsequently, it is also theoretically plausible to assume that under given conditions even better-off citizens may engage in political clientelism.

Second, in societies where political clientelism is widespread and its presence crosscuts between different socio-demographic groups (as it is the case with the

Western Balkan countries), we should look towards variables that report on citizens' non-material resources to account for the factors of clientelist engagement. This study focused on political and networking resources relevant for citizen engagement in political clientelism and showed that they play an important part in deriving an answer to the question of "who are the clients?". Across the Western Balkans, and possibly elsewhere, the main predictors of clientelism are not indicators of material resources, but the possession of resources on non-material types. This indicates that political clientelism is much about socialization and coping with everyday problems from the side of citizens. This is the second theoretical takeaway that this study offers: the notion that citizens activities in party structures and social networks can account for engagement in political clientelism, as well as for the variations in the modes of engagement.

Taken all, this study cautions that we should not extend the theoretical expectations of the clientelist party targeting literature on vote buying to all manifestations of political clientelism. Different modes of engagement can be tied to divergent theoretical expectations. This is an insight that requires further probing in the studies of political clientelism.

Methodological contribution

This study relies on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry and sources of data. As political clientelism is an elusive phenomenon, there is a need for researchers to obtain knowledge of the context before proceeding with multivariate quantitative analysis on the determinants behind citizen engagement. Some of the innovative recent studies on political clientelism in political science, such as those of Stokes et al. 2013 and Nichter 2018, have relied on a similar methodological approach in combining different sources of data. These authors have taken advantage of qualitative findings in developing formal models on the relationship between political patrons and clients. This study follows these insights and performs statistical testing of hypotheses that are drafted while carefully observing the field of the clientelist exchange. This is an important methodological takeaway that this study offers regarding studying political clientelism – the notion that the combination of methods in an integrated manner can provide scientific inference with higher level of certainty. The

quantitative findings of this study would not mean a lot without proper interpretation of the variables employed in the statistical models. For instance, to an outside uninformed observer of the Western Balkan context, party membership would not necessarily be tied to the mode of clientelist engagement that I denote party serving. In contrast, nearly all the experts that I interviewed in the region considered that party membership is closely tied to clientelist engagement. This allowed me to interpret the role of party membership as I do, as a proxy for clientelist party serving.

The main research strategy of this study regarding the quantitative part consisted of comparing the effects of several independent variables on two different dependent variables reporting for clientelist engagement. This approach seems fruitful in pinpointing the nuances between different types of clientelist engagement. The fact that the two models which differ in their dependent variables estimated some varying effects of the independent variables, a notion which was corroborated with qualitative findings, shows that the approach is indeed useful in advancing our understanding of political clientelism. The methodological approach can thus be utilized also in further studies that intend to focus on the differences and similarities of clients participating in different clientelist exchanges.

Empirical contribution

To the best of my knowledge, this is the only study on political clientelism that deals with the contemporary Western Balkan region. As shown in Chapters 3 and 4, the region should not be further overlooked when studying political clientelism. The six countries that I overviewed present a variety of exchanges of political clientelism and corresponding patron and client strategies of engagement. The focus on the Western Balkan context offers several important takeaways for the empirical study of political clientelism. Most importantly, the context by itself drags the researcher away from electoral clientelism towards a study of clientelist linking which goal is to contribute to the building of party organizations. The last two decades have seen the proliferation of studies in political science focusing on electoral clientelism, but this study shows that overlooking of the broader political mobilization purpose of political clientelism can be ineffective for our overall understanding of the phenomenon.

A background goal of this study – beside understanding the varieties of citizen engagement in political clientelism – was also to describe the Western Balkan context of clientelist political mobilization and participation. To this end, I offered what I believe to be the most comprehensive description found in the literature on Western Balkan political clientelism. This is done in Chapter 3 of this doctoral thesis which describes the findings from my fieldwork in the region. Chapter 3 should serve as an invitation towards researchers of political clientelism and area specialists to engage with political clientelism in the Western Balkans in their research activities. A focus on clientelist political mobilization offers numerous insights on political life in the region in the same way as a focus on the region by researchers on political clientelism can offer insights to our general understanding of the phenomenon.

Study limitations

This study is limited in at least four key aspects. The first is related to the problem of whether we may extend the findings from the Western Balkan region to other corners of the world where political clientelism is widespread. Should we expect to observe a similar dynamic of clientelist linking in other countries/regions as well? To this question, this study does not offer an answer. The second limitation is related to the possible differences between the Western Balkan countries. During my fieldwork I was not able to encounter significant differences between the six countries regarding the overall dynamics of clientelist linking, but the survey data that I presented in Chapter 4 shows that there are some differences in terms of prevalence of different clientelist exchanges on the ground. These differences were however not in the focus of this thesis though they remain important in comprehensively understanding political clientelism in post-socialist and reform-oriented contexts.

Third, and perhaps most crucially, I am not able to fully test my theory on the variations of citizen engagement in political clientelism with the survey data used in this study. The INFORM survey that I use for the multivariate statistical analysis in Chapter 4 was not originally designed to obtain data for testing my theoretical arguments. However, I did work with the best data available on political clientelism in the region and I attempted to "fill-in the blanks" while relying on my own fieldwork data and on INFORM's semi-structured interviews data. More specifically, my theory could be tested

more effectively if there are available indicators on the varieties of clientelist exchanges (i.e. if my dependent variables are based on survey items that clearly report on citizen engagement through different modes: vote selling, turnout selling, abstention selling, party serving and clientelist benefit-seeking; and/or if my dependent variables are specified to measure the value of benefits distributed). In addition, it could be argued that some of the independent variables that I use in the models are underspecified. My proxy for party serving is a case in point: the survey item asks the respondents on their current party membership, but beside that we are unable to establish with great certainty what party membership entails for the respondents. To mitigate this problem in future studies, a set of indicators on clientelist party serving can be developed. In this study, I turned to qualitative findings to establish the link between party membership and party serving in the region.

Finally, it can be argued that some of the independent variables in my models present endogenous effects towards the dependent variables. Are party membership and connections relevant because clients are already socialized in clientelism or it is the other way around as I claim in this thesis? To address this, I directed attention in showing that clients turn to party serving in order to extract specific benefits as well as that citizens rely on connections long before they are engaged in political clientelism. This was done by using both my fieldwork findings and the qualitative data from INFORM. However, providing a definite assessment over this critical problem for scientific inference is beyond the scope of this study.

Policy implications

Much of what has been said on the problems for scientific inference when it is not systematically considered that political clientelism has different manifestations can be extended to a discussion on the policy interventions aimed to combat political clientelism. If policies are insensitive to the notion that citizens engage in political clientelism out of different considerations and motivations, as well as in different modes of engagement, the prospects of combating clientelism through policy intervention can be grim. For instance, voter education in the form of anti-vote-selling campaigns can be of little use as a measure to contribute to disengagement from political clientelism of party servants. In another instance, far reaching structural changes such as reduction of

poverty may be useless to combat political clientelism if political parties have established themselves as mediators of a large range of state-sponsored benefits, including those of the grand type, as it is the case with the Western Balkan countries.

In sum, the findings of this study show that there cannot be a "one-size-fits-all" solution for all manifestations of political clientelism. Successful policy intervention would require good understanding of the different patterns of clientelist exchanges within countries and the different factors contributing to the presence or absence of those exchanges.

A research agenda on clientelist engagement by citizens?

This doctoral thesis has an ambition to draw the attention of political scientists on the role of citizens in clientelist exchanges. The contemporary research agenda on political clientelism in political science has started with the concern on the strategies that political parties employ in clientelist political mobilization before gradually moving to considering the role of brokers in clientelist exchanges. If we are moving from top to bottom in the clientelist pyramid, the next phase of the studies of political clientelism should be concerned with the role of citizens. As I attempted to show throughout this thesis, the role of citizens is important for the establishment, cessation and maintenance of clientelist exchanges. This closing section will offer several thoughts on what a focus on citizen engagement in political clientelism can offer for our overall understanding of the phenomenon of political clientelism.

When political clientelism is approached through the problem of citizen engagement, several important research questions appear that could represent the basis for a future research agenda. One obvious research question is why citizens engage in clientelism in the first place. The literature on party targeting has dealt with this issue indirectly, while focusing on the typical party targets (i.e. answering the question "who do parties target?"). Looking at the problem from the point of view of citizens could contribute and possibly challenge the standard theoretical expectations related to the "poor client" theory which is a starting point of many studies of clientelist party targeting.

Largely connected to the previous question and equally relevant is the issue on whether we may speak of different characteristics of clients that are engaged in clientelism through different types of clientelist exchanges. The findings of this thesis are promising in this regard. It could be the case that we are observing different types of clients engaged in different exchanges and future research should probe this assumption empirically.

A third important question relates to citizen-initiated clientelist exchanges. Once again, it is important to pinpoint who does it and why, as well as which are the broader effects from such types of clientelist linking. Citizen-initiated clientelist exchanges may represent an important source of bottom-up pressure for clientelism and may significantly contribute to its perpetuation in a range of settings.

Finally, how do citizens evaluate political clientelism when they are engaged in it? How do citizens evaluate particularism when they arrive at a position to gain from it? For many clients across the world clientelism may represent a problem-solving strategy that cannot be easily abandoned. Understanding and explaining clients' evaluations of political clientelism should bring us closer to the strategic calculations of the understudied side in clientelist linking.

The questions that I place forward are not relevant only scientifically. The answers to the outlined problems of citizen engagement may be crucial for effective policy intervention aimed at sustaining political clientelism. They cannot be answered while focusing solely on party targeting. Rather, both the study of political clientelism and policy making aimed at prevention and suppression could benefit from an extended focus on citizen engagement in clientelist linking. Understanding political clientelism as an alternative to programmatic political mobilization certainly informs us on the choices political parties face when deciding to implement a mobilization strategy but establishes a slower pace in arriving at account on why and how citizens participate in clientelist exchanges.

Appendix A. Description of qualitative fieldwork

The qualitative fieldwork for this doctoral thesis (Chapter 3) consisted of expert information collection through semi-structured interviews. In the period June 2018-February 2019 I spent a total of nine months in the region and interviewed a total of 72 respondents (a breakdown by country is presented in Table A1). Most of my respondents were national experts who were based in the capitals of the six Western Balkan countries: Tirana, Sarajevo, Pristina, Podgorica, Skopje and Belgrade; but I also conducted interviews in other sites in the region (e.g. Banja Luka in Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as in smaller towns in different countries). During my fieldwork in Bosnia and Herzegovina I attended several pre-election rallies of different political parties in both the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Republika Srpska.

The criteria for participation in the research by the experts-respondents was a demonstrated expertise in the field of political mobilization and participation. An initial list of experts was compiled prior to arriving at the fieldwork site and the list was expanded by following recommendations from already interviewed respondents (snowball sampling). The respondents had different profiles: social scientists and researchers from academia (with disciplinary backgrounds in political science, sociology, economics and anthropology), the think-tank sector, election observers, investigative journalists, NGO activists, political parties' officials, and members of the staff of international organizations.

A typical interview lasted for 60 minutes, but the duration varied from one interview to the next. Most of the interviews are audio recorded and a smaller fraction was not due to a request from the interviewees. The interviews were conducted in the local languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian), Montenegro (Montenegrin), North Macedonia (Macedonian) and Serbia (Serbian) and in the English language in Albania and Kosovo. In conducting the interviews, I used a previously developed guide, but I also allowed my interviewees to open topics they considered important for the research project. I did not go through all the themes and sub-question in my interview guide with all of my respondents (I rather focused on the themes where the respondent held the greatest level of expertise). I opened each interview with a

description of my research project, a strategy which set the stage for subsequent discussion, upon which the interviewee was asked to outline its main expertise related to the project's focus. This introductory part of the interview provided a signal on the desired direction of discussion. The guide for semi-structured interviews used during the fieldwork is available in Table A2.

Table A1. Number of respondents per country in the qualitative fieldwork

ALBANIA	10
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	11
KOSOVO	7
MONTENEGRO	7
NORTH MACEDONIA	14
SERBIA	23
TOTAL	72

Table A2. Guide for the semi-structured interviews in the qualitative fieldwork

Theme I. Respondent profile (occupation, expertise in the field of interest)
Theme II. Strategies of political (electoral) mobilization of political parties in the country
A) Programmatic and clientelist strategies - How would you describe the political mobilization strategies of political parties in the country? (take note that we are differentiating between programmatic and clientelist strategies)
B) Specific party strategies - Please explain the level of prevalence of programmatic and clientelist strategies per each important political party in the country?
C) Clientelist targeting strategies: electoral and relational - The level of presence of different clientelist sub-strategies: vote buying, turnout buying, abstention buying, request fulfilling, rewarding loyalists?
D) Parties' decisions on targeting specific individuals and groups

- How do parties decide which citizens to target with clientelist benefits?
- How do parties decide which benefits to distribute?

E) Benefits distributed
- Which benefits are distributed in the country?

F) Enforcement of political clientelism
- How is clientelist monitoring performed in the country?

Theme III. Strategies of political participation and interest articulation of citizens in the country

A) Programmatic vs. clientelist interest articulation
- How would you describe the strategies of interest articulation of citizens in the country? (take note that we are differentiating between programmatic and clientelist strategies)

B) Strategies of engagement of clients
- Level of citizen engagement in two sub-types of political clientelism: electoral and relational clientelism?
- How does clientelist engagement look like in the country?

C) Benefits sought
- Which are the most attractive clientelist benefits in the country?

D) Clientelist services
- Which services are performed by clients in return for benefits?

E) Citizen-initiated clientelist exchanges
- Do you think that citizens initiate clientelist linking by requesting benefits from political parties? Can you offer an example?

Theme IV. The context

A) Important legislations that influences political clientelism?

B) Enforcement of legislation to combat clientelism?

C) Evidence on political clientelism in election observation missions' reports?

D) Evidence on political clientelism in the media?

E) Which are the prospects for eradicating political clientelism in the country?

Appendix B. Description of survey data

The survey data used in this doctoral thesis (Chapter 4) was gathered by the project "Closing the gap between formal and informal institutions in the Balkans" (INFORM) (Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, grant No 693537, http://formal-informal.eu/) in the period May-June 2017. A total of 6040 respondents aged above 18 who were permanent residents in the countries of the region at the time of data gathering participated in the survey. Respondents were selected through a three-stage random representative stratified sample, with the sampling universe being based on official census data and estimated population dynamics. The average response rate across the region was 53.1%. Table B1. shows the sample sizes in different countries and the response rates.

Table B1. Size of samples and response rates per country

	Sample size	Response rate
ALBANIA	919	73.4%
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	1246	41.3%
KOSOVO	930	57.1%
MONTENEGRO	803	47.9%
NORTH MACEDONIA	1015	52.1%
SERBIA	1127	46.9%
Total sample size / Average response rate	6040	53.1%

Table B2. describes the variables used in logistic regression models presented in Chapter 4, the coding choices as well as the original survey questions.

Table B2. Variables used in logistic regression models

Variable	Description	Survey questions	Coding
votebuy	Dependent variable from the VB reporting vote buying.	Have you ever been offered money or a favor in exchange for your vote in elections? YES / NO / REFUSAL	Dummy variable with 1 indicating positive and 0 negative outcome.
benefit_seeker	Dependent variable from the BS models reporting clientelist benefit-seeking.	Have you turned to a party official/influential for help? YES / NO / REFUSAL	Dummy variable with 1 indicating positive and 0 negative outcome.
party_member	Independent variable reporting party membership; a proxy for party serving.	Are you now or have you ever been a member of any political party? YES, I AM A MEMBER NOW / YES, I WAS A MEMBER BEFORE / NO / REFUSAL	Dummy variable where 1 indicates current party membership and 0 past or no party membership.
connections	Independent variable reporting having acquaintances to which the respondent may turn for help in the municipal, regional or national government institutions.	Should you or someone from your household be unable to take care of any business in the regular way, do you have anyone whom you could ask for help in: The municipal government YES / NO / REFUSAL Regional and national government YES / NO / REFUSAL	Dummy variable where 1 indicates having acquaintances in any of the municipal, regional or local government institutions, 0 if otherwise.
rural	Independent variable reporting rural or urban place of residence.	Place of permanent residence? (registered by pollster) VILLAGE / TOWN / CITY / BIG CITY [A village is a settlement with less than 10.000 inhabitants most of which work in agriculture; a town is a small urban settlement with 10.000 to 50.000 inhabitants, a city is an urban settlement with more than 50.000 up to 500.000 inhabitants and a big city an urban settlement with more than 500.000 inhabitants.]	Dummy variable where 1 indicates rural place of residence (village) and 0 urban place of residence (town, city and big city).
income	Independent variable reporting household income per individual member of household.	Think of total monthly net income of all household members together. In your judgement, approximately what is the average total monthly income of your household (from all sources)? UNDER 100 EUR / BETWEEN 101 AND 200 EUR / BETWEEN 201 AND 300 EUR / BETWEEN 301	Ten-units ordinal variable where each unit corresponds to a decile in the national income distribution. The original survey variable is firstly converted into a continuous variable with the top bound assuming the

		AND 400 EUR / BETWEEN 401 AND 500 EUR / BETWEEN 501 AND 750 EUR / BETWEEN 751 AND 1000 EUR / BETWEEN 1000 AND 1500 EUR / BETWEEN 1501 AND 2000 EUR / BETWEEN 2001 AND 3000 EUR / BETWEEN 3001 AND 5000 EUR / OVER 5000 EUR / REFUSAL	value for each individual case (example: 100 for UNDER 100 EUR category, 200 for BETWEEN 101 and 200 EUR category, etc.). These values are then divided with the number of household members (data available through the survey), arriving at a continuous household income per individual member variable. This variable is then recoded into a 10-unit variable where each category corresponds to a decile of the national distribution.
insttrust	Independent variable reporting individual trust in state institutions.	Based in your own experience, what is your trust in state institutions in our country (like courts, police, governments...)? 1 NO TRUST AT ALL / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 COMPLETE TRUST / DK / REFUSAL	Ten-units variable corresponding to the original 1-10 scale from the survey.
estatus	Independent variable reporting individual employment status.	Your economic status? FORMALLY EMPLOYED IN STATE SECTOR WITH MORE THAN 30 HOURS PER WEEK (FULL-TIME) / FORMALLY EMPLOYED IN STATE SECTOR WITH LESS THAN 30 HOURS PER WEEK (PART-TIME) / FORMALLY EMPLOYED IN PRIVATE SECTOR WITH MORE THAN 30 HOURS PER WEEK (FULL-TIME) / FORMALLY EMPLOYED IN PRIVATE SECTOR WITH LESS THAN 30 HOURS PER WEEK (PART-TIME) / SELF-EMPLOYED (WORKS IN OWN COMPANY OR SHOP) / I HAVE INFORMAL JOB THAT BRINGS REGULAR INCOME / I HAVE INFORMAL JOB THAT BRINGS INCOMES OCCASIONALLY / STUDENT /	Five-categories variable with each category corresponding to: state sector employment (full-time and part-time), private sector employment (full-time, part-time and self-employment), informal employment (regular and occasional income), inactive at the job market (students, retired and disabled persons), and the unemployed.

		PENSIONEER / DISABLED PERSON THAT CANNOT WORK / I DON'T HAVE A JOB AND DID NOT SEEK ANY IN THE LAST 30 DAYS / I DON'T HAVE A JOB AND ACTIVELY SOUGHT INFORMATION OF ADVERTS IN THE LAST 30 DAYS / REFUSAL	
female	Independent variable reporting gender.	Your sex**?** (registered by pollster) MALE / FEMALE	Dummy variable where 1 indicates female and 0 indicates male.
age	Independent variable reporting age.	Year of birth? YYYY	Continuous variable measuring age of respondents at the time of interview (converted from original survey data reporting year of birth).
education	Independent variable reporting the level of education of respondents.	Your highest level of education? UNFINISHED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL / ELEMENTARY SCHOOL / SECONDARY VOCATIONAL (CRAFTS) (3 YEARS) / SECONDARY VOCATIONAL (CRAFTS) (4 YEARS) / GRAMMER SCHOOL (GYMNASIUM) (4 YEARS) / SPECIFIC EDUCATION – USMERENO OBRAZOVANJE (IN YUGOSLAVIA 1978-1988) / HIGHER EDUCATION – VIŠA ŠKOLA (2 YEARS) / UNIVERSITY BA (3 YEARS) / UNIVERSITY BA (4 YEARS) / UNIVERSITY BA (5 YEARS) / MASTER (3+2) / MASTER (4+1) / MAGISTERIUM OR SPECIALIZATION / PhD / REFUSAL	Three-units variable with each unit corresponding to: primary education (unfinished and completed elementary school), secondary education (secondary vocational, gymnasium and specific education) and university education (higher education, University BA, Master, Magisterium and PhD).

Appendix C. Description of qualitative data from semi-structured interviews with citizens

The qualitative semi-structured interview data used in Chapter 4 of this doctoral thesis was gathered by the project "Closing the gap between formal and informal institutions in the Balkans" (INFORM) (Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, grant No 693537) in the period October 2017-June 2018. Most of the semi-structured interviews were conducted in follow-up of the INFORM survey, with selected survey respondents who agreed to be contacted for additional interviews. A total of 120 respondents were interviewed (20 per each Western Balkan country) and the sample was balanced with inclusion of respondents from different socio-economic backgrounds. A smaller fraction of interviews (90 in total, 15 per each country) were conducted with so-called "informality insiders": respondents who were identified by INFORM's researchers as credible to discuss informal practices in their societies and who were not part of the INFORM survey. In total, the doctoral thesis uses data from 210 semi-structured interviews gathered by INFORM (see Table C1).

Table C1. Number of respondents in INFORM's semi-structured interviews data base

	Survey respondents	Informality insiders	Total
ALBANIA	20	15	35
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	20	15	35
KOSOVO	20	15	35
MONTENEGRO	20	15	35
NORTH MACEDONIA	20	15	35
SERBIA	20	15	35
TOTAL	120	90	210

Topics covered with the semi-structured interview questionnaire for survey respondents: background of respondent and the family of respondent; perceptions on citizens' reliance on informal practices to deal with everyday problems in different fields (education, the job market, healthcare, social welfare, local self-government, the police, courts, political parties, social networks); personal experiences with informal practices; mechanisms of informal practices; attitudes towards informality; informality as solidarity; attitudes on what constitutes a "good" society; perceptions, attitudes and expectations in regard to the EU integration process.

Topics covered with the semi-structured interview questionnaire for informality insiders: background of respondent; details on the informal exchange in the fields where the respondent is an insider (functions of informality, main actors and roles, practices and activities of actors, functions of social networks, informal sanctions); general "rules of the game" in society (formal and informal); entering and exiting informal networks; instrumentalization of formal rules for informal sanctions; expectations on how EU integration will affect citizens' reliance on informality in the society.

Appendix D. Visuals on political clientelism

Figure D1. Citizens entering the premises of the municipality of Jagodina, Serbia, to obtain one-off aid in cash from local political leader Dragan Marković – Palma (described in section 3.2. from Chapter 3), snapshot taken from a video published on the YouTube channel of United Serbia, source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBdUqdvKqZo&t=5s.

Figure D2. Palma talks with citizens and decides on the amount of cash that each citizen receives (described in section 3.2. from Chapter 3), snapshot taken from a video published on the YouTube channel of United Serbia, source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBdUqdvKqZo&t=5s.

Figure D3. Prime minister of North Macedonia Zoran Zaev (SDSM) pledges to lobby with the private companies to provide cash "bonuses" for their employees to stimulate turnout at the 2018 referendum (described in section 3.2. from Chapter 3). Snapshot taken from a pre-referendum rally, full video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63qu5t7nDn8&feature=youtu.be.

Figure D4. "We will throw them out of their jobs!" Long-term leader of SNSD (Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and incumbent Milorad Dodik issues threats at a pre-election rally (described in section 3.2. from Chapter 3). Snapshot taken from a video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmmB0NW_JOI&feature=youtu.be.

Figure D5. A banner on the "Pronto Affair" in Kosovo (described in section 3.2. from Chapter 3) which features current President of Kosovo Hashim Thaçi (PDK). Source: Kosova Press, http://www.kosovapress.com/sq/lajme/vetevendosje-eulex-nuk-preku-majat-e-krimit-ne-kosove-u-korruptua-edhe-vete-90239/?deviceView=desktop.

Figure D6. Snapshot from an online article in the portal Exit.al on the election fraud affair in Albania from 2019 (described in section 3.2. from Chapter 3). The picture shows current prime minister of Albania Edi Rama (PS). Source: Exit.al, https://exit.al/en/2019/06/17/new-bild-wiretaps-implicate-pm-rama-in-vote-buying-and-backmail/.

Figure D7. Photos from food products allegedly distributed by political parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina (source: Bosnian National Network, https://bnn.ba/vijesti/ajnadzic-paketima-kupuje-glasove) and Serbia (source: unknown) during recent election campaigns. The photo on the right features a pate branded with the face of current Serbian president Aleksandar Vučić (SNS).

Figure D8. Ballot papers filled-in in different colors in Montenegro (described in section 3.4.1. from Chapter 3). Source: Radio Slobodna Evropa, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/glasanje-opozicija-izbori-nevazeci-listici/28896234.html.

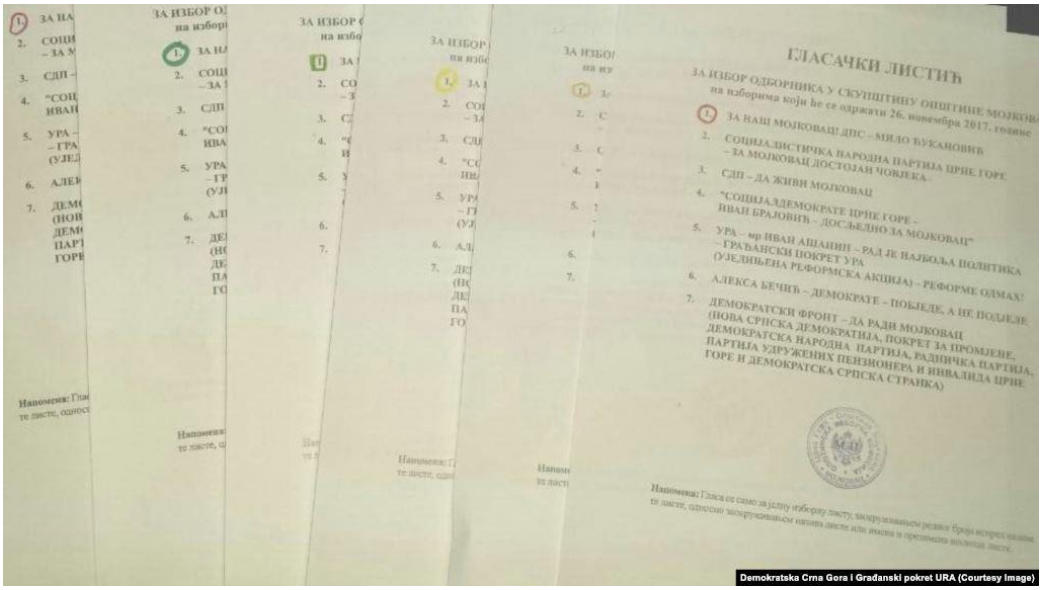


Figure D9. Snapshot from a video that appeared in the online social networks in Serbia showing vote buying on the street. The women on the right admits on camera that she received a vote buying offer from municipality employees (in the car). Source: unknown.

Figure D10. Party evidence on the political affiliations of employees of a state institution in Montenegro (described in section 3.4.1. from Chapter 3). Source: Vijesti, https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/politika/afera-zalutali-mail-demos-direktorica-centra-vodila-evidenciju-glasaca-dps-a.

IME	PREZIME	JMBG	BROJ TELEFONA	PROCJENA
Moštrokol	Milan	2505976		-
Džaković	Stevan	2801970		-
Popović	Vesna	1910960		+
Martinović	Miljana	1402965		+
Čelebić	Željko	3006967		SDP
Popović	Nevenka	2911962		+
Jakšić	Labud	108961		-
Jovićević	Božidar	2911962		- Glasa u Budvi
Ivanović	Mirjana	1209964		+
Padalica	Mirjana	1911962		+
Krivokapić	Petrica	1107961		+
Vukićević	Vjera	1504963		+
Mijanović	Mirko	306963		+
Pejović	Sanja	1403962		+
Martinović	Ivan	2906973		? razgovor
Jabučanin	Nadežda	1210955		+
Adžić	Tatjana	2511964		-
Milošević	Ljiljana	1606955		+
Živković	Tijana	2502979		
Simović	Olivera	507974		?
Vušurović	Radmila	2607964		
Kažić	Ilija	208956		+
Nikolić	Jovan	210972		+
Stanojević	Zdravko	2307967		
Popivoda	Svetozar	1503959		+
Prlja	Filip	707980		
Jablan	Biljana	409974		+
Kekić	Dejan	2708963		+
Đurović	Vlatko	2411966		-
Stanišić	Rade	212976		?
Radoičić	Ana	2806988		?
Jovićević	Snežana	250296		+

Figure D11. "Light at the end of the tunnel" banner with the photo of Aleksandar Vučić (SNS) on the left and Milorad Dodik (SNSD) on the right. The two banners appeared in the newly opened highways in Serbia and Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and represent instances of credit-talking by politicians for public infrastructural projects. The first photo is from Republika Srpska (2018, source: Klix.ba., https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/svjetlo-na-kraju-tunela-dodik-i-vucic-zavrsili-na-baneru-iznad-novog-autoputa/181002145), while the second is from Serbia (2019, photo by: Dimitrije Goll, Tanjug, source: https://www.dnevne.rs/zuta-stampa/autoput-kroz-grdelicu-svetlo-na-kraju-tunela).

Figure D12. "J: How were you appointed in your position? I: The party asks if you want to be in that position!" A snapshot from a video produced by investigative journalists on appointment of managerial board members in cantonal companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The video features a telephone interview with an appointed member of a managerial board (snapshot on the left, transcript of the full interview segment on the right). Source: Centar za istrazivacko novinarstvo Sarajevo, full video at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O7tJCu03Kzo.

"Journalist: How were you appointed in your position?
Interviewee: That was a political decision.
Journalist: A political decision?
Interviewee: Yes. After that, there was an open competition, I applied, there was an interview and then the results, you know how that works…
Journalist: But what do you mean by a 'political decision?' How does that look like in practice?
Interviewee: The party asks if you want to be in that position. [Stranka pita hoćeš ti da budeš.]"

Figure D13. A news report on vote buying in Albania for the 2013 elections (author: Besar Likmeta, Balkan Insight), source: https://balkaninsight.com/2013/06/10/vote-buying-rampant-in-albania-poll/.

NEWS

Vote-Buying 'Rampant' Ahead of Albania Poll

Besar Likmeta | Tirana | BIRN | June 10, 2013

There have been numerous reports of voters being offered money, goods and services in exchange for their votes in the June 23 parliamentary elections, a watchdog says.

"During this campaign we have noticed more money being thrown at the race by political parties to secure electoral success," said Aranita Brahaj, project coordinator for ZaLart, a crowdsourcing website which collects citizen reports about alleged electoral fraud.

"This can be seen not only in the giant posters and banners that have covered the country, but also in reports coming from poor citizens of being offered money in exchange for their vote, or young voters who are thrown parties and [offered] excursions by candidates to win their favour," she added.

According to Brahaj, attempts to buy votes from some the most vulnerable communities in Albania such as the Roma are particularly worrying.

She also cited alleged pressure by the government on public administration workers to boost attendance at campaign rallies.

"There is not only pressure on the administration to attend rallies, but also its vehicles and assets are being use to distribute propaganda materials for the campaign," Brahaj said.

Albania has a long history of contested polls that do not meet international standards. The last general elections in 2009 sparked a political crisis between the ruling Democrats and opposition Socialists which is still reverberating.

The June 23 elections are seen as litmus test for Tirana's political elite to advance the country's battered EU integration goals.

Figure D14. Former prime minister (2006-2016) of Macedonia Nikola Gruevski (VMRO-DPMNE) in court session for the case "Titanik." Grievski and his closest associates from the party are charged with various election infringements, including abuse of public funds for electoral purposes and violation of voting rights (described in section 3.2. from Chapter 3). Photo by: M. Zlatevska, SAKAM DA KAZAM, source: https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/se-rasipaa-mikrofonite-vo-noviot-krivichen-sud-sudeneto-za-titanik-prodolzhi-vo-starata-zgrada/.)

Figure D15. A party canvassing activity conducted in public space by the SNS in Serbia, similar as the one witnessed during the fieldwork by the author (see Section 3.1. from Chapter 3). Source: Južne Vesti, https://www.juznevesti.com/Politika/Naprednjaci-opstinski-casopis-delili-kao-svoj-propaganda-o-trosku-svih-gradjana.sr.html, snapshot taken from the Facebook page of SNS Niš.

Figure D16. "Did you ~~hug~~ employ your child today?" A satirical take on the citizens' recourse to connections to get employment in North Macedonia. Found on the online social networks, source: unknown.

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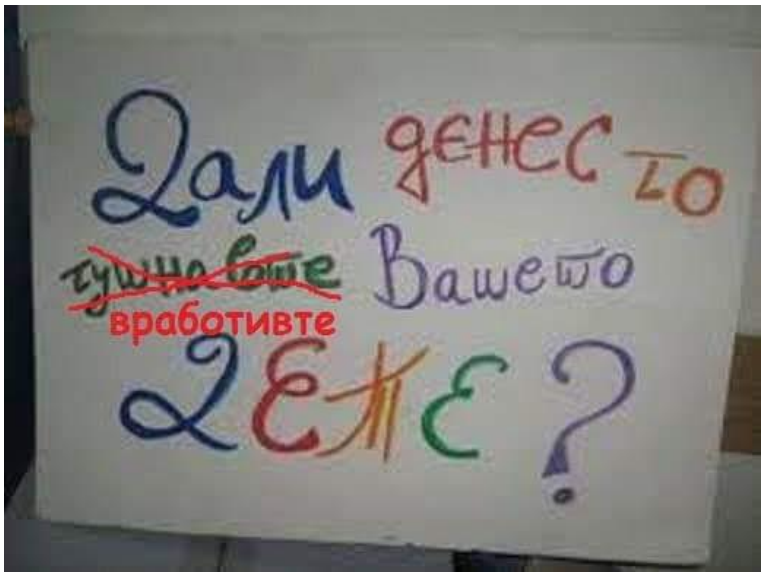

Figure D17. Palma dances the traditional Serbian dance "kolo" with Serbian tourists at the seacoast in Paralia, Greece. The administration of Jagodina annually organizes payed vacations in Paralia for selected citizens (see: Telegraf: https://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/politika/3094282-palma-vodi-700-ljudi-u-paraliju-medju-njima-najvise-poljoprivrednika). Snapshots taken from video by Pink.rs, source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRSkIT3CLtY).

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