

Patronage Politics and Contentious Collective Action: A Recursive Relationship

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ABSTRACT

Based on ethnographic reanalysis and on current qualitative research on poor people's politics, this article argues that routine patronage politics and nonroutine collective action should be examined not as opposite and conflicting political phenomena but as dynamic processes that often establish recursive relationships. Through a series of case studies conducted in contemporary Argentina, this article examines four instances in which patronage and collective action intersect and interact: network breakdown, patron's certification, clandestine support, and reaction to threat. These four scenarios demonstrate that more than two opposing spheres of action or two different forms of sociability, patronage, and contentious politics can be mutually imbricated. Either when it malfunctions or when it thrives, clientelism may lie at the root of collective action.

Political clientelism has been traditionally understood as separate from and antagonistic to most forms of collective action. Patronage politics, most of the scholarship on the subject agrees, inhibits collective organization and discourages popular contention.¹ The vertical and asymmetrical relationships that define clientelist arrangements have been conceptualized as the exact opposite of the horizontal ties that are understood to be the necessary precondition of either episodic or more sustained forms of collective action (i.e., social movements). Based on ethnographic reanalysis and on current qualitative research on poor people's politics in Argentina, this article argues that routine patronage politics and nonroutine collective action should be examined not as opposite and conflicting political phenomena but as dynamic processes that often establish recursive relationships.²

Patronage and contentious collective action are here understood not as different networks but as political phenomena that, in many cases, interface. We here challenge the idea of patronage and contentious action as contradictory processes and examine them as distinct, but sometimes overlapping, strategies for solving pressing survival problems

and addressing grievances. Attention to the continuities and interpenetrations between routine and nonroutine problem-solving strategies holds the promise of a broader understanding of popular politics in Latin America and elsewhere.

This article begins with a brief review of the literature on political clientelism. This scholarship expands more than five decades, and has witnessed a recent revival with political studies' increasing focus on "informal institutions" (Helmke and Levitsky 2004). We also substantiate our assertion regarding the literature's general agreement on patronage's function as a social phenomenon that hinders joint forms of claimsmaking.

Through a series of case studies culled from ethnographic reanalysis of previous fieldwork in different states of Argentina, and from current research on the clandestine dimension of politics, the article explores four different cases in which patronage and collective action intersect and interact. It is important to point out that three of the four cases could be considered defining events in the cycle of protest that transformed Argentina during the 1990s and early 2000s.

The first case, well studied in the literature, illustrates a scenario of network breakdown. The three other cases, underexamined in current scholarship, are variations of what we call relational support. These are patron's certification, clandestine support, and reaction to threat. These four instances show that more than two opposite spheres of action or two different forms of sociability, patronage, and contentious politics can be mutually imbricated. Either when it malfunctions or when it thrives, clientelism, we show by way of example, may lie at the root of collective action—an embeddedness that studies of repertoires of contention have indeed anticipated but have failed to explore in detail (Tilly 1986, 1995, 2006).

Finally, the article elaborates on the analytical dimensions that emerge from this study. The examples demonstrate that inattention to the recursive relationship between patronage and contention risks missing much of the dynamics of both routine and extraordinary forms of popular politics. An empirical focus on the area of their mutual imbrication should afford a better view of two processes that, having been identified as crucial in many a form of contentious politics, play a key role in the episodes reconstructed here. These two processes are brokerage—here understood simply as "the forging of social connections between previously unlinked persons or sites" (Burt 2005)—and certification—here understood as "the validation of actors, their performances, and their claims by external authorities" (McAdam et al. 2001; see also Tarrow and Tilly 2006; McAdam et al. 2008).

The conclusions also consider the limitations of the analysis and offer suggestions for future research. Because the four scenarios do not

exhaust the range of possible relationships between both patronage and protest, further research should explore the area of intersection not simply at the point of origin of collective action but also during the course of contention. Considering that the ensuing analysis focuses on clientelist networks that resemble each other in many important dimensions (sources and types of goods distributed, forms of monitoring followers, and so on), further research should scrutinize the differential impact that variations in the form of clientelism have on the character of collective action. Although our analysis shows different intersections between clientelism and collective action, we tend to emphasize how the former influences the latter. Future analyses should also examine how collective action affects the structure of clientelist networks or the actions of political brokers and patrons.

THE DOUBLE LIFE OF CLIENTELISM

Understood as the distribution (or promise) of resources by political officeholders or political candidates in exchange for political support, clientelism has exhibited, to cite Robert Merton's still insightful analysis of political machines in the United States, "a notable vitality" in many parts of the modern world (1949, 71). In the words of the authors of the most recent survey on this resilient sociopolitical phenomenon, clientelism is a particular form of party-voter linkage; it is a "transaction, the direct exchange of a citizen's vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods, and services" (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, 2). According to these authors, patronage-based voter-party linkages are still operating (and sometimes expanding) not only in the new democracies of Latin America, postcommunist Europe, South and Southeast Asia, and parts of Africa, but also—and contrary to the predictions of those who saw clientelism as a "holdover from preindustrial patterns that would gradually disappear in the modernizing West" (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, 3)—in many industrial democracies, such as Italy, Austria, and Japan.³

It is common knowledge that clientelist exchanges concatenate into pyramidal networks constituted by asymmetrical, reciprocal, and face-to-face relationships. The structure of what David Knoke (1990) calls "domination networks" and the key actors within them (patrons, brokers, and clients) are well-studied phenomena of popular political life in both urban and rural settings (for examples of classic works see Scott 1977; Scott and Kerkvliet 1977; for examples of recent work see Lazar 2008; Auyero 2007; Schedler 2004; Holzner 2004, 2007).

One general agreement in the extensive literature on the subject is that patron-broker-client relationships are as far from any kind of Simmelian sociability ("the purest, most transparent, most engaging kind of

interaction—that among equals” [Simmel 1971, 133]) as from a Roman *societas leonina* (a partnership in which all the benefits go to one side). The vast literature concurs in that clientelist relations are a complex cocktail of the four different forms of social interaction identified by Simmel in his classic *On Individuality and Social Forms*: exchange, conflict, domination, and prostitution. Clientelist relations are seen as hierarchical arrangements, as bonds of dependence and control, based on power differences and on inequality. Being highly selective, particularistic, and diffuse, they are “characterized by the simultaneous exchange of two different types of resources and services: instrumental (e.g., economic and political) and sociational or expressive (e.g., promises of loyalty and solidarity)” (Roniger 1990, 3; representatives of the extensive literature include Silverman 1965; Boissevain 1977; Guterbock 1980; Bodeman 1988; Gay 1998).

With their particularized favors, patrons and brokers offer alternative channels for “getting things done” while avoiding bureaucratic indifference. As Robert Gay (1990, 1994) and Gerrit Burgwald (1996) convincingly show in their studies of two *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro and a squatter settlement in Quito, clientelist mediation is an effective way of obtaining many urban services otherwise unavailable for those without contacts. With its informal rules of promotion and reward (also in an informal party structure) and its low-cost access to state jobs, the clientelist network also offers one of the few remaining channels of upward social mobility. In a context of dwindling economic opportunities, sustained and loyal engagement in the party machinery can assure participants access to jobs and influence in the distribution of public resources.

Clientelism is usually carried out through multifaceted and enduring webs of reciprocal exchange. As Kitschelt and Wilkinson state:

In many systems characterized by relatively high levels of poverty—such as Thailand, India, Pakistan, or Zambia—patrons directly purchase clients’ votes in exchange for money, liquor, clothes, food, or other immediately consumable goods. . . . Much more frequent than single-shot transactions of this nature, however, are webs of exchange, obligation, and reciprocity sustained over a longer period, in which patrons provide private goods or club goods to their clients. (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007, 19)

Yet patronage politics is not solely about the distribution of material resources in exchange for political support. A line of research inspired by the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu has noted that clientelism not only lives a life in the objectivity of network exchange, it lives a second, subjective life in the dispositions it inculcates in some of its actors—dispositions that ensure the reproduction of this arrangement

(Rutten 2007; Auyero 2000, 2007). This research notes that the automatic appearance of the exchange of “support for favors” that is often noted in the literature should not be interpreted in mechanistic terms but as the result of the habituation it generates in beneficiaries or clients.

This body of research shows that the everyday workings of clientelist problem-solving networks produce a set of dispositions among those who receive the daily favors from patrons and brokers. We emphasize the regular, routine operation of this network to highlight that this relationship transcends singular acts of exchange. In her analysis of the emergence of activism among Filipino workers, Rutten (2007) labels this dispositional tool kit “clientelist habitus.” These schemes of perception, evaluation, and action are, in turn, reconfirmed by the symbolic actions that patrons and brokers routinely enact in their public speeches (emphasizing the “love” they feel for their followers and their “service to the people”) and in their personalized ways of giving (stressing their particular efforts to obtain the goods and thus creating the appearance that were they not there, the benefits would not be delivered).⁴

Clientelist politics, therefore, is not limited to material problem solving. The “way of giving” that brokers and patrons enact—in which the patron or the broker (be it a Chicago precinct captain, a Mexican *cacique*, an Argentine *puntero*, or a Brazilian *cabó eleitoral*) portrays himself or herself as “just one of us, who understands what it’s all about” (Merton 1949, 75)—is a central dimension in the workings and persistence of patronage. The “humanizing and personalizing manner of assistance to those in need,” as Merton famously put it, is therefore a constitutive element in the functioning and durability of clientelism.

CONTENTIOUS COLLECTIVE ACTION

For the purpose of analyzing the recursive relationship between patronage and contentious politics, the approach to the latter in this study blends three dimensions: contention, collective action, and politics. Following Tilly and Tarrow (2006), we understand contention as involving “making claims that bear on someone else’s interests,” collective action as denoting the “coordinating efforts on behalf of shared interests and programs,” and politics as a realm of interaction in which at least one of the actors is an agent of the government.⁵ Therefore political contention is defined as the making of public and collective claims in which “at least one of the parties is already a political actor, and a government is at least a party to the claims in the sense that successful pressing of the claims will involve government agents as monitors, regulators, guarantors, or implementers” (Tilly 2006, 20). These claims, following this definition, need to be consequential—meaning that, if realized, they will affect the interests of the object of the claims (Tilly 2006; Tilly and Tarrow 2006).

Among the most established findings in social movement and collective action research are the notions that “prior social ties operate as a basis for movement recruitment and that established social settings are the locus of movement emergence” (Diani and McAdam 2003, 7). Existing scholarship agrees on the key role played by indigenous organizations or associational networks in the emergence of a movement (McAdam 1982; Morris 1984; Osa 1997, 2003; McAdam et al. 2007).

Far from being a realm of possible cooperation, patronage networks are, on the contrary, considered a (de)mobilizing structure (Rock 1972, 1975; O’Donnell 1992; Holzner 2007). Conceptualized as what Julian Pitt-Rivers (1954, 140) famously called “a lopsided friendship,” patron-client bonds are seen as the exact opposite of the horizontal networks of civic engagement that are said to foster a truly civic community and that, in turn, “make democracy work” (Putnam et al. 1993) and social movement activity possible. Consequently—and most important for the subject of this study—embeddedness in clientelist relationships is understood as a suppressor of participation in the more horizontal relational contexts that have been found “to be conducive to various forms of collective engagement” (Diani and McAdam 2003, 2; see also Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Oliver 1984; McAdam and Fernández 1990; Taylor and Whittier 1995; Passy 2003; Mische 2003).

Research conducted in urban poverty enclaves (shantytowns, *favelas*, squatter settlements, *colonias*, and so on) and on poor people’s movements in Latin America shows that patronage and collective mobilization can indeed coexist in the same geographical place, usually in a conflictive way (Gay 1990; Burgwald 1996; Lazar 2008). In their chronicle of the emergence and development of the *piquetero* movement in Argentina (the social movement that grouped and mobilized the unemployed and that used road blockades, *piquetes*, as its main tactic), Svampa and Pereyra (2003, 93), for example, assert that picketers’ organizations represent a “first concrete *challenge* against *punteros* [political brokers]” of the Peronist Party clientelist machine (our emphasis). Another recent example is found in the work of Claudio Holzner. Writing about the “stubborn resilience of clientelist organizations and practices in Mexico despite a strengthening civil society and growing electoral competition at all levels” (2004, 77), he notes the emergence of “rival” forms of political organization—one that is hierarchical and clientelist and another that emphasizes democratic participation, political autonomy and “*actively resists* political clientelism” (77, our emphasis).

Although they point to the complexity of poor people’s politics and the diversity of problem-solving strategies used by the destitute, all these studies depict clientelist and mobilizing networks as two different and opposing fields of political action, two spheres of social interaction and exchange that seldom overlap and that usually “rival,” “resist,” or

“challenge” each other.⁶ The dominance of patronage politics among the poor, the extant research agrees, frustrates collective claimsmaking and also isolates and atomizes citizens, thereby preventing the organizational and relational work that is the basis of collective action.

ILLUSTRATIVE CASES

Although most of the scholarship examines patronage politics as antagonistic to collective contentious action, the literature also agrees that in one particular case, that of the breakdown of clientelist arrangements, protest can actually emerge from patronage, and it usually does so in explosive ways. When a well-oiled system of patron-client relationships, crucial for the survival of the local population, fails to deliver or suddenly collapses, “reciprocity [can] change to rivalry” (Lemarchand 1981, 10).

Case 1: Network Breakdown

Scholars are familiar with these situations of mass mobilization originating in the abrupt malfunctioning of routine social and political relations. Political scientist James Scott (1977) examined one of its iterations when writing about the collective revolts caused by the swift changes in the “balance of reciprocity” between landlords and tenants (a balance that, as Scott examined in detail, was the normative foundation of clientelist networks in agrarian societies). Historian E. P. Thompson (1993) uncovered an analogous case when dissecting the eighteenth-century English food riots as manifestations of the rupture in the “moral economy of the poor”—the “consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community” (Thompson 1993, 188). An affront to these moral assumptions—caused by an unexpected alteration in the “particular equilibrium between paternalist authority and the crowd” (1993, 249)—was, in Thompson’s view, “the usual occasion for direct action.”

More recently, sociologist Magdalena Tosoni (2007) dissected another occurrence when focusing on contemporary urban Mexico. She describes the process by which residents of *colonia* San Lázaro (a working-class neighborhood in Mexico City) campaigned, supported, and voted for a candidate who had promised to help solve a land ownership problem in the district. On taking office, the broker “forgot” about his clients and failed to deliver what had been agreed. As a result, the multitude mobilized and staged a massive road blockade and protest.

Let us illustrate this first case of recursive relationship between patronage and protest, what we call the breakdown scenario, by revisiting the case of the *Santiagazo*, a massive protest whose roots lie at the abrupt “disruption of quotidian” clientelist relationships (Snow et al. 1998).⁷

On December 16, 1993, the city of Santiago del Estero, Argentina, witnessed what the journalist Nathaniel Nash of the *New York Times* (1993) called “the worst social upheaval in years.” Thousands of public servants and city residents, demanding their unpaid salaries and pensions (three months in arrears), invaded, looted, and burned three public buildings (the government house, the courthouse, and the legislature) and the private residences of nearly a dozen local officials and politicians. Described by the main Argentine newspapers as “hungry and angry people,” these disgruntled citizens voiced (and eagerly acted out) their discontent with widespread government corruption. This episode was a unique event in modern Argentina: an uprising that converged on the residences of wrongdoers and the symbols of public power but did not cause human fatalities. A complete account of the events is beyond the scope of this paper; let us concentrate on what they can tell us about the mutual imbrication between clientelist networks and popular contention.⁸

In 1993, Juana was an organizer at a Catholic base community, a lay unit of a local parish that provides religious and social support. She took part in the massive demonstration on December 16, heading home as police reaction escalated early in the morning. She watched the burning and sacking of the public buildings and politicians’ homes on television, recalling that “we watched with the people from my community, with great excitement.” It is worth quoting Juana’s recollections of the months before the riot, because they synthesize many crucial elements of the events preceding the “explosion.” She describes the effects of the collapse of the local patronage system based on public employment (46 percent of wage earners in the province are public employees), a breakdown that had its roots in structural adjustment policies then being implemented throughout Argentina.

Well, let me tell you that before the December 16 thing happened, the public workers, all those workers who depend on the province government, hadn’t been able to receive their salaries. It had been at least three months without payment of wages. People did not have money for medicines or food. The stores did not let you buy on credit anymore. All the mutual aid societies were closed. It was a terrible chaos. I had a business at home. . . . I was an independent worker, but my husband depended on the provincial government. In a certain way, the whole situation affected me, too, because sales went down and I went broke. (Quoted in Auyero 2003, 118).

On December 16, 1993, high school and university students, retired elderly people, informal sector workers, and unemployed youth joined municipal and provincial government workers in the rally in front of the Government House of Santiago del Estero. Angry protesters threw

bricks, sticks, bottles, and flat paving stones at the building while trying to enter it.

The police fired tear gas and rubber bullets at the crowd, which then backed off toward the middle of Santiago's main square. Soon the police seemed to have run out of ammunition and abandoned the scene. (We found out through interviews with members of the police force that they also had not been paid and had accumulated three months' wages in arrears, like the rest of the public employees of a bankrupt administration.)

At that point, the final sacking of the Government House began. Forty minutes later, the courthouse, just two blocks away, became the target of hundreds of protesters. They broke its windows and entered the building, where they took computers, typewriters, and court case files, and burned desks and chairs. The police report on the "riot" reads: "[Around 1 P.M., a] group arrived at the Congress and, making use of the same methods used in the previous two buildings, they entered, destroyed and burned different pieces of furniture and documentation, and looted different objects. . . ." Máximo, a participant, describes what he calls "the procession" through downtown on the day of the "explosion."

When we were in the Government House, the public employees were clapping at the fire. It seemed natural to move on to the Congress. And while we were going there, the feeling was that it had to be the same. It was at the Congress where the most anger had accumulated because legislators voted in favor of the *Ley Omnibus*. . . . So it seemed natural to them that, having already settled the differences with the Government House and the Courthouse, the Congress was next.⁹

After occupying the legislature, "a very dynamic group begins to move around by mopeds and bicycles," recounts Esteban, another protester. This "very dynamic group" arrived at a politician's home and was joined by neighbors in the burning and sacking. As the police report continues, "[After attacking the Congress] groups, in estimated numbers of four to five hundred people, moved around the streets of the city, and later on they entered the private residences of officials and ex-officials. . . . Groups . . . were moving in a state of excitation through different parts of the city."

Many a local official and some news accounts described, with surprise, the "precision" with which the crowd moved from one home to another. This precision (which officials and many journalists used as evidence of the presence of activists or "subversive agitators") does illustrate the active presence of clientelist arrangements in the itinerary of the crowd. After all, the route the protesters followed involved the homes of the political bosses, the best-known political patrons, and

homes that many protesters used to visit quite frequently. In a single comment, Carlos, an active participant in the mass mobilization, encapsulates the continuities between personalized political networks and contention.

Here, in Santiago, there are gangs that serve many, many purposes. These gangs are formed by marginal youngsters. The Radical Party or the Peronist Party invites these youth for a barbecue, taking them for party rallies in exchange for food or money. . . . These youngsters know every single mechanism to get what they want from politicians, ministers, or members of the parliament. They are not Peronists or Radicals, they just go with everybody. They know the políticos' houses. They've been there, because the corrupt politician invites them to their residence, and they begin to figure out how politics work. These are the youngsters who attacked the políticos' houses on December 16. They knew perfectly where they lived.

Among the homes attacked was that of Carlos and Nina Juárez. The couple presided over one of the most resilient patronage-based political machines in the country. From the late 1940s until the early 2000s, the *Juarismo* ruled the province, formally or informally. Local sociologists refer to the *modelo juarista* (in reference to Carlos Juárez, a five-time governor) as a system of power based on the distribution of jobs in the public sector, public housing, and other welfare benefits, carried out through well-established clientelist networks (Tasso 1999). Widespread public nepotism and patronage politics were, until recently, the prevailing ways of conducting government affairs in Santiago. In a context in which politics took such a personalized character, it should not come as a surprise that collective insurgency took the form it did on December 16, 1993. The *Santiagazo* shows how clientelism can operate in a twofold way, one in habitual networks of reciprocity, another in the direct actions taken by the crowd when the former collapsed.

Case 2: Relational Support

Most of the scholarship on patronage networks points to their potential to malfunction as a generator of sudden grievances, which, in turn, creates the opportunity for collective action.¹⁰ Only recently have well-functioning clientelist networks been analyzed as key relational supports of collective action. In these studies, vertical networks do not need to break down in order for collective action to emerge; some of their key actors (patrons, brokers, or clients) may, for a variety of reasons (ranging from threats to existing arrangements to attempts at improving their position in the political field), become organizers of collective (and in some cases violent) action. Before revisiting three cases that serve as varying illustrations of what we call the relational support scenario, let us briefly

review some of the available empirical evidence on this alternative case of a recursive relationship between contention and clientelism.

Historical accounts of “race riots” in the United States point to the participation of members of established political parties or public officials in the support and perpetration of violent actions. Janet Abu-Lughod (2007), for example, documents the attacks committed by the Ragen’s Colts, young party hacks who were financially supported by Frank Ragen, a well-known Democratic commissioner in Cook County, on African Americans during the 1919 riots in Chicago. Machine politics, Abu-Lughod shows, might act as a key support of violent contentious politics.

That disputes between operating clientelist networks can form the basis of violent contention should hardly come as a surprise to a student of civil wars. Writing about the mass killings that took place in Indonesia in 1965 and 1966, Stathis Kalyvas asserts that although they were “ostensibly articulated around the communism/anticommunism cleavage. . . . [A] sustained examination of regional massacres unearthed all kinds of local conflicts. . . . [I]n Bali they were associated with long-standing rivalries between patronage groups” (2003, 478).

Patronage networks have also been identified as the crucial relational support of collective violence in Colombia. As Steffen Schmidt argues (1974, 109): “Colombia’s political violence . . . is in great part due to the existence of widespread, competitive, aggressive, patron-client-based politics.” In her detailed study of *la Violencia*, the wave of political violence that killed two hundred thousand people in Colombia in the 1940s and 1950s, historian Mary Roldán makes a similar point, arguing that in Antioquía, “partisan conflict provided the initial catalyst to violence” (2002, 22). Closer in time, historian Laurie Gunst (1995) and sociologist Orlando Patterson (2001) uncover relationships between what the latter calls garrison constituency (a local version of a patronage network) and gang violence during electoral times in Jamaica. The “mafia-style links” (Gunst 1995, 83) between politicians and gangs, “initially formed for political purposes, now also serve the drug trade. During the ‘80s, many of these gangs migrated to America, where they became known as posses and soon forged a reputation for violence” (Patterson 2001, 1). The origins of Jamaican drug gangs in New York can be found, Gunst argues, in the posses, which were political groups armed by party leaders linked to Jamaican prime ministers Edward Seaga or Michael Manley.

The relationship between patronage and contention need not take a violent form. In his study of environmental protest in eight communities in southern Japan, Broadbent (1998, 2003) notes the presence of what he calls breakaway bosses (local leaders who join protesters). These bosses are indicative, in Broadbent’s analysis, of the existing ver-

tical ties between citizens and elites that shape local political opportunities. Local political bosses, he writes, “formed a vertical structure of social control [that] penetrated into the community through the political party, government, and big business” (2003, 219–20).

Much like a precinct captain in the Chicago political machines analyzed by Guterbock (1980) or a *cabo eleitoral* in a Brazilian favela (Gay 1990), these local bosses build their local power through patronage; that is, “presenting generous contributions at funerals and weddings, holding sake parties to build camaraderie, distributing small bribes at election time, finding jobs and even marriage partners for your children” (Broadbent 2003, 222). Patronage networks pose “a formidable barrier to mobilization in [the] village context” (2003, 223) unless a breakaway boss breaks free: “once a traditional boss broke from his bosses in favour of resistance, he was able to carry much of his subordinate networks ‘automatically’ (structurally) into the protest movement” (221).

The available evidence focusing on what we call the support scenario is limited and scattered for a reason. This form of recursive relationship between patronage and collective action has not been examined in depth, either theoretically or empirically. In what follows we reconstruct three different iterations of mutual imbrication. As will become clear, these cases show that there is no need of a collapse or interruption in the flow of clientelist exchanges for contention to occur. Well-functioning patronage networks can be purposively activated to conduct politics by other collective (and sometimes violent) means.

Case 2: Patron’s Certification

Patronage networks might act as the mobilizing structures needed to generate collective action; instead of trying to suppress or restrain contention, patrons and brokers might validate mass uprising. The *pueblada* in the Argentine area of Patagonia is an example of this dynamic process.¹¹

Between June 20 and 26, 1996, thousands of residents of Cutral-co and Plaza Huinul, two oil towns in the southern province of Neuquén, blocked all the access roads to the area, effectively halting the movement of people and goods for seven days and six nights. The *piqueteros* demanded “genuine sources of employment,” rejected the intervention of their elected representatives and other local politicians (accusing them of dishonesty and of conducting “obscure dealings”), and called for the physical presence of the governor so as to discuss their claims directly with him. The sheer number of protesters, 20,000, according to most sources, intimidated the troops of the Gendarmería Nacional, who had been sent by the federal government to “clear” the national road. On June 26, the governor of Neuquén acceded to most

of their demands in a written agreement he signed with a representative of the newly formed picketers' commission. *La pueblada*, as this episode came to be known, was another extraordinary event in contemporary democratic Argentina: it is not usual to see troops retreating in defeat, authorities negotiating with leaders elected in the midst of collective action, governors conceding popular demands, and uprisings involving entire towns. The chain of events leading to this episode of collective action shows how patronage networks created the conditions for a massive uprising.

Early in the day on June 20, 1996, one of the main radio stations of Cutral-co, Radio Victoria, aired the bad news: the provincial government had called off a deal with Agrium, a Canadian company, to build a fertilizer plant in the region. The radio station then "open[ed] its microphones to listen to the people's reaction. . . . A neighbor called saying that the people should show its discontent . . . [another one] said that we should get together in the road," recalls Mario Fernández, director and owner of the radio station (quoted in Sánchez 1997, 9). All the subjects interviewed for this study mentioned those radio messages as central in their recollections, not only in terms of how the radio reporters and commentators called on people but also how the local radio framed the cancellation of the fertilizer plant project.

On Radio Victoria, the city's former mayor, Adolfo Grittini, and his political ally, Fernández, depicted the cancellation of the deal with Agrium as a "final blow to both communities," as the "last hope gone," and as an "utterly arbitrary decision of the provincial government." Daniel, a local resident, remembers, "there was a lot of anger . . . the radio said that we should go out and demonstrate, they were saying that it was the time to be courageous." "I learned about the blockade on the radio . . . they were talking about the social situation," said Zulma, another local resident. Daniel, Zulma, and the rest point to the same framing articulator and its similar functions: the radio both made sense of the "social situation" and persuaded people to take to the streets.¹²

While the radio broadcast "the ire that we felt," as Daniel explains, and called people to rally at the Torre Uno (the site that memorializes the discovery of oil in the region), taxis brought people there free of charge. Was this a sudden eruption of indignation? Were radio reporters and taxi drivers merely the first to spontaneously react? Hardly so. Factionalism in the governing party, the Movimiento Popular Neuquino (MPN), and particularly Grittini's actions, lay at the root of both the "injustice framing" and the mobilization of resources.¹³

In the words of the current mayor, Daniel Martinasso, "Grittini backed the protest during the first couple of days. How? Well, in the first place, [by] buying a couple of local radio stations so that they call[ed] people to the route" (Auyero 2003, 37). Furthermore, although there is

no conclusive evidence, many sources (journalists, politicians, and protesters) indicated that Grittini also sent the trucks that brought hundreds of tires to the different pickets and some of the bulldozers to block the traffic. Many of the informants also mentioned Grittini as the source behind the free distribution of food, gasoline, firewood, and cigarettes at the barricades ("We even got diapers for the babies!" many women protesters recalled). Some even said that Grittini paid 50 pesos per night to hundreds of young picketers, and that his associates provided them with wine and drugs. Excerpts from interviews with former picketers point to the crucial role played by party politics in the origins of this contentious episode (Auyero 2003, 37).

I: At the first picket, the one on the curve before the Torre Uno, we were around 30 persons. Mattresses, food, coffee, and milk were brought to us ...

Q: And who brought you all these things?

I: Well, maybe . . . politics had something to do with it ...

Q: Tell me a little bit about the first organization. Who decided where to place a barricade?

I: I think that everything was coming from the top; it was all prepared. Because it was a big coincidence that everything took place around the Torre Uno. But I have no idea who organized it or who spread the first warning. But we saw (especially the first couple of days) a lot of politicians. . . . Even so, I stayed there out of curiosity.

Q: So you, the picketers, were not the ones who decided to blockade the road. . . .

I: No, no, no. . . . This was encouraged by one of the factions of the MPN. There was a radio station that promoted the whole thing. It was like calling for a rally. . . .

On June 26, four hundred troops of the Gendarmería Nacional received the order to clear the roads. Facing 20,000 protesters, however, the federal judge accompanying the troops decided that she was not competent to deal with the situation and ordered the retreat of the repressive forces. The governor of the province, Felipe Sapag, therefore agreed to most of the demands. This mobilization of resources and framing process did not, however, operate in a vacuum, but via well-established patronage networks through which the distribution of resources and the spread of information took place.

Taken together, the mobilization and the framing point to a process of certification carried out by known political patrons. Resource mobilization, framing, and certification took shape against background conditions that were ripe for a large-scale protest; namely, the skyrocketing of unemployment in the area and the ensuing rapid process of collective in-miseration (see Auyero 2003; Costallat 1999; Favaro et al. 1997;

Favaro and Bucciarelli 1994). The uprising of Cutral-Co shows patronage networks fostering the organization of collective action. Patronage here operated as a mobilizing structure.

Case 3: Clandestine Support

The third reanalysis points to a variation of the support provided by existing patronage networks for contentious politics. In this case, the relationship between clientelist arrangements and mass action did not take the open, public form it did in Cutral-co but a more clandestine, hidden one.¹⁴

Nearly 300 stores were attacked or looted in 11 Argentine provinces during the week of December 14–21, 2001. Approximately 20 people died, all of them under 35 years old. They were killed either by the police or by the private bullets of store owners. Hundreds were seriously injured and thousands arrested. The provinces of Entre Rios and Mendoza were the first to witness hundreds of persons blockading roads and gathering in front of supermarkets demanding food and, when refused, entering the stores and taking away the merchandise. Soon the wave extended to the provinces of Santa Fe, Corrientes, Córdoba, Neuquén, Tucumán, Santiago del Estero, Chubut, Rio Negro, and Buenos Aires. On the basis of a catalog of 289 episodes culled from newspaper accounts, we found that the following factors characterized these incidents:

- Large, chain supermarkets received ample police protection. This protection generally deterred looting.
- In areas with small, local markets, police rarely showed up. These markets suffered the bulk of the looting.
- Party brokers tended to be present at small market lootings when there were no police around. When big, chain supermarkets were looted and brokers were not present, the chances of police being present were statistically high. And when small, local markets were looted and brokers were present, the chances of police being present were very low. When the site was a small, local market, we saw much more broker activity and a much lower likelihood of police presence.

In June 2005, one of the authors had an extensive conversation with Luis D'Elia, leader of the grassroots organization *Federación de Tierra y Vivienda*, about these episodes.¹⁵ He lives in La Matanza, one of the most populous and poorest districts in metropolitan Buenos Aires, close to the crossroads of Crovara and Cristianía (“C and C”), a commercial area that was devastated during the food lootings of December 2001.

During 2000 and 2001, D'Elia's organization coordinated some of the largest and longest road blockades in the protests against the De la Rúa administration (1999–2001). This is what he had to say about the episodes. Activists from the Peronist Party (the largest political party in Argentina, the largest patronage-based party, and the opposition party at that time)

did two sorts of things: some of them directed the looting. For lootings to occur there has to be a liberated territory. So they moved the police away. And then they recruited people saying that they were going to loot. They did this from the *unidades básicas* [grass-roots offices of the Peronist Party]. The guys from the *unidades básicas* populated the area of Crovara and Cristianía with their own people, as if they had been recruited for such a day. They moved the police away; the police usually have their patrols stationed here. That day, the police disappeared. And, at a certain time, they hurled the people against the stores.

"We invite you to destroy the Kin supermarket this coming Wednesday at 11:30 A.M., the Valencia supermarket at 1:30 P.M., and the Chivo supermarket at 5 P.M." This and similar flyers circulated throughout poor neighborhoods in Moreno, a district in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, inviting residents to join the crowds that looted several dozen supermarkets and grocery stores on December 18 and 19, 2001. Investigative journalists' reports agree that the flyers were distributed by activists of the Peronist Party (see, e.g., Young 2002). D'Elia's testimony and the flyers betray the (in this case, hidden) connection between patronage networks and extraordinary forms of collective action.

The district of Moreno is located in the western part of the *Conurbano Bonaerense* (Greater Buenos Aires), 37 kilometers from the city of Buenos Aires. Close to a third of its 380,000 inhabitants have "unsatisfied basic needs" (i.e., they are poor) (Alsina and Catenazzi 2002). La Matanza borders the federal capital on the southwest; half of its 1,255,288 inhabitants live below the poverty line.¹⁶ There are 106 shantytowns in its territory (Torresi 2005). Both La Matanza and Moreno share the plight that has affected the whole region since the early 1990s: skyrocketing poverty due to hyperunemployment. In May 1997, 24.8 percent of households in the Buenos Aires metropolitan area (and 32.7 percent of the population) were living below the poverty line. By May 2003, these figures had almost doubled: 50.5 percent of the households (and 61.3 percent of the population) were in that condition (INDEC 2003).

The end of 2001 found the inhabitants of Moreno and La Matanza, like those of many other poor areas throughout the country, struggling to make ends meet, amid record high levels of unemployment and shrinking state assistance. Food assistance and other welfare programs

(most notably unemployment subsidies) had been steadily declining with the deepening of the economic recession during 2001. Karina, a resident of one of the most destitute enclaves in Moreno, remembers that at the time she had an unemployment subsidy (then known as *Plan Trabajar*), but the monthly payments were delayed (something that was quite common throughout the district and Buenos Aires): “They were supposed to be paying by the end of the month [November] and they didn’t. They would set a date, then another one. Christmas was right around the corner and . . . well, then the lootings happened.” Payments for the unemployment subsidies were not only delayed but diminishing (relief was cut by 20 percent in many districts [Svampa and Pereyra 2003]).

Lootings in Moreno began late on December 18, but the heaviest activity took place on the afternoon of December 19. That day witnessed most of the destruction in La Matanza as well. Days before, neighbors, looters, and shopkeepers knew “something was coming.” Sandra, who stayed home during the episodes, told us that a week or so in advance she found out through a neighbor that lootings were going to take place. Mono, who did participate, told us, “I was in school, and my classmates and friends were talking about the lootings like two weeks before it all began.” In Moreno, Mónica Gómez told a journalist, “we knew that the lootings were going to happen for at least about a month, but nobody did anything. They gave us [unemployment] subsidies, and then they cut them. They gave us bags of food, but they suddenly stopped giving them. Nobody can take that” (Vales 2001). Rumors were running rampant among shopkeepers in both districts. As two of them told us, “There was a lot of gossip saying that the sackings were about to start.” “A week or so before, other shopkeepers and customers heard rumors that there was a group of people who were going to create disturbances.”

Where were the rumors coming from? Dozens of interviews with residents, looters, the looted, grassroots leaders, and activists from the Peronist Party point to the this last group as their source. Susana, a Peronist broker, confided to us the following: “We [the party members] knew about the lootings beforehand. Around 1 A.M. [the lootings began by the following noon] we knew that there was going to be a looting. We were told about them by the municipal authorities, and we passed the information along [among the members of the party].” Pascual, a store owner in La Matanza, put it this way: “We knew a lot of political activists. . . . They came to the store when they did fundraising. . . . They brought us news [about the lootings].”

Before and during the lootings, Peronist brokers communicated the location of targets, the presence or absence of police, and thus the feasibility of risky practices. Signaling, a crucial mechanism in the generation of collective action (McAdam et al. 2001), was at work.¹⁷ Friends

and neighbors, in cooperation with those brokers, linked to the largest patronage-based party in Buenos Aires, indicated to each other when lootings were about to start and where it was safe to loot. Signaling basically comprised protection from potential repressive action (as many a resident told us, “I didn’t go through that street because neighbors told me the cops were there”) and logistics (participants told us some places were spared of damage because they had heavy or electrified gates or private security).

A report published in the main Argentine newspaper a year after the events tells a similar story. In December 2001, Josefa was living in a small shack located in a poor neighborhood of Moreno. On December 18, she received a small flyer inviting her to “bust” a group of markets. The next day, she showed up on time in front of the Kin market, and soon two hundred people were gathered in front of this small market clamoring for food. She recalls seeing a police car leaving the scene and a man who worked for the local municipal government talking on his cellular phone. Soon, a truck loaded with a *grupo de pesados* (or group of thugs), known in the neighborhood as Los Gurkas, arrived at the scene. “They broke the doors and called us in,” Josefa remembers. “A few days later, I met one of them, and he told me that people from the Peronist Party paid 100 pesos for the job.”

Far from Josefa, residents of the barrio Baires, another poor enclave in Buenos Aires, located in the municipality of Tigre, seemed to have received similar news about an imminent looting through their children: “When my son arrived home from school, he told me that a man from the local *unidad básica* came to inform the teachers about the sites of the lootings. The teacher told my son that she was going to go. And we went to see if we could get something” (summarized from Young 2002).

Therefore, there is little doubt that Peronist brokers were indeed involved in the looting episodes that took place both in Moreno and La Matanza. Investigative journalists stated this, and our own research has found evidence of their presence. But how exactly were clientelist brokers involved? Although some Peronist brokers might have promoted the looting by recruiting followers, their main action (at least, the one for which we have good evidence) seems to have been to spread news of the upcoming looting opportunity. Peronist brokers did not take their followers (clients) to the stores, nor could they control their actions. However, they did do something crucial: they passed the word about the location of the looting—simply by spreading rumors throughout the community that lootings were “coming” at the crossroads of Crovara and Cristianía in La Matanza and at El Cruce in Moreno, places populated not by large, chain supermarkets, but by small retail stores. These were “safe places” to loot—police would not be present, and if present, would not act.

How did activists and people in general know about police future (in)activity? In part, they assumed it because news about upcoming looting was coming from above, from well-connected state actors. In part, they also experienced it on site when they saw that the police were, in the words of one activist-turned-looter, “worse than us; they were the ones who took most of the things . . . and when we were inside El Chivo [a devastated supermarket in El Cruce], they even told us where to escape so that we wouldn’t get in trouble” (Auyero 2007).

Case 4: Reaction to Threat

The last case, culled from current fieldwork, illustrates another variant of the support scenario. Here, a threat to the monopoly position enjoyed by those in charge of patronage distribution fosters a violent and seemingly coordinated form of political action. In this case, the relationship between patronage planning and collective mobilization also takes a concealed form. Brokers organize collectively to make a claim, using violence, to the state. Residents are informed of the upcoming violent event and mobilize collectively to prevent injuries and major property damage.

On February 8, 2007, a fire destroyed the homes of 300 families in the Villa El Cartón (The Cardboard shantytown), located below Highway 7 in the city of Buenos Aires.¹⁸ The fire began at 6:30 A.M. According to newspaper reports, emergency rescue vehicles assisted 177 residents; 31 were hospitalized with diverse injuries, breathing complications, or nervous breakdowns. The following day, the chief of firefighters from the federal police told reporters that they were investigating “arson . . . as many a neighbor denounced.” Weeks later, Gabriela Cerruti, then minister of human and social rights in the city government, confirmed the chief firefighter’s suspicions in a press release, publicly denouncing the “political intentionality of the fire.” Cerruti told the press that the fire that made hundreds of families homeless had “political motivations.” An important official of the city government also told us that he was certain that

it was intentional. . . . Many residents were told in advance that there was going to be a fire. And they left their homes the night before. That’s why no one died. The horses that the local scavengers use to pull their carts were also moved to another place ahead of time. The chief of police told me, “Can you imagine, not even a drunkard was caught offguard!” So most people in the shantytown knew about this beforehand.

Who planned the fire and why? Why did public officials see the incident as stemming from political motivations? According to the report

written by State Prosecutor Mónica Cuñarro in the aftermath of the events, the fire was “planned by persons who were living in the settlement.” The account draws on a barrage of evidence to substantiate the claim of arson. The perpetrators “avoided vital losses. . . . Goods such as appliances, chairs, desks, etc.” were spared from the fire because they were removed from the shantytown before the events. The statement also remarks that “neighborhood leaders planned the fire, and informed most of the local residents who, around 5 A.M., removed the appliances, clothing, mattresses from their houses and the horses. . . .” The report also notes that the fire and the damage could have been prevented, but nobody from the shantytown called the fire department, even though the means for making the call (“specifically cell phones”) were available. Contrary to what was initially reported by the media, Prosecutor Cuñarro states,

A further element of proof is that . . . luckily, there were no fatal victims, no person was burned, no one was suffocated, nobody was hospitalized. . . . [This shows] that the residents were mere spectators of the fire. There were no victims or material losses because, since they knew what was going to happen beforehand, they were able to protect themselves and safeguard their valuables. (Cuñarro 2007)

In the weeks and months that followed the arson, a barrage of accusations between different political factions (some of them part of the city government, others part of the federal government) ensued. Each faction accused the other of “manipulating the poor,” of “using the poor to advance positions,” of “dirty political campaigning,” and the like. The minister of human and social rights accused an official linked to the federal government of being the mastermind of the arson, and a torrent of fingerpointing followed. In August 2007, six months after the episodes, the state prosecutor asked the judge to indict a grassroots broker, member of one of the political parties then running against the mayor.

Although the judge refused the request (citing lack of solid evidence), the state prosecutor’s report is worth close attention because it points to the links (agreed on by almost everybody we talked to about this case) between the arson and the political maneuvering of well-established political actors: “We cannot ignore the fact that the episodes were planned at a time that was close to the elections in the city, and that they were planned by neighborhood leaders who wanted to use a massive disaster in order to put pressure on local authorities to obtain either housing or [money] subsidies” (Cuñarro 2007). The report, furthermore, points to the connection that these events establish with other episodes of collective violence then occurring in the city, such as an organized invasion of an unfinished housing project in Bajo Flores, which took

place less than two months after the episodes in Cartón. The prosecutor's report and several newspaper accounts agree that in the months preceding local elections, there was a dramatic increase in this kind of episode of (seemingly planned) collective violence. What was going on?

According to informal conversations we had with former state officials and the state prosecutor, activists like the ones involved in the shantytown arson and the invasion of the unfinished housing project typically control access to state subsidies, housing, and food packages distributed by state agencies. They do so by controlling the government's registries of beneficiaries (of money subsidies, housing, or food). These local leaders are the ones who decide who "makes it" onto a list and who does not. In other words, they hoard access to state patronage. A former local official explained it to us by way of example:

When we were trying to register shantytown dwellers for Ciudadanía Porteña [a welfare plan], we would open an office in each shantytown and, in many a case, nobody showed up. Only after clearing things up with the local *punteros*, people began to register. These local leaders told us: "Just open the office, and they will come." Obviously, they are the ones who keep control of the final list.

The state prosecutor puts it this way:

Whoever controls the [welfare] census controls who gets the housing, under what conditions. Whoever controls the census controls the state subsidies. These state subsidies are arbitrarily distributed; nobody checks them; they are not centralized. . . . Those who have the neighborhood census and the subsidies obtain the control over that particular territory, they are the ones who decide who comes into the shantytown and who has to leave, who gets the bricks and other materials [for building] and who doesn't. (Cuñarro, personal communication)

When the recently appointed mayor, Jorge Telerman, decided to run for re-election, one of his first plans was to put some order in the city welfare administration, which, to many who dealt with it, was chaotic.¹⁹ For the officials and prosecutors we talked to, the mayor's decision to "rationalize" (or, in less euphemistic terms, to recover control of) local welfare registries (or the census records) triggered a series of episodes (building occupations, fires, etc.) like the ones in Villa Cartón or the invasion of the housing project in Bajo Flores.

By generating episodes of collective violence, local leaders conveyed the message that they were not going to give up territorial control; they would not give up the power over their areas and the resources that came with it. Or, in the words of the state prosecutor's report, the arson's objective was to "completely destroy the place as a

way of exerting pressure on local authorities” (Cuñarro 2007). What were these arsonists trying to accomplish? The prosecutor was unambiguous: they were, she told us in an interview, “trying to avoid the completion of the census of that emergency settlement, to obtain a law of expropriation, and to acquire housing.”

Thus, what an inattentive observer might take as an accident typical of the precarious conditions in which shantytown dwellers live their lives is, in reality, an orchestrated reaction in defense of the control of patronage resources. Coordinated by local brokers, residents’ mobilization (efforts to evacuate the area and the failure to notify the fire department) could also be seen as a way of making claims on the state; in this case, demanding housing and welfare subsidies. This example thus shows how clientelism can live another life in the collective, and violent, attempts at defending its operation.

CONCLUSIONS AND TASKS AHEAD

“Daily social life, existing social relations, shared memories, and the logistics of social settings . . . shape the forms of contention,” writes Charles Tilly in *Regimes and Repertoires* (2006, 43). In one of his earlier writings (1992, 6), this same author puts it this way: “Contentious gatherings obviously bear a coherent relationship to the social organization and routine politics of their settings. But what relationship? That is the problem.”²⁰ This article has addressed precisely this problem by looking at the connection between everyday life, clientelist politics, and extraordinary collective action in four different scenarios.

Given its focus on discontinuous, public, and collective claimsmaking—episodes in which people “break with daily routines to concert their energies in publicly visible demands, complaints, attacks, or expressions of support before returning to their private lives” (Tilly 2006, 49)—it should not be unforeseen that most of the research on collective action has tended to ignore its links with habitual social arrangements, such as patron-client relationships. The evidence culled from ethnographic reanalysis points to one simple, though overlooked, fact: clientelist and contentious politics might connect with each other, sometimes overtly, sometimes in more hidden ways.

Since the early 1990s, much of Latin America has witnessed the simultaneous growth of both protest and clientelism (Svampa and Pereyra 2003; Giarracca 2001; Giraudy 2007; Levitsky 2003; Stokes 2005; Auyero 2007; Almeida and Johnston 2006; Shefner et al. 2006; López-Maya and Lander 2006), a twin process that most sociological and political science research deems unlikely. Patronage (its vertical networks, opportunities, resources, and ideological frames) tends to counteract the emergence of collective action (its horizontal networks, opportunities,

resources, and ideological frames). The joint increase in clientelism and contentious politics is paradoxical only if we fail to pay attention to the zone of mutual influence between both political phenomena. Attention to the area of intersection and interaction uncovers a variety of ways that contentious politics articulate with patronage politics.

The most-researched form of articulation points to the breakdown of clientelist arrangements as conducive to protest. The case of the *Santiago* is supportive of this line of research (network breakdown). This study also examined three other instances in which patronage and collective action intersect and interact. These cases point to variations in the type of interaction between these two phenomena of popular politics. Patronage networks can act as the more or less visible relational support of massive contention. Clientelism does not need to collapse in order to generate episodes of protest. The cases show that patronage networks can act as those indigenous organizations or associational networks that followers of the political process model in the study of social movements have long emphasized as a key presence in the emergence of collective action.

In the case of Cutral-co (patron's certification), patrons and brokers validate mass uprising by providing mobilizing structures. During the 2001 food looting, patrons also provided support, but in this case, it was more hidden (clandestine support). They provided key information to generate and develop looting, opening possibilities for collective violence. The case of Villa Cartón illustrates another variant of the support scenario (reaction to threat). Here, also in a concealed form, brokers organized collectively to make a claim to the state, using violence. Residents were informed of this strategy, and mobilized collectively to prevent injuries and damages. This last case also shows that the framework for the study of the interconnections between political brokerage and collective action can be extended to collective actions beyond traditional types of protest.

These four scenarios demonstrate that more than two opposed spheres of action or two different forms of sociability, patronage, and contentious politics can be mutually imbricated. Because the sample is limited to four different cases, we are not in position to theorize about the causal conditions under which clientelism triggers contention. The task in this article has been much more modest: to illuminate that understudied area of mutual relationship so that we can create the sketch of an agenda for systematic empirical research. In other words, the dearth of systematic data on this dynamic relationship makes it impossible to speculate about the different forms that this interaction may take and the causal factors involved. However, it is still possible to construct several scenarios that, as ideal types, might guide future empirical efforts. That is exactly what this study attempted to do.

The contours of a research agenda emerge as we note the limitations of our analysis. First, in this study, we have treated patron-client networks (and clientelist politics in general) as a problem-solving strategy that recognizes no internal variations. But patronage is far from being a uniform political phenomenon. The vast literature on the subject notes that the goods distributed (whether individual, public, or club goods [Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007]), the balance between distinctive vote-getting methods (more or less coercive, more or less monitored, more or less based on the distribution of material vs. affective resources [Guterbock 1980; Roniger 1990; Wilkinson 2007]), the stability of the brokers and patrons in political parties (more or less tied to a particular party organization [Gay 1990]), and the connection between clientelist politics and state resources (more or less linked to public patronage [Wilkinson 2007]), do make a difference in the way clientelist politics operates and endures. A research agenda that puts at the center of inquiry the recursive relationship between both political phenomena should inspect how variations in the modalities of clientelist politics influence the form of contentious collective action.

Second, this paper has concentrated mostly on the relationship between patronage and the origins of protest. Empirical and theoretical attention should also be paid to the intersection and interaction between clientelism and contentious collective action as the latter evolves (for example, from episodic collective action into a social movement) and as it produces or fails to produce outcomes. We should study how patronage politics may affect the emergence, development, and results of contentious collective action. This notion suggests that the recursive relationship between protest and clientelism should be studied not at fixed temporal intervals but as the two phenomena dynamically shape each other through time.

Third, closer attention should be paid to the impact of collective action on clientelist arrangements. For instance, future research should inspect how contentious events prompt the distribution of state resources among social movement organizations—distribution that, in turn, may foster clientelist relationships.

NOTES

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1. Following most of the recent literature on the subject, we here use clientelist and patronage politics as interchangeable terms (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007; Levitsky and Way 2007; Wilkinson 2007).

2. This article is based not on ethnographic revisits but on “analytic revisits”; that is, what Burawoy calls ethnographic reanalysis, “which involves the interrogation of an already existing ethnography *without* any further fieldwork” (2003, 646). In other words, we did not go back to our field sites; instead, we revisited our data (field notes, interviews, and newspaper accounts). The fieldwork was carried out during the summers of 1999 and 2000 and January through April 2001. Interviews about the Villa Cartón case were carried out from May 16 to 28, 2008. Fieldwork comprised archival research, in-depth interviewing, informal conversations, and photo elicitation. The authors also watched videos and read leaflets, press releases, police records, and court cases to the extent that these were available. For further information and details on each interview and data please see Auyero 2003, 2007.

3. For evidence of its endurance in Mexico, see also Holzner 2007; Tosoni 2007; in Brazil, see Arias 2006; in Argentina, see Brusco et al. 2004; Levitsky and Way 2007; in Bolivia, see Lazar 2008; in Venezuela, see Smilde 2008; in Peru, see Schneider and Zúñiga-Hamlin 2005; in India, see Wilkinson 2007; for a general survey, Roniger and Günes-Ayata 1994.

4. For an analysis of this symbolic dimension of patronage networks, see Auyero 2000.

5. For an alternative definition of politics and therefore of contentious collective action, see Armstrong and Bernstein 2008.

6. For a recent and illuminating exception regarding how citizens, in their attempt to solve pressing survival problems, may shuttle back and forth between “opposing” networks, see Quirós 2007. For a theoretically analogous claim concerning the false opposition between institutionalized and noninstitutionalized politics, see Goldstone 2003.

7. For an audiovisual depiction of this protest see the documentary film by Claudio Remedi and Eugenia Roja (1994).

8. The methodological details of this reconstruction can be found in Auyero 2003.

9. Ley Omnibus is the name given to the local adjustment law that the local parliament passed on November 12, 1993. It implied the layoff of hundreds of temporary workers, the reduction of wages for public administrators, and the privatization of most public services. In a province where close to half of the wage earners are public employees, such a law was destined to provoke massive protests.

10. On the variable nature of grievances as an important factor in mobilization, see Walsh 1981.

11. The methodological details of this reconstruction can be found in Auyero 2003.

12. On framing, see Heaney and Rojas 2006; Snow et al. 1986; Snow et al. 2004; Snow and Benford 1992; Steinberg 1998, 1999.

13. Grittini had been waging his own personal battle against political leaders. Months earlier, in the party primaries, former governor Jorge Omar Sosbich had allied with Grittini against the incumbent governor, Felipe Sapag. Sapag

won the primaries, and Daniel Martinasso, Grittini's successor, who initially had sided with them, switched factions and joined Sapag's group. For classic statements on resource mobilization theory, see McCarthy and Zald 1977; Jenkins 1983.

14. The methodological details of the reconstruction of the 2001 looting can be found in Auyero 2007.

15. For details on interviews about the 2001 looting, see Auyero 2007.

16. For a description of the area see Cerrutti and Grimson 2004; for an ethnographic study of popular organizations in Buenos Aires see Grimson et al. 2003.

17. Signaling refers to a set of events whereby participants in a risky situation "often scan each other for signs of readiness to incur costs without defecting, modulating their behavior according to estimates of the likelihood that others will flee" (McAdam et al. 2001, 28).

18. The following reconstruction is based on accounts of the events in the newspapers *Clarín*, *La Nación*, *Perfil*, and *Página/12*; a close reading of the unpublished state prosecutor's report; and interviews with the state prosecutor and public officials.

19. Telerman was formerly the vice mayor, and took office after the mayor was impeached.

20. Or, as Piven and Cloward (1979, 20–21) write, "it is the daily experience of people that shapes their grievances, establishes the measure of their demands, and points out the targets of their anger."

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