



**informal
institutions
&
democracy**

**lessons from
latin america**

Edited by Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky

Informal Institutions and Democracy

This page intentionally left blank

Informal Institutions and Democracy

Lessons from Latin America

Edited by

GRETCHEN HELMKE

STEVEN LEVITSKY

The Johns Hopkins University Press
Baltimore

© 2006 The Johns Hopkins University Press
All rights reserved. Published 2006
Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper
2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3 1

The Johns Hopkins University Press
2715 North Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4363
www.press.jhu.edu

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Informal institutions and democracy : lessons from Latin America /
edited by Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky.

p. cm.

“The volume emerged out of two conferences on informal institutions. The first, entitled ‘Informal Institutions and Politics in the Developing World,’ was held at Harvard University in April 2002. . . . The second conference, entitled ‘Informal Institutions and Politics in Latin America: Understanding the Rules of the Game,’ was held at the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, in April 2003”—Pref.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8018-8351-2 (hardcover : alk. paper)

ISBN 0-8018-8352-0 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Political culture—Latin America—Congresses. 2. Democratization—Latin America—Congresses. 3. Democracy—Latin America—Congresses. 4. Politics, Practical—Latin America—Congresses. 5. Latin America—Politics and government—1980— I. Helmke, Gretchen, 1967—

II. Levitsky, Steven, 1968—

JL966.I55 2006

306.2098—dc22

2005032064

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Contents

Preface vii

Introduction 1

GRETCHEN HELMKE AND STEVEN LEVITSKY

PART I THE INFORMAL POLITICS OF EXECUTIVE-LEGISLATIVE RELATIONS

1 Accommodating Informal Institutions and Chilean Democracy 33

PETER SIAVELIS

2 How Informal Electoral Institutions Shape the
Brazilian Legislative Arena 56

SCOTT W. DESPOSATO

3 Crafting Legislative Ghost Coalitions in Ecuador:
Informal Institutions and Economic Reform in an Unlikely Case 69

ANDRÉS MEJÍA ACOSTA

PART II INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

4 Informal Institutions When Formal Contracting Is Prohibited:

Campaign Finance in Brazil 87

DAVID SAMUELS

5 The Difficult Road from *Caudillismo* to Democracy:

The Impact of Clientelism in Honduras 106

MICHELLE M. TAYLOR-ROBINSON

6 Do Informal Rules Make Democracy Work?
Accounting for Accountability in Argentina 125
SUSAN C. STOKES

PART III INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS AND PARTY POLITICS

7 The Birth and Transformation of the *Dedazo* in Mexico 143
JOY LANGSTON

8 Election Insurance and Coalition Survival:
Formal and Informal Institutions in Chile 160
JOHN M. CAREY AND PETER SIAVELIS

9 Informal Institutions and Party Organization in Latin America 178
FLAVIA FREIDENBERG AND STEVEN LEVITSKY

PART IV INFORMAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTIONS AND
THE RULE OF LAW

10 The Rule of (Non)Law:
Prosecuting Police Killings in Brazil and Argentina 201
DANIEL M. BRINKS

11 Mexico's Postelectoral *Concertaciones*:
The Rise and Demise of a Substitutive Informal Institution 227
TODD A. EISENSTADT

12 Dispensing Justice at the Margins of Formality:
The Informal Rule of Law in Latin America 249
DONNA LEE VAN COTT

Conclusion 274

GRETCHEN HELMKE AND STEVEN LEVITSKY

Afterword

On Informal Institutions, Once Again 285
GUILLERMO O'DONNELL

Notes 291
References 313
List of Contributors 337
Index 341

Preface

Political reality can be compelling. The sweeping regime changes of the 1980s and 1990s brought democratic institutions to virtually every country in Latin America, but the quality or performance of those institutions has disappointed both scholars and policymakers alike. Military coups have largely disappeared, but presidents continue to be forced from office before the end of their mandate; constitutional liberties have been restored, but security forces kill some citizens with impunity; legislators seem more interested in making money than in making policy; corruption and clientelism remain widespread, and in many rural (and some urban) areas, the rule of law effectively does not exist. This book contends that in order to understand how—and how well—democratic institutions work in Latin America, scholars must go beyond the study of formal institutions and take seriously informal “rules of the game.” The book presents a conceptual and theoretical framework for analyzing how formal and informal institutions interact in new democracies. Although it focuses on Latin America, its lessons are broadly applicable throughout the developing and postcommunist worlds.

The idea for this volume emerged out of a series of conversations that began nearly a decade ago. As researchers beginning fieldwork in Argentina during the mid-1990s, we were struck by the vast gap between the formal institutions we had come to study (political parties in one case, courts in the other) and the informal realities we encountered on the ground. Our respective efforts to make sense of these patterns were heavily influenced by the work and teaching of Guillermo O’Donnell. O’Donnell, who has written an afterword to this volume, is a major intellectual inspiration behind it.

We have incurred many debts in bringing this project to fruition. The volume emerged out of two conferences on informal institutions. The first, entitled “Informal Institutions and Politics in the Developing World,” was held at Harvard University in April 2002. It was generously funded by the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies. We

are particularly grateful for the support of Weatherhead Center director Jorge Domínguez, and for the dedicated organizational work of Jeana Flahive. Our own conceptual and theoretical ideas about informal institutions were heavily informed by this conference, and we thank participants Kathleen Collins, Keith Darden, Jorge Domínguez, Dennis Galvan, Robert Gay, Kathryn Hendley, Jim Johnson, Jack Knight, Hans-Joachim Lauth, Melanie Manion, José Luis Medina, María Victoria Murillo, Andreas Schedler, Rudra Sil, Lily Tsai, and Lucan Way.

The second conference, entitled “Informal Institutions and Politics in Latin America: Understanding the Rules of the Game,” was held at the Kellogg Institute for International Studies, University of Notre Dame, in April 2003. The conference was generously supported by the Kellogg Institute, through a grant from the Coca Cola Foundation. We are particularly thankful for the support of Frances Hagopian and Scott Mainwaring, as well as Christopher Welna, Holly Rivers, and Dawn Dinovo, and to conference participants Rebecca Bill Chavez, Martín Böhmer, Jorge Buendia, Michael Coppedge, Jack Knight, Miriam Kornblith, Susan Stokes, Ignacio Walker, and Kurt Weyland for their insightful comments.

In addition, we have received extremely useful comments along the way from Jorge Domínguez, Anna Grzymala-Busse, Peter Hall, Goran Hyden, Lisa Martin, María Victoria Murillo, Shannon O’Neil Trowbridge, Benjamin Smith, Hillel Soifer, Lucan Way, and Jason Wittenberg. Maria Koinova, Elena Plaxina, and Hillel Soifer provided critical research and editorial assistance. We also thank the staff at the Johns Hopkins University Press, and particularly Henry Tom, for their careful assistance in bringing the book to press.

Excerpts from the Introduction are taken from “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda,” by Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, in *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 2, no. 4, December 2004, pp. 725–740. Copyright © 2004 by the American Political Science Association. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press.

Finally, Steve Levitsky thanks his wife, Liz Mineo, and daughter, Alejandra Sol Mineo-Levitsky, for keeping him focused on the rules of the game that really matter. Gretchen Helmke thanks Mitch Sanders and her father, Stephen Helmke, for their support and encouragement.

Informal Institutions and Democracy

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

GRETCHEN HELMKE AND STEVEN LEVITSKY

Over the past two decades, a scholarly consensus has emerged around the centrality of political institutions. In Latin America, recent research on executive-legislative relations, electoral and party systems, judicial politics, bureaucracies, and federalism has shed new light on how institutional design affects the stability and quality of democracy.¹ Nevertheless, persistent problems of corruption, clientelism, executive-legislative conflict, and the “unrule of law” cast doubt on whether an exclusive focus on “parchment”² institutions is sufficient for understanding what drives politics in the region (O’Donnell 1996a, 1999c; Weyland 2002a). Scholars such as Guillermo O’Donnell and Douglass North have argued that *informal institutions*—or rules and procedures that are created, communicated, and enforced outside the officially sanctioned channels—are often as important as their formal counterparts in structuring the “rules of the game.”

Informal rules coexist with formal democratic institutions throughout Latin America. In Mexico during much of the twentieth century, presidents were selected not according to rules laid out in the constitution, the electoral law, or the statutes of the governing Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI), but rather by means of the *dedazo* (“finger tapping”), an unwritten code that gave the sitting president the right to choose his successor, specified the candidate pool, and prohibited potential candidates from openly seeking the job. In Chile, notwithstanding a constitution that created one of the most powerful presidencies in the world, informal power-sharing arrangements in place since democratization have induced presidents to systematically underutilize that power. As a result, Chile is viewed as an exception in a re-

gion characterized by presidential dominance (O'Donnell 1994). In parts of Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Guatemala, where state judicial institutions are often absent or ineffective, local communities solve conflict through indigenous law and other informal justice systems. And throughout Latin America, established patterns of clientelism, corruption, and patrimonialism challenge the efficacy of elections and the rule of law (O'Donnell 1996b).

Informal rules shape how democratic institutions work. They reinforce, subvert, and sometimes even supersede formal rules, procedures, and organizations. Analyses of democratic institutions that focus exclusively on formal rules thus risk missing much of what shapes and constrains political behavior, which can yield an incomplete—if not wholly inaccurate—picture of how politics works. Hence, it is imperative that the institutionalist turn in Latin American politics be grounded in an understanding of what O'Donnell calls “the actual rules that are being followed” (1996a, 10; see also Weyland 2002a).

Taking up O'Donnell's call, this volume examines the relationship between informal institutions and democracy in Latin America. Building on a large but heretofore disparate body of research,³ the book provides a conceptual and theoretical foundation for informal institutional analysis. The volume brings together scholars of Latin American political institutions, from diverse theoretical and methodological traditions, who converge around a simple observation: political actors respond to a mix of formal and informal incentives (North 1990), and, consequently, the degree to which formal rules actually enable and constrain politicians varies considerably. Although formal rule-based incentives predominate in many instances, they may also compete with—and even be trumped by—informal incentives. In some cases, formal rules exist only on parchment, and actors are guided almost entirely by unwritten rules. In these cases, political behavior can be expected to deviate substantially from that prescribed by (or expected from) the formal rules.

The implications for institutional analysis are far-reaching. Even in areas that have traditionally been the exclusive domain of formal institutional analysis, research has found that informal rules have a powerful—and, at times, systematic—effect on institutional outcomes. For example, although earlier work on presidentialism in Latin America centered mainly on issues of formal institutional design (Linz 1990; Shugart and Carey 1992; Linz and Valenzuela 1994), recent studies suggest that the dynamics of presidentialism cannot be fully understood in strictly constitutional terms. Studies have shown how norms of patrimonialism produce a degree of executive dominance that far exceeds that prescribed by the constitution (O'Donnell 1994, 1996b; Hartlyn 1998; Sandbrook and Oelbaum 1999). At the same time, other scholars have shown how informal institutions may *limit* presidential power, even in cases

of “hyper-presidentialist” constitutions (Peter Siavelis, this volume). Similar informal institutional effects have been found in studies of legislative politics, judicial politics, electoral systems, party politics, political regimes, federalism, and public administration.⁴

Informal institutions also shape formal institutional outcomes in a less visible, but equally important, way: by creating or strengthening incentives to comply with formal rules. In other words, they may do the enabling and constraining that we usually attribute to the formal rules. As Susan Stokes argues in this volume, formal institutions often work because they are embedded in implicit and informally shared expectations, or “grammatical rules,” about the particular behavior governed by the explicit formal or “game” rules. For example, the effectiveness and stability of the United States’ presidential democracy is not only a product of the rules laid out in the Constitution, but is also rooted in a set of “paraconstitutional” rules that prevent formal checks and balances from deteriorating into severe interbranch conflict (Riggs 1988). The absence of such norms of restraint and accommodation may help explain why similarly designed presidentialist systems have often proven more crisis-prone in Latin America.

By bringing informal institutions more centrally into the picture, this book seeks to lay a better foundation for understanding how political institutions in Latin America work. The essays in the volume cover a diverse array of informal institutions, including the Mexican *dedazo*, clientelism in Brazil and Honduras, legislative “ghost coalitions” in Ecuador, norms of executive-legislative power-sharing in Chile, illicit campaign finance in Brazil, norms of electoral accountability in Argentina, indigenous law in the Andes, norms underlying police violence in Brazilian cities, and informal mechanisms of electoral dispute resolution (*concertaciones*) in Mexico. The chapters explore how these informal rules of the game affect the quality and stability of democracy. They find myriad, complex, and often unexpected effects: whereas some informal rules compete with and subvert democratic institutions, others complement and even help sustain them.

The chapters also explore a set of conceptual, theoretical, and methodological questions that are critical to advancing a research agenda on informal institutions.

- In the *conceptual* realm, they address the question of what informal institutions are and, crucially, what they are not.
- In the *theoretical* realm, the chapters explore four central questions: (1) What are the distinct ways in which formal and informal institutions interact? (2) What are the effects of informal institutions, particularly with respect to the quality, performance, and stability of democracy? (3) What are the origins

of informal institutions, and specifically, why—and how—are they created?
 (4) What are the sources of informal institutional stability and change?

- In the *methodological* realm, the chapters explore the crucial questions of how to identify, measure, and compare “rules of the game” that are unwritten and, in many cases, hidden from public view.

This introductory chapter provides an overview of these questions. The first section examines the concept of informal institution. It makes the case for a narrow definition that permits scholars to distinguish between informal institutions and other informal phenomena, such as weak institutions, culture, and non-rule-bound behavior patterns. In the second section we provide an overview of how informal institutions affect the performance and quality of democracy in Latin America. The third section develops a typology of formal-informal institutional interaction. Expanding on the work of Hans-Joachim Lauth (2000), we distinguish among four types of informal institution: complementary, accommodating, competing, and substitutive. The fourth section explores a set of theoretical issues at the frontier of research on informal institutions, including the critical, but underresearched, questions of informal institutional emergence and change. Finally, we discuss some challenges related to research on informal institutions, such as issues of identification, measurement, and comparison.

CLARIFYING THE CONCEPT: WHAT IS AN INFORMAL INSTITUTION?

This book focuses on informal *political* institutions, leaving aside a range of informal social (e.g., the handshake; the rules of dating) and economic (e.g., black markets) institutions. Yet even in the narrower realm of politics, informal institution is an ambiguous concept. The term has been applied to a broad diversity of phenomena, including culture, civil society, personal networks, clans and mafias, corruption and clientelism, and bureaucratic and legislative norms.⁵ Such conceptual ambiguity has serious analytic costs, for it limits our capacity to build and test theories.

In this section, we attempt to clarify the concept of informal institution and to develop a more precise and analytically useful definition. In our view, such a definition should capture as much of the universe of informal rules as possible, but it must be narrow enough to distinguish informal rules from other, noninstitutional, informal phenomena.

Formal versus Informal Institutions

We begin with a fairly standard definition of institutions as rules and procedures that structure social interaction by constraining and enabling actors' behavior. This definition is generally thought to encompass both formal and informal rules (North 1990, 3–4; J. Knight 1992, 2; Carey 2000, 735). There is less agreement, however, on how to distinguish between formal and informal institutions. Some scholars treat informal institutions as synonymous with culture or tradition. For example, Svetozar Pejovich defines them as “traditions, customs, moral values, religious beliefs, and all other norms of behavior that have passed the test of time . . . Thus, informal institutions are the part of a community's heritage that we call *culture*” (1999, 166). Other scholars employ a state-societal distinction, characterizing state agencies and state-enforced rules as formal institutions and the norms and organizations that constitute civil society—including religious, ethnic, kinship, and civic associations—as informal institutions (Boussard 2000; Manor 2001; L. Tsai 2002). A third group of scholars distinguishes between informal norms, which are self-enforcing, and formal rules, which are enforced by a third party, often the state (Ellickson 1991; J. Knight 1992; Calvert 1995).

In our view, each of these conceptualizations is problematic. Although some informal institutions may be rooted in cultural tradition, many informal rules (legislative norms, illicit patterns of party finance) have little to do with a community's larger values and attitudes. The state-societal distinction fails to capture the many informal rules—from organized corruption to bureaucratic norms to intragovernmental power-sharing arrangements—that are embedded within state institutions.⁶ It also fails to capture what Ellickson (1991, 31) calls “organization rules,” or the official rules that govern nonstate organizations such as political parties and corporations. Finally, although the self-enforcing definition is analytically useful, it fails to account for the fact that certain informal rules may be externally enforced (e.g., by clan and mafia bosses), in some cases by the state itself (Joy Langston, this volume).

We define informal institutions as *socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels*.⁷ By contrast, formal institutions are rules and procedures that are created, communicated, and enforced through channels that are widely accepted as official.⁸ A key element of this definition, to which we return later in the chapter, is that informal institutions must be enforced in some fashion.⁹ In other words, actors must believe that breaking the rules carries some form of credible sanction—be it physical punishment, loss of

employment, or simply social disapproval. As several of the chapters in this volume show, informal rules are often enforced—albeit unofficially—by actors and institutions within the state itself.¹⁰

A Second Distinction: Informal Rules versus Other Informal Phenomena

Distinguishing between formal and informal institutions, however, is only half the conceptual task. One of the dangers of our “parchment”-based definition is that *informal institution* may become a residual category, or a term used to describe virtually any behavior that departs from, or is not accounted for by, the written-down rules. To avoid this pitfall, it is essential to distinguish informal institutions from several other informal phenomena. In other words, we must elaborate further what an informal institution *is not*.

Four distinctions are worth noting. First, informal institutions should be distinguished from *weak institutions*. Many formal institutions are ineffective, in that the rules that exist on paper are, in practice, widely circumvented or ignored. Yet formal institutional weakness does not necessarily imply the presence of informal institutions. It may be that no stable or binding rules—formal or informal—exist. For example, in his seminal article on delegative democracy, O’Donnell (1994) argued that in much of Latin America, the formal rules of representative democracy are weakly institutionalized. In the absence of institutionalized checks on executive power, the scope of permissible presidential behavior widened considerably, which resulted in substantial abuse of executive authority. In subsequent work, O’Donnell (1996b) highlighted how particularistic informal institutions such as clientelism undermined the effectiveness of representative institutions. O’Donnell’s work points to two distinct patterns of formal institutional weakness that should not be conflated. Clientelism and abuses of executive authority both depart from formal rules, but whereas the former pattern is an informal institution, the latter is best understood as noninstitutional behavior.

Second, informal institutions must be distinguished from other informal behavioral regularities. Not all patterned behavior is rule-bound, or rooted in shared expectations about others’ behavior (Hart 1961, 53–56; J. Knight 1992, 66–72). Behavioral regularities may be a product of a variety of other incentives. To cite an example offered by Daniel Brinks (2003b, 4), removing one’s hat in church is an informal institution, whereas removing one’s coat in a restaurant is simply a behavioral regularity. In the latter case, leaving one’s coat on may bring physical discomfort, but it is not expected to trigger social disapproval or sanction. To be

considered an informal institution, a behavioral regularity must respond to an established rule or guideline, the violation of which generates some kind of external sanction. To take another example, public graft is clearly informal behavior, but not all patterns of graft should be considered institutional. Where graft is organized and enforced from above (Waterbury 1973; Darden 2002), or where it is rooted in widely shared expectations among citizens and public officials (and a refusal to go along risks incurring important costs) (Manion 1996; Della Porta and Vannucci 1999), corruption may indeed be an institution. By contrast, where graft is neither externally sanctioned nor rooted in shared expectations, but rather is a response to low public sector salaries and ineffective enforcement, it may be best characterized as an informal behavior pattern.

Third, informal institutions should be distinguished from *informal organizations*. Although scholars often incorporate organizations into their definition of institution,¹¹ it is useful, following North (1990, 4–5), to separate the “rules” from the “players.” Just as formal organizations (such as political parties or unions) may be distinguished from formal rules, informal organizations (such as clans or mafias) should be distinguished from informal institutions. Nevertheless, just as parties and other organizations are routinely studied under the broader rubric of “institutionalism,” informal organizations—such as the informal party structures analyzed by Flavia Freidenberg and Steven Levitsky in their contribution to this volume—may be usefully incorporated into informal institutional analysis.

Finally, we return to the distinction between informal institutions and culture. Although the border at which culture ends and informal institutions begin can admittedly be difficult to discern, it is essential to avoid conflating these two phenomena. Our approach to this problem is to cast informal institutions in narrow terms, defining them in terms of shared expectations or beliefs rather than shared values. Shared expectations among a particular set of actors may or may not be rooted in broader societal values. For example, whereas particularistic norms embedded in kinship or clan networks may be plausibly traced to broader societal values (Price 1975; Dia 1996), elite power-sharing norms that emerge in deeply divided societies (e.g., Dutch consociationalism, Chile’s consensus democracy) cannot. This point is clearly made in Donna Lee Van Cott’s chapter on indigenous justice institutions. Although indigenous institutions are often assumed to be deeply embedded in culture or tradition, Van Cott shows that this is not always the case. Whereas some indigenous institutions draw on preexisting tradition, others are recent inventions—in some cases, modeled on modern state institutions—that cannot be traced back to earlier traditions. Not least of all, distinguishing between shared values and shared

expectations permits us to analyze potential causal relationships *between* culture and informal institutions, such as the conditions under which shared societal values engender, reinforce, or undermine particular informal rules.

WHY INFORMAL RULES MATTER

Informal institutions merit our attention because they shape how democracy works—for both good and ill. Perhaps not surprisingly, much of the existing literature on informal institutions in new democracies focuses on their negative effects. In particular, studies have highlighted ways in which corruption, clientelism, and patrimonialism undermine the effectiveness of democratic, state, and market institutions.¹² The chapters in this volume tell a more mixed story. Although several essays provide systematic evidence of how informal institutions erode the quality of democratic institutions, others point to the ambiguous, double-edged, and even positive effects of informal rules. Particularly where formal state and regime institutions are weak, ineffective, or insufficiently democratic, informal rules may enhance the performance and stability of democracy. In this section we examine the effects of informal institutions in four key areas of democratic politics: representation, accountability, governability, and citizenship and the rule of law.

Political Representation

Several of the essays in this volume grapple with issues of political representation. Evidence of a growing gap between citizens and politicians in Latin America is abundant: it includes declining party identification and voter turnout (Hagopian 1998, 114–21), high levels of electoral volatility (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Roberts and Wibbels 1999), the rise of personalistic or “neopopulist” outsiders (Roberts 1995; Weyland 1996, 1999), and, in a few countries, large-scale protest against the entire political elite. Scholars have linked this “representation gap” to informal institutions such as clientelism, patrimonialism, and corruption (Fox 1994; O’Donnell 1996b; Mainwaring 1999; Brusco et al. 2004). These particularistic institutions are thus said to erode or prevent the establishment of programmatic linkages between parties and citizens.

The chapters in this volume find new evidence in support of these claims. For example, in his comparative analysis of state-level legislative politics in Brazil, Scott Desposato finds that clientelism erodes legislative parties’ capacity to represent voters on programmatic issues. In the highly clientelistic state of Piauí, he finds that party discipline is low, individual legislators rarely take public positions on issues,

and opposition parties are frequently co-opted by governors. By contrast, in São Paulo, where clientelism is less pervasive, Desposato discovers the same parties to be more cohesive, more willing to take public positions on programmatic issues, and less vulnerable to co-optation. The chapters by Freidenberg and Levitsky, Andrés Mejía Acosta, and David Samuels also suggest that informal—and especially particularistic—rules erode the quality of programmatic representation.

Yet the effects of informal institutions on representation are not uniformly negative. Where formal mechanisms of representation are weak or ineffective, informal institutions—even particularistic ones—may yield some positive benefits in terms of representation. In her chapter on clientelism and pork-barrel politics in Honduras, Michelle Taylor-Robinson argues that due to Honduras's closed-list proportional representation system, the electoral incentives for legislators to represent local interests are weak. She finds that elected representatives from poor rural areas who sponsor locally targeted (usually pork-barrel) legislation do so mainly in response to established norms of clientelism. In the absence of such norms, the legislative process might have ignored poor rural localities entirely.

Democratic Accountability

Recent evidence from Latin America suggests that democratic elections are often insufficient mechanisms for ensuring government accountability and responsiveness. Using O'Donnell's terms (1994), accountability has been found wanting in two key areas: vertical accountability, or the degree to which citizens are able to reward or punish officials for their performance in office (O'Donnell 1994; Stokes 2001), and horizontal accountability, or the degree to which public officials are responsible to (or checked by) other agencies and institutions of the state (O'Donnell 1994, 1999b; Schedler et al. 1999; Mainwaring and Welna 2003). In much of the region, citizens and their representatives are said to lack effective mechanisms to oversee and, when necessary, punish officeholders who abuse power. As a result, elected officials routinely betray their mandates, abuse their authority, and ignore constituents' demands.

Here, too, informal institutions are widely viewed as obstacles to normatively desirable outcomes, and for good reason. Because they are unwritten and unregulated, informal rules generally lack the transparency or public oversight that is often essential to accountability. It is difficult to use the law or public agencies to hold a politician accountable for breaking rules that—by definition—are not on the books. Several chapters in this volume explore the link between the nontransparent nature of informal institutions and deficits of accountability. For example, in their essay on informal party organization, Freidenberg and Levitsky argue that informal finance,