

Clientelistic Networks and Local Corruption: Evidence from Western Crete

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In this article, the attitudes and interaction of local political and business elites in western Crete are examined by means of an attitudinal survey, triangulated with data from in-depth interviews, conducted between July and October 1991. The data examined indicate that the endemic prevalence of clientelistic networks creates the background for corruption, although evidence of corrupt practice is not strong. In this analysis it is presumed that the attitudes and perceptions of key actors are affected by a definition of corruption that is relevant to their particular civil society alone. Data analyzed here suggest that local elite attitudes towards corruption are not perceived to affect the standards of conduct at the local level. It can also be deduced that if corruption is linked to the problems of administrative efficiency and economic development of the region, these can be related to vertical clientelistic networks with the national centre.

CLIENTELISM AND CORRUPTION

Donatella Della Porta has convincingly argued that 'corruption and clientelism ... appear to be mutually reinforcing since both phenomena create a pattern of individual mobilisation and a conception of politics as the occasion for personal advancement' (Della Porta 1996: 363). It would be a gross simplification, however, to see clientelism as simply a corrupt practice or corruption dependent on purely clientelistic relationships.

In examining Italian political elites, Della Porta and Pizzorno (1996) reveal the characteristics of a 'new breed' of political entrepreneur, the 'business politician' who (a) mediates in business transactions, (b)

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