Analytical Narrative on Subnational Democracies in Colombia
Clientelism, Government and Public Policy in the Pacific Region
Chapter 1
Introduction. The Paradox of a Formally Open and Materially Exclusive Democracy

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Abstract In this chapter of the work, an introductory approach to the problem that involves the phenomenon of clientelism in the process of construction of democratic regimes is presented. The analysis is limited to the subnational contexts of the Colombian state, more precisely the Pacific region, where the paradox between the material and formal value of democracy is more than evident.

The political events of the situation in Colombia constitute a challenge for analysts and experts. Every day conveys the uncertainty of a new scandal, perquisite, or practice rigged by clientelism or what Luis Jorge Garay would call the permanent co-optation of the state through corruption. Perhaps the events which occur in a nation that has become accustomed to the fact that the public sphere is the favorable scenario for the satisfaction of private and sectarian interests, no longer bear the potential or capacity to surprise. However, the news that is broadcast daily by the mass media, with a touch of novelty and sensationalism—based on the need to sell advertising guidelines—has a transversal history and a fundamental question that has been studied lightly from the academia: The history: a country that founded a nation with the precept of being a solid democratic system (to the point of calling itself the Athens of South America). The question: Why has this “solid system” not permeated local interests in territories where democracy has only served as another instrument for sustaining a system of individual privileges, protected by coercive power and complicity institutional?

The history and the proposed question are not easy to solve, regardless of the time and space in which this challenge is proposed. In the past, the democratic system in Colombia was overshadowed by the armed conflict, influential variable, but reductionist at the point of interpreting the Colombian reality, to such an extent that the electoral agenda of the centralist power ended up reducing the democratic exercise to a debate on the strategy to defeat the FARC guerrilla—via military or political—means. At present, with the agreement signed between the Santos government and the FARC, a door of hope and opportunity has been provided to devote itself once and for all to solving the precariousness of our models of participation in the public sphere. Nevertheless, the referendum of October 2, 2016, was a coup d’état to the political myopia with which everyday life in the regions of the country is seen