7 Conclusion: Contemporary Citizenship in Chile and Argentina

The analytical thrust of this book has focused on the role of the citizen in the transition and consolidation of democracy, and the ideological formation which that citizenship takes. It has explored citizenship as a formal concept in constitutions and in ideological pronouncements, and it has sought to reveal the influence of these constructions in the institutional apparatus, the state, government and policy. In contrast to established analyses of democratization, this thesis has examined developments at the apex of power from the perspective of the citizen herself, exploring the implications of these changes for citizen sovereignty. Moreover, it has sought to understand alternative concepts of citizenship emanating from the citizenry and has focused on citizen participation in the political process, both during the dictatorships and within the contemporary institutional and ideological context. The analysis has been built around the framework of models of citizenship, which, though idealized in their theoretical form, assist in the identification of ideological trends and changing mechanisms which interpret and guide the relationship between citizen and political elite.

MODELS OF CITIZENSHIP

The findings are clear. In both Chile and Argentina, relationships articulated through the welfare model of citizenship dominated political, economic and social interaction from the post-war period. In Chile, this formed the foundation for a number of regimes founded on different ideological positions, but essentially each utilized the intervention of the state to mediate between the equalizing dynamic of democracy, and the dynamic of inequality inherent in capitalist relations. In Argentina, the welfare model was linked to populist and corporatist political mechanisms and the model was particularly associated with Peronism which gained popular legitimacy partly through the initial success of its welfare strategy. In both countries, though, the welfare model was unsustainable as the dynamic of equality became
perceived to be a threat to capitalism and as development strategies failed to provide governments with the financial ballast to sustain or expand welfare programmes.

The neo-liberal model of citizenship has replaced welfarism in both countries. In Chile it was introduced in the mid-1970s under General Pinochet's military regime which revolutionized political, economic and social relations. Presidents Aylwin and Frei have built on these new institutional and economic foundations, adapting the model of citizenship to democratic procedures and to a new relationship between citizen and democratic state. In Argentina, the model has only been systematically applied in recent times, being introduced by President Menem in 1989. As yet, the economic project is still at the transitional stage, the model of citizenship is not yet well established, and the norms and relationships of populism persist. However, in both cases the neo-liberal project is being pursued at every level of government and it is being injected into both formal and informal, national and personal sites of interaction to create a coherent and hegemonic model of citizenship.

In neither case, though, has the logic of neo-liberalism with its emphasis on privatized interrelationships eroded political power. While the state has been cut back and intervention has diminished, the power of political elites remains unassailable, and neo-liberalism and elitism combine to reinforce one another. The neo-liberal model of citizenship guides relations between individual citizens, and between the citizen and the state through a socialized framework of interaction which undermines political activity. The mechanism of elite rule and the model of citizenship associated with it dominates the relationship between the citizen and those who govern, centralizing political power. By encouraging depoliticization, the neo-liberal model enhances the legitimacy of elite rule, and in distancing the citizen from politics, the elite model reinforces the depoliticization associated with successful neo-liberalism.

Challenges to this new hegemonic combination have come from outside the formal political arena and reflect the participatory and welfare models of citizenship. The former was employed to greatest effect during the transition to democracy and the early years of democratic rule by social movements. Essentially, this model was employed as a strategy for participation under military rule and it remained effective during the democratic period only while government activity was focused on the military regime and its legacy, and only while the structures of the new democracy were soft and