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Unpacking patronage: the politics of patronage appointments in Argentina and Uruguay's central administrations

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ABSTRACT

This study makes the following contributions to the study of the politics of patronage appointments in Latin America: Conceptually, it adopts Kopecký et al (2008) distinction between clientelistic and non-clientelistic types of patronage politics as a conceptual lens for the study of patronage practices in Latin America's presidentialist regimes.. Analytically, it sets up a new taxonomy of patronage appointments based on the roles appointees' play vis a vis the Executive, the ruling party and the public administration that can be used for the comparative study of the politics of patronage. Empirically, it applies the taxonomy to a pilot study of the politics of patronage in Argentina and Uruguay under two left of centre administrations. Theoretically, it contributes to theory building by relating the findings of our research to differences in party systems and presidential powers in the countries under study and agency factors associated to the respective governments' political projects. The article concludes that differences in patronage practices are a manifestation of two different forms of exercising governmental power: a hyper-presidentialist, populist one in Argentina and a party-centered, social democratic one in Uruguay.

KEYWORDS

Patronage appointments, scope, power of appointment, motivations, roles.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the more important political factors affecting the quality of public institutions in Latin America is the colonization of the state by politically appointed public sector employees. In a classical study of the Latin American state published more than 40 years ago, Douglas Chalmers (1977, 24) argued that the enduring quality of Latin American politics in the 20th century was not a particular form of regime but the politicized quality of the state. He further argued that being "in power" was very

important because it gave leaders wide patronage and the authority to establish government programs to benefit existing supporters and attract new ones (31). Much has changed in Latin America since Chalmers published his work but the argument about the politicized nature of the state has stood the test of time (Philip 2003; Spiller, Stein, Tommasi and Scartascini 2008).

Scholars have used the terms patronage and clientelism interchangeably (Piattoni 2001, 4) to signify the exchange of public sector jobs for political support (Chubb 1982, Geddes, 1994) This assimilation, however, has been challenged by analytical distinctions between clientelistic and non-clientelistic modalities of patronage (Kopecký et al. 2008; Piattoni 2001) and by awareness of the different roles appointees play in different political environments and even within the same public administration (Grindle 2012). And yet, there is surprisingly little comparative empirical research about the politics of patronage appointments in Latin America's presidentialist central public administrations and about what explains differences between countries and within countries.

This article contributes to the study of patronage appointments in Latin America's presidentialist regimes by adopting and adapting the definition of patronage appointments formulated by Kopecký, Scherlis and Spirova (2008) in order to set up a taxonomy of patronage appointments. It subsequently applies the taxonomy to the study of the politics of patronage appointments in Argentina and Uruguay' central public administrations under two left –of- center governments and relate the findings to institutional and agency factors in the countries under study.

We assume that the scope of patronage appointments, the power to make appointments, the motivations for the appointments and the roles played by appointees are the defining elements of the politics of patronage. We argue that differences in patronage practices in the two countries were shaped by institutional differences in presidential powers and party systems and by agency factors related to the political forces that controlled the government in the period under study. We found that the scope of patronage largely confirms the picture of two politicized central administrations that were not, however, characterized by traditional forms of mass clientelism. Within this common baseline, politicisation not only run deeper in

Argentina but also worked differently in the two countries. In Argentina, patronage was centrally controlled by the presidency in strategic areas and by ministers in other areas. In contrast, in the case of Uruguay, patronage was largely devolved to the ruling party's fractions with little central interference from the presidency. These findings, together with differences in the roles played by appointees present a clear picture about two different political systems, two different political projects and, ultimately two different modalities of exercising governmental power: A hyper-presidentialist, populist, politico-institutional regime in Argentina and a party-centered, social democratic one in Uruguay.

The rest of the article proceeds as follows: The following section reviews the literature on patronage appointments. Section three defines the main concepts and sets up a taxonomy of patronage practices. The fourth section presents and justifies the choice of cases and theoretical assumptions. Section five outlines the research design and methodology. The sixth section presents the research's main empirical findings. The concluding section discusses institutional and agency explanations for the differences in patronage practices between the two countries.

2. THE POLITICS OF PATRONAGE APPOINTMENTS

While there are a wealth of studies of clientelism in Latin America (see, among several others, Hilgers 2012; Lazar 2004; Levitsky 2003; Stokes et al 2013; Taylor 2004), as a general rule these studies are mainly interested in explaining variations in the scope of clientelism (Ames 1977; Geddes 1994; Gordin 2001; Hagopian, Gervasoni and Moraes 2009;) and in investigating mechanisms of clientelistic exchanges at subnational level (Oliveros 2016, Stokes 2005 ; Auyero 2000) with little attention to mapping different patronage practices in central administrations.¹

Closer to our research interests are Kopecký, Scherlis and Spirova (2008) work on conceptualizing and measuring patronage appointments; Kopecký, Mair and Spirova (2012) studies of the politics of patronage in European democracies; studies of political

appointments and coalition management at the upper levels of the Federal Government in Brazil (Bersch, Praça and Taylor 2017; Garcia Lopez 2015); Scherlis (2012) study of patronage practices in Argentina as a party building strategy and Grindle's (2012) comparative study of patronage and the politics of administrative reform. In common, these studies argue that patronage appointments are controlled and contested by different actors, that patrons have different motivations for making appointments, and that appointees perform a variety of roles within the public administration and have different levels of competence.

In line with Kopecký, Scherlis and Spirova (2008), we define patronage appointments as the power of political actors to discretionally appoint individuals to (non-elective) positions in the public sector, irrespectively of the motivations for the appointment, the capabilities of the appointee and the legality of the decision. As Kopecký et al (2016) note, this definition includes patronage appointments that are clientelistic in nature and others in which appointments are used for purposes others than clientelistic exchanges. In consequence, we distinguish between different types of patronage roles (see below) and define clientelistic appointments -the exchange of public sector jobs for votes- (Lémarchand 1981; Roniger 1994) as one among different varieties of patronage appointments.

Two clarifications are necessary to better understand the relations between clientelism and patronage: 1) Recruitment to patronage positions defines obligations but not necessarily motivations and roles, as those who are politically appointed to positions in the public sector may be in such positions for a variety of reasons other than furthering the patron's electoral chances (Grindle 2012; Johnston 1979; Key 1964; Kopecký et al. 2012; Müller 2006). While sharing with clientelism the politicized and discretionary nature of the appointment, patronage appointments include appointments where professional qualifications –rather than just partisan criteria- may have been taken into account (Grindle 2012).

2) Trust is of the essence of patronage. It cuts across the other selection criteria and combines with them in different measures. It can be personal to the politician or political to the party. Even in the cases in which patronage appointments are made in

accordance with the law, there is always an asymmetry of power between the patron and the appointee, as appointees serve at the discretion of the patron, making the position dependent on relations of personal trust or partisan loyalty between the politician and the appointee (Grindle 2012: 19).

3. MAPPING PATRONAGE PRACTICES

In order to map patronage practices in Argentina and Uruguay we look at three elements regarded by the comparative literature as crucial for the study of the politics of patronage: The scope of appointments; who has the power to appoint and the patron's motivation for the appointments. We use the motivations for appointments as a lens to identify the roles played by appointees and construct a taxonomy of patronage appointments.

By scope we mean the range of state agencies that include patronage appointments (breadth) and the levels (depth) that patronage appointments reach within the administrative hierarchy of a given state agency. By measuring scope we aim at determining levels of politicization within countries and between countries (Kopecký et al 2016).

By power of appointment we understand the political actor or actors that have the real power of appointment regardless of the legal one. By studying the power of appointment we aim at determining the partisan or personalistic nature of patronage networks and the ability of Executive office holders to make patronage appointments with autonomy from the ruling party or parties (Scherlis 2012).

By motivations we understand the reason or reasons patrons have when making an appointment (patrons may have more than one reason when making an appointment). Motivations largely determine the roles played by appointees (Connaughton 2015; Grindle 2012) and define the appointees' relations vis a vis the Executive, political system and the public administration. Studies of patronage in Europe show that parties have sought to compensate their lack of an active militancy by becoming increasingly embedded in the state apparatus (Katz and Mair 1995). Following this

logic, appointments are used to reward and maintain a network of political activists. While this may be the case, there is still the need to find out what roles –both political and technical- are played by appointees once appointed. In line with this objective and in order to better capture the roles appointees play vis a vis the Executive, political parties and the public administration we analytically distinguish the following four motivations for the appointments:

1) The provision of technical advice and expertise. While a neutral and technically qualified civil service is regarded as an important asset for the practice of good governance, politicians increasingly seek the advice of experts aligned with their political views for policy design and implementation (Aberbach and Rockman 2005). We call this category '*counsellors*'. The category includes experts that are organically linked to the ruling party and combine both party political loyalty and technical capabilities (what the literature calls *technopols* (Domínguez 2010; Joignant 2011)) and more independent experts aligned with the policies rather than the politics of the government (what the literature calls *technocrats* (Dargent 2014)). Counsellors are typically found at the higher level of the administrative hierarchy.

2) The control of the public bureaucracy and other public sector resources (Kopecký et al 2012) by acting as the "eyes, ears and mouth" of their patrons (Connaughton 2015). We call this category '*commissars*'. Appointees in this category are appointed to supervise and control the public bureaucracy on behalf of the ruling party, party fraction or individual office holders. In the later case, they tend to follow their political patrons through their different postings, as exemplified by the "*equipos*" attached to individual politicians in Mexico. In a different guise, they are also common in the US federal administration ².

3) Securing political support for policy initiatives. This category of appointments is related to the political rather than the technical dimension of the policy-making process. In order to secure political support for public policy initiatives governments need skilled political negotiators to liaise with Congress and other key stakeholders. Appointees often play this role. We call these appointees '*political operators*'. Operators are particularly required in presidential systems in which the president has moderate powers and is obliged to permanently negotiate political support with other

political actors, as is the case in the USA (Halligan 2003). They tend to be party political cadres and to be found at the upper and medium levels of the public administration.

4) To gather electoral support. This task is typically carried out by low level public sector employees acting as brokers (*'punteros'*, *'cabos electorais'*, *'caudillos de barrio'*, 'ward bosses') and activists. Brokers mediate particularistic exchanges between the government and the recipients of public goods and services on behalf of the ruling party or individual politicians (Stokes et al. 2013). Activists, in turn, participate as political cliques in political rallies and distribute electoral propaganda on behalf of the ruling party or their political patrons. They are typical of political systems that resource to mass clientelism as an electoral currency, particularly at provincial and municipal level.

Table one below presents our taxonomy of patronage appointments.

Table 1 about here

We conceive our taxonomy as a tool that can be used to better understand differences in patronage practices. The prevalence of certain types of appointments and the nature of patronage networks within a given administration is set to impact differentially on governance and governability and give insights about the relations between party systems, executive office holders and the public administration.

In the case studies below, we apply our taxonomy to the study of the politics of patronage practices in the central public administrations of Argentina and Uruguay under the left-of-center governments of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner in Argentina (2003-2007; 2007- 2015) and Tabaré Vazquez (2005-2010) and José Mujica (2010-2015) in Uruguay.

4. CASE STUDIES: ARGENTINA AND URUGUAY

The cases of Argentina and Uruguay are particularly well-suited for a pilot study of the politics of patronage appointments in Latin America under John Stuart Mill's method of difference (Lijphart 1977; Mill 1961). The cases combine strong contextual similarities in the socio-economic and historical variables with important differences in the institutional and agency factors that are assumed to explain variation in the politics of patronage.

The combination of similarities and differences is bound to minimize variance in certain variables while making it more evident in others. Argentina and Uruguay have similar and relatively high levels of economic and human development (United Nations Development Program 2016; World Bank 2016), which has been regarded as an important variable in explaining the decline in the use of mass clientelism as an electoral resource (Kopecký and Mair 2006; Stokes et al. 2013). Both countries share strong historical, economic and cultural links and have experienced similar cycles of authoritarianism and democratization since the 1970s. The two countries were the earliest full democracies in Latin America (González 2012). Concerning the history of the public sector, in both countries democratization preceded the setting up of a professional bureaucracy, a sequence that has been associated to the politicization of the civil service (Shefter 1977). The two countries shared the same score (52 in a 1 to 100 scale) in Zuvanic, Iacoviello and Rodríguez Gustá (2010) index of the use of merit in bureaucratic bodies. The score places them equal fourth in the region behind Brazil, Chile and Costa Rica and well above the Latin American average of 33 in the ranking of public sector professionalization. These conditions make the central public administrations of these two relatively highly-developed countries an ideal locus for our research because we expect to find politicized but not mass clientelistic central administration bureaucracies³.

In contrast, the two countries exhibit significant variation in key institutional and agency factors that have been related to the politics of patronage. Institutionally, Argentina has been characterized as a "delegative democracy" and as a hyper-presidentialist democracy (Castells 2012; Casullo 2015; Nino 1992; O'Donnell 1994; Rose-Ackerman and Desierto 2011). The characterization refers to the combination of

majoritarian politics, weak horizontal accountability and the political centrality of the presidency. The Argentinean president enjoys strong legislative powers that allow the president to rule by decree, have budgetary initiative and use legislative line item veto (Cox and Morgenstern 2001; Payne 2006; Negretto 2004). Concerning the party system, from the second half of the twentieth century until the November 2015 presidential election, it was dominated by the Peronist Party. The 2001-02 financial crises hit particularly hard the non-Peronist parties in office at the time, reinforcing the historical hegemony of the Peronist Party that won three consecutive presidential elections between 2003 and 2011 (Casullo 2015; Torre 2003).

Institutionally, Uruguay is a liberal democracy (Freedom House 2017) characterized by a strong rule of law and an effective system of checks and balances (World Bank 2016). The political system is characterized by a highly institutionalized party system with strong programmatic elements (Kitschelt et al. 2010; Mainwaring and Scully 1995). Parties are internally organized in political fractions that are also highly institutionalized. Presidential powers in Uruguay are relatively weaker than in Argentina (Payne 2006)⁴. Politically, the power of the president is constrained by the need to negotiate with the ruling party and party fractions and by a more powerful parliament. This makes Uruguay one of the few countries in the region that can be typified as a system of party government (Katz 1986; Rose 1969; Wildenmann 1986).

Politically, Argentina has a long-tradition of populism, to the extent that it has been labeled a populist democracy (Casullo 2015). The Peronist Party has been historically regarded as one of the electorally most successful populist machines in the region (Levitsky and Roberts 2011). Presidents belonging to the Peronist Party have traditionally enjoyed a high degree of discretion to allocate state resources that they use to consolidate their power over the ruling party and, via the state governors, over the clientelistic provincial political machines that provide crucial electoral support (Scherlis 2013).

The Peronist Party administrations of Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007) and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007– 2011 and 2011-2015) were regarded as examples of the national popular, left-populist governments in Latin America's populist- social

democratic Left divide (González 2012; Horowitz 2012; Philip and Panizza 2011). The Kirchners' own political grouping, the Frente para la Victoria (FPV, the Front for Victory, also known as "*Kirchnerismo*"), was formally part of the Peronist Party but relations between the two organizations were often strained, as the grouping became effectively an autonomous political machine controlled by the Kirchners from the Executive.

The Frente Amplio administrations that ruled Uruguay between 2005 and 2015 were regarded as part of Latin America's 21st century's "late social democracies" (Lanzaro 2014). The Frente Amplio is an alliance of left and left-of-center political groupings that in line with the institutional features of Uruguay's political parties are formally constituted as autonomous political fractions. The Frente Amplio's access to government in 2005 represented an important change in Uruguay's historical domination by the traditional Colorado and Blanco parties without, however, representing a rupture with the country's liberal democratic institutions, strong welfare state, mixed economy, policy gradualism and highly institutionalized party system (Lanzaro 2014; Panizza 2015).

The large number of institutional and agency variables that are considered to influence patronage appointments makes difficult to account for differences in practices at high levels of generality independently of the political context. Aware of the danger of generalizing from a paired comparison, this study assumes that differences in the politics of patronage in the two countries are the result of a number of politico-institutional and agency factors that find expression in two different forms of exercising governmental power. We expect that in the period under study in Argentina, stronger presidential powers, a dominant party, a weaker party system and high levels of political polarization will result in higher levels of politicization of the public administration; that presidents and ministers will exercise their power of appointment with relatively high degrees of autonomy from the ruling party and that control of the public administration and the electorally-driven intermediation between the government and the recipients of public goods and services will be a

significant motivation for the appointments. In Uruguay, we expect that a competitive party system, the consociational nature (Lijhpart 1977) of the decision-making process and lower levels of political polarization will result in a lower scope of patronage, that parties will have significant influence in the process of appointments, that securing political support for the government will be a significant motivation for the appointment and that the programmatic nature of the party system will be reflected in the importance of technical advice and expertise. In terms of our taxonomy, we expect to find relatively more commissars brokers and activists in Argentina and more counsellors and political operators in Uruguay.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Measuring patronage is no straightforward, as the exercise of patronage comprises a combination of formal and informal practices (Helmke and Levitsky 2006). An analysis of formal rules, such as laws, decrees and constitutional dispositions that regulate public sector appointments can give a broad idea of the official number of discretionary appointments. Such a study, however, risks missing a significant number of appointments that are regulated by informal rules that sidestep, bypass, distort or simply violate legal dispositions. As Grindle (2012, 145-46) put it, as is often the case 'de facto practice trump de jure theory'. In an attempt to have a more comprehensive picture, scholars have attempted to estimate the numbers of discretionary appointments by using proxies, such as increases in the number of public employees or in personnel spending. These indicators, however, are influenced by factors beyond the power of actors to appoint discretionarily and may thus not truly reflect patronage practices (Kopecký et al. 2012; Scherlis 2013).

Informal practices are notoriously difficult to measure with accuracy and borderline cases often require judgment calls. An accepted qualitative method for measuring the impact of informal institutions on public life is to survey the perceptions of experts (Peabody et al. 1990; Transparency International 2017). For example, the method was

used by Peter Evans and James Rauch (1999) to identify features of Weberian bureaucracies in newly industrialized countries.

Our research adopts and adapts the method of experts' survey originally developed by Kopecký et al. (2008) and more recently employed by Meyer-Sahling and Veem (2012) and by Kopecký et al (2016) for the comparative study of patronage in 22 countries from five world regions. In order to have a more rounded picture of the two countries' patronage practices and in an attempt to minimize cognitive and political bias we drew our interviewees from a wide range of political and professional fields comprising experts with a broad knowledge of the public administration and party systems of the countries in question and key informants chosen for their inside knowledge of the four areas of the central public administration of each country selected for this research. Experts included scholars, specialized journalists, trades union leaders, parliamentarians, and public sector consultants. Key informants, included active and retired career civil servants, trade unionists, current and former Executive office holders and politically-appointed public sector workers.

We choose four policy areas representative of the central public administration in both countries: the economy, social development, foreign relations and agriculture. These areas were chosen on the expectation based on the literature on public bureaucracies that they represent different patterns of bureaucratic professionalization (Peters 1988): More professional in the economy and foreign affairs, more technical in agriculture and more politicized in social development. The administrative hierarchy in each area was divided into "High" (top managerial level), "Medium" (lower managerial and high administrative levels) and "Low" (low administrative level, technical and service personnel) tiers, in accordance with each country's administrative scale of public sector positions.

The questionnaire was administered through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with 16 experts (9 in Argentina and 7 in Uruguay), and 64 key informants (29 in Argentina and 35 in Uruguay) conducted between [month/year] and [month/year]. The questionnaire and list of interviewees with their work profiles are attached as an appendix. Interviewees were asked to provide quantitative estimates and qualitative

accounts of patronage. As a way of estimating the scope of patronage appointments taking into account both formal and informal rules we used the so-called Index of Party Patronage (IPP) (Kopecký et al. 2008, 2012, 2016). The method uses survey results to measure the extension and depth of patronage appointments across institutions and levels of hierarchy. The IPP varies from zero (no patronage appointments) to one (all appointments are patronage appointments).

We complemented the questionnaire and checked the interviewees' views against a number of primary and secondary sources. These included government documents, background interviews, freedom of information requests, press reports, international surveys and academic studies. For changes in the total number of public employees we relied on officially published figures. We surveyed legislation and other publically available sources to estimate the number of discretionary appointments authorized by law. The following section presents a summary of our main findings.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Scope and politicization

According to our survey, at 0.77, the IPP of Argentina was significantly higher than that of Uruguay (0.61). To place the figures into context, the IPPs of both Argentina and Uruguay were above those of Eastern Europe (0.42) and Southern Europe (0.45) but well below those of Guatemala (0.98) and Paraguay (0.97), two Latin American countries characterized by mass patronage (Kopecký et al 2016).

To complement the IPP, we looked at the ratio of non-tenured (mainly public sector workers on fix-term contracts) to tenured positions. While this indicator must be used with caution because non-tenured employees can be appointed for a variety of reasons and many contracts tend to be eventually converted into tenured positions (Scherlis 2013), a large number of non-tenured public workers on fix-term contracts

may be a mechanism for setting up a parallel administration and thus a proxy for politicization. In Argentina under the Kirchners, there was a sharp increase in the ratio of non-tenured to tenured appointments, which went from 20.3% to 57.3% (Llano and Iacoviello 2015). In contrast, in Uruguay, there was a small decline from 8.8% to 6.2% in the same ratio during the administrations of the Frente Amplio (Observatorio 2016).

Figure 1 about here

Patronage appointments reached considerable depths within the administrative structure, particularly in Argentina⁵. In this country, 89% of interviewees considered that most appointments (ranging between 80% and 100%) at the top level of the administrative structure (the one immediately below political positions, such as ministers) were based on patronage, whilst in Uruguay 88% of interviewees also choose this range

The finding was not particularly surprising in the case of Uruguay, given that the law establishes the discretionary nature of appointments at this level. In Argentina, however, positions at this level are mandated by law to be filled through competitive processes (*“concursos de oposicion y méritos”*) among high civil servants and the winners should be appointed for a period of between five to seven years.

According to the survey results, a significant proportion of mid-level appointments in both countries were also based on patronage. Range estimates, however, varied significantly both within and between countries. In Argentina, 35.7 % of respondents estimated that between 50% and 79% of appointments at this level were patronage appointments, while a further 32% estimated the appointments at the lower range of between 10% to 49% . In Uruguay, 39.5 % and 18.6% of interviewees opted for the higher and lower ratios respectively. Altogether, 67.7% of interviewees in Argentina and 58.1% of those in Uruguay considered that there were at least some patronage appointments at the medium level of the administrative hierarchy. This finding goes against legal dispositions in both countries prescribing that most if not all positions at this level must be filled by career civil servants in accordance to rules for promotions.

A difference between the two countries was that while in Uruguay appointees at this level were usually co-opted from within the ministry or agency and appointed to a higher managerial position on a temporary basis, in Argentina they tended to be outsiders to the ministry or agency, thus further disrupting the agency's administrative structure.⁶

The survey also showed differences between Argentina and Uruguay in the scope of patronage appointments at the lowest levels of the public administration. The central public administration in Uruguay was perceived as nearly free of patronage appointments by a large majority of interviewees (97.8%). In contrast, all interviewees in Argentina claimed that there were at least some patronage appointments at this level, although they differed on estimates of its magnitude. Differences within countries in estimates of patronage at both medium and lower levels are at least partly explained because of variations in scope between the areas of the public administration covered in the survey. For example, both in Argentina and Uruguay key informants in the ministry of Social Development coincided that most appointments at medium level were patronage appointments while informants from the ministry of Foreign Relations perceived lower levels of patronage at the same level.

Table 2 about here

All interviewees in Uruguay agreed that political and policy differences between the Frente Amplio administrations and previous governments did not lead to a significant overall increase in patronage appointments or to different patterns of politicization. It must be noted, however, that the number of legally authorized discretionary appointments ("*cargos de confianza*") at both national and departmental (provincial) level went up from 324 in 2005 (Ramos Larraburu, 2009, 354; Correa Freitas and Vázquez 1998, 159) to 671 in 2015 (Oficina Nacional de Servicio Civil, *Observatorio de la Gestión Humana del Estado*, 2016 29, Table 11).⁷ While the increase is apparently significant, only 159 of the positions were in the central administration with the majority (440) of the *cargos de confianza* being appointments at the departmental

(provincial) level. Moreover, these positions amount to just about 0.2% of the total number of public employees. Regarding non-discretionary appointments, the administration of President Mujica centralized civil service recruitment in the National Civil Service Bureau (*Oficina Nacional de Servicio Civil, ONSC*) to increase compliance with meritocratic processes⁸.

5.2 Who appoints?

The degree of consultation between the president, ministers and parties when making patronage appointments is an important indicator of the powers of the president and of the relations between the ruling party or parties and Executive office holders. Our research shows that while in some cases officeholders (presidents and ministers) exercised their powers of appointment autonomously, in others they did it in consultation with other relevant actors. Figure 2 summarizes the aggregate results of the respondents' perceptions on the powers of appointment in Argentina and Uruguay

Figure 2 about here

Two main findings stand out from this section of the research:

1) Presidents and ministers played a key role in the appointment process in both countries. The majority of our informants (48.5% in Argentina and 74% in Uruguay) agreed that ministers were the most relevant patrons within the ministries under their control but a significantly larger number of informants in Argentina (45%) than in Uruguay (12%) considered that it was the president who held the main power of appointment.⁹ The claim that ministers had power of appointment did not mean, however, that they personally made discretionary appointments in all areas and at all levels within their domains. Ministers often delegated powers of appointments down the administrative ladder to under-secretaries, agency directors and program coordinators, whom in many cases were political appointees themselves.

2) In Argentina, over 70% of respondents claimed that presidents and ministers made appointments with autonomy from the ruling party. Presidents Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner largely ignored the ruling Peronist Party when making appointments, relying instead mostly on trusted former members of Néstor Kirchner's state administration of the province of Santa Cruz (1991-2002) (Scherlis 2012) and used patronage appointments to build up their own political grouping, the *Frente Para la Victoria*, from within the state.

During the administrations of Presidents Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, there was an intensive process of top-down politicization (Van der Meer et al. 2007) intended to secure the Presidency's political control of the public administration, particularly over strategic agencies. As noted by several key informants, this process was particularly noticeable during the last two years of President Fernández de Kirchner's second administration. To this purpose, the Executive colonized key public sector agencies by making patronage appointments at levels traditionally staffed by professional bureaucrats.¹⁰ For instance, in 2006, in a highly publicized and well-documented case (Jueguen and Bullrich 2009; Noriega 2012), the government of President Néstor Kirchner removed over 20 professional staff from the National Statistics Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censo*, INDEC) and replaced them with political appointees in order to manipulate official figures for inflation.

The distinction between the personal and the partisan and between public sector duties and political activism was, however, not always clear-cut in Argentina. For example, the appointment of militants of *La Cámpora* (a political grouping directly controlled by the Kirchners) was based on personal links that often went back to a common university background but in many cases appointer and appointee also shared politico-ideological sympathies. Moreover, *La Cámpora* itself evolved from being a loose network of militants into a more institutionalized political grouping, further blurring the distinction between personal and partisan loyalty. The grouping was originally set up by Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's son, Máximo, in 2003 as an organization of young political cadres at the service of his

parents' political project (Rocca Rivarola 2013). Particularly in the last two years of her second mandate (2011-2015), President Fernández de Kirchner used her powers of appointment to build up *La Cámpora* as a personal political machine (Novaro, Bonvecchi and Cherny (2015). Close political allies of the president followed the same logic. For example, Alicia Kirchner, sister of the late Néstor Kirchner and Minister for Social Development during both Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner's administrations, set up the so-called *Kolina* organization of activists within the ministry as a personal political apparatus that came to be known as "*La Agrupación de Alicia*" ("Alicia's Grouping") (Vázquez 2014: 86).

In contrast to the FPV's state-centered construction of its political organization, in Uruguay party fractions were structured outside and independently of the public administration. However, party fractions were still key actors in the politics of patronage. As a general rule, presidents from all parties took into account the political weight of the ruling parties' highly institutionalized party fractions when making ministerial appointments or, in the case of coalition governments, of the parties and factions of the governmental coalition (Buquet, Chasqueti and Cardarello 2013: 17). According to our survey, ministers enjoyed a high degree of autonomy from the president when making appointments within their ministries but in most cases they consulted their party or party fraction and appointed members of their own political fractions. A study of discretionary appointments below cabinet level during the 2005-2015 Frente Amplio administrations by Ramos, Casa and Samudio (unpublished) shows a high positive correlation between the relative electoral weight of the party's fractions and the number of discretionary appointments made by each fraction, suggesting that discretionary appointments were part of the government's coalition management toolkit.

5.3 Motivations and roles

Addressing the patrons' motivations for making appointments is crucial for understanding the roles played by political appointees. Table 3 summarizes the interviewees' perceptions about the patrons' main motivations and of the roles

performed by the appointees. In analyzing the results it must be taken into account that patrons could have more than one motivation when making an appointment.

Table 3 about here

According to 87% of interviewees in Argentina and 75% of those in Uruguay the main motivation for appointments at the top and medium tiers of the public administration was the provision technical advice and expertise for policy design and implementation that lead to the appointment of *counsellors*. Technical expertise, however, was not the sole criteria for these appointments, as it was always combined with either personal or partisan trust. While in Uruguay there was a strong emphasis on partisan trust, in Argentina there were no significant differences between personal and partisan trust, which is in line with the observation from interviewees that technical, personal and partisan links were often superimposed in groupings such as *La Cámpora*.¹¹

A further significant difference in motivations is apparent from comparing the relative importance assigned to control over the bureaucracy and to the ability to operate politically. According to the survey figures, across all levels of the two countries' central public administration there was more than 10 percentage points difference in favour of Argentina in the importance assigned to control over the bureaucracy that was reflected in the appointment of a higher number of commissars. Some interviewees noted that the Kirchners' administrations were particularly mistrustful of the loyalty and neutrality of the civil service. One key informer, a politically-appointed high civil servant in the Ministry of Finance, who belongs to the *Cuerpo de Administradores Gubernamentales* (a senior public sector managers body of public employees), encapsulated the government's skepticism about the principle of politically-neutral civil service by arguing that it would be impossible to implement government policies by trusting civil servants from previous administrations because of their different views about the working of the economy.¹² The informant's remark must be interpreted within the context of a government that sought to break with the neoliberal consensus that had dominated Argentinean politics over the past two

decades (Wylde 2016). Rightly or wrongly, office-holding politicians saw career civil servants as part of the old consensus which could only be broken by the appointment of trusted commissars to control the public bureaucracy.

Table 4 about here

Moreover, technical expertise and political activism were not regarded as separate qualities; rather, they complemented each other in the technical and political pursuit of an alternative model of development and the consolidation of the political hegemony of the Frente Por la Victoria. As one of our interviewees, an agronomist working in the Ministry of Agroindustry, put it: *“People think that because we are militants of La Cámpora we are here to bang the drums [a practice associated with Peronista party and unions political rallies] and eat choripans [bbq pork sausages, a street food associated with popular culture] but in fact many of us belong to the intellectual middle class”*.¹³ In an example of the blurring of the distinction between technical expertise and political militancy, in 2011 a group of economists within the Ministry of the Economy created an organization called *La Gran Makro*, with the purpose of publicly defending the government’s economic policies as a technically sound alternative to neoliberal orthodoxy (Vázquez 2014: 73).

In contrast, in Uruguay, the more gradualist nature of political and economic change and the consociational characteristics of its political system resulted in the highest priority assigned to the appointment of political operators in order to articulate political support for the government’s policies within the ruling party and party fractions: 69% of our interviewees in Uruguay considered the ability to operate politically as relevant selection criteria at the top level of the public administration and a further 43% regarded it as relevant at the medium level. The corresponding figures for Argentina were 42.9% and 10.7% respectively.

Furthermore, it is important to notice that in Uruguay counsellors often doubled as political operators, as many counsellors were also party members with considerable political experience and used their political knowhow to gain support for government policies. One of our key informants, , a high ranking policy maker in the ministry of the Economy during the first Vázquez administration, highlighted his role as political operator, noting that he used to spend about half of his time negotiating political support for the ministry's policies with leaders of his own party within the Executive, Parliament and the Frente Amplio's executive¹⁴.

In the lower tier of the public administration the appointment of brokers to mediate between the government and the recipients of public goods and services was perceived by 64% of interviewees that detected patronage at this level in Argentina as the top motivation for the appointments. Other studies have shown that the wider category of political activists was also relevant at this level (Zarazaga 2014, Faur 2011).

¹⁵ The importance of political activism at this level is reflected in the comment from one of our key informants,, an employee in the ministry of Agroindustry: *“ I recently joined the ministry together with a large group of Peronist militants to work in the administration while simultaneously campaigning for the government. Recently, my comrades called me to attention because lately I have become too involved with my work within the ministry to the neglect of political militancy.”*¹⁶

In Uruguay, the low numbers of discretionary appointments at this level do not allow to draw any firm conclusions about motivations

6. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Our comparative study bridges the literature on public administration and on politics, two strands of scholarly research that not always talk to each other. It makes four

contributions to the study of the politics of patronage in Latin America: Conceptually, it adopts Kopecký et al distinction between clientelistic and other modalities of patronage appointments and broadens the authors' classification of the patrons motivations for making appointments to better reflect the variety of roles played by appointees vis a vis the Executive, the ruling party and the public administration . Analytically, it sets up a new taxonomy of patronage appointments that can be used for the comparative study of the politics of patronage. Empirically, it applied the taxonomy to a pilot study of the politics of patronage in Argentina and Uruguay under two left of centre administrations. Theoretically, with the customary caveats about generalizing from a paired comparison, contributes to theory building on the politics of patronage in Latin America by relating differences in patronage practices to institutional and political factors in the countries under study.

Five main findings emerge from our study:

- 1) The scope of patronage largely confirms the picture of two politicized central administrations that were not, however, characterized by traditional forms of mass clientelism. Within this common baseline, differences in the IPP and in the ratio of non- tenured to tenured public sector workers are evidence that the central public administration in Argentina was more politicized than in Uruguay.
- 2) Politicisation not only run deeper in Argentina but it also worked different in the two countries. In Argentina, patronage was centrally controlled by the presidency in strategic areas and by ministers in other areas. As a general rule, there was little consultation with the Peronist Party when making appointments.

Particularly during the administration of President Fernández de Kirchner, patronage appointments were used to build up *La Cámpora* as a personal political machine at her own service, autonomous from the Peronist Party and even the *Frente Parala Victoria*. Through the appointment of *La Cámpora* cadres in different areas of the public administration, President Fernández de Kirchner reinforced her control over a public sector bureaucracy that was deeply mistrusted to implement the foundational project of her government. Last but not least, there was significant blurring of the divide between public sector service and political activism.

In contrast, in the case of Uruguay, patronage was largely devolved to the *Frente Amplio's* fractions with little central interference from the presidency. As a general rule, ministers appointed persons that enjoyed their personal trust but in consultation with their own fraction. The more horizontal nature of patronage appointments in Uruguay suggests that appointments were used as tools of coalition management by the presidency and as mechanisms to consolidate the influence of their fractions by ministers.

3) An analysis of the motivations for the appointment in terms of our taxonomy shows that contrary to our expectations there were no significant differences between the two countries in the importance assigned to the appointment of counsellors. This was an unexpected finding concerning Argentina, given the emphasis in the literature on the Peronist Party's lack of firm ideological foundations and the importance assigned by the party to corporatism and clientelism as an electoral mechanism. The finding, however, is in line with arguments that programmatic and clientelistic electoral appeals can coexist in a political system, often operating at different territorial and political levels (Luna 2014). The importance of counsellors in Argentina can also be explained by the Kirchners' determination to make a clear break with the neoliberal policies of the previous administrations (Wylde 2016) and their lack of trust in the neutrality of a public administration they suspected to too close politically and ideologically to previous governments.

In contrast, and in line with our expectations, we found that relatively more commissars were appointed in Argentina and more political operators in Uruguay. If we take this finding together with the findings about differences in scope and in the real powers of appointment, a clear picture emerges about two different political systems, two different political projects and, ultimately two different modalities of exercising governmental power.

Institutionally, differences in patronage practices can be attributed to Argentina being a political system with a strong presidency and a weakly institutionalized party system in which the Peronist Party was the dominant party during the period under study and the *Frente Para la Victoria* emerged as a semi-autonomous, personalistic, faction

within the Peronist Party directly controlled by the President. In contrast, Uruguay is a typical case of party government (Rose 1969) in which political parties have a strong institutional presence and deep social roots. Ruling parties never offer a blank check to the president who was obliged to permanently negotiate policy support with his own ministers (usually party factions' leaders) and with the party's parliamentary fractions.

4) Within this context, agents developed their own strategies regarding the politics of patronage. In the case of Argentina, *Kirchnerismo* exacerbated the top – down politicization of the public administration and the in-built personalistic bias of patronage, particularly during President Fernández de Kirchner's second administration. Meyer-Sahling and Veen (2012) claim that problems of political control over the bureaucracy are more severe in political contexts characterized by regular wholesale alternations of ideological blocks of parties in government. Drawing from this claim, it could be argued that the hyper-politicized, rupturist nature of *Kirchnerismo* (Laclau 2006; Panizza 2015) brand of left-populism made the political control of the bureaucracy a high priority for the government, as expressed in the importance assigned to the appointment of political *commissars*. In contrast, in the Uruguayan case, the Frente Amplio as a moderate left-of- center political force largely maintained the traditional patterns of bargain and negotiations characteristics of the politics of appointment in Uruguay. Hence, the relatively larger number of political operators.

5) Last but not least, our findings are relevant for understanding the relations between politics and the public administration. The relatively large number of *counsellors* in both countries shows that both governments have important programmatic components and that securing policy responsiveness was a high priority¹⁷. We must stress, however, that the fact that appointees had technical expertise does not mean that they were the best-qualified persons for the jobs, particularly given that technical expertise was combined with personal or partisan trust. The abundance of *commissars* and political operators at medium level is also consistent with the administrations' prioritization of policy responsiveness. Taken together, *counsellors*, *commissars* and

political operators almost monopolized policy design and implementation. While this secured policy responsiveness it raises the question of whether this institutional design is the best to secure the quality of public policies. But this is a matter for further research.

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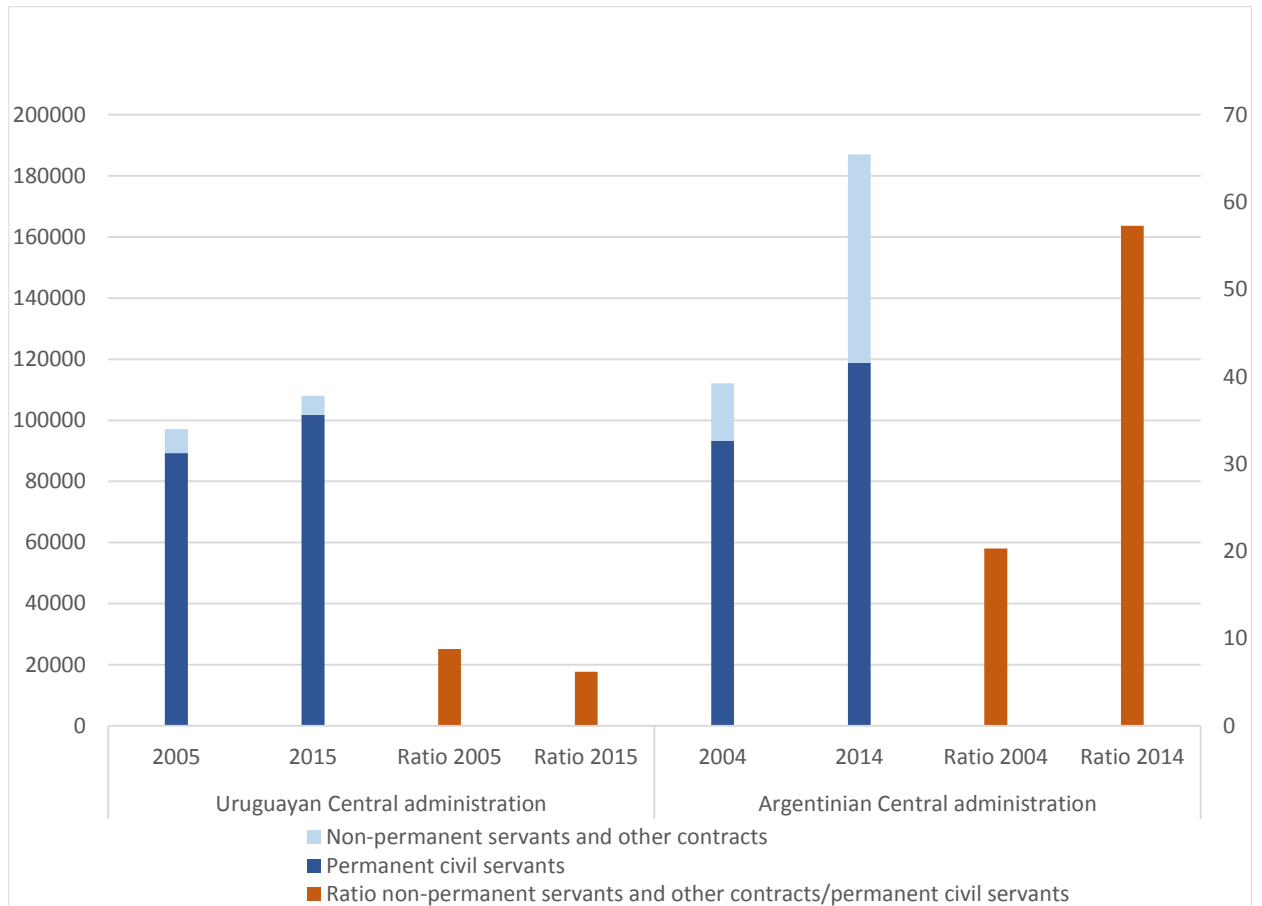
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FIGURES AND TABLES

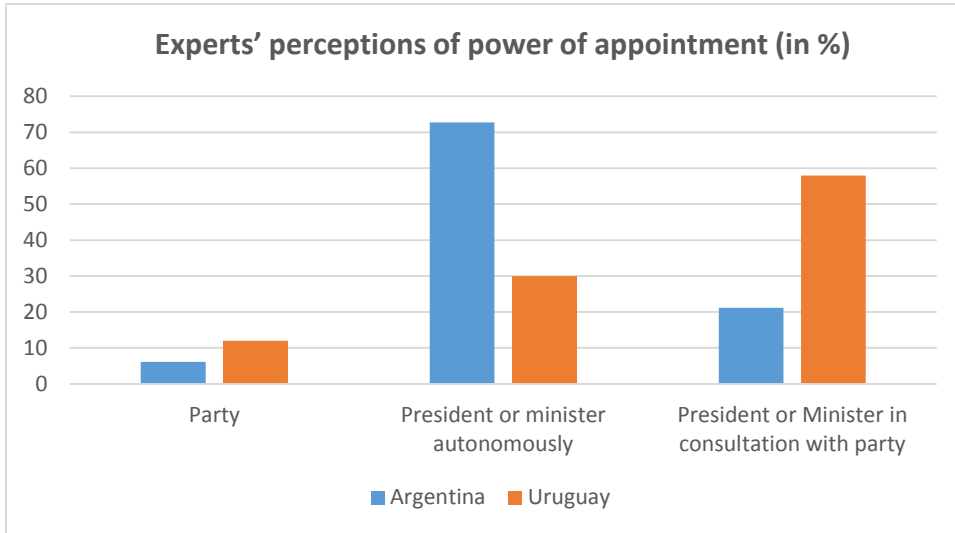
Figure 1. Evolution of permanent and non-permanent civil servants in the central administration in Uruguay (2005-2015) and Argentina (2004-2014)



Sources: Llano and Iacoviello 2015; Observatorio de la Gestión Humana del Estado 2016 (ONSC)

Figure 2

- Experts perception of power of appointment (in %)



Source: Survey results

Table 1: Taxonomy of patronage practices

Motivations	Roles
Technical advice and expertise	<i>Counsellors (technopols and technocrats)</i>
Control of the public bureaucracy	<i>Commissars</i>
Political support for policy initiatives	<i>Political operators</i>
Electoral support	<i>Brokers and activists</i>

Source: Authors' elaboration

Table 2. Scope of patronage by level

Level	Scope	Argentina	Uruguay
High	All-Almost all (80-100%)	89,3%	88,1%
	Many (50-79%)	10,7%	7,1%
	Quite (10-49%)	0%	4,8%
	A few (1-9%)	0%	0,0%
Middle	All-Almost all (80-100%)	28,6%	18,6%
	Many (50-79%)	35,7%	39,5%
	Quite (10-49%)	32,0%	18,6%
	A few (1-9%)	3,6%	14,0%
	None	0,0%	9,3%
Low	All-Almost all (80-100%)	7,1%	0%
	Many (50-79%)	14,3%	0%
	Quite (10-49%)	32,1%	2,3%
	A few (1-9%)	46,4%	34,9%
	None	0,0%	62,8%

Source: Survey results

Table 3 – Perception of the importance in motivations and roles for appointments by level of administrative hierarchy

Level	Argentina	Importance	Uruguay	Importance
High	Policy Expertise (<i>Counsellors</i>)	92,6%	Policy expertise (<i>Counsellors</i>)	79,5%
	Control of Bureaucracy (<i>Commissars</i>)	63,0%	Operate Politically (<i>Political Operators</i>)	77,3%
Medium	Policy Expertise (<i>Counsellors</i>)	82,1%	Policy Expertise (<i>Counsellors</i>)	69,4%
	Control of Bureaucracy (<i>Commissars</i>)	70,4%	Control of Bureaucracy (<i>Commissars</i>)	61,1%
Low	Reward of brokers and activists	64,0%	N/A	-

Source: Authors' elaboration from survey results.

Table 4- Informants' perceptions of motivations for appointments: Control and operate politically only (all levels) (%)

	Control of Bureaucracy	Operate Politically
Argentina	67.27	42.86
Uruguay	56.52	66.25

Source: Surveyresults

ENDNOTES

¹ The study of the different roles that patronage appointments play in central administrations, has received more attention in Europe (Connaughton 2015; LSE Group 2012; Askim et al 2017; Kristinsson 2016) than in Latin America. European studies however, tend to concentrate in the narrow category of advisers, while the range of political appointees is much broader in Latin America's politicized central public administrations.

² See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/white-house-installs-political-aides-at-cabinet-agencies-to-be-trumps-eyes-and-ears/2017/03/19>.

³ However, in Argentina mass clientelism is still common at provincial level (Scherlis 2013: 29).

⁴ Payne (2006) assigns Uruguayan presidents an index of 0.39 and to Argentinean presidents an index of 0.47 in his 0 to 1 scale of presidential powers in which 0 is minimum power and 1 maximum power.

⁵ The questionnaire provided a nominal list of the positions considered to be at the higher and medium levels of the administrative structure in each country.

⁶ In Uruguay, to get round the legal disposition ministers promote functionaries of their personal or political trust within their ministries in an acting capacity, a widely used mechanism known as *encargaturas*. The use of this mechanism was mentioned by several experts in the semi-structured section of the interviews. In Argentina, in contrast, ministries tend to bring "their own people" from outside. For corroborating evidence on Uruguay see Filgueira, Heredia, Narbondo y Ramos (2002). For Argentina, see Scherlis (2009) and Ferraro (2006) .

⁷ In the table the *cargos de confianza* are codified as *escalafón "Q"*.

⁸ "*Uruguay Concurso*". Article 127, law 187191 of 27 December 2010 and Executive Decree dated 27 February 2011.

https://www.uruguayconcurso.gub.uy/uruguayconcurso/uruguay_concurso_normativa.htm. Accessed August 22, 2016.

⁹ The fact that the Kirchners' exercised their power of appointment over the head of ministers was noted by several interviewees, particularly interviews No 12 and No 5. . For corroborating evidence see also Scherlis 2012, 59.

¹⁰ According to key informants, this was particularly evident in the ministry of the Economy and in the international trade and economic areas of the ministry of Foreign Relations, in which outsiders were appointed to positions traditionally held by professional staff (interviews No. 9 and 14).

¹¹ Interviews n..2, 3, 5 12, and 15, . See also Scherlis (2012)

¹² Interview n. 9, to a politically-appointed high civil servant at the Ministry of Economy.

¹³ Interview n. 36 , to an appointee in charge of parliamentary affairs at the Ministry of Agroindustry. “Banging the drums and eating sausages” [*“tocar el bombo y comer choripán*] are part of the popular culture of Peronist militants during public demonstrations.

¹⁴ Interview n. 40 (Appendix), to a high political appointee at the Ministry of Economy.

¹⁵ <http://www.lanacion.com.ar/1869917-echaron-del-ministerio-de-agroindustria-a-330-contratados>

¹⁶ Interview n. 34 (Appendix), to a low rank civil servant at the Ministry of Agroindustry.

¹⁷ In the case of Argentina this may be surprising for those who equate populism with clientelism and lack of ideological principles. However, scholars of populism have shown that populism is different from clientelism and that populist parties can have strong politico-ideological components.