

membership and takes citizenship as a verb that involves political responsibility and engaging in civic duties, as opposed to being a given.

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NOTES

1. non-idealistic?
 2. Accent correct?
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Virginia Oliveros, *Patronage at Work: Public Jobs and Political Services in Argentina*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Tables, figures, notes, bibliography, index, 250 pp.; hardcover \$110, ebook \$88.

Clientelism in Argentina is a topic that has received a great deal of attention in the specialized literature. However, an important mechanism has remained understudied: the exchange of public sector jobs for political support. Public employees are an important gear of political machines but have not received the attention they deserve.

Studies of Argentine clientelism have focused mainly on *punteros*; that is, on local party brokers who mediate personal favors between poor voters and politicians (Auyero 2001; Levitsky 2003; Stokes 2005; Calvo and Murillo 2004; Zarazaga 2014). While many *punteros* are public employees or aspire to be, the two groups are not the same because many *punteros* do not hold¹ a public job. Public employees who received their jobs in exchange for political support are a particular subset within the party machines' army of campaigners. Oliveros's book successfully fills the gap by studying how patronage affects electoral competition and the quality of democracy.

This fascinating study is the first to provide a systematic analysis of the political activities of mid- and low-level public employees in Latin America. Oliveros argues that patronage jobs are distributed to supporters in exchange for a wide range of political services—such as helping with campaigns and electoral mobilization—that are essential for attracting and maintaining electoral support.

The book makes an important theoretical contribution. While it is clear that public employees provide political services to the politicians who have hired them, it is less clear why they do not renege on such deals after being appointed. They can easily back out of the agreement after getting the job. Following Stokes's rational inquiry method (2005), Oliveros asks why the deal is sustainable; that is,

why public sector employees would comply with their side of the patronage deal once they have the job. Her answer, however, departs not only from Stokes's fear of punishment explanation but also from explanations based on feelings of reciprocity (Finan and Schechter 2012).

Arguments that assume that clients—in this case public employees—abide by the deal out of fear of retaliation from politicians deny clients any agency and make them mere prisoners of their political bosses. Extensive fieldwork in Argentina has shown, on the contrary, that clients and brokers, whether public employees or not, have agency power (Auyero 2001; Zarazaga 2014; Nichter and Peress 2017; Calvo and Murillo 2019). Arguments that assume that clients abide by the deal out of a feeling of reciprocity with politicians assume that while politicians are rational actors, clients are myopic or naive. This simplification also ignores the evidence. Oliveros's theoretical argument has the significant merit of not assuming that clients do not have agency power or are less sophisticated or self-interested than their bosses. In her account, clients know how the political system works and approach politicians to ask them for a job in exchange for their political services. They are poor, but they are far from being just prisoners or naive players.

For Oliveros, what makes the patronage deal sustainable is that the fate of public employees is tied to that of the politicians who hire them. If political bosses keep their positions, the public employees they hire will probably keep theirs. If their political bosses continue to win elections, public employees will retain their jobs; if a competing politician wins the election, they will probably be fired or demoted. According to Oliveros, public employees who support the incumbent cannot credibly commit to providing services for the opposition. Because their jobs or working conditions are at risk, clients have an incentive to help their incumbent bosses stay in power. Therefore, patrons' and public employees' interests are aligned, and their deal is self-sustainable.

Building on the line of authors such as Auyero (2001), Calvo and Murillo (2019), and Zarazaga (2014), Oliveros contributes to the argument that clients have agency power and are not less rational than their bosses. However, I find that Oliveros's most important contribution is to provide quantitative evidence to sustain this type of argument. To my knowledge, this study is the first to provide a systematic analysis of the political activities of public employees in Latin America. Oliveros gathered survey data during face-to-face interviews with 1,184 low- and midlevel local public sector employees in the Argentine municipalities of Salta (Salta Province), Santa Fe (Santa Fe Province), and Tigre (Buenos Aires Province). In each municipality, she generated a random sample, thus building up a unique dataset about the topic. The book makes clear that the author did not only create this valuable dataset but has also acquired knowledge that is possible only through extensive fieldwork.

Works on clientelism or patronage usually resort to qualitative evidence, as patrons and clients are usually unwilling to answer survey questions about their deals and political activities. This makes it very hard to obtain random samples with high response rates. Oliveros minimized social response bias by cleverly resorting to survey and list experiments, which guarantee respondents anonymity.

With these tools she has managed to find solid evidence confirming her theory. The book is, in this aspect, solid and coherent.

Oliveros shows that most public sector jobs are distributed disproportionately to supporters through informal channels. She also shows that in exchange for these jobs, public employees help their political bosses who have hired them, campaigning, attending political rallies, and monitoring elections. From 12 to 22 percent of the public employees surveyed participated in one or more of these activities during elections. Furthermore, in line with the self-sustainable patronage theory, incumbents' supporters are more involved in the provision of these services than nonsupporters. Oliveros also documents that between elections, supporter workers grant more personal favors to their followers than do nonsupporters. By applying survey methodologies to the topic in a novel way, the book proves that patronage jobs are disproportionately distributed to supporters who believe that their fate is tied to the electoral fate of their bosses.

While the book clearly fills a gap in our knowledge, an interesting question arises about the sustainability of the self-sustainable patronage argument. The argument, as the collected evidence proves, works well for municipalities in which reasonably strong parties compete. In these cases, public employees who identify with the incumbent party will find it difficult to work for the opposition if it wins. However, in recent decades, Argentina has suffered the same process as most other democracies in the world, in which traditional parties have weakened. The author mainly focuses on municipal patronage. In 2015, the Peronist Party lost not only the presidency but also 11 municipalities of the 33 in the Greater Buenos Aires, where it has its stronghold. When a Peronist recovered the presidential office in 2019, the main opposition party was able to win the election for mayor in 6 of these municipalities.

With weaker parties and more alternation in power, public employees may just adapt and work politically for whoever is in power. It is not necessarily that they would renege on their patronage deal, but that such deals would always be with the mayor who is in power and only for as long as he or she is in power. In this sense, the deal would have a shorter horizon, increasingly becoming a one-shot deal. Hopefully, a new book by the author will explore this line of questioning.

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NOTE

1. Do not hold a public job.

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Paul Lagunes, *The Eye and the Whip: Corruption Control in the Americas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. Figures, tables, illustrations, bibliography, index, 168 pp.; hardcover \$74, ebook.

Construction of a prominent luxury apartment tower in São Paulo was halted in 1999 after allegations surfaced that it failed to meet the appropriate height-to-land-area requirements, and worse, was being built to a dangerous height that might imperil planes on the flight path to the Congonhas Airport. This alleged flaunting of seemingly reasonable construction rules naturally raised questions among *paulistanos* about the efficacy of regulation in the city. A few years later, a city building investigator was arrested. On his modest civil service salary, he had managed to buy up more than one hundred properties over seven years on the job. Perhaps the issue was not just ineffective regulation, but corruption as well?

This example leapt to mind as I read Paul Lagunes's smart book on corruption and anticorruption efforts in the "built environment" of the Western Hemisphere, the environment made up of human constructions that house and connect society in residences, office buildings, and roads. As Lagunes points out, examples of corruption in this environment are all too frequent, including the Walmart scandal that broke in Mexico in 2012, Lava Jato in Brazil in 2014, and bribery in New York City's property oversight department in the early 2000s (this last case a salutary reminder that corruption is not the province of Latin Americans alone).

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