BUREAUCRATS

Comparative Politics

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What we'll cover today

- How bureaucrats matter

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- Models of the bureaucracy

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- Models of the bureaucracy

- Patronage and what to do about it

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- Research design exercise

How bureaucratsd matter

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- In a context of polarization and declining trust, political entrepreneurs sometimes turn to attacks on bureaucracies and bureaucrats

- The erosion of bureaucratic capacity can fuel a loop of declining performance and trust

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  - Health is ultimately delivered by doctors and other healthcare professionals

  - Order is ultimately produced by police officers, soldiers, etc.

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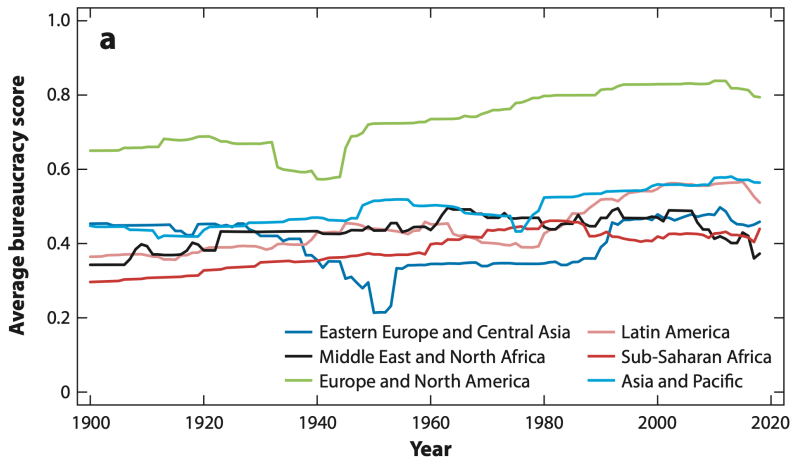
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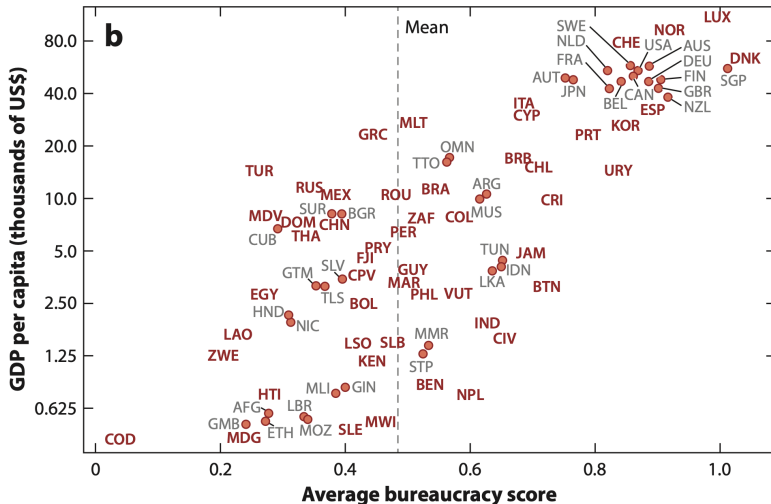
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- How do we improve the quality of our bureaucracies?

Bureaucratic quality is persistent

Figure a: Average bureaucracy score by Year, with lines for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and North America, and Asia and Pacific.
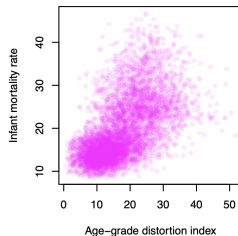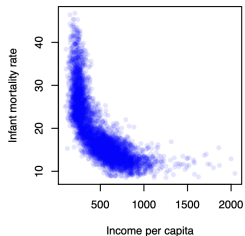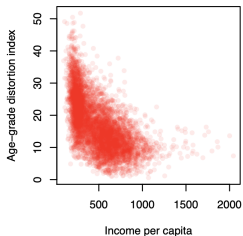
Bureaucratic quality is correlated with economic development

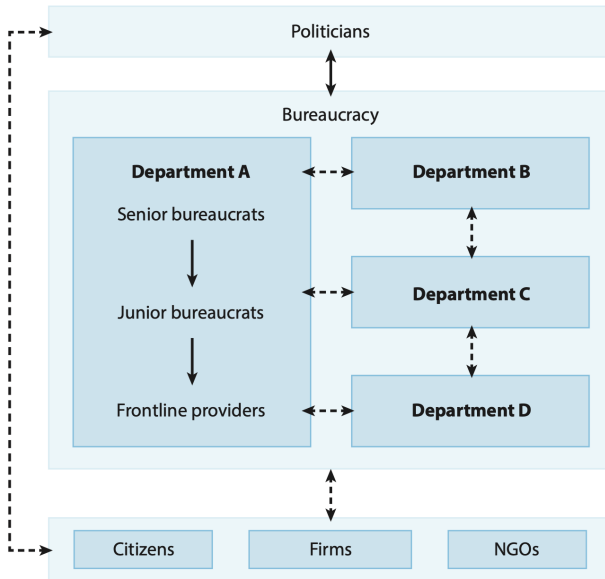# But bureaucratic performance varies a lot

Human development outcomes across Brazilian municipalities

Models of the bureaucracy

Bureaucracies as embedded hierarchies

Bureaucratic governance

- There are **two main perspectives** to think about bureaucratic governance:

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- Both make some **assumptions** that do not always hold true

Weberian models of the bureaucracy

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- By having capable and autonomous bureaucrats with authority, organizations will achieve **speed and efficiency**

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- **Give bureaucrats tenure**: hire bureaucrats for the long-term, and protect public organizations from turnover

- **Protect politicians from political interference**: politicians' interventions in the bureaucracy are harmful

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- **Politicians are not always ill-intentioned** when seeking to intervene in the bureaucracy

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  - **Information asymmetries**: the agent knows things that the principal ignores, which hinders monitoring

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- **New public management**: set up material incentives, decentralize, and promote competition

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- **Principals may not be capable or able to hold agents accountable**

Patronage and what to do about it

What is patronage?

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- A more precise definition of patronage is the discretionary hiring and firing of bureaucrats based, at least partly, on political criteria

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- But there are very wide variations in the prevalence and nature of patronage across and within countries

Where do we find patronage

Figure 1-1: Average country-expert responses to the question
How often do the political connections of the applicants decide who get the job?
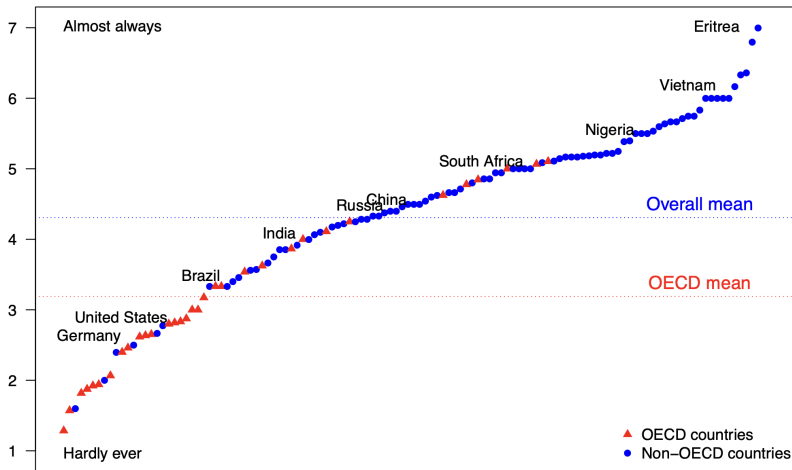
My book project on patronage: "Inside jobs"

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  - Managing bureaucrats

Key take-aways on patronage

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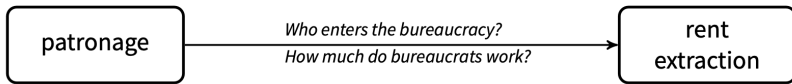- **Anti-patronage policies can have undesirable consequences**
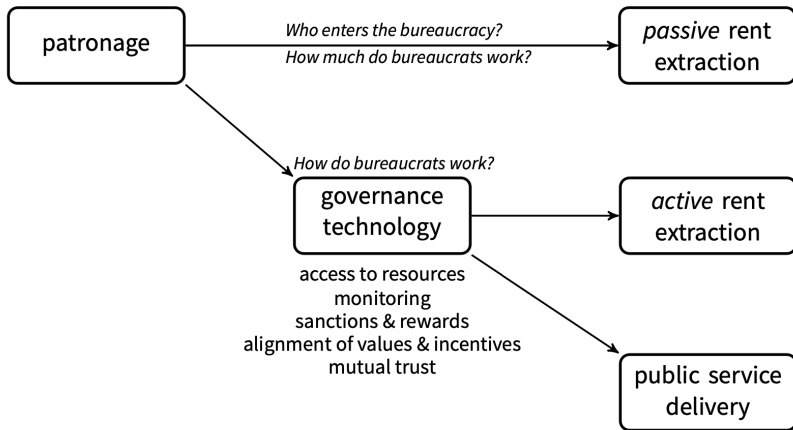
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- **Anti-patronage policies can have undesirable consequences**

- Patronage **can increase bureaucratic effectiveness and accountability**

Wait... patronage can increase effectiveness and accountability?

```
┌─────────────┐      Who enters the bureaucracy?       ┌─────────────┐
│             │      How much do bureaucrats work?     │    rent     │
│  patronage  │ ────────────────────────────────────▶ │  extraction │
│             │                                        │             │
└─────────────┘                                        └─────────────┘
```

The benefits of patronage: Theory

patronage → *Who enters the bureaucracy?* / *How much do bureaucrats work?* → *passive* rent extraction

How do bureaucrats work? → governance technology → *active* rent extraction

access to resources
monitoring
sanctions & rewards
alignment of values & incentives
mutual trust

→ public service delivery

The benefits of patronage: Summary of the design and findings

In Brazilian municipalities, politically appointed/connected bureaucrats...

- Have more access to, trust in, and alignment with politicians

  → Survey of bureaucrats
  → Observational regressions

- Are perceived as more responsive and, in some dimensions, more effective

  → Surveys of bureaucrats and politicians
  → Conjoint experiments

- Become less effective in service delivery upon losing their connections

  → Administrative data on schools
  → Quasi-experiment: difference-in-discontinuities

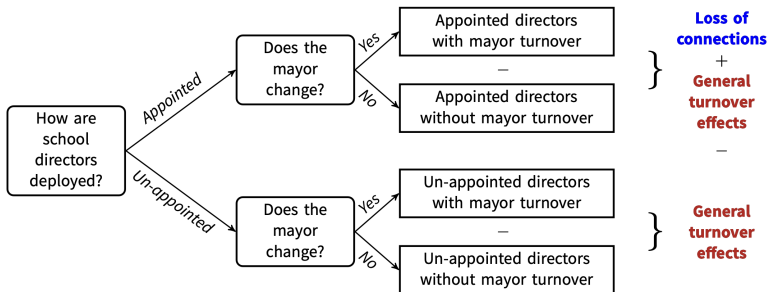# Quasi-experimental evidence on effectiveness

Hypothesis: Bureaucrats who lose their connections to politicians become less effective

Empirical challenge: Identify exogenous variation in bureaucrats' connections to politicians

Solution: Differential impact of political turnover:

- For **un-appointed bureaucrats**, an electoral defeat of the mayor carries the general effects that political turnover has on bureaucracies

- For **appointed bureaucrats**, an electoral defeat of the mayor carries those general turnover effects **and** the loss of political connections
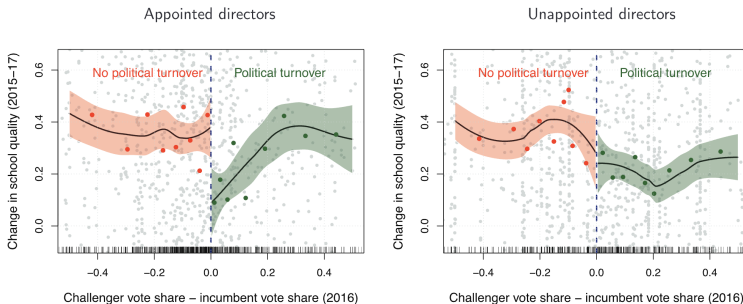
Quasi-experimental evidence on effectiveness

Outcome variable: **school quality**, as measured by a federal index with data on student performance, after - before the election

Quasi-experimental evidence on effectiveness

FIGURE 2 **Effect of Political Turnover on School Quality, by Director Appointment Mode**

Notes: Colored dots are local averages for equally-sized bins. Lines are loess regression lines estimated at both sides of the threshold with no controls. Shaded regions denote 95% confidence intervals.

Quasi-experimental evidence on accountability

Hypothesis: Appointed bureaucrats are sanctioned if they under-perform in service delivery
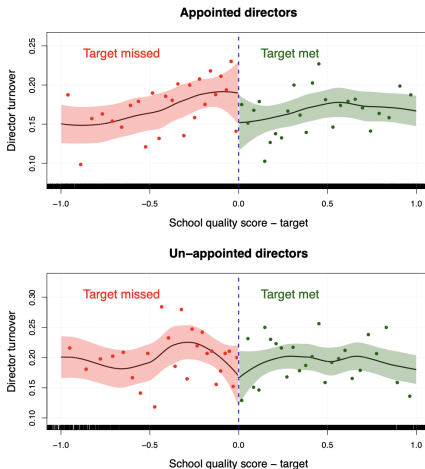
Empirical challenge: Identify exogenous variation in bureaucrats' performance

Solution: Distance between school quality score and the pre-defined target the school was expected to reach:

- If that distance is ≥ 0, the school met its target $\rightarrow$ positive performance signal

- If that distance is < 0, the school missed its target $\rightarrow$ negative performance signal

Quasi-experimental evidence on accountability

- Meeting their school quality target causes a decrease of ~ 0.2 standard deviations in the turnover among appointed directors ($p < 0.01$)
- Among un-appointed directors, meeting the school quality target has no effect on turnover

Appointed directors

Target missed   Target met

Director turnover

School quality score − target

Un−appointed directors

Target missed   Target met

Director turnover
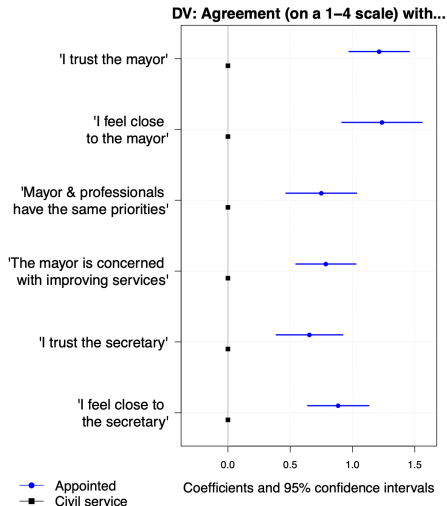
School quality score − target

Correlational evidence on mechanisms

- Compared to civil service managers, political appointees report higher levels of trust in and proximity to the mayor and to the secretary; and stronger beliefs of the mayor and professionals being aligned

- Differences are large and significant ($p < 0.001$)

▸ estimating equation   ▸ table

DV: Agreement (on a 1–4 scale) with...

Coefficients and 95% confidence intervals

- Appointed
- Civil service

Survey experimental evidence on mechanisms

	Manager A	Manager B
Selection	Political appointment	Civil service
Political connections	Has connections to the local government	No connections to the local government
Education	Bachelors degree	Masters degree
Experience as manager	3 years	10 years
Performance of the unit	Unit targets were met	Unit targets were not met
Relationship to professionals	Good	Bad

"Which one of these managers do you think would…

- … have a better communication with the Secretariat?"

- … have more chances of implementing changes requested by the local government?"

- … have more chances of obtaining funds for a reform of the unit?"

- … achieve better performance indicators?"
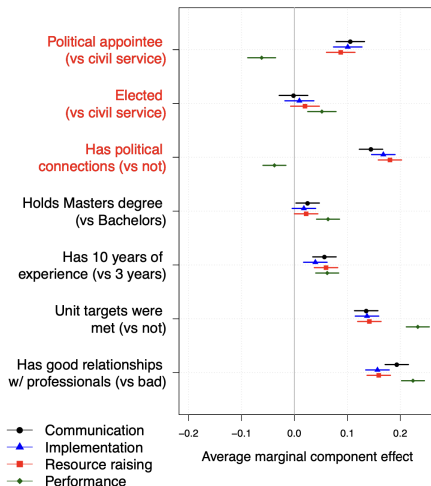
Survey experimental evidence on mechanisms

Bureaucrats with political appointments and connections are seen as more likely to:

- Communicate better with politicians
- Implement changes requested by them
- Raise resources from them

But they are seen as less likely to improve the performance of the unit

▸ estimating equation   ▸ table

Research design exercise

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- See more detailed guidelines on Blackboard or **here**

Research design: The rationale of this assignment

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- Be ambitious with your empirical strategy! Remember you don't need to execute it. It needs to be something that could be feasible with a research budget and much more time.

Research design: Key resources at your disposal

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- Ask me questions! I'm here to help

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6. Find, read, and engage with previous academic studies on the topic (use Google Scholar and focus on top political science journals such as APSR, AJPS, JOP, BJPS, ARPS, CPS, WP)

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   • What can be done to improve the theory? And the empirics?

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- **Make progress on your research design**