



Hector Bahamonde, PhD

Assistant Professor

Social Sciences Institute

O'Higgins University

Rancagua, Chile

p: +1(504) 941-9131

e: hector.bahamonde@uoh.cl

w: www.HectorBahamonde.com

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Research Statement

Within comparative politics, my research explores the intersection between inequality and political development, from a political economy perspective. My **job market paper** (*under review*) is entitled “[Income Taxation and State Capacity in Chile: Measuring Institutional Development Using Historical Earthquake Data](#).” Income taxation fostered via spillover effects increases state-consolidation over time in Chile. The paper contributes in two ways. First, it studies the relationship between taxation and state building outside Europe. Second, the paper tests the theory using a novel approach. Exploiting the exogeneity of earthquake shocks, I create a novel hand-collected longitudinal dataset on Chilean earthquake death tolls. Under reasonable assumptions, the capacity for enforcing and monitoring building codes throughout the territory is a reflection of a state’s overall capacities. The paper shows that death tolls decrease (state capacity increases) once the income tax law was implemented in 1924 using a Bayesian Poisson regression. To explore the causal mechanisms, I discuss the Chilean case since the 1920s.

The job market paper is embedded in a **larger research agenda and book manuscript** entitled “*Structural Transformations in Latin America: State Building and Elite Competition 1850-2010*.” The **main argument of the book** is that the economic structural transformation in Latin America—the secular decline of agriculture and substantial expansion of manufacturing—imposed tight constraints on the way politics was run by the incumbent landowning class. This was a major change due to the advantage the landed elites enjoyed since colonial times. Where the expansion of the industrial sector was weak, post-colonial norms persisted due to institutional inertia, perpetuating the advantaged position of the agricultural class. Leveraging economic sectoral outputs dating back to 1900 until 2010, for a sample of Latin American countries, I use panel data **methods** (particularly, Cox-proportional hazard models), time series analyses (VAR models, impulse response functions, and Granger-causality tests), and fine-grained qualitative data to support my argument. **Another major contribution of the book** is in measurement. One of the biggest gaps in the literature is the lack of a measurement of state capacities able to capture variations of *stateness* over time. Using a novel dataset, the book proposes measuring state capacities using earthquake data. The rationale is very intuitive: the capacity to enforce quake-sensitive building codes throughout the territory is a *reflection* of the overall (*in*)capacity of states of solving both logistic and political limitations at the subnational level. *Why does a 7.0 magnitude earthquake flatten Haiti, leaving at least 100,000 deaths, while a 8.8 earthquake in Chile in the same year leaves just 525 deaths?* By exploiting variations on earthquake death-tolls and local population to weight the number of deaths since 1900, I measure state capacities over time. Keeping magnitudes constant, casualty differentials should be attributed to the *lack of state capacities*.

In one of the **sections of the book**, I explain that the structural transformation required both sectors to grow in a *balanced* fashion, *leveling both elites in their relative political, economic, and military capacities*. Leveraging the dual sector model of economic growth, I sketch a theory of political and economic development that stresses the structural economic dependence of both sectors. The agricultural sector supplied labor and

cheap foodstuff—which the industrial sector demanded, promoting balanced economic development of both sectors. The political consequence of balanced economic growth was the mutual political dependence and the need of inter-elite compromises that fostered both economic and political development in the long-run. The paper version of the chapter (currently *in preparation*) can be downloaded [here](#). In another section of the book, I explain how the emergence of a strong industrial sector accelerated the implementation of fiscal institutions. From a fiscal sociology standpoint, I consider this to be an important critical juncture that set countries in a path of political development. The paper version of the chapter (currently *in preparation*) can be downloaded [here](#).

In addition to the book manuscript, I am currently expanding the findings of a **series of papers** related to vote-buying and vote-selling, using both **observational** and an original **experimental** designs.

Vote-buying. Going forward, I have a **published paper** (Bahamonde, H. (2018). *Aiming Right at You: Group versus Individual Clientelistic Targeting in Brazil*. Journal of Politics in Latin America, 10(2), pp. 41-76.) on vote-buying in Brazil. Do parties target individuals or groups? This is a question fundamental to understanding clientelism, yet the literature does not offer an answer. This paper argues that depending on certain conditions, brokers target individuals when they are identifiable and groups when brokers need to rely on the spillover effects of clientelism. Both identifiability and spillovers depend on individual poverty, group poverty, and political competition. Though the theory I outline focuses on targeting, the paper also argues that structural factors, such as the density of the poor, should be considered in the vote-buying literature. Structural factors are one of the few observables upon which brokers can base their decision regarding investment in clientelism. Using survey and census data from Brazil, the paper exploits variations in personal incomes within contexts of differing levels of poverty. I find that political parties engage in segmented or ad-hoc strategies, targeting individuals when identifiability is high, and groups when there are economies of scale. Importantly, non-poor individuals can also be offered clientelism.

Vote-Selling. With the support of a generous grant, I designed two experiments in the U.S. out of a series of experiments to be fielded in Latin America for further comparison. In the [paper](#) (*under review*), I looked at the tipping points at which a sample of U.S. citizens ($N = 1,479$) prefer a monetary incentive rather than keeping their right to choose whom to vote for. In nineteenth-century United States politics, vote buying was commonplace. Nowadays, vote-buying seems to have declined. Yet, the literature emphasizes vote-buying, ignoring the micro-dynamics of vote-selling. We seem to know that vote-buyers can no longer afford this strategy, however, we do not know what American voters would do if offered the chance to sell their votes. Would they sell their votes (and at what price) or would they consistently opt-out of vote-selling? Exploiting a novel experimental dataset representative at the national level, 1,479 U.S. voters participated in an online list experiment in 2016 and the results are striking: Approximately 25% would sell their votes for \$730. Democrats and liberals are systematically more likely to sell while education levels and income do not seem to impact on vote-selling. In addition to the list experiment, an online conjoint experiment was also fielded. This design was used to measure—in an unbiased way—attitudes towards democracy, a multi-dimensional concept. The analysis suggests that U.S. citizens have “healthy” democratic values. After combining both experimental designs, the paper also finds that likely vote-sellers have lower support levels towards a system governed by principles of checks and balances.

Within the same project, I am currently designing an **economic experiment** in the lab. The literature asserts that Chilean parties no longer buy votes. While those are good news, the bad news are that we are rather ignorants about a number of other interesting, and yet, unanswered questions. First and foremost, the approach used by most scholars focuses exclusively on vote-buying. That is, parties offering to buy votes, completely ignoring the ones who sell their votes (i.e. voters). This is a rather important distinction. What would voters do if offered the chance to sell their votes? Would they sell them? And if so, at what price? Would voters still sell their votes to their own party of preference, or would they sell it to the opposing party? Do voters set a higher selling price if selling to the opposing party, while lowering the price if selling to the party they would have supported anyways? Another important question is who political parties target: party supporters, opposers, or swing voters? By recreating market conditions that exist between vote-buyers and vote-sellers—via an “auction game” implemented in the lab—the paper sheds light on these issues. The paper presents preliminary evidence.

Summary and Future Research In summation, my book manuscript, job market paper and working papers on vote-buying and experiments on vote-selling work toward exploring the effects of inequality on political development from a comparative perspective. I use a widely broad methodological perspective, historical comparisons, time series analyses, and experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies. My goal is to use this toolkit to keep asking “big” questions that are fundamental to our discipline. My future

research will seek to study the connection between elite competition and democratic regimes, exploring the connection between state building and democratic institutions (and its relationship with vertical accountability), and the role of the middle class on bureaucratic development. Particularly, I am interested in whether dictatorships have different dynamics of state-building relative to democracies. Please check my [teaching portfolio](#) and see how my **research and teaching interests match**.

More information, [syllabi](#), my [research](#), [teaching](#) and [diversity](#) statements, as well as other [papers](#) are available on my website: www.HectorBahamonde.com. Thank you for considering my application. I look forward to hearing from you.