

**The Many Dimensions of Democratic and Hybrid Subnational Regimes:  
Evidence from an Expert Survey in Argentina**

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## **Abstract**

This paper presents an operationalization of the degree of democracy in the Argentine provinces. Starting with a mainstream and “thick” definition of regime type, I measure each of its aspects using a subjective or perception-based strategy that taps the knowledge of experts. I briefly introduce the resulting Survey of Experts on Provincial Politics (SEPP) and present its main results. Some aspects of the provincial regimes appear to be clearly democratic, while others are mixed or even leaning towards authoritarianism. Moreover, some show little inter-provincial variance, while others vary considerably from province to province. Inclusion is the most democratic dimension, while institutional constraints is the most deficient. Overall, the state of democracy in the provinces appears to be mixed (i.e., average levels are neither too high nor too low) and generally heterogeneous (i.e., there are significant inter-provincial differences). Individual provincial regimes range from democratic to hybrid: although some authoritarian practices exist, no province fits the classical definition of authoritarianism. A key finding is that the different aspects of democracy measured by the survey are not always correlated, and therefore cannot be easily reduced (via factor analysis) to one or two dimensions. Provincial regimes seem to be complex and multidimensional, likely more so than national regimes.

The emerging literature on subnational regimes has started to fill a very important gap in the broader field of democracy and democratization studies, that is, the uneven distribution of political rights across regions, provinces, states and municipalities within the same country. A number of theoretical approaches have recently been proposed to explain this variance. In just a few years scholars have pointed to modernization (McMann&Petrov 2000), patterns of interaction with the national government (Gibson 2005, Giraudy 2009), economic autonomy (McMann 2006), diffusion (Lankina and Getachew 2006), and rentierism, either based on natural resources (Goldberg, Wibbels, and Mvukiyehe 2008) or on redistributive fiscal federalism (Gervasoni 2010a). These explanatory efforts have not always been accompanied by similarly intense descriptive efforts. To some extent, we seem to have put the cart before the horse by reversing the logical description-explanation sequence. Obtaining sound “descriptive inferences” is a valuable and complex social science goal in itself, and a precondition for obtaining sound explanatory inferences (King, Keohane and Verba 1994). In this spirit, this paper presents initial results from a broad descriptive study of provincial regimes in Argentina, a country that is generally considered to have a large range of variance in terms of how democratic its subnational units are. The paper focuses on Argentina’s 24 first-level subnational units, that is, the Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires (or CABA),<sup>1</sup> and 23 provinces.

Notice that measuring subnational regimes in national-level democracies is especially difficult. Provinces<sup>2</sup> in such contexts are usually constrained to be institutionally democratic. In Argentina, for example, the national constitution establishes a representative and republican form of government for the provinces that replicates the national-level presidential system. The civil and political rights that the constitution grants to all citizens must of course be respected by provincial authorities. Therefore, easy-to-observe distinctions between democratic and authoritarian regimes are generally absent. Burma, Cuba, or Saudi Arabia are easily distinguished from India, Costa Rica or Turkey, because the latter, even if not perfect democracies, elect their governments in reasonably free and fair elections and for the most part respect liberal political rights. The former, on the other hand, are ruled by non-elected dictators who repress all significant forms of opposition. Distinctions are crystal clear. All provinces of Argentina and many other democracies around the world, on the contrary, are institutionally similar. In particular, they elect their executives and legislatures in reasonably free, fair, and effectively multiparty elections. As the literature on hybrid regimes has clearly shown, however, electoral institutions often hide regimes that are not especially democratic (Zakaria 1997; Levitsky and Way 2002, Schedler 2006). How do we measure regime type in this context? A first and relatively easy to implement strategy is through objective indicators of political competitiveness and/or inclusiveness (as is done, for example, by the indices proposed by Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi and Przeworski [1996], and Vanhanen [2000]). A second strategy, which is complementary of the first in terms of advantages and disadvantages, resorts to subjective (but allegedly sound) judgments to determine how democratic different aspects of a given political regime actually are (beyond its nominally democratic institutions), as illustrated by the Freedom House index. Drawing on this second approach, in this paper I present the main

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<sup>1</sup> Also known as the Federal Capital. The so called “Greater Buenos Aires” (about 13 million inhabitants) includes the CABA (about 3 million inhabitants) and 24 additional counties or municipalities that, although sociologically and geographically adjacent to the CABA, belong administratively to the province of Buenos Aires (i.e., confusingly, the Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires is not a part of the province of Buenos Aires).

<sup>2</sup> From here on I use the word “province” to refer to any first-level subnational unit.

features and results of an expert survey that I conducted to assess levels of democracy in all the Argentine provinces.

## I. Operationalizing Subnational Democracy: Conceptualization and Measurement

Issues of conceptualization and measurement have been only lightly addressed by the literature on subnational regimes. It is often unclear what conceptual definitions of democracy and authoritarianism are used, and what operational rules are applied to determine whether a given province or region belongs to the first, to the second, or somewhere in between.

National indices of regime type covering most countries in the world have been available for decades (e.g., Bollen 1980; Coppedge and Reinecke 1991; Alvarez et al. 1996; Vanhanen 2000; Marshall and Jaggers 2002; Freedom House 2009). Scholars of Latin America have more recently developed region-specific indices (Mainwaring, Brinks and Pérez-Liñán 2001; Bowman, Lehoucq and Mahoney 2005). The measurement of national regimes has given rise to a sophisticated methodological debate (Bollen 1993; Collier and Adcock 1999; Bollen and Paxton 2000; Munck and Verkuilen 2002; Hadenius and Teorell 2005) that has led to a better understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the extant indices, and provided advice on how to design measures that maximize validity and reliability. In recent years several works have proposed new cross-national indices that —using new conceptualizations, new data and/or new statistical methods— improve on imperfections of the previous ones (Paxton 2000; Moon et al. 2006; Coppedge, Alvarez and Maldonado; Treier and Jackman 2008). The young subfield of subnational regimes, by comparison, is light-years behind in conceptual clarity, measurement rigor, and data richness.

As scholars interested in a country or a set of countries we would like to know how democratic (or not) our provinces are. As comparativists we would like to explain why some subnational units are less democratic than others. This paper presents a methodological contribution —a new, expert-based operationalization strategy to measure the level of subnational democracy— and makes a substantive contribution —a description of subnational democracy in the 24 provinces of Argentina for the period 2003-7. Elsewhere I discussed conceptualization issues, identified the dimensions and subdimensions of the concept of “subnational democracy,” and made the case for a subjective or perception-based measurement strategy on the grounds that it is better suited to capture the subtle ways in which democracy is restricted in subnational polities that are embedded in national democracies (Gervasoni 2008). In this paper I focus on the actual measurement tool I used to gauge democracy in the Argentine provinces and on its results. The perceptions that are used as the basis of measurement are those of 155 experts on the politics on each of the provinces, as revealed by the responses they provided to the *Survey of Experts on Provincial Politics* (or SEPP).<sup>3</sup> Below I briefly introduce the methodological design of the survey and present and analyze its results.

The proposed operationalization strategy has the following advantages: 1) it starts with an explicit and clear understanding of the concept to be measured, and of its dimensions, subdimensions, components and subcomponent, 2) it includes specific indicators for each subcomponent, 3) it measures each indicator several times (by consulting more than one expert

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<sup>3</sup> The *Survey of Experts on Provincial Politics* was funded by a National Science Foundation grant.

per province), 4) it permits assessing the uncertainty of the descriptive inferences, and 5) it makes the procedures public by clearly describing each of the methodological decisions made. These are all characteristics recommended by the methodological literature (Bollen 1991; King, Keohane and Verba 1994; Munck and Verkuilen 2002) which, however, are often disregarded by popular national-level indices (Munck and Verkuilen 2002). The methodological design of the survey is explained briefly below, and in detail elsewhere (Gervasoni 2008), so that any researcher can replicate the study in Argentina or, with some adaptation to local political contexts, in any other nation with elected and reasonably autonomous subnational governments. Hopefully, in a not-so-distant future, scholars will periodically produce estimates of subnational regime type around Latin America and the world that can be used to assess the causes and consequences of subnational democracy.

## II. Conceptualization: The Nature of Subnational Regimes

In his classic *Polyarchy*, Robert Dahl stressed that “even within a country, subnational units often vary in the opportunities they provide for contestation and participation” (1971, 14). He recognized that not dealing with this issue was a “grave omission” of his book. Thirty-five years later, the matter remains very much understudied. Some recent attempts to measure democracy at the national level explicitly indicate that they fail to incorporate information about subnational regimes (cf. Foweraker and Krznaric 2001, 18). For the particular case of Latin America, Guillermo O’Donnell has called attention to the matter, wondering “how one conceptualizes a polyarchical regime that may contain regional regimes that are not at all polyarchical” and pointing to “abundant journalistic information and reports of human rights organizations, that some of these regions function in a less than polyarchical way” (O’Donnell 1999b, 315). Although there are a few recent academic case studies of “subnational authoritarianisms” (Cornelius 1999; Snyder 1999; Gibson 2005), they often do not provide explicit definitions or operationalizations of the *degree of subnational democracy*. The earliest studies I am aware of which define and measure democracy systematically in all the subnational units of a country are those conducted by Kim Quaile Hill (1994) for the US and McMann (2006) for Kyrgyzstan and a large subset of the subnational units of Russia (McMann and Petrov 2000). Several recent studies have used institutional or electoral indicators to construct indices that measure subnational democracy or subnational electoral contestation, an important dimension of democracy (Beer and Mitchell 2006; Borges 2007; Gervasoni 2010a; Goldberg, Wibbels, and Mvukiyehe 2008; Giraudy 2009; Montero 2009).

Although the concept of democracy and authoritarianism are relatively well-established in political science (Dahl 1971; Linz 1975), potential for disagreement and “stretching” does exist, especially when they are applied to new empirical domains. Thus, conceptualizations of subnational regime types in Latin America sometimes incorporate idiosyncratic elements. Authoritarianism, for example, is associated by some authors with “conservative rule” or “machine politics,” and democratization is linked to the electoral progress of the (often leftist) opposition (Fenwick 2009; Montero 2009). Likewise, sometimes a conceptual connection is established between low levels of subnational democracy and neopatrimonial politics (Trocello 2008; Durazo Herrmann 2009). In this paper democracy is defined at a high level of abstraction, that is, avoiding region-specific attributes that may not “travel” well. (For example, the understandable Latin American tendency to associate authoritarianism with rightist or

conservative forces would be awkward in the context of the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe). As detailed in the next section, the concept of “liberal, representative democracy” refers to a regime type that institutionalizes both electoral access to government positions and limited exercise of state power.

It should be (again) emphasized that, in the context of national-level democracies, subnational regimes are usually democratic in one sense: they have elections (often reasonably free), real opposition parties represented in the legislature, nontrivial levels of freedom of speech and the like. Subnational authorities are constrained in the extent to which they can restrict political rights. Blatantly authoritarian leaders are unlikely to succeed in keeping “boundary control” (Gibson 2005): open and visible violations of political rights attract much negative national attention, which both hurts the provincial leaders’ (often national) career ambitions, and increases the likelihood that the federal government will use its formal or informal powers to remove them.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, national constitutions and laws generally establish democratic subnational institutions that subnational legal norms cannot contradict. As a result, even the less democratic provincial regimes contain significant doses of both authoritarianism and democracy. The point may be blurred by the literature’s tendency to use adjectives such as “authoritarian” and “undemocratic” to describe certain subnational regimes in Latin America (Fox, 1994; Cornelius 1999; Snyder, 1999; Gibson, 2005; Durazo Herrmann 2009; Giraudy 2009; Montero 2009). As argued by McMann (2006), however, subnational regimes in formally democratic contexts are generally better described as “hybrid regimes” (Karl 1995; Zakaria, 1997; Levitsky and Way, 2002; Schedler, 2006) than by the traditional concept of “authoritarianism.”<sup>5</sup> A methodological consequence of the hybrid nature of some subnational regimes (and of their democratic formal institutions) is that measurement is especially challenging: the regime differences between a hybrid Argentine province such as San Luis and a democratic one like Mendoza, are smaller and less visible (and therefore harder to measure reliably) than those between blatantly authoritarian North Korea and prototypically democratic Finland.

### **III. Dimensions, Subdimensions, Components and Subcomponents of Subnational Democracy**

Regime type is defined as a set of “procedural rules, whether formal or informal, that determine the number and type of actors who are allowed to gain access to the principal governmental positions, the methods of access to such positions, and the rules that are followed in the making of publicly binding decisions...” (Munck 1996, 8). This definition can be reduced to two sets of rules, those about how government positions are filled and those about what government officials can and cannot do. These “access to power” and “exercise of power” dimensions<sup>6</sup> broadly correspond to the “democratic” and “liberal” components of modern

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<sup>4</sup> The Argentine constitution, for example, assigns congress and the president the right to remove provincial authorities to “Guarantee the republican form of government.” These “federal interventions” have taken place six times since 1983: Catamarca (1990), Tucumán (1991), Corrientes (1991 and 2000), and Santiago del Estero (1993 and 2004).

<sup>5</sup> Durazo Herrmann (2009) uses the concept of “hybrid regime” to describe the Mexican state of Oaxaca. In his conceptualization, however, the combination of “formally democratic political institutions ... with authoritarian practices” does not call “its authoritarian character into question” (p. XXX). That is, hybrid regimes are seen as a type of authoritarianism, not as an intermediate category between democracy and authoritarianism.

<sup>6</sup> I borrow these terms from Mazzuca (1998).

representative liberal democracies, respectively. They are in turn, decomposed in three subdimensions each, as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Genus, Differentia, Dimensions and Subdimensions of Democracy**

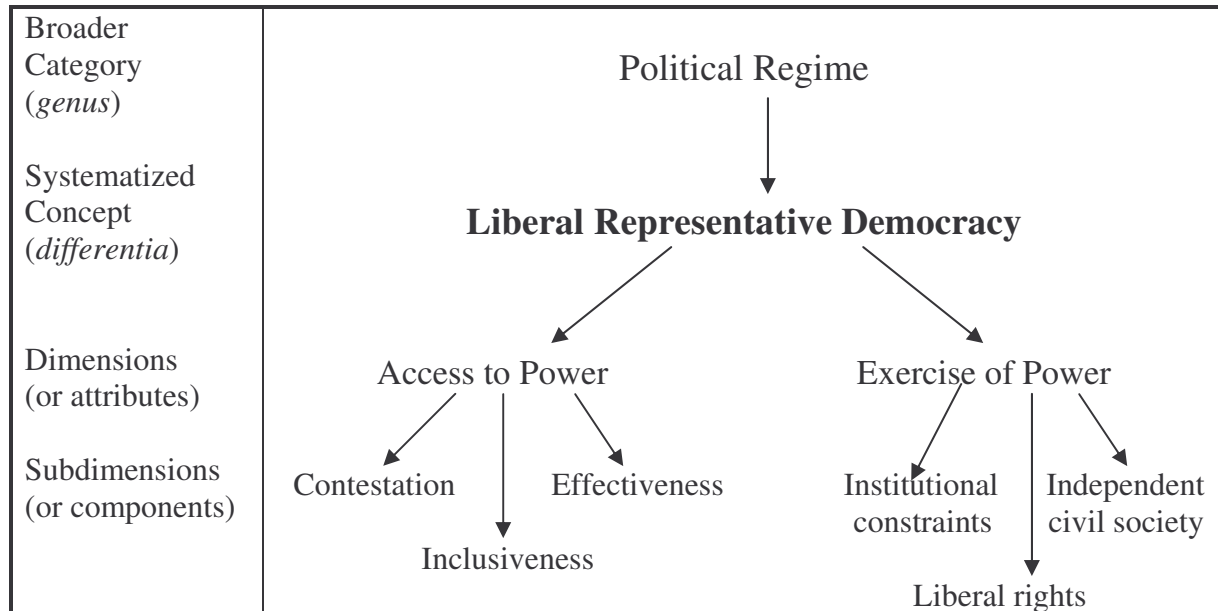


Table 1 presents the components and subcomponents in which each subdimension of democracy is decomposed. Each subcomponent represents the end of the operationalization of a concept and is measured by one or more indicators, which in the context of my perception-based operationalization strategy, are questions in the survey of experts. The final data, then, are the answers to those questions (aggregated by province). The table presents the dimensions (column 1) and subdimensions (column 2) defined so far, plus a list of the components (column 3) and subcomponents (column 4) of each subdimension. Columns 1 through 4, then, are thought as general categories applicable to the elective subnational regimes of any country. The questions (=indicators), of course, have to be adapted to the context –in this case to the Argentine provinces– and to each particular province. Some of these indicators may be directly applicable to other countries, but some will need substantial redesigning to adapt them to different national realities. (For details about the overall conceptualization and decomposition into dimensions, subdimensions, components and subcomponents, see Gervasoni 2008).

**Table 1. The Operational Disaggregation of the Degree of Subnational Democracy**

<b>Dimen- sion</b>	<b>Subdi- mensions</b>	<b>Components</b>	<b>Subcomponents</b>	
<b>ACCESS  TO  POWER</b>	<b>INCLU- SION</b>	Extension of effective right to vote	Denial of right to certain individuals or groups	
		Extension of effective right to run	Denial of right to run	
	<b>CONTES- TATION</b>	Fairness of elections	Fairness of campaign	Fairness of electoral act and vote counting
			Freedom of expression	Opposition leaders Critical journalists Politically relevant media Public employees General population
		Freedom to form/join organizati.	Political parties	
		<b>EFEC- TIVE- NESS</b>	Unelected local powers	Unelected local powers
			Elected national powers	Elected national powers
	<b>EXER- CISE  OF  POWER</b>	<b>INSTITU- TIONAL</b>	Legislature	Provincial legislature
Judiciary			Provincial justice Federal justice in the province	
Agencies of Horizontal Account.			Independence OF agencies of HA	
<b>CONS- TRAINTS</b>		Incumbent Party	Constraints of party on governor	
		National legislators	Senators	Deputies
<b>LIBERAL RIGHTS</b>		Freedom of information	Right to consume alternative and diverse sources of information	Effective access to government information
			Personal freedoms	Physical security Privacy Alternative minority lifestyles Academic freedom
		<b>INDE- PENDENT</b>	Economic organizations	Autonomous labor unions Autonomous business organizations
			<b>CIVIL SOCIETY</b>	Non-profit organizations

#### IV. Indicators: Subjective (or Perception-based) Measures of Democracy

In this section I go one level below the “systematized concept” (Adcock and Collier 2001) to address the indicators that will be used to operationalize the concept of subnational liberal representative democracy. Given the complexities of a “thick” concept (Coppedge 1999) such as *degree of subnational democracy*, and the additional difficulties posed by the fact that hybrid regimes restrict democracy in subtle ways, I propose to follow the subjective tradition of measurement of democracy (Bollen and Paxton 2000, 60). As opposed to the objective tradition that uses measures which do not depend on the judgment or opinion of the researcher, experts or secondary sources (e.g., Vanhanen 2000), the subjective tradition uses “perceptions-based” (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2005) indicators.<sup>7</sup> In this strategy a researcher makes an informed judgment about the status of a certain aspect of democracy in a given polity using secondary sources and/or consulting country experts. This strategy is clearly illustrated by mainstream democracy measures, such as Polity IV (Jagers and Gurr 1995; Marshall and Jagers 2002), Freedom House’s (2009) ratings of political rights and civil liberties, and Coppedge and Reinecke’s Poliararchy Index (1991), all of which use subjective measures. Bowman et al. (2005, 940) make a strong case in favor of an index of democracy based on the judgments of experts with deep knowledge of the polities to be coded.

The subjective operationalization I propose consists of a survey of experts on the politics of the subnational units. Such strategy has to my knowledge only two precedents, carried out by Kelly McMann in Russia and Kyrgyzstan (McMann and Petrov 2000; McMann 2006). The main methodological difference between these surveys and my own is that the former interviewed a group of experts who resided in the capital cities and asked them to rank and rate all the regions (Kyrgyzstan) or the top ten and bottom ten regions (Russia) in terms of a given definition of democracy, while mine selected a smaller set of experts for each province (usually residents of the province) and asked them to provide ratings about many aspects of democracy (those listed in Table 1), and only about the province they specialize on.

Experts are considered a more reliable source than secondary sources, in part because the latter lack the necessary level of detail and quality for several provinces, and because the subtle ways in which democracy is restricted in hybrid regimes calls for very specific pieces of information. The questionnaire of the *Survey of Experts on Provincial Politics (SEPP)* included many items aimed at tapping experts’ assessment of the situation of each subdimension in their respective units of specialization. One significant disadvantage of this approach is that, due to well-known memory limitations, interviewees can only be expected to supply reliable data for recent times.

Because experts are by definition knowledgeable of many characteristics of the political

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<sup>7</sup> The word “subjective” is often loaded with negative connotations. It is sometimes associated with normative biases or interested opinions. Here it is used in a straightforward neutral way, just to describe a measurement process based on informed and educated judgments of certain “subjects.” It is important to realize that some well respected and widely used databases in political science come from subjective operationalizations. This is not only the case with measures of democracy, but also with measures of corruption, for example Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index, and with measures of governance, such as the World Bank’s Governance Indicators. For a defense of the strengths of “perceptions-based” indicators over objective ones, see the methodological paper for the World Bank indicators (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2005, 27-31).

regime in place, multiple aspects of democracy beyond electoral competition and inclusion can be assessed, including, for example the effectiveness of legislative and judicial checks on the executive, the level of press freedom, the civil rights situation, the prevalence of human rights violations, and so forth.

**Methodological Design of the SEPP:** The *Survey of Experts on Provincial Politics* (SEPP) was conducted face-to-face in each of Argentina's 24 subnational units, using a questionnaire that included approximately 150 items about the 2003-2007 period (except for two provinces off the regular electoral schedule). The fieldwork was conducted between during 2008, that is, after the gubernatorial terms under study had concluded. The survey was carried out with a structured questionnaire including both closed-ended items (in which experts rate an aspect of democracy in a given province) and open-ended items (in which they can explain the reasons for their ratings, qualify their answers, or provide an answer different from those offered by the questionnaire). The average length was of one hour and nineteen minutes. The questionnaire was pretested first with colleagues and then on a sample of 14 experts on the politics of 11 provinces. Interviewees were intentionally selected using two broad criteria: 1) deep and broad knowledge of the politics of the province, and 2) reasonable level of independence from the provincial government and opposition. Most interviewees were scholar in the social sciences or political journalists. The goal was to achieve a minimum of three experts per province so that inter-expert agreement could be calculated on a relatively solid basis. The effective sample includes a minimum of four and a maximum of twelve interviewees per province (for a total of about 155 experts, or an average of 6.46 per province). The author and four research assistants completed the fieldwork in two stages (the second one to obtain additional interviews in provinces with relatively low inter-expert agreement), between April 22 and November 13, 2008), obtaining a response rate of 81% of all experts contacted. (For details on questionnaire design, questionnaire pretest, sample design, survey administration, fieldwork, coding, quality control, and other methodological aspects of the SEPP, see Gervasoni [2008]).

## V. Descriptive Results

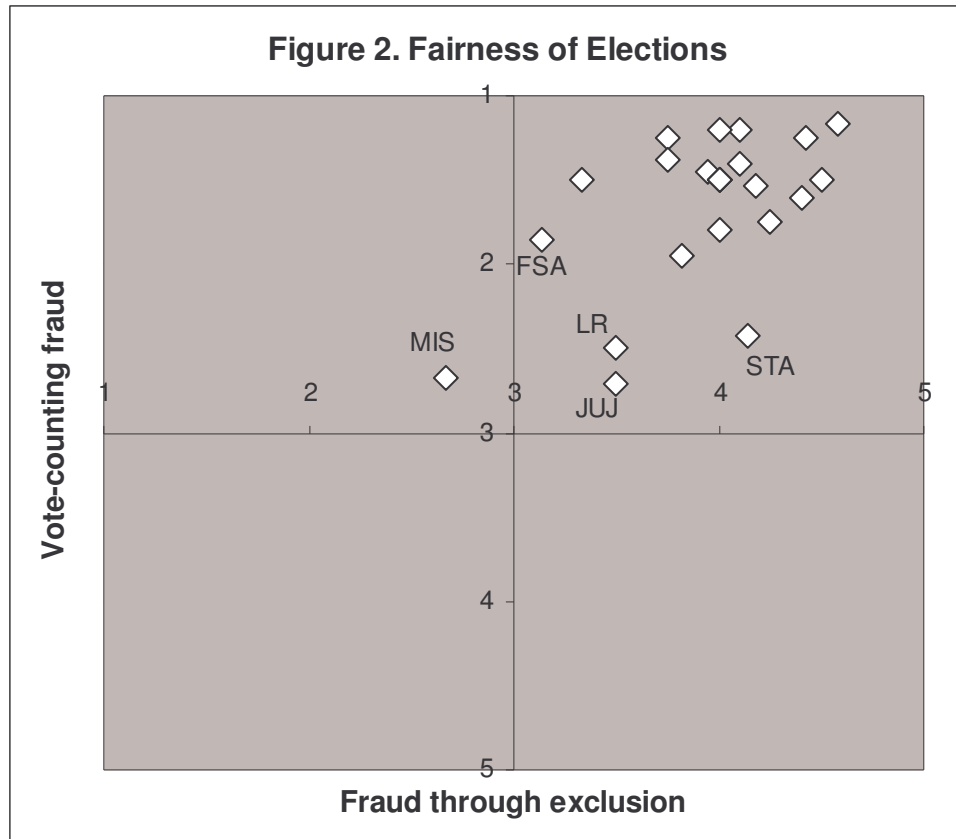
After the end of the second stage of fieldwork, the questionnaires were revised, coded, and entered into an electronic database. The experts' answers to the close-ended questions were averaged to form an aggregate score for each item in each province. These means are presented below without any consideration to their level of certainty, but it should be pointed out that inter-expert reliabilities vary both across provinces and across items: sometimes experts are in full agreement, more often they disagree moderately (something that would be expected just on the grounds of random measurement error), and in some cases they disagree significantly. In each of these three situations the mean is a better estimate of the true provincial score than any single expert opinion, but the level of reliability of these estimates fall together with the level of inter-expert disagreement.

As it will be shown below, items vary considerably both in central tendency and dispersion. Some obtain quite democratic average scores, while others reveal widespread nondemocratic practices. Equally importantly, some items contain little inter-provincial variance, while others make sharp distinctions between more and less democratic provinces. The graphs I

present below, representing some of the most critical aspects of democracy, illustrate these situations (for further descriptive results, see Gervasoni 2010b).

**Contestation.** Contestation is the only element of democracy in which all definitions, including the most minimal ones, agree. Free and fair elections for the main executive and legislative offices is the central element of this subdimension of democracy. How free and fair are provincial elections in Argentina? Figure 2 displays the results of two questions measuring the fairness of the last gubernatorial elections, that is, the extent to which some people were arbitrarily excluded from the ballot and the extent to which votes were miscounted to favor a given party. (In this and the following figures the more democratic scores correspond to the upper-right corner and the least democratic ones to the lower-left corner; this sometimes means that categories in the graphs are reversed with respect to their order in the questionnaire). The text of the questions and the answers are shown under each figure.

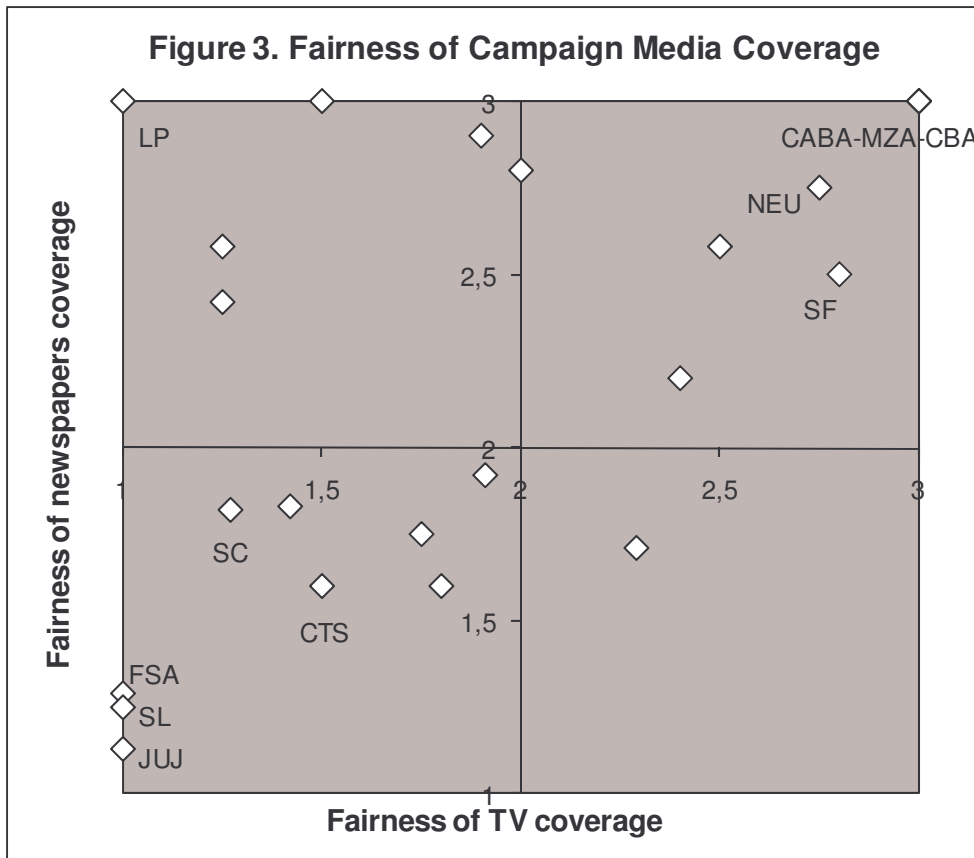
According to Figure 2, there are almost no important instances of electoral fraud (Misiones appears to be an exception). Most provinces cluster close to the democratic (upper-right) quadrant, while the lower-left quadrant is empty. These variables, then, seem to reflect a situation of relatively high and homogenous levels of electoral contestation in the provinces. However, the situation changes when we take a broader view of the electoral process. Figure 3 shows indicators of the pro-incumbent bias of the provincial media (TV in the X-axis and provincial newspapers in the Y-axis) in the most recent gubernatorial elections. The CABA and two other provinces appear at the upper-right corner. However, all the quadrants are populated, and at least three provinces do very poorly in both TV and newspaper coverage. That is, there is considerable variance in these measures, implying that in some provinces incumbent and opposition candidates have similar access to the media, while in others incumbents get much more and better coverage than opponents. Elections in the latter cannot be considered fair even if votes are counted fairly. Another important conclusion of the figure is that, although the variables are positively associated, the correlation is only moderately strong ( $r=0.58$ ) because of off-diagonal provinces like La Pampa in which the TV is biased but the newspapers are not.



**X-Axis (Q.21):** “Sometimes citizens cannot vote because they are not given their ID cards on time, because their names do not appear on the voting rolls, etc. How serious do you think this kind of problem preventing citizens from voting was in the provincial elections of 2007? 1) Very serious, 2) quite serious, 3) somewhat serious, 4) not very serious, 5) not serious at all?”

**Y-Axis (Q.24):** “How fair was the counting of the votes by the electoral authorities? Do you believe there were 1) no irregularities in the counting of the votes, 2) few, 3) some, 4) quite a few, or 5) many irregularities in the counting of the votes?”

In sum, it seems that the electoral act in itself is generally not subject to important political manipulations, but the pro-incumbency bias of the provincial media ranges from null to extremely high. Contestation, then, is in some provinces restricted in one of the most critical arenas of modern politics. As both classic liberal thinkers posited and contemporary public opinion research shows, a reasonably-informed democratic public cannot exist in the absence of media pluralism.



**X and Y Axes (Q.32a-d).** “Please think about the provincial media coverage of the 2007 electoral campaigns. We mean the coverage by the media and not the publicity of the candidates. Taking into account both the quantity and content of TV broadcasting, would you say that on average it was 1) very biased in favor of the incumbent’s gubernatorial candidate, 2) somewhat biased in favor of the incumbent’s candidate, 3) balanced (including countervailing biases), or biased in favor of the candidates of the opposition? And what about the coverage of the main provincial newspaper/s? (same response options)”

**Freedom of Expression.** Democracy can only function properly when citizens can voice their political views without fear of punishment. The SEPP included a number of questions about freedom of expression. Two of them, one about public employees and another about the population in general, are presented in Figure 4. Only two provinces appear on the left sector of the graph, indicating that the citizens of most provinces enjoy significant levels of freedom of expression. When this attribute is evaluated only for provincial public employees, who are often thought to run larger risks if they express critical views of the government, inter-provincial differences become larger: several provinces are located in the lower half of the chart. Public employees, then, are not so free to speak about politics publicly. This is a major limitation of democracy in many provinces where most jobs (and the overwhelming majority of the best jobs) are controlled directly or indirectly by the provincial administration. The finding is consistent with interpretations of differences in subnational regimes as emerging from differences in levels of “economic autonomy” (McMann 2006; Gervasoni 2010a). Overall, only a few provinces are well into the upper-right quadrant. These results and the findings above on campaign coverage

by the media suggest that one of the main ways in which provincial incumbents limit contestation is by restricting political communications.

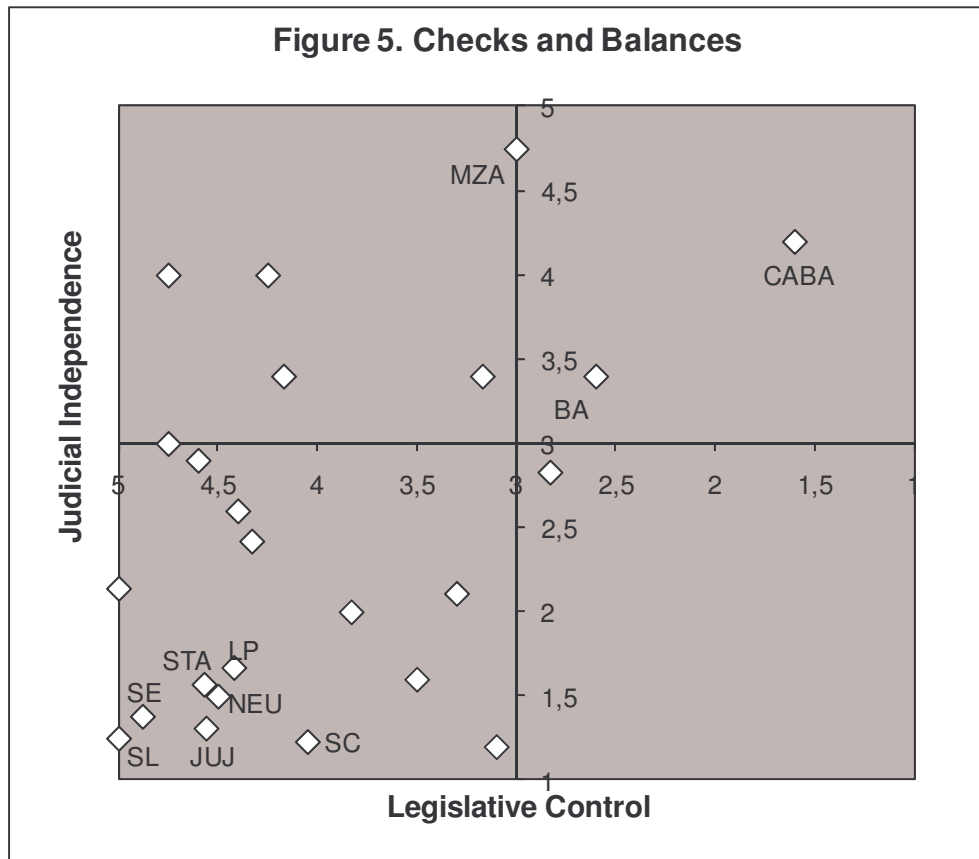


**X-Axis (Q.36):** “How free to criticize the provincial government without fear of punishment were regular citizens during 2002-2007: 1) Very free, 2) quite free, 3) somewhat free, 4) not very free, 5) not free at all?”

**Y-Axis (Q.35):** “We would like to know whether provincial public employees were at risk of being punished if they were openly critical of the administration of governor XX. Would you say that career administrative employees 1) ran serious risks such as being fired, 2) ran moderate risks such as not being promoted, or 3) did not run risks?”

**Checks and Balances.** The SEPP assesses institutional constraints through questions about the role of the provincial legislature and the provincial supreme court of justice in functioning as limitations on the power of the executive (all of Argentina’s provinces are “presidential” and have, constitutionally, three clearly separated branches). Figure 5 shows that only the city of Buenos Aires has effective legislative and judicial controls on the power of the executive. The provinces of Buenos Aires and Mendoza appear in relatively democratic positions too. Most notably, there is a large group of provinces clustered towards the lower-left corner. The governors of Santiago del Estero, San Luis, Santa Cruz, La Pampa, Jujuy and other provinces enjoy almost total freedom from the other powers, a finding consistent with journalistic accounts and academic case studies of some of these provinces (Bill Chávez 2003; Gibson 2005). Contrary to the findings above about vote-counting fraud and inclusion, the “checks and balances” subdimension appears as a deficit of democracy in many (but not all)

provinces. An interesting additional finding is that provinces with decent levels of judicial independence outnumber those with effective legislative control.



**X-Axis (Q.6):** “¿How limited was Governor XX’s power by the provincial legislature during the 2003-2007 period: 1) Very limited, 2) quite limited, 3) somewhat limited, 4) not very limited, or 5) not limited at all?”

**Y-Axis (Q.7):** “¿How many of the provincial supreme court justices were independent enough to make decisions contrary to the preferences of the XX administration: 1) No justice was independent, 2) fewer than half were independent, 3) half were independent, 4) more than half were independent, 5) all justices were independent?”

Figures 2 to 5 illustrate items of the SEPP that are both closer to the democratic end (such as the prevalence of vote-counting fraud) and closer to the less democratic pole (e.g., the level of legislative control on the executive). They also show that items are sometimes rather homogenous (again, vote-counting fraud) and sometimes quite heterogeneous (for example, the level of fairness of newspapers’ political coverage). These results anticipate a rather complex subnational regime picture: average levels of subnational democracy, and inter-provincial differences in subnational democracy, depend to a large extent on which aspect of the regime is considered.

Tables 2a and 2b below present the means and standard deviations of all the relevant survey questions<sup>8</sup> by dimension, subdimension, component and subcomponent, for all the provinces. To make results easily interpretable, all items in the questionnaire, regardless of their original scale, have been normalized and made consistent. This means that in all cases the most democratic value is 1 and the most authoritarian 0 (even if in many variables no province reaches these maxima and minima).<sup>9</sup> Thus, the interpretation of mean values is straightforward. Standard deviations are somewhat more difficult to interpret, as their minimal value is clear (zero, when all provinces have the same score in a given item) but their maximum value is not. It is informative to know that the maximum possible value of the standard deviation for a variable that ranges between 0 and 1 is 0.5 (i.e., in a very unlikely situation of perfect polarization, with twelve provinces scoring 0 and twelve provinces scoring 1). A (more plausible) normal distribution of cases would result, for a 0-1 variable, in a standard deviation of approximately 0.17. It should be clear, then, that standard deviation values above .2 should be considered significant, and values above .3 very high.

The normalized means range approximately from 0.17 (two items related to the campaign resources available to incumbents and challengers) to 1 (an item on government killing of critical journalists). This means that the SEPP covers a wide range of issues that go from those in which the provinces rank consistently high (e.g., in none of them the government murders journalists) to those in which they tend to do poorly (in general incumbents' campaign funds are much larger than those of challengers). The standard deviations are sometimes practically zero (in items in which all provinces score essentially 1) and sometimes as high as .36 (an item on the extent to which governors control the national senators of their provinces).

The statistical results presented in tables 2a and 2b are organized analytically according to the operationalization scheme presented above (Table 1). However, it is immediately clear that within dimensions, subdimensions, components and even subcomponents, items can vary widely both in central tendency and dispersion, as illustrated by the items in the "Fairness of campaign" subcomponent: provinces are homogeneously democratic in not registering cases of pressures for a gubernatorial candidate to withdraw from an election, but they do quite poorly and are rather heterogeneous when the fairness of the TV campaign coverage is evaluated.

It would be descriptively illuminating to look at this information in terms of the statistical characteristics of the items. For example, a first useful distinction is between those items that differentiate provinces and those that do not (i.e., with SDs close to zero). Likewise, our understanding of provincial regimes would advance a long way just by distinguishing items in which provinces score very high from those in which they are middling and those in which they do poorly.

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<sup>8</sup> Not all the items in the SEPP measure subnational democracy.

<sup>9</sup> Keep in mind that for a province to have an average rating of 0 (1) in a given survey item, every single expert on that province needs to have chosen the most authoritarian (democratic) answer.

**Table 2a. Mean and Standard Deviation of Survey Items: Access to Power Dimension**

Subdim.	Components	Subcomponents	Survey item	Mean	SD
INCLUSION	Right to vote	Denial of right to vote	Seriousness of denial of voting rights to citizens (p21+p22-p23)	.73	.11
	Right to run	Denial of right to run	Seriousness of candidate proscriptions (p26)	.99	.04
CONTESTATION	Fairness of elections	Fairness of Campaign	Incumbent gubernatorial campaign spending advantage (p29)	.17	.22
			Incumbent's use of state resources for gub. campaign (p31)	.17	.15
			Pro-incumbent's gub. candidate bias: TV (p32)	.32	.26
			Pro-incumbent's gub. candidate bias: Cable TV(p32)	.41	.19
			Pro-incumbent's gub. candidate bias: Radio (p32)	.40	.21
			Pro-incumbent's gub. candidate bias: Newsp. (p32)	.44	.23
			Govt. pressures for a gub. candidate to withdraw (p27)	.99	.02
	Fairness of electoral act and vote counting	Extent of irregularities at the ballot station (p19)		.70	.17
			Fairness of vote-counting process in gub. elections (p24)	.83	.12
	Freedom of expression	Opposition leaders	Opponents prosecuted for libel/defamation (p33)	.82	.12
			Opponents fired from a job (p33)	.76	.20
			Opponents threatened or blackmailed (p33)	.70	.20
			Opponents physically attacked (p33)	.89	.15
			Opponents arrested (p33)	.95	.11
			Opponents killed or disappeared (p33)	.99	.03
			Opponents self-censor because of fear of punishment (p34)	.73	.19
	Critical journalists	Political journalists mostly pro governor (p41)		.37	.13
Political journalists often critical of governor (p41)			.34	.12	
Critical journalists excluded from Govt. publicity (p43)		Critical journalists prosecuted for libel/defamation (p43)	.75	.20	
		Critical journalists fired from a job (p43)	.82	.15	
		Critical journalists threatened or blackmailed (p43)	.75	.21	
		Critical journalists physically attacked (p43)	.91	.10	
		Critical journalists arrested (p43)	.97	.07	
		Critical journalists killed or disappeared (p43)	1.0	.01	
Politically relevant media	Media coverage of opinions about governor: TV (p40)	.33	.23		

			Media coverage of opinions about governor: Cable (p40)	.43	.19
			Media coverage of opinions about governor: Radio (p40)	.52	.17
			Media coverage of opinions about governor: Newsp. (p40)	.51	.26
			% of media outlets which would minimize a Govt. corruption case (p42)	.45	.19
			Use of selective distribution of Govt. publicity (p44)	.27	.14
			Use of selective distribution of Govt. information (p44)	.39	.16
			Use of pressure on companies to withdraw publicity from critical media(p44)	.70	.21
			Use of selective inspections to critical media (p44)	.83	.18
			Use of denial of paper, electricity, etc to critical media (p44)	.93	.09
			Use of denial/cancelation of permits to critical media(p44)	.91	.13
			Use of libel prosecution of critical media (p44)	.82	.15
			Use of bribes to journalists or media owners (p44)	.64	.20
			Use of harassment of journalists or media owners (p44)	.79	.16
			Use of provincially-owned media to obtain favorable coverage of Govt. (p44)	.57	.32
		Use of media owned by governor/allies to obtain favorable coverage (p44)	.65	.28	
		Public employees	Risk of punishment for criticizing Govt.: high-ranking staff (p35)	.37	.20
			Risk of punishment for criticizing Govt.: permanent staff (p35)	.48	.24
			Risk of punishment for criticizing Govt.: temporary staff (p35)	.21	.18
			Risk of punishment for criticizing Govt.: teachers (p35)	.71	.25
		General population	Freedom to participate in opposition demonstrations (p37)	.75	.20
	Freedom to criticize Govt. (p36)		.77	.17	
	Freedom to organize	Political parties	Likelihood of punishment for joining an opposition party (p38)	.57	.21
			Likelihood of positive incentive to preempt joining an opposition party (p39)	.43	.17
<b>EFEC-TIV.</b>	Unelected local powers		Extent of limitations on power of elected officials by unelected actors (p17)	.70	.18
	Elected national powers		Extent of limitations on power of elected authorities by federal Govt. (p18)	.42	.22

**Table 2b. Mean and Standard Deviation of Survey Items: Exercise of Power Dimension**

Subdim.	Components	Subcomponents	Survey item	Me an	SD
INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS	Legislature	Provincial legislature	Govt. bills passed unchanged by legislature (p.5)	.23	.12
			Govt. bills substantially modified by legislature (p.5)	.20	.13
			Extent of legislative constraints on the executive (p.6)	.26	.22
	Judiciary	Provincial justice	Influence of Govt. preferences on provincial highest court rulings (p8)	.33	.21
			Proportion of highest court justices independent from Govt. (p7)	.37	.27
			Probability that provincial courts investigate minister accused of corruption (p10)	.32	.21
		Federal justice in prov.	Independence of federal judge(s) with respect to Govt. (p9)	.60	.22
	Agencies of Horizontal Account.	Independence of HA agencies	Effectiveness in control of Govt.: <i>Tribunal de Cuentas</i> (p11)	.29	.19
			Effectiveness in control of Govt.: <i>Fiscalía de Estado</i> (p11)	.28	.20
			Effectiveness in control of Govt.: <i>Defensoría del Pueblo</i> (p11)	.27	.29
			Effectiveness in control of Govt.: <i>Otra</i> (p11)	.36	.30
	Incumbent Party	Party constraints on governor	Power of governor over his/her own party (p12)	.27	.25
	National legislators	Senators	Influence of governor over the votes of national senator #1 (p4)	.46	.36
			Influence of governor over the votes of national senator #1 (p4)	.57	.32
Influence of governor over the votes of national senator #1 (p4)			.62	.35	
	Deputies	Influence of governor over the votes of his party's national deputies #1 (p4)	.31	.29	
LIBERAL RIGHTS	Freedom of information	Right to consume alternative and diverse sources of information	Ease of access to varied information on provincial politics: poor peasant (p45)	.36	.16
			Ease of access to varied information on provincial politics: teacher (p45)	.57	.19
			Ease of access to varied information on provincial politics: lawyer (p45)	.88	.11
		Access to Govt. informat.	Ease of access to information on procurement or welfare recipients (p46)	.34	.16
	Personal freedoms	Physical security	Arbitrary detentions by police or other Govt. agents (p47)	.65	.22
			Excessive force on public events by police or other Govt. agents (p47)	.76	.15
			Excessive force against demonstrations by police or other Govt. agents (p47)	.72	.19
			Excessive force against detainees/suspects by police or other Govt. agents (p47)	.57	.21
			Murder of detainees/suspects by police or other Govt. agents (p47)	.88	.12
			Murders or disappearances by police or other Govt. agents (p47)	.94	.09
Privacy		Use of intelligence services to spy on politically prominent people (p49)	.53	.25	
Alternative minority lifestyles		Govt. discrimination against religious minorities (p50)	.98	.04	
		Govt. discrimination against people of indigenous descent (p50)	.89	.14	
		Govt. discrimination against Latin American immigrants (p50)	.94	.09	
		Govt. discrimination against immigrants from other provinces (p50)	.94	.09	

			Govt. discrimination against women (p50)	.91	.11
			Govt. discrimination against homosexuals (p50)	.92	.11
<b>INDE- PEN- DENT</b>	Economic organizations	Academic freedom	Use of provincial schools and textbooks to enhance Govt. image (p51)	.84	.17
		Autonomous labor unions	Govt. support: main provincial public employees' unions (p13)	.47	.15
	Autonomous business organizations	Govt. support: main provincial business organizations (p14)	.37	.09	
	Non-profit organizations	Catholic Church	Govt. support: provincial Catholic bishop/s (p15)	.52	.15
Good government organizations		How critical of Govt. were provincial "good government" NGOS (p16)	.73	.19	
<b>CIVIL SOC.</b>					

Table 3 systematizes these distinctions. For the sake of simplicity, it is assumed that item means and standard deviations can be “low,” “medium,” or “high.” Although the table contains 9 cells, only 7 situations are possible. The lower-left and lower-right cells are empty because it is logically impossible for a low or high mean to be accompanied by high standard deviation: the former require a clustering of the provinces in one end, while the latter implies that provinces are widely scattered.

**Table 3. Classification of Items by Mean and Standard Deviation**

Standard deviation	Mean		
	Low	Medium	High
Low	Consistently non-democratic	Consistently Middling	Consistently democratic
Medium	Non-democratic with exceptions	Middling and dispersed	Democratic with exceptions
High	-	Polarized	-

Left-to-right movement in Table 3 implies going from less to more democratic overall provincial situations. Movement from the top to the bottom, on the other hand, is associated with low to high inter-provincial differences. For example, the “Low” row ranges from items that are “Consistently non-democratic” (i.e., all provinces do poorly) to those that are “Consistently democratic” (all provinces do well) with an intermediate category for items that are “Consistently middling,” that is, aspects of democracy for which all provinces cluster around an intermediate level. The “Medium” column illustrates the table’s vertical axis: the overall provincial mean can be middling because all provinces are middling, because provinces are moderately dispersed around a mean middling value, or because they are “polarized,” that is, about half of the provinces score very high and the other half very low.

The actual distribution of many survey items is displayed in Figure 6 (for reasons of space not all items are included). Notice, first, the empty area on the left of the graph: no item has a very low mean, which means that there is no aspect of democracy that performs consistently poorly in all provinces. At the right end of the graph, however, there are several items with high means: some features of democracy appear to be prevalent across the national territory. The declining level of dispersion as the item means approach one is, as explained above, inevitable: a very high mean can only be obtained if all cases rank high, a situation that implies inter-provincial homogeneity and, therefore, a low standard deviation.

Standard deviations do differ considerably toward the center of the figure. No item approaches a standard deviation of 0.5 (the “polarized” situation of Table 3), as this would mean that about half of the provinces are at the democratic extreme, half at the authoritarian extreme, and none in between, a highly unlikely distribution for any social science variable. However, the fact that all items in the central area of the figure are above 0.10, and many above 0.20, suggests that non-trivial inter-provincial differences are common, and that sometimes they are rather large.

Figure 6. Mean and Standard Deviation of selected SEPP items

SD	Mean									
	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.0
0.30			SC independence	TV camp. bias	Newsp. bias					
0.25		Party constraints		Punishment of staff (p)	Biased govt. advert.	Spying				
			TV bias	Newsp. camp. bias	Federal justice					
	Camp. spending	Prov. Justice constraints			Police brutality	Threats journ./oppon.				
		Legisl. constraints	Federal limit.		Police detentions					
0.20			Radio camp. bias	Alt. sources (teacher)	Freedom of protest					
		HA institutions		Media self-censor.	Excessive police force					
	Punishment of staff (c)				Tutelary powers					
		Alt. sources (peasant)	Radio bias		Elector. irregul.	Politicized. educat.				
		FOI			Freedom of criticism					
0.15	State resources for camp.				Camp. harassment	Oppon. attacked				
						Discrim. ag. natives				
		Legisl. support	Journ. bias			Execution of detainees				
						Vote counting fraud	Oppon. arrested			
					Elect. exclusion	Alt. sources (lawyer)				
0.10							Discrim. ag. women./gays			
							Discrim. ag. immigrants			
0.05	Inclusion	Contestation	Effectiveness	Institutional constraints	Liberal rights				Discrim. ag. religions	Candid. exclusion
									Oppon. executed	

Is there a pattern to the type of items that appear in each sector of the graph? To start answering this question, I colored items in Figure 6 according to the subdimension of democracy they belong to.<sup>10</sup> Two sets of items tend to cluster in a specific sector of the figure. First, the two purple items (inclusion dimension) are on the lower-right corner, indicating that they are consistently democratic: all provincial regimes tend to be highly inclusive both in terms of the right to run and the right to vote. Second, the red items (institutional constraints) are mostly located on the left half of the figure, and generally on the upper half.<sup>11</sup> This pattern implies that institutional limits on the incumbents' power is the weakest aspect of subnational democracy in Argentina. Both the provincial legislatures and the provincial Supreme Tribunals (and lower courts) appear to be generally ineffective in checking the governor. The same is true about provincial agencies of horizontal accountability (HA) (O'Donnell 1999a) and incumbent parties. Notice, however, that the relatively high standard deviation of these red items indicates that at least in some provinces checks and balances do work. The items associated with institutional constraints, then, approach the "non-democratic with exceptions" pattern in Table 3.

The "liberal rights" (green) items are somewhat more common on the right half of the figure, and especially so when the substantive content includes overt repression. Thus, executions of detainees are extremely rare, and arbitrary detentions or excessive use of force by the police not too common. The only liberal rights that perform poorly are freedom of information (FOI), which measures the ease of access to government data, and the availability of alternative sources of information (peasant). That is, core liberal rights such as physical security and liberty are for the most part respected, while violations occur in the realm of less critical rights or for the less privileged sectors of the population.

The items associated with contestation, the most central feature of democracy, do not follow a clear distributional pattern. They appear in all populated sectors of the figure, but seem to move from left to right as the substantive content becomes more associated with traditional forms of electoral fraud. For example, electoral irregularities, the arrest of opposition leaders, or the harassment of opposition campaigns are relatively uncommon. Items tapping the fairness of electoral campaigns in terms of financial resources or media coverage, on the other hand, show a generally lopsided picture: incumbents often (but with important inter-provincial differences) prevail over their opponents because of privileged access to campaign funds, state resources, and favorable media coverage.

There are strong theoretical reasons to expect that subnational incumbents in national democracies will tend to curtail democratic rights in subtle and relatively peaceful ways (McMann 2006). The items highlighted in bold in Figure 6 are those associated with highly visible violations of democratic principles. Those items, which ask about acts such as vote stealing, threats, physical attacks, arrests, and executions, are always located on the right side of the figure. It appears that, following the logic of hybrid regimes and "boundary control" (Gibson

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<sup>10</sup> As measures of the dimensions "Independence of Civil Society" are "effect indicators" more than constitutive aspects of democracy, I decided not to include them in Figure 6. The point is that it is logically possible for a democratic political system to exist in the midst of a weak civil society, even if such situation is unlikely.

<sup>11</sup> The only partial exception is the federal justice, a non-surprising finding given that federal courts are part of the national, not the provincial government.

2005), provincial executives try to avoid blatant (and therefore visible) instances of undemocratic practices.

Finally, the two items tapping the “effectiveness” subdimension, are located towards the center of the figure. The mean value for “Tutelary powers” (which refers to unelected local actors that limit the power of elected authorities), however, is in a more democratic position than “Federal limitations.” The effective exercise of democratic power seems to be limited in several provinces, but more so because of the action of federal authorities than because of those of unelected local actors.

## **VI. How Many Dimensions to Subnational Democracy?: Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Democracy has usually been understood as a low-dimensionality concept. Some definitions see it as unidimensional, prominently those that conceive of it mostly as an electoral procedure to fill out government positions (Schumpeter 1975[1942]; Alvarez et al. 1996). Bi-dimensional conceptualizations are also common, for example those seeing (or measuring) democracy in terms of contestation and inclusion (Dahl 1971; Vanhanen 2000; Coppedge, Alvarez and Maldonado 2008) or, like here, in terms of the strictly democratic “access” dimension and the liberal “exercise” dimension. However, more dimensions have been proposed, and there are explicit defenses of democracy as a “thick” and highly multidimensional concept (Coppedge 1999). The extensive set of items included in the SEPP, which in turn measure a complex set of dimensions, subdimensions, components and subcomponents, reflects a “thick” view of democracy. But even a conceptually thick concept can be empirically uni- or bi-dimensional if its parts are strongly correlated. An important analytical task, then, is to determine the dimensionality underlying the many items measured in the SEPP.

The traditional statistical procedure to analyze dimensionality is exploratory factor analysis, a relatively common and straightforward multivariate technique. However, factor analysis cannot be simply applied to the SEPP data because of a familiar problem: there are too many variables and not so many cases. The survey includes approximately 100 items that measure characteristics of the provincial regime (92 of them appear in tables 2a and 2b), but only 24 units. At the very least factor analysis needs the same number of variables and cases, and as it is the case with all statistical techniques, works better when the cases/variables ratio is higher.

To deal with this problem I adopted a two-stage strategy. I first factor analyzed the items in each of the components or subcomponents (focusing on one or the other depending on the number of items they encompass). As the number of items in each of them is smaller than 24, factor analysis was always possible. In each case the items could be well summarized by the first or first and second factor extracted. As a result of these set of analyses (now shown) I derived 10 factors. Table 4 lists them and shows the variables most highly correlated with each of them. The factor names and the information on the associated variables should be enough to grasp the underlying aspect of democracy tapped by each of them.

**Table 4. Ten Factors Underlying the SEPP data**

<b>Subdimension</b>	<b>Component or subcomponent</b>	<b>Factor number and name</b>	<b>Associated items</b>
Contestation	Fairness of campaign	<b>1. Incumbency advantage</b>	p32, p31
	Fairness of electoral act and vote counting	<b>2. Fairness of electoral procedure</b>	p24, p28, p19
	Opposition leaders	<b>3. Freedom of expression for opponents</b>	P33, p34
	Critical journalists	<b>4. Freedom of expression for journalists</b>	P41, p43
	Politically relevant media	<b>5. State control of the media</b> <b>6. Pro-government media bias</b>	p44 p40, p42
	Public employees, General population	<b>7. Freedom to oppose the government</b>	p35, p36, p37, p38
Institutional constraints	All	<b>8. Institutional constraints</b>	p5, p6, p7, p8, p10
Liberal rights	Freedom of information	<b>9. Freedom of information</b>	p45
	Personal freedoms	<b>10. Personal freedoms</b>	p47, p49, p45, p51

Only three of the six subdimensions identified in Figure 1 appear in Table 4. The reason is that the “Inclusion” and “Effectiveness” subdimensions could not be factor analyzed because they include only two items each, while the items corresponding to the “Independent Civil Society” subdimension did not reveal any underlying factors (the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was in this case a poor 0.48, while for the ten factors in Table 4 it was always above 0.70).

The second stage consisted in looking for common dimensions underlying these ten factors (plus an indicator of the inclusion dimension and the two indicators of the effectiveness dimension). Table 5 displays the correlation matrix for these variables. The first two columns and last two rows show that the indicators of inclusion, incumbency advantage, and effectiveness are generally not highly correlated with other variables. The other factors, however, tend to be correlated among themselves, especially the group composed by “Freedom of expression for journalists,” “Freedom of information,” and “Personal freedoms”. In sum, the pattern of correlations reveals both potential for multidimensionality (as not all variables are correlated with the rest) and potential for reducing the 13 variables in the table to a more manageable number of underlying dimensions.

A factor analysis of these variables (Table 6) shows that the data can be reduced to three dimensions, a dominant one associated with most “freedom” factors (in particular “Freedom of expression for journalists,” “Freedom to oppose the government,” “Freedom of information” and “Personal freedoms,” and to a lesser extent to “Institutional constraints”), a second one defined mainly by “Incumbency advantage,” and a third and relatively weak one linked to federal government limitations on the power of elected provincial authorities.

**Table 5. Correlations among Factors Extracted from SEPP's items**

	Right to vote	Incumb. Advant.	Fair Elec.	FoE Oppon.	FoE Journ.	Media Control	Media Bias	Free Oppos.	Inst. Const.	Free Inform.	Pers. Freed.	Nonelec. Powers
Right to vote	1.00											
Incumbency advantage	0.06	1.00										
Fair. of electoral proc.	<b>0.68</b>	0.08	1.00									
FoE: Opponents	0.32	-0.45	0.40	1.00								
FoE: Journalists	0.48	0.06	<b>0.66</b>	<b>0.75</b>	1.00							
State control of media	0.32	-0.32	0.33	<b>0.63</b>	<b>0.67</b>	1.00						
Pro-Govt. media bias	0.26	0.54	0.47	0.24	<b>0.60</b>	0.01	1.00					
Freedom to oppose Govt.	0.43	0.03	<b>0.68</b>	<b>0.76</b>	<u>0.87</u>	0.58	<b>0.64</b>	1.00				
Institutional constraints	0.19	0.16	0.35	0.51	<b>0.75</b>	0.39	0.48	<b>0.67</b>	1.00			
Freedom of information	0.46	0.16	<b>0.68</b>	0.55	<u>0.87</u>	0.55	<b>0.72</b>	<u>0.85</u>	<b>0.62</b>	1.00		
Personal freedoms	0.51	-0.13	<b>0.70</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<u>0.84</u>	<b>0.68</b>	0.35	<b>0.79</b>	<b>0.64</b>	<u>0.79</u>	1.00	
Non-elected powers	0.05	-0.45	-0.08	0.15	-0.17	-0.15	-0.28	-0.21	-0.43	-0.22	0.04	1.00
Federal limitations	0.22	0.02	0.11	-0.27	-0.32	-0.14	-0.35	-0.31	-0.46	-0.39	-0.17	0.34

Note: Entries are correlation coefficients. Figures above .70 are **bolded**, and figures above .8 are underlined.

**Table 6. Factor Analysis of SEPP’s Factors**

Factor analysis/correlation	Number of obs =	22
Method: principal factors	Retained factors =	3
Rotation: orthogonal varimax (Kaiser off)	Number of params =	36

Factor	Variance	Difference	Proportion	Cumulative
Factor1	6.00948	3.87735	0.5436	0.5436
Factor2	2.13213	0.59161	0.1929	0.7364
Factor3	1.54052	.	0.1393	0.8758

LR test: independent vs. saturated:  $\chi^2(78) = 253.72$  Prob> $\chi^2 = 0.0000$

Rotated factor loadings (pattern matrix) and unique variances

Variable	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Uniqueness
Right to vote	0.5415	0.0408	0.5371	<u>0.4167</u>
Incumbency advantage	-0.0626	<b>0.8915</b>	0.0262	<u>0.2005</u>
Fair. of electoral proc.	0.6780	0.1987	0.5666	0.1798
FoE: Opponents	0.7682	-0.4795	-0.1008	0.1698
FoE: Journalists	<b>0.9559</b>	0.0647	-0.0126	0.0819
State control of media	0.6406	-0.4086	-0.0446	<u>0.4208</u>
Pro-Govt. media bias	<u>0.5639</u>	<b>0.6584</b>	-0.0819	0.2417
Freedom to oppose Govt.	<b>0.9222</b>	0.0869	-0.0313	0.1411
Institutional constr.	0.7425	0.2014	-0.4093	0.2407
Freedom of information	<b>0.8769</b>	0.2539	0.0145	0.1664
Personal freedoms	<b>0.8861</b>	-0.1854	0.1537	0.1568
Non-elected powers	-0.1185	-0.5524	0.3995	<u>0.5212</u>
Federal constraints	-0.2253	-0.0971	<b>0.7479</b>	<u>0.3804</u>

These results should be taken as preliminary and exploratory. Several of the methodological and statistical decisions that led to the results in Table 6 may be modified on deeper analysis. Taken at face value, they seem to indicate that subnational regimes should be described in terms of at least three independent dimensions: how much freedom they allow, the magnitude of the incumbent’s political and electoral advantage, and the extent to which provincial authorities are limited by federal ones. This implies that “not all good/bad things go together,” or that a given province may be more or less democratic depending on the dimension under consideration.

The point is illustrated by the scatterplots below, in which provinces are located according to their scores in different pairs of dimensions. The first one (Figure 7a) displays “Incumbency advantage” in the X axis and “Freedom of expression: Journalists” in the Y axis. The striking position of Santiago del Estero is explained by the fact that gubernatorial elections there were conducted under a federal intervention, so the “incumbent” candidate did not have the control over state resources that his counterparts in other provinces typically have. Interestingly, Santiago del Estero is the least democratic province in terms of freedom of expression. The

position of this province and, to a lesser extent, of Neuquén, Salta and Corrientes shows that the two regime dimensions displayed in the graph need not vary together.

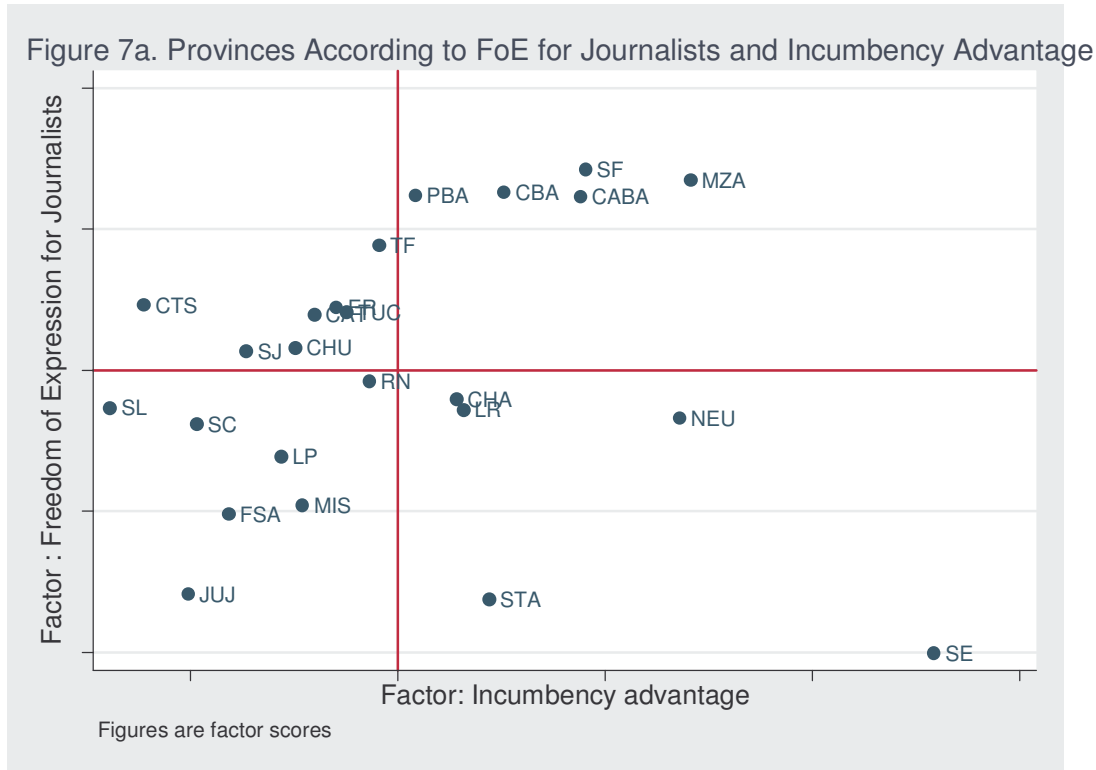
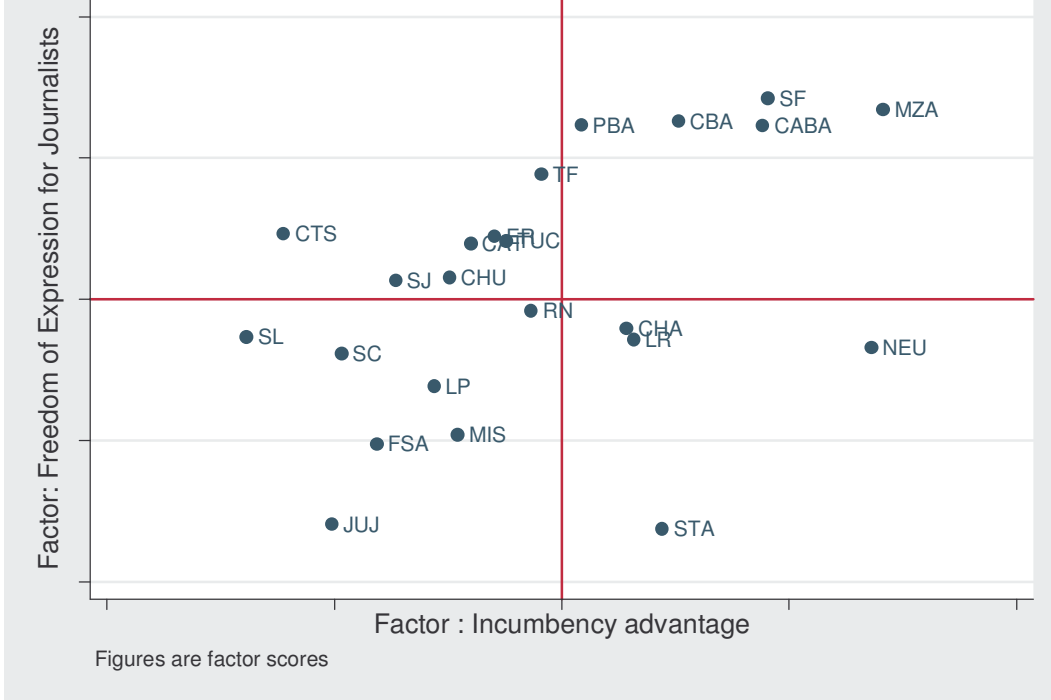
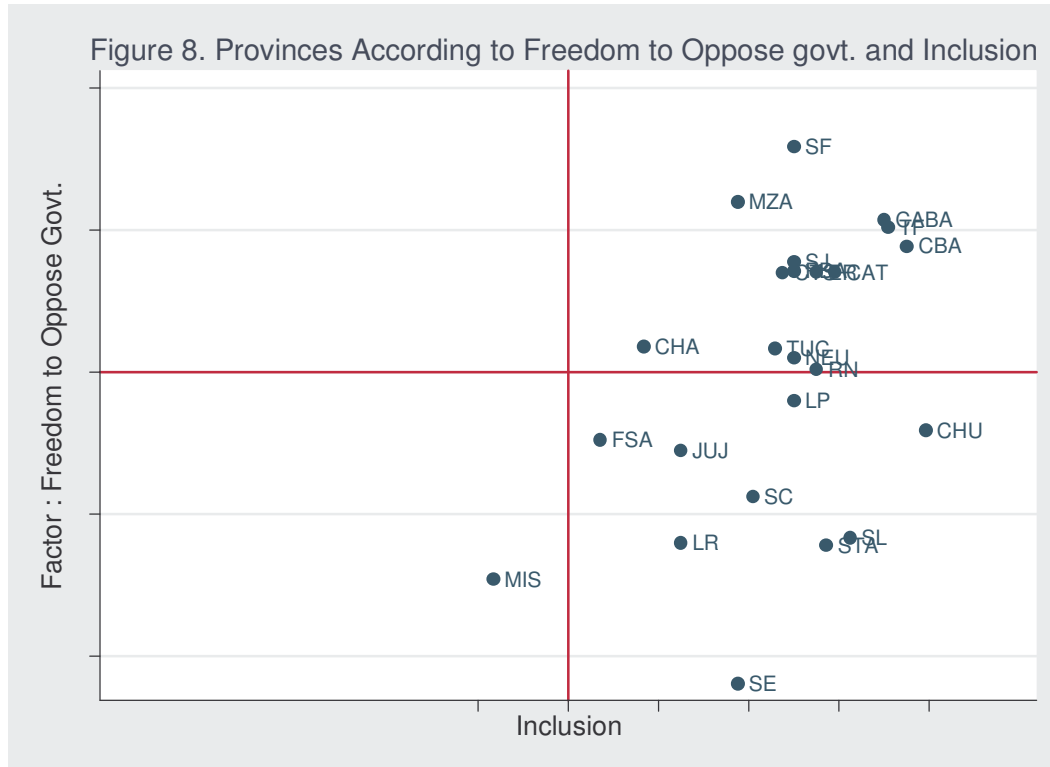


Figure 7b reproduces the results in Figure 7a after dropping Santiago del Estero. The upper-right “democratic” quadrant is occupied by the Mendoza and four of the six districts of the Pampas region. In the opposite, “undemocratic” quadrant we find Formosa, Jujuy, La Pampa, Misiones, San Luis, and Santa Cruz. Two provinces, Corrientes and Salta, do poorly in one dimension but decently on the other one. There is a visible positive correlation in the data, but not a very high one ( $r=0.43$ , Santiago del Estero excluded).

Figure 7b. Provinces According to FoE for Journalists and Incumbency Advantage

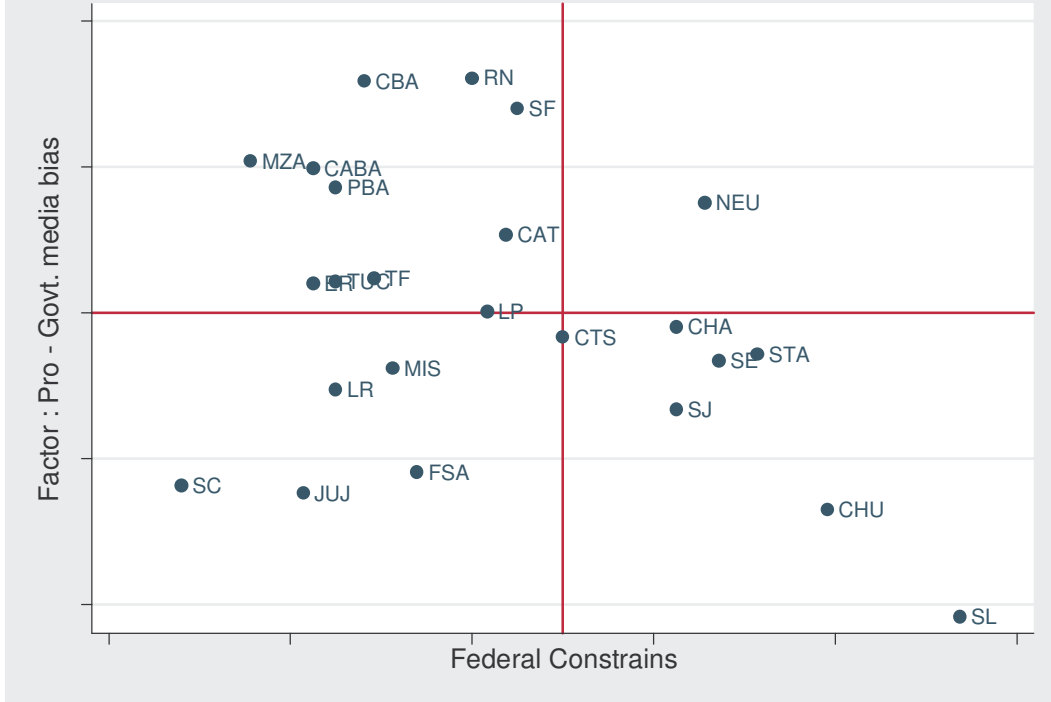


In Figure 8 the Y axis changes (slightly) from “Freedom of expression for journalists” to “Freedom to oppose the government,” while the X axis is now the indicator of inclusion (the same as used in Figure 2). Although the provinces located at the upper-right and lower-left positions tend to be the same as before, it is clear that the inclusion dimension does not discriminate as much among provinces as other aspects of regimes. In this figure the left quadrants are practically empty, in stark contrast with the previous figure.



Finally, Figure 9 displays the position of provinces in terms of the prevalence of a bias in favor of the provincial government in the local media and of the constraints imposed by federal authorities. The first pattern to strike the eye is that there is no positive correlation here. In fact, Pearson's  $r$  is  $-0.35$ . A province may do well in terms of media bias and still be severely constrained by federal rulers (e.g., Córdoba and Mendoza) or, conversely, have a media system highly biased in favor of incumbents, but be free from federal constraints (like San Luis and to a lesser extent Chubut). There is one element of continuity with respect to the previous figures: Formosa, Jujuy, Misiones and Santa Cruz appear again in the lower-left quadrant, here in the company of La Rioja.

Figure 9. Provinces According to Pro-Govt. Media Bias and Federal Constraints



Beyond some distinguishable trends, the subnational regime landscape varies depending on the dimensions of democracy under consideration. Provinces do not align neatly on a single democracy-authoritarianism continuum. Regime type seems not only to be multidimensional at the conceptual level, but also empirically. Consequently, the descriptive task at hand is complex: a comprehensive characterization of subnational regimes will imply dealing with nuanced, mixed, and hybrid realities. Not having provincial North Koreas is a normative blessing for Argentina and other national democracies, but it is at the same time a methodological challenge.

## Conclusion

Different aspects of democracy in the Argentine provinces, as measured by the SEPP questions, range from (on average) very good to rather poor. Many also have a significant level of inter-provincial variance. These findings mean that subnational regimes in Argentina are heterogeneous in two different ways. First, provinces as a whole vary with respect to the particular component of democracy under consideration. For example, they tend to be democratic in terms of inclusion but not so much in terms of checks and balances. Second, provincial regimes vary with respect to the mean of each dimension: for a majority of the items some provinces are significantly more and some significantly less democratic than the average. There is, then, plenty of inter-item and inter-provincial variance to be explained.

The descriptive results presented above suggest that the less democratic subnational regimes in Argentina are characterized by weak checks and balances, by sophisticated ways of

undermining contestation, and by significant (if subtle) violations of liberal rights. Inclusion requirements and the basic rules of democratic contestation, on the other hand, are generally respected by Argentine provincial incumbents. Subnational democracy is to some extent limited by federal power, but the most affected provinces are not in general those that are less democratic on the other dimensions.

Exploratory factor analysis of the survey's items clearly reject a unidimensional view of provincial regimes. The many dimensions of democracy identified in the "thick" conceptualization adopted in this paper can be reduced to a small number of factors, but not to a single factor or two. Preliminary statistical results suggest at least three empirically-different dimensions are needed to summarize adequately the underlying structure of the SEPP's data. Subnational political regimes appear to be at least as complex, and maybe even more complex, than national regimes.

## APPENDIX: Original Question Wording in Spanish

### Figure 2

**X-Axis** (Q.21): “A veces los ciudadanos no pueden votar porque no se les entrega el DNI a tiempo, porque sus nombres no aparecen en el padrón, etc. ¿Cuán graves cree usted que fueron este tipo de problemas que impiden que los ciudadanos voten en las elecciones provinciales de 2007: 1) muy graves, 2) bastante graves, 3) algo graves, 4) poco graves, o 5) nada graves?”

**Y-Axis** (Q.24): “¿Y cuán limpio fue el conteo de los votos por parte de las autoridades electorales? ¿Le parece que hubo 1) ninguna, 2) pocas, 3) algunas, 4) bastantes o 5) muchas irregularidades en el conteo de los votos?”

### Figure 3

**X and Y Axes** (Q.32a-d). “Por favor piense en la cobertura de la campaña electoral de 2007 por parte de los medios de comunicación provinciales. Nos referimos a la cobertura de los medios, y no a la publicidad de los candidatos. Considerando tanto la cantidad como el contenido de la cobertura de la TV abierta, ¿usted diría que en promedio fue 1) muy sesgada en favor del candidato a gobernador oficialista, 2) algo sesgada en favor del candidato oficialista, 3) equilibrada [incluyendo sesgos compensatorios], o sesgada en favor de candidatos opositores? ¿Y la del/de los principal/es diario/s provincial/es?”

### Figure 4

**X-Axis** (Q.36): “¿Cuán libres de criticar al gobierno provincial sin miedo de ser castigados eran los ciudadanos comunes durante 2003-2007? ¿1) Muy libres, 2) bastante libres, 3) algo libres, 4) poco libres o 5) nada libres?”

**Y-Axis** (Q.35): “Ahora quisiera saber si los empleados públicos provinciales corrían el riesgo de ser castigados en caso de que fueran abiertamente críticos del gobierno del gobernador XX. ¿Diría que los empleados administrativos de carrera 1) corrieron riesgos graves tales como ser despedidos, 2) riesgos moderados tales como no ser ascendidos, o 3) no corrieron riesgos?”

### Figure 5

**X-Axis** (Q.6): “¿Cuán limitado estuvo el poder del gobernador XX por la legislatura provincial durante el período 2003-2007: 1) muy, 2) bastante, 3) algo, 4) poco o 5) nada limitado?”

**Y-Axis** (Q.7): “¿Cuántos de los jueces de El Superior Tribunal de Justicia eran lo suficientemente independientes como para tomar decisiones contrarias a las preferencias del gobierno de XX: 1) ningún juez fue independiente, 2) menos de la mitad, 3) la mitad, 4) más de la mitad, o 5) todos fueron independientes?”

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