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“Wish you were here” trust in public administration in Latin America

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Studies show that Latin American citizens do not trust institutions. But what underlies this distrust? This work presents an exploratory and descriptive effort around Public Administration. The goals are: a) to contrast the beliefs that citizens and administrators have about Public Administration, b) to verify differences and similarities between countries of the region, c) to identify aspects of reform that promote trust. Information was gathered from three data sources: Latinobarómetro (2011, 2015), CAF Development Bank of Latin America, (2014), and a survey with the support of the Organization of American State (OAS, 2015). The analysis reveals that: a) there are no appreciable differences between officials and citizens, b) there is relative homogeneity between countries, c) open government policies can be an excellent opportunity to renew trust.

Keywords: trust; public administration; civil servant; open government; Latin America.

“Wish you were here” confianza en la administración pública en Latinoamérica

Sabemos que los ciudadanos latinoamericanos desconfían mucho de las instituciones. Pero ¿qué subyace a dichas actitudes? Este trabajo presenta un esfuerzo exploratorio y descriptivo en torno a la Administración Pública. Los objetivos son: a) contrastar las creencias que sobre dicha institución tienen la ciudadanía y los administradores, b) verificar diferencias y semejanzas entre países de la región, c) identificar ejes de reforma para promover la creación de confianza. Metodológicamente, se triangula información proveniente de tres fuentes de datos: Latinobarómetro (2011, 2015), CAF Banco de Desarrollo de América Latina, (CAF, 2014), y una encuesta propia con apoyo de la Organización de los Estados Americanos (OEA, 2015). El análisis revela que: a) no existen diferencias apreciables entre funcionarios y ciudadanía, b) hay relativa homogeneidad entre países, c) las políticas de gobierno abierto pueden ser una excelente oportunidad para renovar la confianza.

Palabras clave: confianza; administración pública; funcionarios; gobierno abierto; Latinoamérica.

“Wish you were here” confiança na administração pública na América Latina

Sabemos que os cidadãos latino-americanos são muito desconfiados das instituições. Mas o que subjaz essas atitudes? Este trabalho apresenta um esforço exploratório e descritivo em torno da Administração Pública. Os objetivos são: a) contrastar as crenças que cidadãos e administradores têm sobre a referida instituição, b) verificar diferenças e semelhanças entre os países da região, c) identificar eixos de reforma para promover a criação de confiança. Metodologicamente, as informações são coletadas de três fontes de dados: Latinobarómetro (2011, 2015), CAF Banco de Desenvolvimento da América Latina (CAF, 2014) e uma pesquisa própria com o apoio da Organização dos Estados Americanos (OEA, 2015). A análise revela que: a) não há diferenças apreciáveis entre funcionários e cidadãos, b) há relativa homogeneidade entre países, c) políticas governamentais abertas podem ser uma excelente oportunidade para renovar a confiança.

Palavras-chave: confiança; administração pública; funcionários; governo aberto; América Latina.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Trust ensures common ground from which to interact with others. Trust reduces uncertainty, generates shared senses and, based on that, it further improves chances to cooperate and collaborate. If mutual trust is missing there is no way of envisaging the co-creation of public policies and integration of knowledge, resources and contributions that public governance aspires to (Pollitt, Bouckaert, & Löffler, 2006; Van De Walle & Lahat, 2016; Yang, 2005).

Despite its core role in coordination and governance, there are few studies on trust in Public Administration (from now on PA) in Latin America. We are aware of a widespread lack of trust (Güemes, 2016), an extended lack of trust in Public Institutions (Government, Courts of Justice, Legislature, etc.), (Del Tronco, 2013; Torcal & Bargsted, 2015), and a deep dissatisfaction with public services (Del Campo, Güemes, & Paramio, 2017). We still know little about lack of trust in Public Administration and its underlying issues, that is, the reasons explaining the mismatching between citizens and public administration.

Contrary to what was to be expected based on theoretical expectations and comparative studies, we have not observed differences in former studies with regard to the levels of trust in PA as a result of the quality of bureaucracies or levels of dissatisfaction towards public services in Latin America (Güemes & Brugué, 2017). Nor is there any relevance of macroeconomic variables such as GDP or Gini Index to help account for such differences. Countries where bureaucracy is characterized as efficient and meritocratic such as Brazil or Chile are not getting more trust than countries where PA is regarded as biased as is the case of Dominican Republic or Paraguay. In an equal sense, only satisfaction with the police and democracy are significantly related with trust but at very low levels. These findings presumably indicate that objective assessment (aggregate indicators) and subjective satisfaction (individual indicators) with civil service and its products are only reflecting part of the story and are not sufficient to help understand variations of trust in PB among countries of the region.

Given the importance of trust in PA, we make further approaches into a comprehensive definition inclusive of emotional and social aspects besides rational aspects.

Qualitative studies help interpret and understand the configuration of imaginary collective groups and the historical base of lack of trust; experimental studies with officers and citizens allow the identification of emotional components and explain interactions by incorporating contributions of Psychology. In turn, quantitative studies enable comparisons and develop generalizations with regard to a given object of study.

Among the former we can illustrate classical studies such as that of Escalante (2005), which helps understand why citizens do not feel linked to legal and formal institutions in Latin America. Instead, some particular loyalties tend to prevail: community-based, client-based and corporate loyalties, hierarchical and property-based loyalty links also prevail and coexist with the legal framework. Interestingly as well, we can refer to the classical study of Goodsell (1985) on how communication media and anti-public ideologies construct biased stereotypes about bureaucracy, or else the paper coordinated by Lima (2010), which helps understand the configuration of logical textures, identities and institutionalized forms for the management of conflict of judicial power by applying ethnographic techniques.

With regard to experimental studies, Van Ryzi's analysis (2013) is worth noting, thus helping demonstrate how expectations and ideologies condition the assessment of services, Marvel's experiments (2016) are also worthy of attention, as it helps evidence how exposure to anti public administration messages has repercussions in the way subjects evaluate performance of institutions. In both cases, distrust is driven by influences, which does not depend so much on the rational and restful evaluation of institutions performance but on more emotional socially-configured issues

Unlike these two approaches, this paper intends to structure survey data under simple methodologies so as to offer a general overview of the Latin American region, by integrating different primary sources of information with regard to: 1) levels of (dis)trust in PA of civil servants and citizens; 2) their opinions and attitudes with regard to trust and solutions to distrust. We consider this is a relevant exercise as there are no descriptive studies on these phenomena which can enable a comparative view of attitudes and feelings of civil servants and citizens towards trust in Public Administration so as direct the focus towards the development of qualitative research and hypotheses that can be experimentally tested.

Our research questions are two. The first is whether the distrust in PA is explained by stereotypes and social prejudices based on the lack of knowledge of the operation of the PA itself and the complexity of its work. If that were the case, one would expect a gap between the perception of civil servants and citizens, where distrust was to be lower among civil servants, given that they know the complex institutional reality and limits that public work entails. However, our hypothesis is that the gap is limited and this is most likely attributable to the fact that the distrust of both groups is based on a sense of apathy and generalized anger that goes beyond a cognitive analysis of public sector performance or a sustained emotional assessment in social stereotypes about public administration. The frustration that derives from a constant impotence in the face of an environment dominated by the low culture of legality, corruption and personalization of social relations translates into a distrust in the similar institution for both groups (Güemes & Wences, 2019).

If we take into account this widespread dissatisfaction, it is as well interesting to know what the players themselves (citizens and civil servants) believe about the causes and solutions to the problem of trust. Our hypothesis is that, given the climate of frustration, there will also be a coincidence between the two groups. Among the causes, the highlight will be on corruption and the perception of unequal treatment, key phenomena to understand the social trap of low culture of legality. Additionally, as part of the solutions, the proposals will be aligned to the promotion of open government policies, specifically transparency and participation, a paradigm of Public Administration reform popularizing in the region (Güemes & Brugué, 2017).

2. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNDERSTAND TRUST IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Trust is a difficult concept to capture and define. Sometimes it refers to socially oriented individual attitudes; and some other times to rational perceptions that evaluate the surrounding reality based on information and signs that the subject receives; others to pre-rational beliefs developed in primary socialization.

A common feature to all definitions of trust is the emphasis on the positive expectations that subjects have about the intentions and behaviors of other subjects or organizations. Trusting the other means expecting not to be disappointed, deceived or harmed (at least without a fair cause) (Güemes, 2016).

This expectation on the other would rest in three dimensions: a cognitive one that supposes a reasoning based on information that it interprets, another affective one based on emotions and that implies the decision to suspend the doubt with respect to the other and to act "as if" was trustworthy; and a sociological-routine that leads to sustain fiction and the expectation that all others will behave in appropriate ways (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Möllering, 2006; Raaphorst, 2013).

Literature provides references to satisfaction with public services, the main product of Public Administrations such as education, health, etc. These data allow us to learn about the perceptions that users of public services have of quality, coverage or impartiality in how they are managed or visions of how they believe they should be formulated under a democratic regime but not to trust in the sense that we give here (Guerrero, 2011; Del Campo et al., 2017). Those who study the trust itself prefer to inquire into more direct questions about the institution itself (Bouckaert, 2012; Del Pino, Calzada, & Pulido, 2016; Van De Walle & Lahat, 2016), even though it is difficult to identify if the respondent is thinking in the institution itself (beyond those who occupy it) or is evaluating the current management (Del Tronco, 2012; Güemes, 2016; Llewellyn, Brookes, & Mahon, 2013).

In this paper we will define **trust in Public Administration** as a positive expectation of citizens about the intentions and behavior of civil servants that rests on rational, affective and social aspects. Given the characteristics of the Latin American Public Administrations, we will refer to civil servants in a wide sense, and we will include all those servants having a statutory, contractual or political relationship with the State and who, broadly speaking, perform a public function and refer to themselves as public workers or civil servants.¹

Empirical studies on trust in Public Administration focus on three drivers: public sector performance, impartiality of processes, and social imaginary. The evaluation of outcomes and performance would be adjusted to the rational dimension of trust focusing on the output of governments. The impartiality of processes would be adjusted to the emotional dimension of trust. Those who feel or believe they are despised or disadvantaged by the treatment received develop strong negative emotions not only against the specific person who provides the service but also against the institution they represent. Finally, negative stereotypes constructed around bureaucracy build an imaginary that influences the configuration of individual trust from their social perspective.

Table 1 systematizes these approaches and their correspondence with trust dimensions.

¹ For a more extensive discussion on the concept of Trust in Public Administration please turn to (Güemes, 2018).

TABLE 1 **DIMENSIONS OF TRUST AND EXPLANATORY APPROACHES**

Approach	Focus point	Trust Dimension
OUTPUTS	Satisfaction with public services	Rational
PROCESS	Impartiality of processes	Affective
SOCIAL IMAGINARY	Mental settings and stereotypes	Social Aspect

Source: Elaborated by the author.

Regarding performance, it is worth highlighting that satisfaction with public services is essential to explain trust in Public Administration (Bixi, Lust, & Woolcock, 2015; International Institute of Administrative Sciences [IIAS], 2014; Parry, 1976). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2017) makes reference to this as *competence*: the ability of governments to provide citizens with the services they need and with quality levels they expect.

With regard to procedure for the provision of public goods and services, research made so far stresses the value of the quality of processes, their legitimacy and impartiality (Guerrero, 2011). In other words, not needing "an acquaintance working in there" or a "a connecting friend" (favoritism) to obtain a medical appointment or a place at the school selected is key to building trust. The OECD (2017) refers to these aspects as *values or principles* that should inform and guide government action.

As regards the imaginary, cultural determinants and emotional constructions, it is interesting to find out how fellow citizens think and feel in society and with respect to their institutions (Bouckaert, 2012; IIAS, 2015; Van De Walle, Van Roosbroek, & Bouckaert 2008). Culturally-disseminated prejudices and stereotypes can play a relevant role in explaining distrust (Del Pino, Calzada, & Pulido, 2016).

Certainly, when it comes to specific cases, it will be difficult to ascertain the proportion of rational, affective or social aspects that weighing the most in the configuration of trust in the PA. However, it is essential to understand that it is not enough to work on one dimension, but to encompass them integrally. Thereby:

- a) proposals aimed at improving the effectiveness and performance of PA by simplifying and procedures such as electronic administration are relevant to strengthen the first of the dimensions (Inter-American Development Bank [IDB], 2017),
- b) transparency, control and accountability policies that favor more impartial and fair processes are essential to transform the processes (second dimension) (OECD, 2017),
- c) participation and collaboration initiatives among citizens and civil servants are essential to transform the imaginary and remove prejudices (third dimension) (Open Government Partnership [OGP], 2017; Yang, 2005).

The interesting aspect about this paper is to get to know if there are divergences between civil servants and citizens in relation to: 1) levels of trust in PA, 2) causes of distrust and solutions to it.

Generally speaking, citizens' perception of civil servants is negative and they are characterized as indifferent subjects acting in a devitalized, ritualistic and obstructionist fashion (Goodsell, 1985). Gray human beings who are trapped in an anachronistic organizational logical reasoning, who speak legalese by merely stating whether this can or cannot be done. From the other side, it is common for servants to perceive citizens as people with no commitment, no interest and lacking information, having a short-term vision (Yang, 2006). Citizens behave like children writing a letter to the wise men ignoring the formal, legal and budgetary limits that exist to meet requests and the difficulties of harmonizing them with the general interest. If these imaginary visions are taken into account, one would expect that the cooperative potential and the ability to trust the other be limited and that the views that each group has on the causes of distrust be divergent (Del Pino, 2005; Van De Walle et al., 2008).

However, chances are that, despite the presence of negative imaginaries with respect to the other, there will be a generalized vision on of the causes of distrust going beyond stereotypes and focused on institutional and contextual issues that can be politically transformed and thus revitalize the relationship of mutual trust that governance demands. In other words, if similarities were found rather than divergences, one might think that distrust has historical-structural roots that demand profound transformations (with high political costs) but that there is a window of opportunity to place these changes on the eaves of international initiatives (under the pressure of being part of them) like those of Open Government so popular in the region.

3. METHODOLOGICAL PRECISIONS: DATA BASES AND DIMENSIONS TO BE OBSERVED

Since our objective is both descriptive and exploratory, simple statistical processing will be used where frequencies are observed in comparative terms. To this end, information from different sources is triangulated, out of which, one belongs to the author, with unpublished results.

The first is *Latinobarómetro*, a public opinion survey which annually applies around 20,000 interviews in 18 countries in Latin America.² We will use the latest available databases where institutional trust is inquired: 2002, 2008, 2013 and 2015. Per each civil servant in this database, the occupant filter of the respondent is applied, who claim to work in the Public Administration or State-run Companies regard themselves as civil servants.

The second is a special module called "Employment characterization: skills and motivations" that in 2014 was part of the annual survey carried out by the CAF, Development Bank of Latin America in the main cities of Latin America³. In this case, the distinction between civil servants and citizens

² Countries included in *Latinobarómetro* are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela. Samples include 1000 or 1250 cases. Representative samples of the population of legal age are applied. Most countries apply modified probabilistic samples. The margin of error is +/- 2.8% n = 1200 and +/- 3.1% n = 1000.

³ The application date was 2013, 9,616 surveys were distributed in 10 capital cities of Latin America: Buenos Aires, La Paz, San Pablo, Bogotá, Quito, Mexico City, Panama City, Lima, Montevideo and Caracas. The survey is 95% reliable, assuming maximum dispersion of the results (p / q = 1) and a probabilistic selection of respondents.

takes into consideration the response of the respondents to: Is their main economic activity in the public sector or in the private sector?

The third self-run survey was conducted from the Center for Political and Constitutional Studies (CEPC) with the support of experts from the Organization of American States (OAS) in 2015 and was addressed to those responsible for public service and modernization of the Administration in the governments of Latin America. This survey was structured around four blocks. The first block included generic questions for the definition of the personal and professional profile of the interviewees. The second block focused on the conditions external to public institutions that influence their work while the third block focused on the organization and internal work of the entities. The last block included questions referring to the initiatives implemented by governments to improve citizen trust. The survey was applied to organizations and officers who, on behalf of their respective countries, were part of the network managed by the OAS in matters of public service and modernization of the Administration. In some cases, they are in charge of ministries, secretaries and sub-secretaries whose positions are the result of political appointments. In other cases, when it comes to directors and heads of modernization, these are supposed to have constructed a professional career for their appointment but whether their appointment is the result of a direct hiring system or a competitive contest is unknown. The survey was answered by 19 representatives from 15 countries in Latin America, out of whom 55% have worked in the public sector for more than 15 years and the majority take ministerial, assistant secretary, headquarters or senior management positions in the central administration of government.⁴

In that respect, we are interested in observing the following:

- 1- The **levels of trust** in Public Administration by drawing a distinction between civil servants and citizens, and between types of civil servants. No differences are expected between those who are part of the public service and those who are not, as well as differences between administrative bodies.
- 2- The **causes** that identify both citizens and civil servants as bases of trust. Our hypothesis is that the concern for corruption is widespread and will be the main cause. However, it is expected that civil servant also focus on aspects external to them such as stereotypes; while citizens emphasize internal aspects such as slowness, impersonal and partial treatment, etc.
- 3- The **solutions** offered by citizens and civil servants to revert distrust. Our intuition is that both will focus on aspects of the process that respond to different pillars of open government. While citizens will demand more equity, speeding up procedures and reducing attention times, civil servant will focus on digitalization, transparency policies and dissemination of management results.

⁴ Respondents belong to the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia (2 people), Costa Rica (2 people), Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico (2 people), Panama, Paraguay (2 people), Peru, Dominican Republic and Uruguay. Interviews were conducted through web tools. Of the 20 respondents, 12 were defined as men and 7 as women. In relation to the age 2 of the respondents are under 35 years, 7 of them between 35 and 45 years, 5 of them between 45 and 55 years, and the remaining 5 over 55 years. In relation to the years of experience in the public sector, 3 of them have less than 5 years, 5 of them between 5 and 15 years of experience, and 11 of them more than 15 years of experience. In relation to the positions they occupy we find: 2 Head of Modernization of the State Management and Digital Government of different countries, 3 ministers of the State Executive and 1 vice minister, 1 Secretary of Public Management, 2 Assistant Secretaries of Institutional Change, 2 Holder of the National Unit linked to Improvement of Public Management, 5 Directors of executive level, 1 commissioner of the presidency, 1 manager, 1 state employee, 1 expert, 1 communication advisor.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND CONTRASTIVE ANALYSES

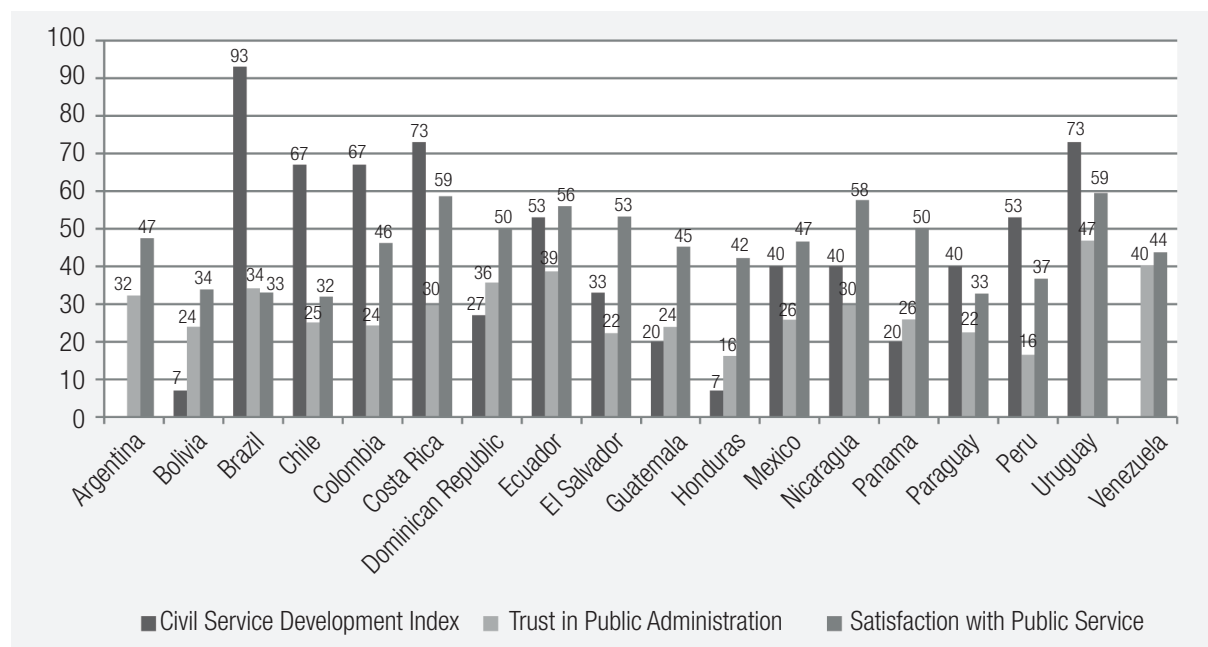
4.1 Trust in Public Administration

According to data from the World Values Survey (segment 2010-2014), average trust in PA between Asian countries is 57%, among African countries 53%, among former British colonies countries 44%, among European countries 40% and among Latin American countries 32%.

As Latin America is the most distrustful region, there are cases such as Ecuador, where 4 out of 10 people trust the Public Administration, while in Honduras they do not reach 2 out of 10 (16% according to Latinobarómetro data).

Papers such as that of Evans and Rauch (1999) suggested that the key to the quality of bureaucracy was meritocratic recruitment and professionalization. Contrary to what one would expect, there is no obvious correlation between bureaucratic models, satisfaction with goods and services and trust in the region (Figure 1). Countries like Brazil or Chile have high levels of civil service development and very low trust and satisfaction with Public Services. Meanwhile, in Nicaragua and El Salvador there is moderate satisfaction with the Public Services and little development of the civil service. Only in Uruguay do the indicators seem to point in the expected direction: + quality of civil service + satisfaction with public services + trust.

GRAPH 1 TRUST, CIVIL SERVICE DEVELOPMENT INDEX & SATISFACTION WITH PUBLIC SERVICES



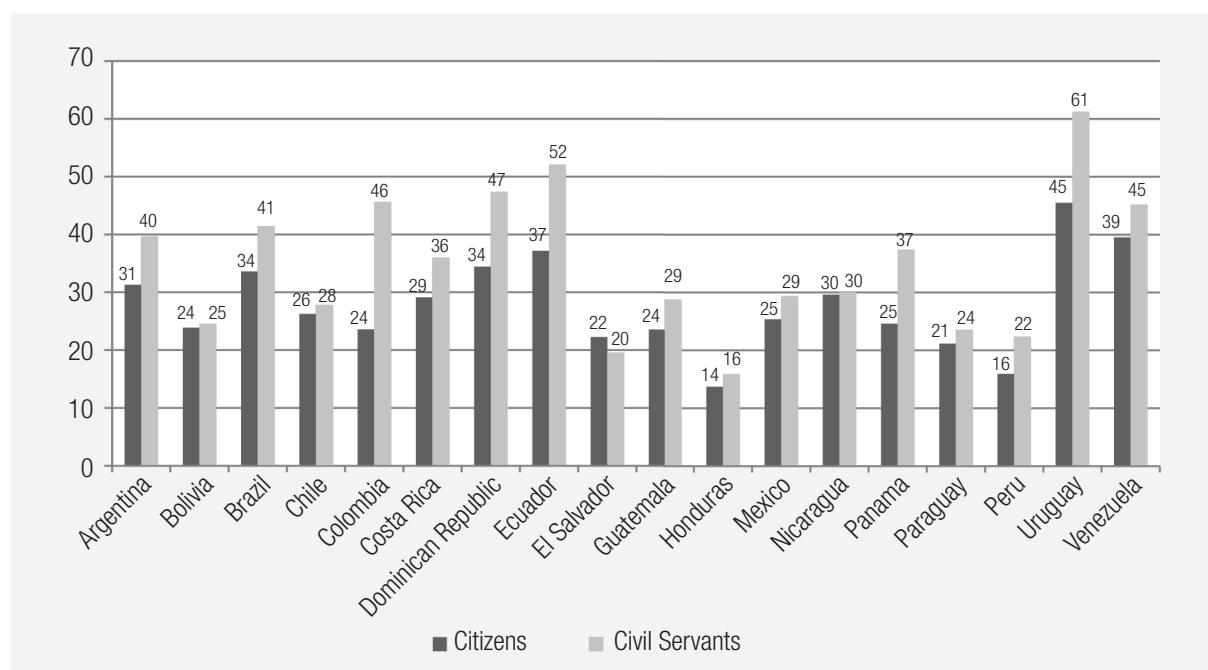
Source: Elaborated by the author based on IADB in 2017 (Civil Service Development Index, 2012-2016) and Latinobarometer in 2011 (Satisfaction with Public Services) and 2013 (Trust in PA).

Note: Satisfaction with public services is a mean between satisfaction with education, hospitals, transport, police or citizen security, courts of justice and place where DNI is taken. Questions: Would you say that you are very satisfied (1), rather satisfied (2), not very satisfied (3) or not at all satisfied (4), with the way they work...? The responses of very and rather satisfied are added. How much confidence do you have in public administration? 4 position scale (much, something, little or none). The answers of much and something are added.

For the Brazilian or Chilean case, the explanation for the lack of correlation between bureaucracy quality and trust is probably attributable to: 1) the historical development of public administration construction and incomplete reforms or partial professionalization (Abrucio, Pedroti, & Pó, 2010; Barria, 2015; Garavaglia, 2012; Souza, 2015) 2) the high levels of inequality of the country which conspire against the development of an idea of citizenship, there is no universal access to public services, nor is it perceived that the procedures of provision thereof are fair and impartial (Lechner, 2002; Katzman, 2007). As Geddes (1994) suggested, in democratic periods, where there is supposed to be a wider range of change and a greater demand to put an end to corruption, inequality and professionalization of state structures, governments face the dilemma of assuming the costs of the reforms vis-à-vis a majority of citizens who do not have sufficient reasons to contribute their resources to their achievement and, on the contrary, with the affected individuals organized and with resources that oppose the reforms.

Additionally, as Figure 2 shows, the gap distinguishing between servants and citizens is 10 percentage points on average, with exceptions such as Colombia, Uruguay and Ecuador where the gap is 22, 16 and 15 points respectively and in the opposite end Bolivia and Nicaragua where the gap does not reach 1 point.

GRAPH 2 TRUST IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: CIVIL SERVANTS VS. CITIZENS



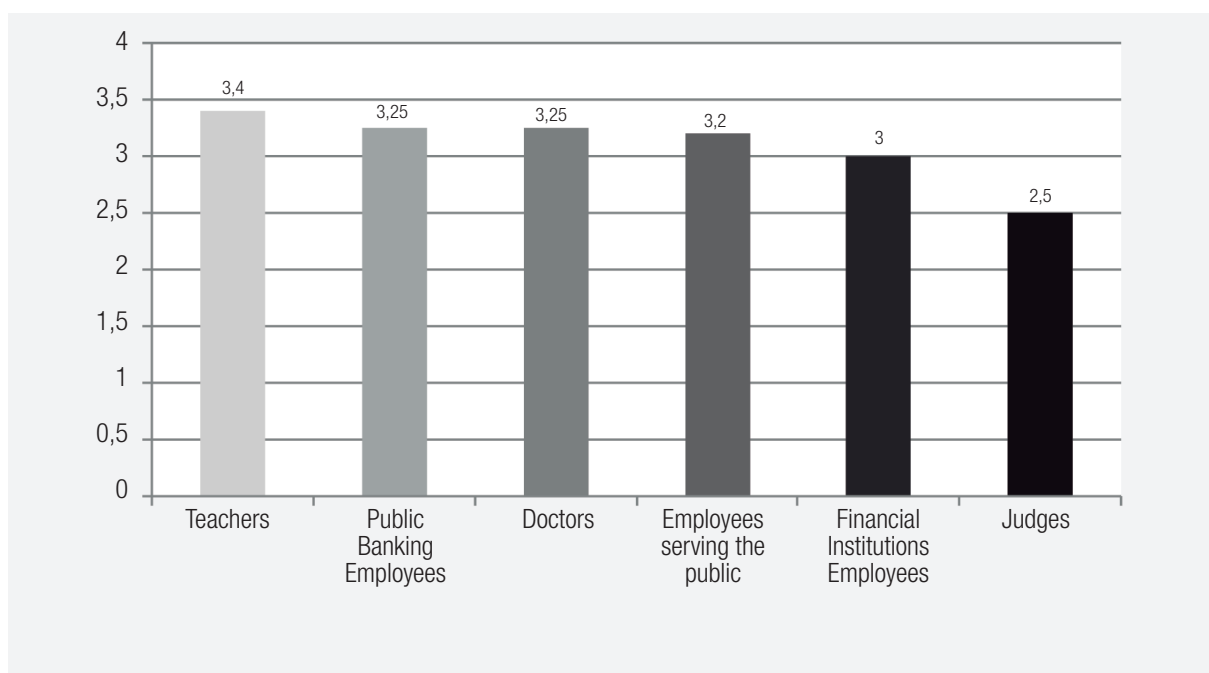
Source: Latinobarómetro (2013).

Except for the case of Uruguay, where 61% of officers trust in PA, in the rest of the countries in the region, both officials and citizens trust less than 40%. The most worrying cases are Honduras and Peru with values below 20%.

These differences are sustained over time and there is no striking downward dynamics of trust. In 1996, in aggregate terms for the region, officers expressed a trust in the PA around 41% and in 2013 it is 38%, while citizens expressed 30% in 1996 and 29% in 2013.

In case civil servants are treated differently (Figure 3), the civil servants who have the highest trust in citizens are those who provide tangible social public services such as health and education as opposed to judges, who except in the case of Brazil are always the civil servants with a lower trust rate. Doctors excel in Argentina and Uruguay, while teachers do so in Bolivia, Brazil and Ecuador. The case of Panama, Peru and Venezuela are surprising as it is bank employees who trigger higher levels of trust. However, there are no significant gaps.

GRAPH 3 AVERAGE LEVELS OF TRUST IN DIFFERENT CIVIL SERVANTS IN CAPITAL CITIES OF SELECTED LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. YEAR 2014



Source: CAF (2014).

Question: How much do you trust the following professionals? Scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is not confident at all and 5 is full trust.

TABLE 2 AVERAGE LEVELS OF TRUST IN DIFFERENT CIVIL SERVANTS IN CAPITAL CITIES OF SELECTED LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. YEAR 2014

Trust	Public Banking Employees	Financial Institutions Employees	Doctors	Teachers	Employees serving the public	Judges
Argentina	3,45	3,12	4,01	3,79	3,43	2,33
Bolivia	3,04	2,74	2,68	3,13	2,89	1,99
Brasil	3,09	2,98	2,85	3,45	3,44	3,05
Colombia	3,16	3,03	3,06	3,29	3,22	2,69
Ecuador	3,38	3,36	3,52	3,86	3,40	2,57
Mexico	2,94	2,98	3,30	3,34	3,12	2,35
Panama	3,64	2,87	3,43	3,61	2,99	2,42
Peru	2,88	2,49	2,72	2,81	2,68	1,80
Uruguay	3,71	3,49	3,89	3,82	3,62	2,78
Venezuela	3,51	3,32	3,35	3,49	3,37	3,04

Source: CAF (2014).

Question: How much do you trust the following professionals? Scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is not confident at all and 5 is full trust.

The comparison between graphs for cases such as Colombia or Mexico serves as evidence of the impressions of Del Pino (2005): when asked broadly about PA there is wide distrust (probably because stereotypes are activated); however, when the enquiry is about professors or doctors trust increases (probably because it is the specific experience that determines the opinion).

These first evidences suggest a complex picture for the region; trust is very low over time and in almost all the countries of the region (with greater intensity in Central America), regardless of the position held by the respondent (official or non-official) and does not seem associated with satisfaction with public services or indicators of Civil Service Quality.

This leads us to think that distrust in PA could be articulated with the widespread indifference of citizens towards public institutions and the weak culture of legality that has prevailed in the region for two centuries. Escalante (2005) argued that in parallel to the formal order that determines the legal apparatus, life is organized informally through regular relationships and practices with all the characteristics of an effective order. Thus, distrust in the PA could be related to: a) the establishment and acceptance of informal institutions that compete with the formal ones, b) the inefficiency of the State in sanctioning the breach, c) the social and moral acceptance of the breach, d) to think that others will try to take advantage and therefore the most rational thing is not to trust (Güemes & Wences, 2019).

4.2. Causes of Distrust

To know what citizens and officers regard as the cause of trust, we will observe the following: the determinants of institutional trust that Latinobarómetro enquires about, the problems that CAF Survey asks about and the external and internal factors of the organization that could be blocking the development of trust identified OAS interviewees.

Table 3 shows that, for the average Latin American citizens (18 countries), a core determinant of trust is that institutions should treat everyone equally. 63% of civil servants interviewed prioritize the first reason, followed by if they are supervised, which accounts for 17% of officers' responses. Responses of citizens go in the same direction, and differences are in terms of decimals.

TABLE 3 MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS TO DETERMINE TRUST IN PUBLIC SERVICES, PUBLIC OFFICIALS VS CITIZENS

Latin America Media		Citizens	Public Officials
Equity	If they treat everyone equally	62,5	63
	If they are supervised	16,7	17,4
	If they are interested in one's opinion	0,6	0,5
Managment	If they admit their responsibility when mistaken	4,7	4,6
	The leadership and management quality	2,1	3,2
	If they keep their promises	2,9	2,1
Performance	If the service responds to my needs	1,2	0,8
	If they give the information required	7,4	7,3
Context opinions	What friends and relatives say about it	0,9	0,7
	What the mass media say about it	0,7	0,4

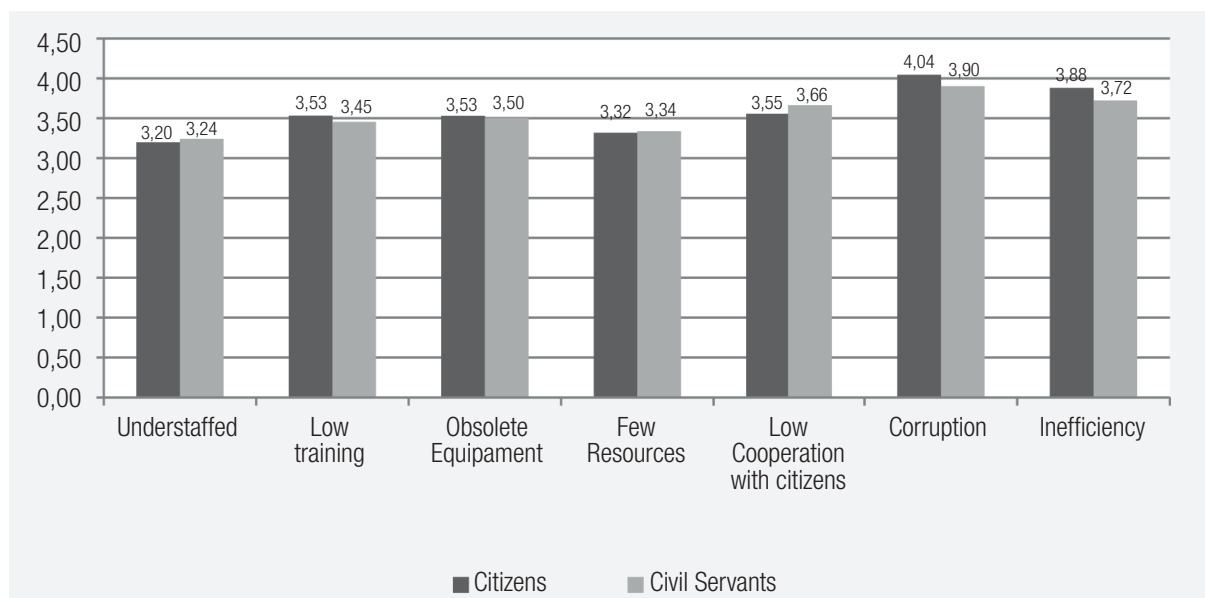
Source: Latinobarometer (2008).

Question: Which of the following factors, if any, are the most important in determining how much trust you have in the public institutions?

There are differences among countries, but the answers go in the same direction. In Nicaragua, 72% of the population surveyed believes that equality in treatment is a determinant of trust, while in El Salvador the percentage is 47%. The same applies to if the institutions are supervised, in the Dominican Republic and in Chile, 21% of the population considers this point to be decisive for trust, while in Mexico and Nicaragua the values range from 8 to 9%, being in any case the second variable of importance in the list of possible determinants in these countries.

As can be seen in figure 5, corruption is both for civil servants and citizens the main problem of the sector (CAF survey), followed closely by the inefficiency and low cooperation with citizens. There are no significant gaps between citizens and officers.

GRAPH 5 PROBLEMS FACING THE PUBLIC SECTOR. CITIZENS VS CIVIL SERVANTS



Source: CAF (2014).

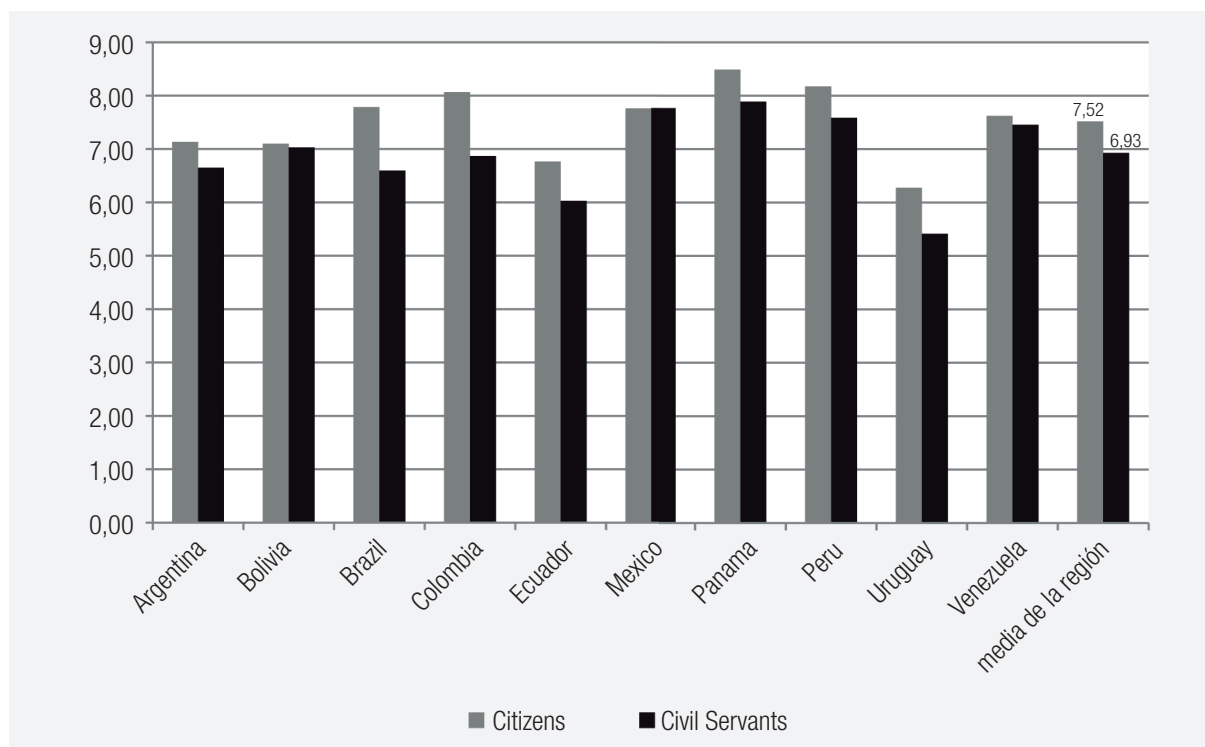
Question: How much do you agree that the public sector faces the following problems to offer a good service? Scale from 1 to 5 where 1 strongly disagrees and 5 totally agree. Horizontal axis 1 is a civil servants and 0 is another type of employee.

The same applies to the perception of corruption: the average for citizens is 7.5 and among civil servants it stands at 6.8. Variations among the main cities are more remarkable, Quito or Montevideo reflect an average of around 6 points while Panama and Peru exceed 8 points (See Graph 6).

Despite their being upset about corruption levels, when subjects are questioned as to whether they would report about partner for bad performance or corruption, 50% of respondents say they would; while 25% would not report on this. On a scale where 1 means 'yes would denounce' and 5 'would not denounce', in Colombia and Uruguay there is a clear majority of those who would denounce (2,4), while in Panama the answer is less clear (2,9) as illustrated on the left axis Graph 7.

Likewise, when asked about their preference in the sense that public servants are to do what is best for society even if it affects personal interests (impartiality, right axis of graph 7), 49% agree, while 27% disagree. In Uruguay and Argentina we can find a higher adherence to with impartiality, while those levels are lower in Colombia and Mexico.

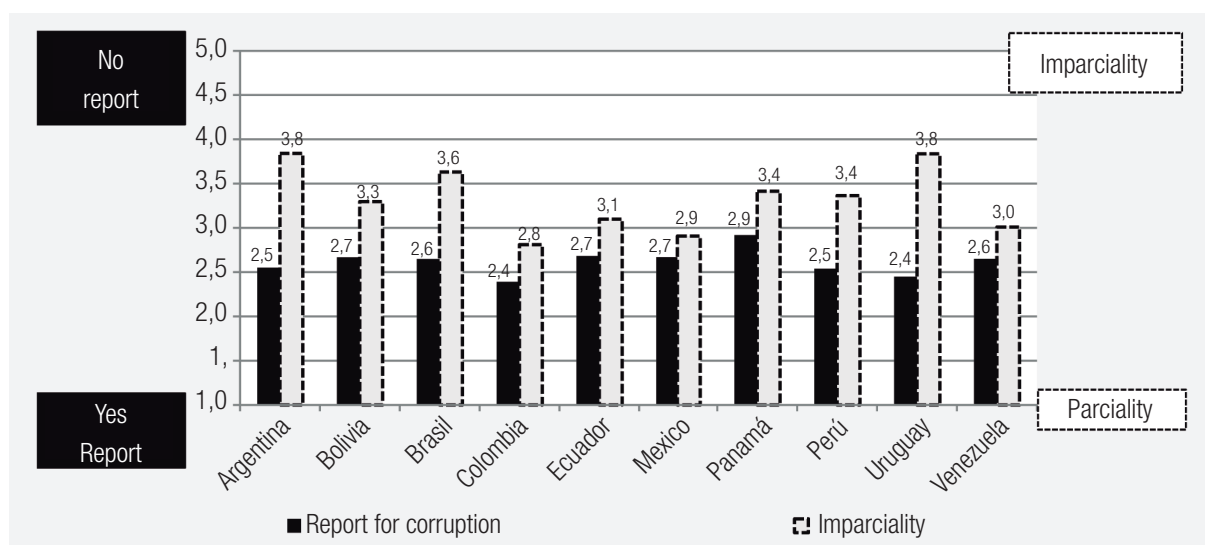
GRAPH 6 AVERAGE EVALUATION OF THE PERCEPTION OF CORRUPTION AMONG PUBLIC OFFICIALS IN SELECTED COUNTRIES OF LATIN AMERICA. YEAR 2014



Source: CAF (2014).

Question: Scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is no corruption and 10 total corruption.

GRAPH 7 PREFERENCES FOR IMPARTIALITY AND WILLINGNESS TO REPORT PEERS



Source: CAF (2014).

Briefly speaking, in the face of concerns about non-equal treatment and corruption, tolerance (not reporting) in the specific and close case of bad behavior is an alarming signal. This can respond either to the fear of being socially penalized for being disloyal (bad friend, bad partner), or for the prevailing sense of impunity (why should I report on this if nothing will happen after all?), or else because this type of behavior is accepted due to the inefficiency of other regulatory mechanisms. Whatever the reason, corruption and mistrust are configured as collective action problems while a certain course of action is interactively and reciprocally linked to shared expectations as to how the rest of the individuals would behave in that situation. If it is believed that all or almost all would take advantage of the situation, it seems legitimate to take advantage and not very intelligent not to do so (Persson, Rothstein, & Torell, 2012).

Additionally, in the OAS survey, of the 20 civil servants interviewed, 8 considered that the causes of distrust lie in prejudices towards the efficiency of the State and the association of the Public Administration with a black box; 6 manifested that distrust was based on dissatisfaction with the quality and coverage of the services, and only 2 of the respondents put the focus on the assistance rendered by officials can be cold, ritualistic and distant and on the lack of meritocratic scheme to gain access to public administration.

When they are asked to identify factors external to the organization that could be blocking the development of trust, they first of all highlight the prejudices towards the administration itself (26%), secondly, the excessive rigidity with which the PA operates (17%), then the low participation in the service provision process (11%). To a lesser extent, it is believed that economic factors or political issues are to account for distrust. As far as internal factors are concerned, the answer taking up the majority of points is: difficulty in modifying or adapting procedures to changes in the environment (17%) followed by failures in the administration, coordination, direction and control of development-related tasks of public initiatives (15%). Issues identified as typically belonging to the process account for 67% of the answers, while those issues of economic nature only 23%, lastly, political matters take up 8% (see table 3).

TABLE 4 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTOR BLOCKING TRUST OF CITIZENS IN PA

	External factors	Percentage %
Prejudices	Unfavorable opinion of the population towards government organizations, parties and the political class.	26
	Excessive rigidity of the regulatory framework governing the running of the Administration.	17
Process	Low participation of citizens in meetings, discussions and decision-taking process on issues affecting them.	11
Economic Factors	Limitations imposed on government initiatives due to budget restrictions.	11
	Negative evolution of the national and / or local economy (economic cycles).	9

Continue

External factors		Percentage %
Political Factors	Political instability as a result of the system of political parties and elections.	6
	Deficiente ejercicio de sus competencias por parte del gobierno. Poor exercise by the government of its inherent powers.	6
	Difficulty in establishing cooperation agreements (alliances, coalitions) with other levels of government.	4
	No effective coincidence between the ruling party and the majority party in the legislative branch.	4
	Conflicts between State powers.	2
	Exclusion of the main citizen demands from the discussion agenda of electoral campaigns.	2
Others		2
Internal Factors		Percentage %
Process	Difficulty in modifying or adapting procedures to changes in the surrounding environment.	17
	Failures in the administration, coordination, direction and control of tasks related to the development of public initiatives.	15
	Slow decision taking on internal management tasks.	13
	Excessive application of internal procedures.	13
	Civil servants and technical employees of Public Administration with a poor qualification to perform their duties.	9
	Insufficient technological resources.	4
Economic Factors	Deficiency in the logistic resources available (furniture, transport equipment, office supplies, etc.).	4
	Budget constraints to finance social impact initiatives.	15
Political Factors	Insufficient staff in the management of scheduled procedures and tasks.	8

Source: OAS survey (2015).

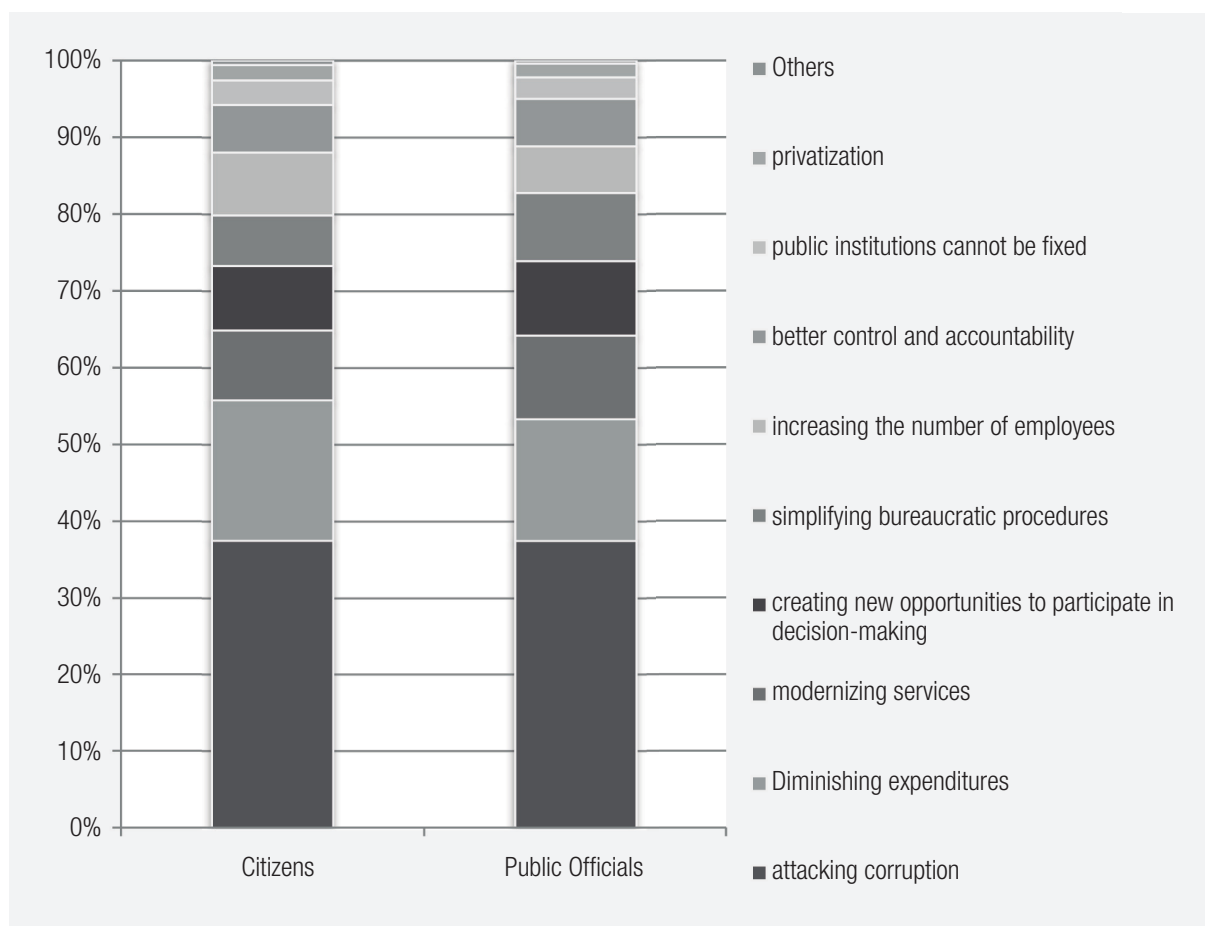
Question: Could you please specify the internal and external factors of the organization that could prevent your work from building trust in citizens? Select the three main factors in your view.

Comparatively, the Latinobarómetro's data evidence that the prejudices are not likely to be relevant when explaining distrust (table 2, less than 2% of the responses refer to the opinion of friends or the media as a reason that configures their perception); the answer is affirmative for 8 of the 20 officials surveyed by the OAS (table 3). For the latter, the negative perception of PA is articulated with the typical slowness and rigidity usually ascribed to institutional procedures. Within the inner scope of the institution, respondents attribute this difficulty of the bureaucracy to adapt to the changing environment and coordination problems as part of the problem.

4.3. Solutions to distrust

In Latinobarómetro, a question was made about which aspect was regarded as most important to improve institutions in 2002. The most frequent responses were to attack corruption, accounting for almost 40% (both among officers and among those who are not), followed by the recommendation to reduce expenses and introduce participation dynamics. Only about 3% of respondents believe that the institutions have no solution at all (a hopeless case) and about 2% propose privatization. There are no weighable differences between the opinions of civil servants and those who are do not have that ranking.

GRAPH 8 MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR IMPROVING THE FUNCTIONING OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS. CIVIL SERVANTS VS CITIZENS. MEDIA FOR LATIN AMERICA



Source: Latinobarómetro (2002).

In the OAS survey, we specifically asked about the actions undertaken and the axes they consider should be addressed in the future. At this point citizen participation gains more weight as a response: 14 of the 20 respondents believe that the participation of citizens in the provision of public goods and

services allows to build citizenship and trust in the government irrespective of or independently of cost savings, improvement in the quality and effectiveness of the provision, or productivity. However, officers from only 2 countries mention participation as a strategy developed for this purpose.

Regarding the actions developed to improve trust, the most frequent response is that of transparency policies (5 countries mention it), thereby referring to the need to publicize information and gain better access to public data. The second answer in the ranking made mentions to: digitalization and streamlining of procedures (3 mentions) and policies of dissemination of the work of the Public Administration (3 mentions). Only 2 countries mention citizen participation. The rest is divided between those who prioritize communication as an image improvement strategy, who focused on improving response times to complaints and suggestions or those who opted to improve the closeness and friendliness of their officials in customer service. There is a country, Uruguay, which claims to have focused on all such strategies. None of the respondents referred to the use of social networks, the creation of web portals or the integration of players such as NGOs or Associations dealing with public actions.

With regard pending issues in the coming future, transparency is the axis that government players mostly highlight as fundamental to gain trust (10 of 20 respondents), followed by the importance of better communicating what is done (6 of 20 respondents) and work with minorities and excluded in pursuit of greater social justice (2 of 10 respondents). As a more distant priority, there remain strategies related to citizen consultation, co-management or co-production and accountability.

TABLE 5 MAIN ACTIONS AND WORK LINES

Interviews x countries	Main actions undertaken	Main lines along which Public Administration should work		
Argentina	Communication policies, improve image	Listening to and consulting citizens	More social justice	Joint production of public services
Bolivia	Digitalization and a more agile work	Transparency	More social justice	
Brazil	Transparency	Listening to and consulting citizens	Communicating better	
Chile	Citizens' participation	Joint production of public services		Communicating better
Colombia	Transparency	Transparency	Listening to and consulting citizens	
Costa Rica	Transparency and Citizens' Participation	Accountability	Transparency	
Ecuador	Disclosure of results	Transparency	Listening to and consulting citizens	More social justice

Continue

Interviews x countries	Main actions undertaken	Main lines along which Public Administration should work		
Guatemala	Disclosure of results	Transparency	Opening and integration	
Honduras	Transparency	Transparency	Accountability	More social justice
Mexico	Digitalization and a more agile work	Transparency	Opening and Integration	Communicating better
Panamá	Speedy response to claims	Opening and integration	Joint production of public services	
Paraguay	Transparency	Transparency	Communicating better	
Perú	Disclosure of results Digitalization and a more agile work	More social justice	Transparency	Communicating better
Rep. Dominicana	Better manners and closeness in public assistance	Communicating better	Joint production of public services	
Uruguay	All of the above	Opening and integration	Communicating better	

Source: Elaborated by the author based on data of OEA survey (2015).

There is an evident connection with the promise of open government. The principles that guide the practical application of Open Government are related to: a) improving levels of transparency and access to information by opening public data and reusing public sector information; b) facilitate the participation of citizens in the design and implementation of public policies; and c) favor the generation of collaboration and innovation spaces among the various actors, particularly among public administrations, civil society and the private sector (Ramírez-Alujas, 2012). Thus, open data portals and platforms for monitoring and controlling government commitments make their way as a first step to fight corruption and rebuild the damaged relationship between citizens and institutions (Güemes & Brugué, 2017).

Now, if mistrust and corruption require a shift in deeper beliefs about “what to expect from others” and to build a favorable expectation about the actions of others, the third sector initiatives and media developed in India, Uganda and Brazil where moral behaviors are explained and internet platforms where dishonest behaviors are made public create a sense of right and wrong and can complement open government efforts (World Bank, 2015, p. 62).

5. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this paper has been, first of all, to publicize the state of the issue under analysis in Latin America, for which, we thought it convenient to use three data sources, two citizen surveys and another focused on experts holding relevant positions in public administration. Secondly, we sought to verify similarities and differences between countries and between citizens and civil servants so as to have more accurate information in the design of solutions.

Although it would have been possible to carry out two studies, one focused on citizens and the other on civil servants, the objective of comparing opinions is to configure a new working hypothesis about distrust in Public Administration in Latin America. Distrust is most likely to be a generalized response to a climate of lacerating social inequality and widespread corruption that does not depend so much on the institution's performance or social stereotypes but on the feeling of unequal treatment.

A couple of issues arise from the observation of the data that should guide future research on the subject.

1. Coincidences between civil servants and non-civil servants lead us to think that the implementation of reforms could be legitimized and facilitated due to the concomitance of points of view. Along these lines, the work coordinated by Persson (2013, pp. 465-467) opens hope by citing experiences such as Switzerland, Denmark, Hong Kong and Singapore, as examples of successful transition from corrupt systems and with high distrust rates to exemplary systems. In all of them extensive political, economic and social reforms were made including formal and informal control and sanction systems, as well as trust and reciprocity. In these cases, the players who are located at the top of the system: members of the ruling elite and high-level civil servants have served as role models by changing their behavior model. From there, citizens realized that there was a "new game" in the city and the *modus operandi* of the institutions went from particularism and arbitrariness to universalism and impartiality. The challenge now is to imagine and design similar transitions for countries in the region.
2. Despite the clear differences among countries in terms of development, state efficacy, quality, coverage and extension of public services and in their bureaucratic types or models, citizen perceptions regarding trust are similar and always negative. Inequality could be the key as well as the historical configurations of the relations between administration and citizenship.

These differences in a relatively homogeneous environment generate two future challenges when it comes to research. On the one hand, an investigation focused only on some specific cases, which allows focusing and formulating hypotheses based on more qualitative knowledge. Corbet and Le Dante's (2018) paper on the Canadian reality is very inspiring in this regard. These authors argue that trust is an ecology made up of people and institutions, of distances and risks, of expectations and power and is subject to growth, evolution and regression. Taking this into consideration, through qualitative tools (in-depth interviews) and based on ground theory, the authors observe how trust is generated through continuous practices that manage the distance in relations between civil servants and city residents. Applying research of this kind to Latin American cities would be mostly interesting in the future.

On the other hand, it is interesting to focus on the operation and characteristics of specific administrative institutions where interactions and trust development can be analyzed based on face-to-face and / or virtual relationships between officers and citizens. Studies in the Spaniard field such as that of Martín-Pérez (2010) are very suggestive in this regard. In this paper we can observe – with a basis on ethnography – interviews and participant observation, the daily practices and modalities of communication and interaction that are established between field bureaucrats and citizenship and how

this leads to the construction of citizenship and the pedagogy of rights. These specific interactions allow us to intuit how certain public organizations lay the foundations of mutual trust or, on the contrary, of distrust. Besides, it would be relevant to advance studies of these characteristics in the region.

The puzzle of distrust a complex one, we have some pieces for the time being. Influencing transparency, social control and citizen participation policies is necessary and useful, but the search for solutions must go further and take into account a change in the rules of the game that involves breaking the social traps and laying the foundations for a new social contract in the region.

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