Policy-making or rewards: political appointments in Brazilian municipal governments

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Brazil has 5,570 municipalities, and each local government has a stock of appointed positions. This study adopted descriptive and inferential statistics to observe the variations in the political strategies adopted when filling these positions. The research identified (1) different political appointment strategies, from those based on reward (high scope/low education level) to strategies based on policy-making (reduced scope/high education level), (2) a robust relationship between HDI and political appointments with a policy-making profile inferring lower coordination costs and informational asymmetries for principals/voters, and (3) party and electoral competition variables showed modest results as potential explanatory factors to adopting reward-based strategies. Also, the adoption of reward-based strategies – cases where municipalities' employees presented a higher proportion of appointees with lower education levels – did not affect the odds ratios of incumbents in the next municipal elections.

Keywords: policy; rewards; appointments; governments; municipalities.

Policy-making ou recompensas? Nomeações políticas nos governos municipais brasileiros

O Brasil possui 5.570 municípios e em cada um deles governos eleitos dispõem de um estoque de cargos em comissão disponíveis para nomeação discricionária. É possível observar variações nas estratégias políticas adotadas para essas indicações? Os principais achados deste trabalho permitidos através do uso de estatística descritiva e inferencial foram (1) identificação de diferentes estratégias de nomeação política entre recompensa (escopo elevado/escolaridade baixa) e *policy-making* (escopo reduzido/escolaridade alta) (2) robusta relação entre IDH e nomeações políticas com perfil de *policy-making* inferindo menores custos de coordenação e assimetrias informacionais para principais/eleitores e, (3) variáveis partidárias e de competição eleitoral apresentaram resultados modestos como candidatas a explicar a adoção de estratégias de recompensa, da mesma forma que estratégias de recompensa – maior proporção de CCs e menor escolaridade destes – não afetaram as razões de chance de incumbentes nas eleições municipais seguintes.

Palavras-chave: policy; recompensas; nomeações; governos; municípios.

¿Hacer políticas o recompensas? Nombramientos políticos en los gobiernos municipales brasileños

Brasil tiene 5.570 municipios y en cada uno de ellos los gobiernos elegidos electos tienen un stock de puestos en comisión disponibles para su nombramiento discrecional. ¿Es posible observar variaciones en las estrategias políticas adoptadas para estas candidaturas? Los principales hallazgos de este trabajo obtenidos mediante el uso de estadísticas descriptivas e inferenciales fueron (1) identificación de diferentes estrategias de nombramiento político entre recompensa (alcance alto/educación baja) y formulación de políticas (alcance reducido/educación alta); (2) relación sólida entre el IDH y los nombramientos políticos con un perfil de hacedor de políticas que infiere menores costos de coordinación y asimetrías de información para los principales/votantes y, (3) las variables de competencia electoral y partidaria mostraron resultados modestos como candidatas para explicar la adopción de estrategias de recompensa, de la misma manera que las estrategias de recompensa -mayor proporción de CC y menor escolaridad de estos- no afectaron las razones de probabilidad de los titulares en las siguientes elecciones municipales.

Palabras clave: políticas públicas; recompensas; nombramientos; gobiernos; municipios.

1. INTRODUCTION

Brazil has 5,570 municipalities, and, in each of them, elected governments have a stock of commissioned positions available for discretionary appointment. Is it possible to observe changes in the political strategies for these appointments? Are there significant variations between municipalities in the proportion and education levels of holders of commissioned positions? What factors can contribute to explain the adoption of strategies oriented to achieve higher efficiency in providing public policies or to reward allies and political support?

The more conventional approach found in the literature usually reduces political appointments to patronage, public office sharing, and administrative inefficiency (Grindle, 2012). However, representative governments have solved delegation problems with the implementation of preferences on public spending through the appointment of political cadres for top government positions (Rouban, 2001). Understanding the relevance and implications of public service "politicization" requires a more refined analytical treatment, which does not consider occupants of free appointment positions as a homogeneous set but considers the proportion of these positions in the public administration and the capacity of their occupants.

Regarding the Federal Government, there are papers that analyze the positions of trust by considering their recruitment, party affiliation, and turnover (Lopez, 2015; Lopez & Moreira, 2019; Lopez & Silva, 2019). There is still a gap in investigations on political appointments in subnational governments. This paper follows this direction and contributes to the analysis of the scale and capacity of nominees for positions of trust in Brazilian municipalities.

To achieve this goal, the text is organized as follows: in addition to this introduction, the second section reviews the national and international literature that addresses political appointments, seeking especially to distinguish the different analytical categories employed in this effort, and explains the research hypotheses. The third section presents the indicators, sources, and analytical procedures adopted. The four section shows the results, based on the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. Finally, the conclusion highlights the contributions of the study to the topic.

2. POLICITIZATION, POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS, AND PATRONAGE

Representative governments are challenged by the trade-off between being responsive to the major preferences of the electorate and being effective in the provision of public goods. Political parties and government bureaucracies were the responses built to address this challenge. Voters delegate prerogatives for politicians to implement their preferences, and they transfer responsibilities to bureaucrats for executing public programs and services. In democracies, this process has shady zones with high coordination costs – due to the main agents of these processes -, oligopolistic supply, and information asymmetry in favor of the respective agents. There is an extensive literature, both on delegation losses in the voters/politicians' circuit (Manin, 1995; Przeworski, Stokes, & Manin, 1999) and on politicians/bureaucrats relationship (Fiorina, 1981; McCubbins & Schwartz, 1984; McCubbins, Weingast, & Noll, 1989; Moe, 1989; Weingast, 1984).

How to limit the discretion of professional bureaucracies, by subjecting them to preferences dictated by political and electoral competition, has been a puzzle in the agenda of comparative studies on political institutions, over the last century. For Weber (1984), its solution would lie in

well-established hierarchical chains and exhaustive and written rules as protocols for submitting the decisions of civil servants.

Weberian optimism did not captivate authors affiliated to the theory of public choice, for whom the power of bureaucrats would lead, inexorably, to the satisfaction of self-interest and servants' careers (Tullock, 1965), inefficiency and capture (Downs, 1967), and maximization of public agencies' budget (Niskanen, 1971). More recently, the *New Public Management* journal has replicated skepticism in more moderate doses, suggesting more flexible models of recruitment and public careers, in addition to the replacement of *ex-ante* by *ex-post* controls, through performance evaluations (J. Denhardt & R. Denhardt, 2007; Ferraz, 2020).

The strategy of politicizing the administration (Rouban, 2001) was an alternative to address problems stemming from the discretion of officials not subject to ballot and to temporary mandates. Although on a much smaller scale, compared to the spoil system of the 19th century, by blurring the rigid boundaries between politics and administration projected by Weber (1984) and Woodrow Wilson (1955), appointment to high-level positions in the public administration provided a resource for politicians to re-establish hierarchical chains of command in contemporary civil service. Parties in contemporary polyarchies have not developed isomorphic attributes, thus distinguishing themselves as vote-seekers, policy-seekers, or office-seekers (Muller & Strom, 1999). However, even when guided by the maximization of control over political appointments, it would be possible to distinguish intrinsic strategies from instrumental ones, the latter aimed at occupying positions in order to extend their influence in public policy formulation (Budge & Laver, 1986).

The practice of patronage has a long history in studies on comparative politics (Bearfield, 2009; Doherty, Lewis, & Limbocker, 2019; Bach, Hammerschmid, & Löfflerl, 2020). Under the lens of modernization theory, patronage has been related to social, economic, and political underdevelopment and to categories such as clientelism, pork barrel, and corruption (Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1980; Scott, 1969; Weingrod, 1968). It would also represent residues of traditional societies, an anachronism doomed to be displaced by modern mass parties endowed with ideological programs and grounded in class, religious, or territorial cleavages (Neumann, 1956), as opposed to individual incentives offered by patronage-based organizations (Shefter, 1977). Also frequent is the interchangeable use of the analytical categories patronage, clientelism, and pork barrel (Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007).

We find a distinct perspective in Kopecky et al. (2016), Kopecky and Mair (2011), and Kopecky and Scherlis (2008). Here we find an effort to dissect the concept and distinguish it from allegedly anachronistic particularisms by modernization: different from clientelism (selective allocation of public resources), pork barrel (allocation of government funds to specific constituencies), and corruption (illegal use of public resources for private gains), patronage should be considered 'power of parties to appoint people to positions in public and semi-public life' (Kopecky & Mair, 2011, p. 3).

Similar concern in delimiting the phenomenon of politicization of public service can be observed in Lopez and Silva (2019). However, for the authors, discretionary choices are conceived as *politicization*; discretion based on party affiliation would be equivalent to *partisanship*, and, finally, discretionary choices in exchange for sinecures would correspond to patronage.

However, even *politicization* does not seem to be a simple and self-explanatory concept. For Rouban (2001), the concept may refer to three distinct phenomena: i) participation of civil servants

in decision-making; ii) political engagement of civil servants; and iii) party control of appointments to public positions. Considering only the last possibility, it is still necessary to distinguish politicization as party control over the administration and provision of public policies, from its use as a resource for rewarding political loyalties.

In a the same direction, we find the distinction proposed by Kopecky and Scherlis (2008, p. 362) for the motivations for political appointments as **control** over public policy or **reward** for followers, in addition to the proportion of political appointments in public administration. Looking for nuances of the phenomenon, Meyer-Sahling and Veen (2012) distinguish between party and embedded politicization, the latter characterized by appointments based on career servers.

Political appointments have been analyzed mainly in national research on federal agencies (Abbers & Oliveira, 2015; Albrecht, 2021; Batista & Lopez, 2021; Lima, 2018; Lopez & Moreira, 2022; Lopez & Praça, 2015; Lopez & Silva, 2019; Olivieri, 2007; Palotti & Cavalcante, 2018). Lopez and Praça (2015) identified patterns in appointments to the top echelon of the Brazilian federal bureaucracy: islands of excellence together with greater party influence in areas responsible for social policies and infrastructure, as well as ordering expenses, regulating and directing state-owned companies; the higher the position, the more centralized the choice decision; preservation of regional criteria in occupying positions. Santos (2009) compared positions of free appointment in Brazil and the United States.

If studies on discretionary appointments to positions in the federal administration have increased the knowledge on their dynamics, studies on this phenomenon in subnational governments in Brazil are still rare. Borges (2010) and Gomes, Lacerda, and Silva (2020) found political appointments in state governments. Marin (2016) noticed the complexity in implementing management by results programs in municipal administrations in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, and the need to consider the dimensions of performance, governance, and politics. Avellaneda and Gomes (2017) assessed the effects of mayors' management capacity (schooling and public experience) on performance, measured by IPTU [urban real estate tax] collection. The results showed low explanatory power of mayors' individual attributes and higher potential of political factors, such as support in the City Council and electoral cycles, which seems to indicate the relevance of political appointments as a resource for imposing local government preferences. Although focusing on clientelism and using the categories 'legislator', 'fundraiser' and 'assistentialist', Lopez and Almeida (2017) revealed that the probability that councilmen prioritize meeting particular demands increases with electoral competition, but decreases in large municipalities and with higher electoral volatility. Cardoso and Marenco (2020) studied the relationships between political appointments and municipal performance, and showed the need to develop cut-offs to better capture these links. Several papers have already considered schooling as one of the dimensions to explain municipal and state capacity (Batista, 2015; Batista, Rocha, & Santos, 2020; Cardoso & Marenco, 2019; Marenco, 2017; Marenco & Strohschoen, 2018; Marenco, Stroeschen, & Joner, 2017).

At this point, the challenge consists in seeking an analytical modeling capable of unraveling the adoption of different strategies in the use of the resource of political appointments. On the one side, we can connect Barbara Geddes's (1994) politician's dilemma, which argues that public policies potentially capable of producing economic development and quality of public services would be public goods endowed with high future discount rates, since their medium and long-

term effects contrast with the political instability and short electoral cycles that can threaten the continuity of political careers. Hence, it would be safer for certain politicians to seek short-term rewards through patronage:

> Politicians who might otherwise consider offering reforms as a strategy for attracting support, will not be able to afford the cost in lost political resources as long as they compete with others able to use such resources in the struggle for votes. This is the politician's dilemma. A politician might in some circumstances, however, be willing to give up this resource if everyone else were also willing (Geddes, 1994, p. 42).

Although maximizing efficiency in public policy delivery, through a meritocratic public service, might be the optimal choice for elected politicians, the disadvantage in a competition where patronage is a relevant currency would encourage balance-oriented strategies around the spoil system, which can be transposed to the game theory matrix:

BOX 1   POLITICIANS' DILEMMA – REWARDS OR POLICIES

		B	
		Rewards	Policies
A	Rewards	1,1	-1,1
	Policies	1,-1	2,2

Source: Elaborated by the author.

Policy offering may represent higher pay offs for politicians when it is the strategic choice for both, but the worst when adopted unilaterally. Otherwise, the *reward* decision should be the best answer for all players, regardless of the others' choice, generating a Nash equilibrium around the spoil system.

Hence, the more unequal the distribution of government positions, the more likely would be patronage resilience. Geddes (1994) assumes that the uncertainty promoted by electoral competition and change of government would represent the disjunctives to explain preferences for policy-making strategies: greater competition/alternation would equal higher political risk and preference for suboptimal choices, prioritizing less generous pay offs, but with less risk of giving spoil resources to the opponent. The blind spot seems to lie in the ambiguous function exercised by greater competition: cooperation around the suboptimal choice or a decision to minimize risk - regardless of the rival strategy - by fostering spoil?

A second problem in Geddes's (1994) model regards the exclusivity assigned to the political supply side. Here, the blind spot in this equation seems to be located in the absence of a term related to the potential of voters for monitoring the provision of public services and conditioning choices

that maximize public policies. It is about considering a contextual rationality or, in Falleti and Lynch's terms, 'the same mechanism operating in different contexts may lead to different outcomes' (Falleti & Lynch, 2009, p. 1151).

Several papers have examined the action of *police patrols* as monitoring mechanisms for municipal governments (Batista et al., 2020; Campos, Castelar, & Soares, 2018; Grangeia, Carvalhães, & Coelho, 2021; Olivieri, Martinelli, Massucatto, & Silva, 2018). A less examined angle consists in identifying *fire alarms* as inducers of preferences to be followed by elected representatives.

In this direction, alternative causal inference can be found in Cortazar, Lafuente, and Sanginés (2014). In this case, a factor that affects the choice of political appointments would lie in social coordination costs of potential beneficiaries for gains in the quality of public goods supply. While the latter have high costs to coordinate their action, due to high N and information asymmetry, political elites would have lower costs for collective action and the exercise of political veto power over changes.

Here it does not seem too heterodox to resort to tools from modernization theory: a pluralistic social order (Dahl, 1997, p. 86), translated into social development, urbanization, and schooling, leverages resources for voters to monitor representatives, while population size, social development, and lower levels of inequality should reduce the relative value of credit claiming (Mayhew, 1974) in the electoral contest.

The analytical perspective adopted in this paper, on the one hand, follows Kopeky and Scherlis (2008) and Rouban (2003), in delimiting patronage to discretionary political appointments, just as it seeks to distinguish analytically between strategies for efficiency and control of public policies or rewards for followers, as guiding elements of distinct party orientations. Moreover, as Kopeky and Scherlis (2008) observe, it is necessary to measure the scope of political appointments, in order to infer distinct party utilities according to the extent of the use of discretionary political appointments. At the same time, they consider that elements to explain the different strategies adopted should be sought more in the factors responsible for reducing coordination costs and information asymmetry in favor of voters, than in the ambiguous influence of electoral competition on the process.

Therefore, we extracted the following hypotheses:

BOX 2   RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Hypotheses	Variables	Tests
H[1]: Party strategies for political appointments are not homogeneous, distinguishing themselves according to the proportion and schooling of those appointed.	Proportion of CCs in relation to the total number of public servants in the direct municipal administration and nominees' schooling for commissioned posts.	Descriptive statistics.

Continue

Hypotheses	Variables	Tests
H²: Party competition produces ambiguous effects in strategies for municipal political appointment.	Independent variables: party, ideology, alignment with federal and state governments, electoral competition, incumbency. Dependent variables: dummies *for policy-making* (high schooling/reduced proportion) and *reward* (low schooling/ extended proportion).	Inferential statistics (correlations and logistic regression).
H³: Factors that leverage politicians' monitoring by voters condition choices for *policy-making* strategies rather than for *rewards.*	Independent variables: contextual factors (HDI-M, Gini, population size). Dependent variables: *dummies* for *policy-making* ((high schooling/reduced proportion) and *reward* (low schooling/ extended proportion).	Inferential statistics (correlations and logistic regression).

Source: Elaborated by the author.

3. MATERIALS AND PROCEDURES

In this paper, we shed light on positions of *cargos em comissão* or political discretionary appointments (CCs) in the Brazilian municipal administration. Thus, the purposes of the research were: a) to estimate the proportion of political appointments; b) to distinguish analytically political appointments as public policy **control** or **reward**s for supporters; and c) to identify the causes for choosing these strategies.

Data and information, regarding the 5,570 Brazilian municipalities, came from the Munic/IBGE database, in addition to electoral records from the Superior Electoral Court (TSE). The size of the task, determined by the number and heterogeneity of municipalities, as well as the resulting complexity for distinguishing strategies, brought obvious difficulties.

Following the literature examined in section 2, we chose to use two indicators as proxies for control *versus* reward: 1) the proportion of CCs in relation to the total number of public servants in the direct municipal administration; and 2) the level of education of those appointed to commissioned positions.

A higher proportion of people with college degree among CCs and their smaller number should indicate selectivity and control in choosing qualified managers, suggesting a preference for policy delivery as currency in the local electoral contest. In contrast, a lower proportion of CCs with higher education would assign lower value to profile and technical capability, in favor of party or electoral loyalties. Therefore, lower schooling in CCs composition, combined with a higher proportion of them in the municipal staff, suggests a preference for maximizing political loyalties, through the distribution of positions and increase in their available stock.

We knew the risk of bias arising from the local supply of graduates, due to demographic factors (population size, development, proximity to higher education institutions). This problem is further addressed, through analytical procedures that measure it. One of the anonymous reviewers made a relevant and timely suggestion, for considering internal recruitment (of public servants) of those appointed to CCs in the municipalities. However, different from the federal level (Atlas of the Brazilian State, IPEA), the Munic/IBGE database does not provide this information. We should also consider

that for the categories used in the text (policy-making and rewards), schooling matters more than the internal recruitment of CC nominees.

Analytical procedures had two stages: first, through descriptive statistics, we brought information on the size and composition of the civil service, the proportion of political appointments, and the education level of public office holders in Brazilian municipalities. Next, we used inferential statistics to isolate explanatory factors for the patterns found, by testing the association between the *control* and *reward* models with variables of electoral competition (party; ideology; alignment to federal and state governments; electoral competition; incumbency) and contextual variables (population size; HDI-M; Gini index).

4. RESULTS

According to data from the 2018 Munic/IBGE survey, the number of civil servants in the direct administration of Brazilian municipalities was just over 6 million, representing a growth of 198.7% since the enactment of the 1988 Federal Constitution, which transferred resources and responsibilities to municipal governments (Marenco, 2019). In a smaller time span, between 2005 and 2018, the increase was 36.7%.

A first observation concerns the number of servants in relation to the municipal population. The classification adopted corresponds to that used by Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). The average values, according to the different categories of population size, are presented in Graph 1:

GRAPH 1   **PROPORTION OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN RELATION TO THE POPULATION, ACCORDING TO MUNICIPALITY SIZE (2018)**
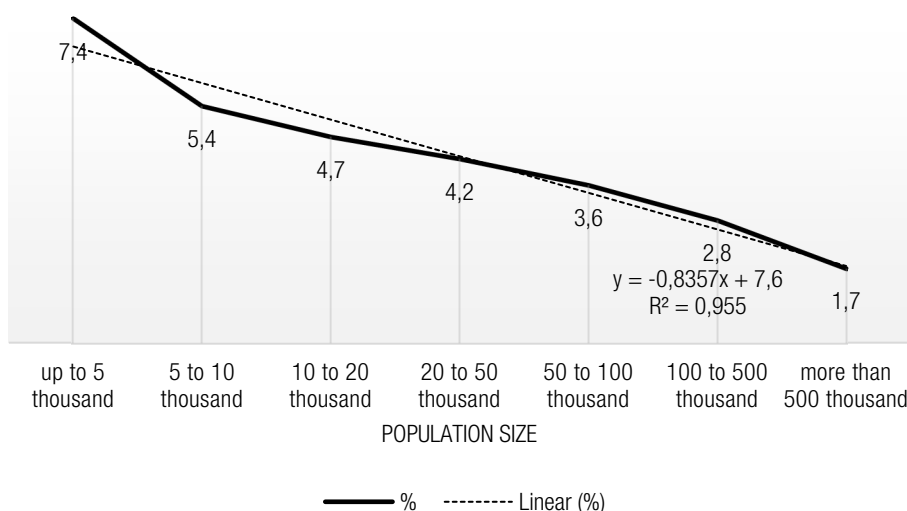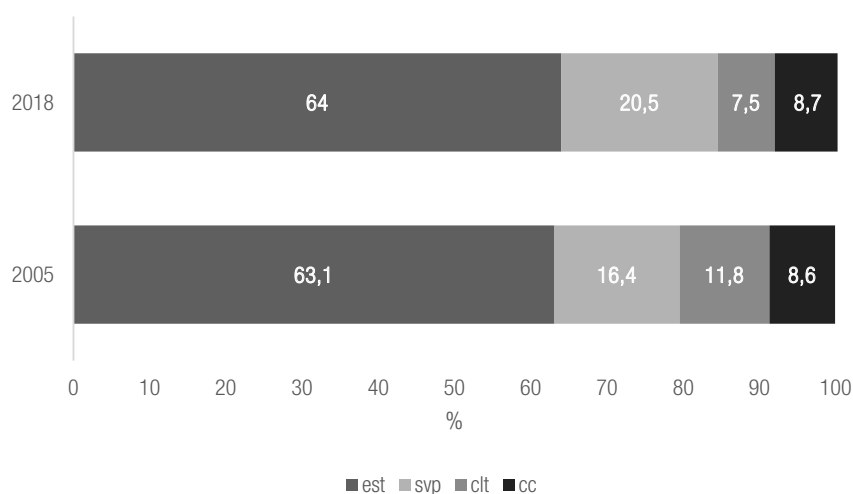

Source: Based on Munic/IBGE (2018).

Considering the averages by population size, we observe a curve very close to the linear relationship between the relative dimension of the municipal civil service and the municipality size, measured by an R^2, which equals 0.955, suggesting a higher relative participation of civil servants in small municipalities. However, this information may lead to a distorted perception of an alleged internal homogeneity in each population cluster. The internal dispersion of each cluster can be measured by its respective standard deviation: 1.21 (100 to 500 thousand) to 2.39 (less than 5 thousand), indicating high variability. Similarly, when data are disaggregated, considering the correlation between the proportion of civil servants and the number of inhabitants per municipality, we reach a negative Pearson coefficient, statistically significant, but very modest (p = -.195, sig at 0.01). The relationship between the worst indicators of development and well-being - here measured by municipal HDI - and the greater dependence on public employment neither provides a more promising explanatory power (p = -.206, sig at 0.01). In other words, there is a propensity for increasing the size of municipal public service in smaller and less developed cities, but it is a weak relation, requiring other factors for a better explanation.

If we consider the hiring regime, the public service in municipal administrations must be disaggregated into statutory, 'celetists', non-permanent, commissioned, and trainee employees. Statutory servants (EST) are those hired under the Unified Legal Regime, through public tender, and achieving stability after three years; 'celetists' are employees hired by the municipality under the Brazilian Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT) regime; non-permanent (SVP) are employees who provide services, without an employment relationship and a signed work permit, also including freelancers, interns, volunteers, and those assigned by other administrations; Commissioned positions (CC) are of free appointment and dismissal, intended for direction, management, and advisory services, and includes both individuals not connected to the administration, or civil servants and public employees (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 2018).

Graph 2 shows the distribution of links in the municipal administration, in two different periods:

GRAPH 2   **COMPOSITION OF THE DIRECT ADMINISTRATION IN BRAZILIAN MUNICIPALITIES, ACCORDING TO THE LINK, IN % (2005 AND 2018)**
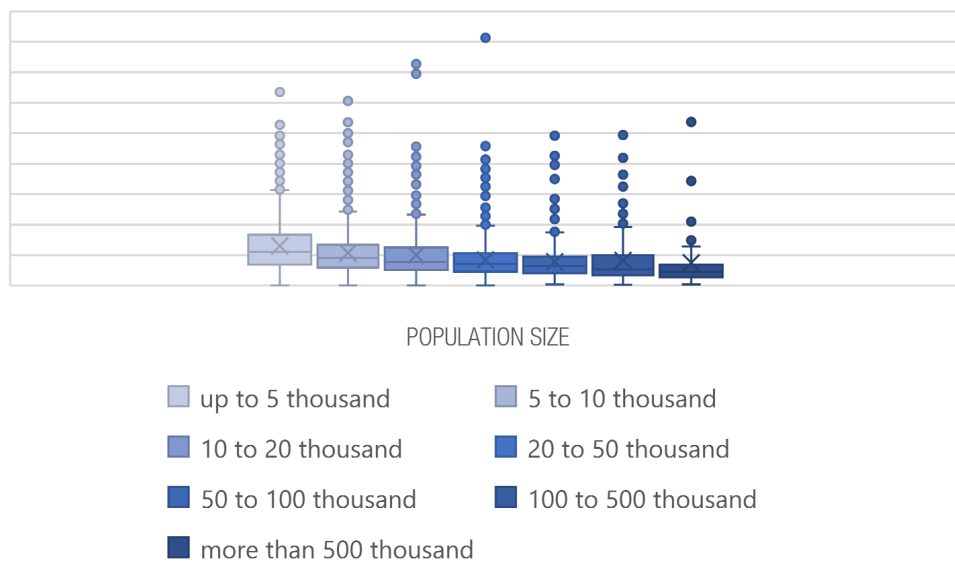

Source: Based on Munic/IBGE (2018).

Data show stability in the participation of statutory employees and CCs. About three-fifths of the civil servants in Brazilian municipal administrations entered through public tenders and gained job stability after three years in the civil service. On the other hand, there was a decrease in the relative number of servants under the CLT regime, along with an increase in the number of non-permanent employees. Maybe the growth of non-permanent employees was driven by the greater flexibility of these contracts, especially given the demands and pressures for public service efficiency (Marconi, 2010).

Disaggregating the information on the proportion of commissioned positions, according to the population size of the 5,570 Brazilian municipalities, we observed discrepancies in political appointments according to the size of the municipalities. Graph 3 presents this information:

GRAPH 3   RATIO OF CCS IN RELATION TO THE TOTAL DIRECT ADMINISTRATION, ACCORDING TO POPULATION SIZE (2018)

POPULATION SIZE

☐ up to 5 thousand   ☐ 5 to 10 thousand
☐ 10 to 20 thousand   ☐ 20 to 50 thousand
☐ 50 to 100 thousand   ☐ 100 to 500 thousand
☐ more than 500 thousand

Source: Based on Munic/IBGE (2018).

The share of commissioned positions in the direct administration workforce decreases according to the size of municipal population: while it represents 11.1% of the median value in cities with up to 5 thousand inhabitants, it accounts for only 4.3% in cities with more than 500 thousand inhabitants. However, once again, we need caution to handle central tendency indicators. As the boxplot Graph 3 suggests, the dispersion in all population clusters is significant, which can be measured by the standard deviation: decreasing in municipalities in the interval between less than 5 thousand (9.11) and 100 thousand inhabitants (5.99), and increasing again in those between 100 and 500 thousand (7.99) and over 500 thousand inhabitants (10.1).

Considering the party of the mayor elected in 2016, we found significant differences only in micro-parties, where the reduced number of municipal governments represents a distortion in the central behavior measures (Graph 4).

GRAPH 4   RATIO OF CCS IN RELATION TO THE TOTAL DIRECT ADMINISTRATION, ACCORDING TO MEDIAN PARTY VALUES (2018)
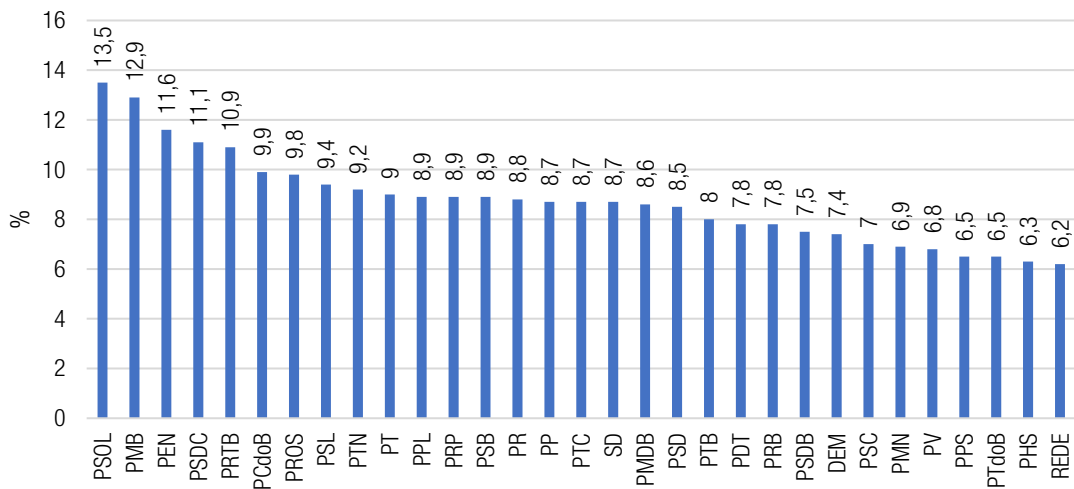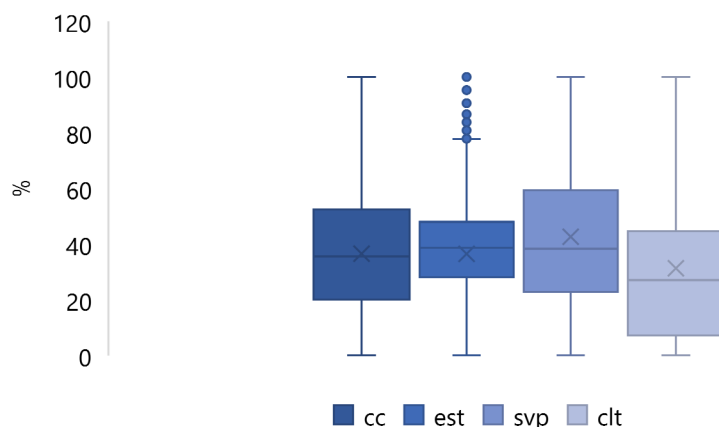

Source: Based on Munic/IBGE (2018).

At this point, a doubt remains - if variations in the proportion of political appointments would correspond to a path dependent pattern or, conversely, could be the product of each management's discretion, increasing or decreasing the stock of commissioned positions. Trying to answer this question, we tested the correlation measured by Pearson coefficient between the proportional share of commissioned positions in 2005, 2008, 2014, and 2018. The results indicate that the association increases as time span decreases, with $p = .327^{**}$ (2005), $p = .492^{**}$ (2008), and $p = .733^{**}$ (2014), all significant at 1%.

Comparing data series for 2014 and 2018, in 49% of Brazilian municipalities there was an increase in the share of CCs in relation to the total number of direct administration employees. Unfortunately, the Munic database does not provide these data for all years, which hindered defining if the increase occurred at the end of the 2013/16 term or at the beginning of the 2017/20 term.

The second relevant dimension for examining strategies to maximize efficiency or reward political support consisted in checking the participation of cadres with higher education (undergraduate and graduate) in the group of those holding commissioned positions in municipal administrations. Initially, we sought to compare CCs with other types of relationships, such as statutory, 'celetists', and non-permanent employees. Graph 5 shows their distribution.

GRAPH 5 **PROPORTION OF MUNICIPAL SERVERS WITH UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE, BY LINK (2018)**

Source: Based on Munic/IBGE (2018).

The median value referring to the percentage of occupants of commissioned positions with a college degree in municipal governments is 35.5%, below the proportion of statutory (38.5%) and non-permanent (38.3) employees, but above the 'celetists' (27.1%). The greater discrepancy of the latter may be related to age factors and their residual character as a contract. We should also consider the dispersion observed among those holding commissioned positions, with a standard deviation of 24 and an interquartile range of 32.4.

Would the variation in the proportional share of higher education graduates among municipal CCs be related to population size? Graph 6 offers clues to answer this question, showing the distribution of CCs with undergraduate degree, according to municipality size.

GRAPH 6 **PROPORTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES AMONG CCS, BY POPULATION SIZE (2018)**
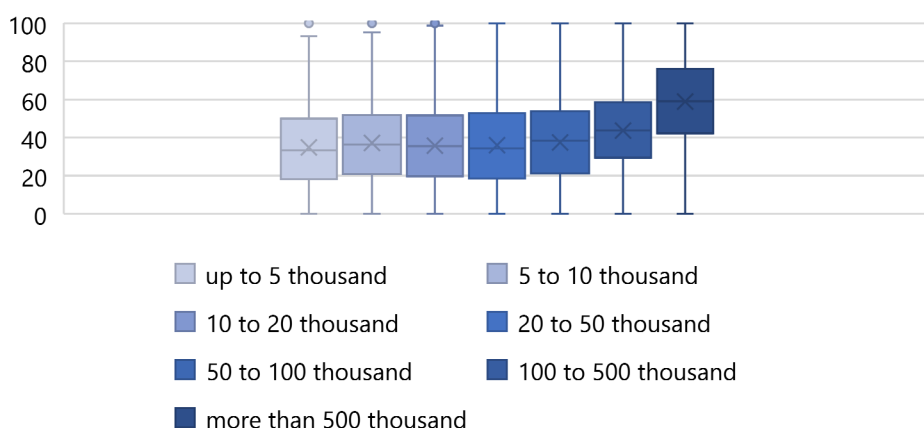
Source: Based on Munic/IBGE (2018).

In the various population groups, until municipalities with up to 100 thousand inhabitants, there is little variation in the share of higher education graduates, ranging from 34% (fewer than 5 thousand) to 37.4% (50 to 100 thousand), although the corresponding standard deviations, always higher than 23, showed a marked dispersion within each cluster. The most significant increase of CCs with higher education occurs in municipalities with 100 to 500 thousand inhabitants (43.6%), and in those with over 500 thousand (58.9%). Similarly, standard deviations remain above 23, highlighting a high dispersion, even in these population groups.

Next, we tried to combine the two axes (proportion and schooling), to identify clearer patterns. Box 3 combines proportion (reduced/extended) and education (low/high). The respective medians were used as a cutoff criterion for the categories in the two dimensions:

BOX 3   POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS, ACCORDING TO PROPORTION AND HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES, IN % (2018)

		Proportion	
		Reduced	Extended
Higher Education	High	31.1	19.2
	Low	18.9	30.9

Source: Based on Munic/IBGE (2018).

Here, we infer that political appointments for commissioned positions, guided by strategies to reward electoral support, correspond to the combination extended proportion/low schooling, which indicates municipalities with the highest proportion of CCs in relation to the number of servants, and with the lowest proportion of higher education among the occupants of commissioned positions. Conversely, high schooling with reduced proportion may indicate strategies for maximizing performance in the implementation of public policies. Together, the two consistent combinations represent 62% of Brazilian municipalities. However, in 38.1% of local governments we observe the combinations reduced proportion/low schooling or extended proportion/high schooling, suggesting mixed strategies, or even the weight of administrative legacies.

An issue in the agenda of studies (Batista, 2013; Brambor & Ceneviva, 2012; Carneiro & Almeida, 2008; Cervi & Borba, 2019; Peixoto & Goulart, 2014) asks if parties matter in the municipal arena. Thus, the next challenge was to locate parties, according to the coordinates of proportion and schooling, in political appointments to commissioned positions at municipal administrations. Graph 7 identifies party patterns in occupying political positions. We only considered parties with 100 or more city halls:

GRAPH 7 **PARTY PATTERNS OF POLITICAL APPOINTMENTS CONSIDERING SCHOOLING AND PROPORTION (2018)**
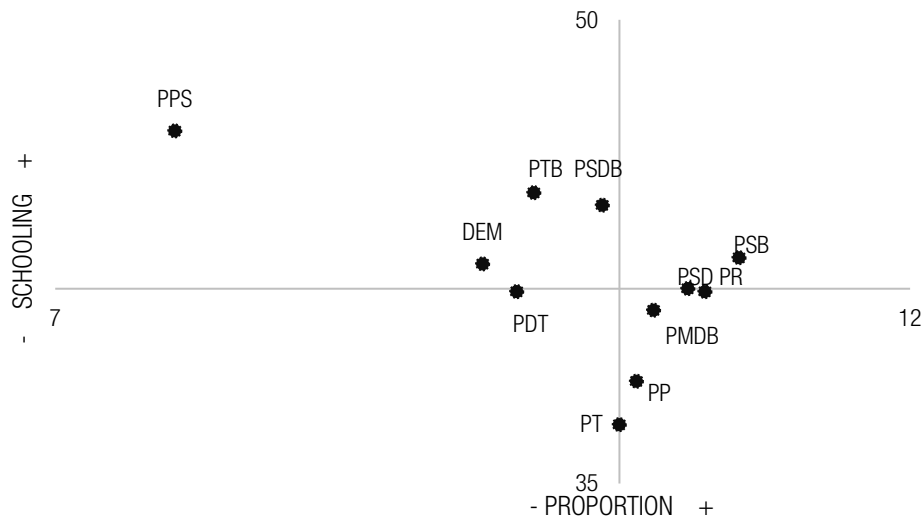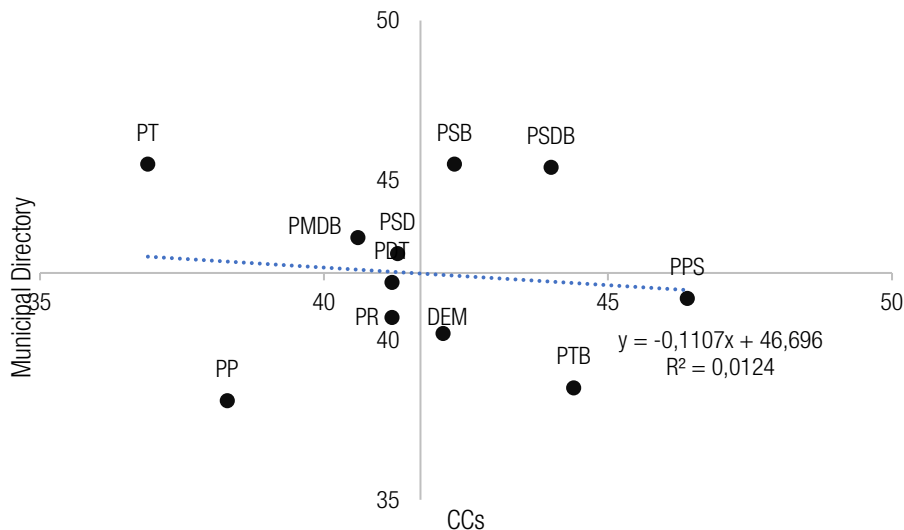

Source: Based on Munic/IBGE (2018).

The result of this procedure revealed a counterintuitive picture: PPS, DEM, PTB, and PSDB are situated in the quadrant that indicates the predominance of fewer appointments with higher schooling, while PT presents the lowest proportion of higher education among the occupants of commissioned positions in municipal governments run by the party, being located in the median of the distribution, in the axis corresponding to the proportion of CCs. Low schooling in PT governments corresponds to the pattern found in all population groups, with college degrees ranging from 23.5% (between 50 and 100 thousand inhabitants) to 46.3% (5 to 10 thousand inhabitants).

Finally, PP and MDB local governments seem to fit the pattern of using positions to promote rewards: extended proportion/higher education lower than the median.

Cervi and Borba (2019) analyzed the political and social profile of local party leaders with a mandate in effect in 2016, who ran for elective office in the 2016, 2014, or 2012 elections. The results showed mostly male members of municipal party boards, with a high-school degree, an average age of 48 years old, and low political professionalization. Matching Cervi and Borba's results with information on the education of local CCs provides an additional angle for identifying party strategies for political appointments. Graph 8 presents this result:

GRAPH 8   SCHOOLING OF CCS AND OF MEMBERS OF MUNICIPAL PARTY DIRECTORIES IN %

Scatter plot with axes labeled "Municipal Directory" (vertical) and "CCs" (horizontal). Data points labeled: PT, PSB, PSDB, PMDB, PSD, PDT, PPS, PR, DEM, PP, PTB. Regression line with equation $y = -0{,}1107x + 46{,}696$, $R^2 = 0{,}0124$.

Source: Based on Cervi and Borba (2019) for municipal directories, Munic/IBGE (2018), and TSE.

We would expect to observe a correspondence in party averages for schooling, since members of municipal directories (DMs) comprise a potential reserve for recruiting cadres occupying municipal commissioned positions. However, we only saw that for PP and PR (lower college education in CCs and DMs), PSB and PSDB (higher college education in both). More suggestive were the observed discrepant patterns:

- PPS, PTB, and DEM: CCs with higher college education, supposedly recruited from outside party cadres;
- PT, PMDB, and PSD: leaders with higher schooling than CCs.

An established interpretation for explaining the adoption of strategies oriented to reward allies or maximize public policies is based on the association between competition and incentives to remove legacies of the administrative spoil system. Thus, Silberman (1993) pointed to uncertainty as a causal mechanism for reforms that produced greater administrative rationalization, while Geddes (1994) stated that the removal of patronage is less likely under a structure of opportunities, characterized by less competition, alternation, and political balance.

The next step was to test the effect of competition on the probability of increasing political appointment strategies as a reward, and their impact on incumbents' chances of success. In the first test, we used the dummy variable *reward* and assigned value 1 for the combination extended proportion/low schooling, which indicates municipalities with a higher proportion of CCs in relation to the set of servers with a reduced proportion of higher education. We chose the independent variables based on indicators capable of pointing the lowest electoral competition, such as the

incumbency status of the mayor, alignment with federal and state governments, having been elected in 2016 with over 75% of the votes, right-wing party affiliation, and municipalities with less than 50,000 inhabitants.

In parallel, we ran a test to observe the effect of the strategy of rewarding allies for the success of mayors seeking re-election in 2020. Municipalities with re-elected mayors were ranked as 1. To identify candidates with better chances, we considered the reward pattern in appointments to commissioned positions (*recomp*), federal alignment (*alignFed*), having achieved more than 75% of the votes in the previous election (*over75%2016*), variation in the proportion between 2018 and 2014, suggesting expansion of CC positions (*varescop1814*), and population size (*popless50*), as shown in Table 1:

TABLE 1   LOGISTIC REGRESSION, REWARD (2016/2020), AND INCUMBENT RE-ELECTION (2020)

Appointments = reward		Incumbent Re-election	
	B		B
incumbency	.060	recomp	-.006
alignFed	-.080	alignFed	-.446***
alignEst	.183**	over75%2016	.337***
over75%2016	.059	varescop1814	-.001**
right	.010	popless50	-.180**
popless50	.818***	constant	-.476***
constant	-1.75***		

***sig at 0.01; **sig at 0.05; *sig at 0.10.
Source: Based on Munic/IBGE (2018) and TSE.

The explanatory power of modeling electoral competition as a factor for reward strategies was very small. Only the variables *popless50* and *alignEst* generated statistically significant coefficients, and the population size of small or medium-sized cities (below 50 thousand inhabitants) was a robust explanation for the preference for increasing the number of CCs and distributing them to less educated occupants. Party continuity in municipal government, less competition in the previous election, and right-wing party showed extremely modest coefficients; federal alignment showed a negative relationship, although very small.

On the other hand, rewarding allies or expanding the number of commissioned positions did not increase incumbents' chances of re-election, as well as alignment with the Federal Government or disputes in small/medium cities. In this case, only when the mayor had been elected in 2016 with more than 75% of the local votes, we observed a moderate and statistically significant coefficient for his/her chances of re-election.

Are coordination costs and voters' information asymmetry linear or context-dependent? What conditions could reduce asymmetries between voters and politicians and allow lower coordination costs for citizens? Trying to answer this question, we made a new logistic regression, now having as dependent variable a proxy for *policy-making*, represented by high median values for education, and low for the proportion of political appointments. We repeated the variables that measure electoral competition, now increased with indicators of the local context, such as the Human Development Index-Municipal (HDI-M) and the Gini index of inequality. HDI-M is a composite indicator that considers population longevity, per capita income, and education (Programa das Nações Unidas para o Desenvolvimento [PNUD], 2010). The Gini index measures the degree of income concentration in a given population, through the difference between the earnings of the poorest and the richest. Its scale is from 0 to 1, 0 representing the situation of maximum equality, and 1 the situation where a single person holds all the wealth. The expectation is that welfare and lower income concentration may create conditions that provide more resources for social monitoring of elected representatives. Similarly, the test was replicated with the dependent variable *reward*. The results are shown in Table 2:

TABLE 2   LOGISTIC REGRESSION, *POLICY-MAKING,* AND *REWARD* (2016/2020)

Appointments = *policy-making*		Appointments = *reward*	
	B		B
incumbency	-.120*	incumbency	.073
alignFed	.004	alignFed	.018
alignEst	-.073	alignEst	.183**
over75%2016	-.030	over75%2016	.070
popless50	-.202**	popless50	.559***
gini	-.570	gini	.176
hdi	9.028***	hdi	-5.002***
constant	-6.504***	constant	1.606***

***sig at 0.01; **sig at 0.05; *sig at 0.10.
Source: Based on Munic/IBGE (2018) and TSE.

Competition variables, which had shown modest results for the relationship with *reward,* replicated their limited performance when addressing *policy-making. Incumbency* showed a negative association, significant at 10%, but not very robust; federal and state *alignment* was not statistically significant and pointed conflicting directions; previous reduced electoral competition, measured by electoral majorities *over 75%*, showed a negative relationship, but again, neither significant nor

robust; municipalities with less than 50 thousand inhabitants had a significant (at 5%), moderate, and negative relationship; *Gini* showed a more robust, negative, but not significant coefficient; finally, *HDI* revealed a very strong and significant association at 1%. In parallel, for *reward*, among political competition factors, only alignment to state government remained significant - but not very strong - with the introduction of contextual variables such as *HDI* and *Gini*. The Human Development Index showed a negative and very strong association with the pattern of reward in appointments to commissioned positions.

The clue offered by HDI allows us to resume the counterintuitive information in Graph 6: PPS, PTB, and DEM show a *policy-making* pattern in their municipal governments; PT, a *reward* pattern. To what extent can these results be explained by the demographic profile of the corresponding city halls of these parties? To try this possibility, two tests were generated with logistic regression. In the first, PPS, PTB, and DEM were coded as 1, and the others as 0; in the second, PT received the dummy variable 1, while the others were 0. In addition to HDI, Gini and population size, we used proxies for electoral competition. Table 3 shows the results:

TABLE 3   LOGISTIC REGRESSION, PPS/PTB/DEM AND PT (2016/2020)

PPS, PTB, and DEM		PT	
	B		B
incumbency	.109	incumbency	1.754***
alignFed	20.438	alignFed	-20.389
alignEst	-.009	alignEst	.443*
over75%2016	-.013	over75%2016	-.104
popless50	-.256*	popless50	-.120
gini	-.497	gini	-2.640**
hdi	2.939***	hdi	-2.555**
constant	-22.657	constant	1.352

***sig at 0.01; **sig at 0.05; *sig at 0.10.
Source: Based on Munic/IBGE (2018) and TSE.

The municipal governments of parties that showed a clearer *policy-making* pattern are located in cities with more than 50 thousand inhabitants and high HDI. Inversely, the city halls won by PT - with the lowest proportion of higher education and median scope - showed a positive association with *incumbency*, negative with *Gini* and *HDI*, all of these with robust coefficients. How can we interpret these results? Party patterns of policy-making seem to reflect contexts of higher development, where, despite the configuration of political competition and local alternation (strong/weak), they provide

social conditions that allow better monitoring of the *fire alarm* type. Similarly, the appointment strategy for commissioned positions in PT governments may be influenced by local contexts that are socially more homogeneous, but less developed.

Hosmer and Lemeshow tests for overall fit indicated no statistically significant difference between the observed and predicted ratings for all models. Chi-square values were non-significant, indicating good fit of the models.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In conventional wisdom and in newspaper columns, political appointments are associated with pathologies such as clientelism, pork barrel, and corruption. The first objective of this paper was to rebuild a more nuanced picture of this phenomenon, interpreting it as an alternative to face problems of delegation between politicians and bureaucracy. To this end, we sought to distinguish the appointment strategies, considering their proportion (reduced/extended) and the schooling (high/low) of the nominees for commissioned positions in Brazilian municipal administrations.

The proportion of commissioned positions and their occupants' schooling are related to population size, by negative and positive relationships, respectively (although, in both cases, the dispersion in each population group was significant).

Parties do not show relevant differences regarding the proportion of CCs in their administrations. Considering the combinations resulting from the proportion and schooling dimensions, the party described in the literature as policy-seeking (PT) showed low education levels of its nominees for commissioned positions, and a medium scope in the public service of its city halls. In contrast, the legends associated with office seekers, such as DEM, PTB, and PPS, showed a pattern more similar to policy-making strategies, the same found in the case of PSDB.

Electoral competition variables showed very modest results for explaining the adoption of reward strategies, and these strategies (higher proportion of CCs and lower schooling) did not affect the chance ratios of incumbents in the 2020 municipal elections.

Finally, the use of HDI, population size, and Gini coefficient as proxies for coordination costs and voters' information asymmetries led to more promising clues, especially regarding the strong relationship between HDI and political appointments with a policy-making profile. We can connect this finding with the counterintuitive revelation that this profile of high schooling and reduced proportion was found in parties where this would not be the expected behavior. A new angle emerged when we tested the association between the city halls of those parties and contextual variables (HDI, Gini, population size). Hence, policy-making parties were related to the municipalities with higher HDI; PT, to cities with lower HDI and less inequality. In other words, more than party vocation, the local context seems to present greater predictive power, strengthening the probability found between policy-making and high HDI.

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