



# The neo-Weberian state and the neodevelopmentalist strategies in Latin America: the case of Uruguay

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## Abstract

This article seeks to contribute to the development of the neo-Weberian theory of public administration by making it travel to the Latin American context. We argue that this model of public administration reform, identified in continental European states, tends to be present in some Latin American countries that have followed neodevelopmentalist models of economic development. The neo-Weberian political strategy promotes a public sector modernization that enhances its steering and coordination capacities which is functional to a neodevelopmental view that aims to rebuild the state's central role in leading economic growth and social cohesiveness. Yet, the public management model that is implanted resembles an 'imperfect' neo-Weberianism due to the institutional deficiencies of these countries and the difficulties in providing a clear reform script. We provide this link by decoding the main outlines of the public management model in Uruguay in the context of the reforms implemented by the *Frente Amplio*.

## Points for practitioners

The article demonstrates two central points. First, that the processes of public sector reform are usually linked to other broader development strategies and to calculations

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of political feasibility. This can explain to some extent the options taken by politicians. Second, public sector reforms are often a combination of multiple administrative doctrines. This poses the risk of being unsystematic, incoherent or even contradictory.

### Keywords

Latin America, neo-Weberian, public administration, state, Uruguay

## Introduction

The New Public Management (NPM) model of administration has received a great deal of attention over recent decades, both from a supportive and from a critical point of view. This has led to series of new studies that have given attention to concepts such as performance management, post-NPM, public service motivation, among others (Christensen and Laegreid, 2007; Curry, 2014; De Vries and Nemeč, 2013). Latin America (LA) has been part of this debate. In the last decade, the post-NPM agenda has been pushed by international organizations such as the IADB, the World Bank and the OECD as a means to improve the outcomes of public policies (Kaufman et al., 2015). This was, in part, a response to the limited effects of NPM reforms in developing countries (Manning, 2001) and its excessive emphasis on economic efficiency over policy effectiveness.

Simultaneously, the LA region has witnessed the arrival of a series of leftist governments which brought a different state conception, called by some as neo-developmental<sup>1</sup> (Boschi and Gaitán, 2009; Gaitán, 2014). Rather than an NPM model, the neodevelopmentalist state (NDS) has its public administration correlate in the neo-Weberian state (NWS). This concept has received increasing attention from scholars both from a theoretical and a practical approach. It has been defined as one of the new trends of the post-NPM public management models (Lynn, 2008; Mazur and Kopycinski, 2018; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). From a practical standpoint, it has been used to define the reform experiences of the Western European states and some trends in south-east and post-communist Eastern Europe countries (Dreschler, 2009; Randma-Liiv, 2008). Putting these two concepts to work together seems a good way of discussing public administration and development models.

It is our argument that since the *Frente Amplio* (FA) took office in 2005, Uruguay has been following a model of public administration reform that fits the European NWS model. This model does not stand on a managerialism and pro-market discourse, or privatizing, but on one that strengthens the public sector. Not only did the country structural features adjust administratively to NWS, but also the political imaginary of a left-of-center party like the FA, sometimes characterized as social-democrat (Lanzaro, 2008; Luna, 2007; Panizza, 2005), and for others as neodevelopmentalist (Garcé and Yaffé, 2014; Stoessel, 2014).

However, some of the main public management reforms enacted by the FA, such as performance management initiatives, reinforcing steering and coordination capacities from the center, and civil service policies, experienced some problems. We believe that it was the consequence of some typical deficiencies of developing countries states and political systems, such as their lack of institutional capacities and the political difficulty in presenting a reform script. But we also believe that the FA, following a political tradition for public sector reforms in Uruguay, sought a strategy of 'reform without losers' (Panizza, 2004) which reinforces a political culture that makes resistance to change a political virtue.

In short, we argue that, although it has not been made explicit, the public sector in Uruguay has adopted a model of management reform that could be called 'imperfect neo-Weberianism'. This makes Uruguay a good case of study to discuss the possibilities and constraints that neo-Weberian management reforms have in states outside Europe.

### **Focus and methodological approach**

This work is focused on theory development rather than theory testing. The aim is to comprehend and combine concepts to do what George and Bennett (2005) have called 'building blocks' where cases serve as empirical and inductive material for theory construction. In this regard, our article tries to bring new concepts for further studies in LA public administration. We take Uruguay as a case study for continuing the refinement of the NWS concept, mainly normative to this day, to see how comfortably it travels, and how valid the concept is outside the European context. In short, whether it is possible to identify alternative paths to similar outcomes.

The Uruguayan case is particularly interesting in this regard. It is one of the most consolidated democracies in LA, based on a programmatic and competitive party system (Kitschelt et al., 2010), and a strong welfare state tradition which resembles some models of continental Europe (Martinez, 2008) and a reliable civil service. These structural features make this country a potentially suitable place to develop neo-Weberian experiments. The article is based on an extensive literature review both from public administration and sectorial reforms, an analysis of key Acts and decrees, government reports and data review of the case.

### **Languages and dialects: the Latin American NDS and the European NWS**

The early years of the 21st century saw the arrival of leftist governments in almost every country of the LA region. While the 'family' of leftist governments was not homogeneous in terms of their ideological and party structures, it was in their political discourse, based on the criticism of the neoliberal policies of the 1990s and particularly on the need to rebuild the state as the key actor for development.

The new conception of state that these governments have had can be characterized, depending on the case, as 'neodevelopmentalism'.

The NDS calls for greater state intervention in social and economic life but in a context of respect for the market rules and collaboration with the private sector. The market plays a central role in generating wealth, and in this context the role of the NDS is to maintain macroeconomic stability, facilitating productive diversification, opening access to new markets and encouraging investment in science and technology (Boschi and Gaitán, 2009; Bresser Pereira, 2007; Gaitán, 2014). The NDS does not constitute a complete break with the previous neoliberal postulates; yet, its role is more limited than in the classical developmental vision in terms of market presence and monopolistic services.

In social terms, neodevelopmentalism is about making the most of the economic growth to rebuild the welfare state. To do this, it develops redistributive policies focused on poverty and inequality via cash transfer programs to low-income sectors as well as major sectoral reforms in areas such as health or labor.

Unlike in previous times, service delivery and even the implementation of some social programs have not been conceived as a state monopoly; on the contrary, one of the ways of formalizing an alliance with the private sector has been using new (and not so new) management methods such as outsourcing. Particularly in social democratic governments, such as those of Chile, Brazil and Uruguay, this development view went hand in hand with the reinforcement of the role of the public administration in the public space through the modernization of its management systems.<sup>2</sup>

The similarities in the reform processes of these three countries do not mean that they deserve the same typification. Chile is perhaps the most powerful example of post-NPM reforms (Morales, 2014). Here, post-NPM came as a response to a series of strong reforms promoted during the 1990s by its technocracy. Brazil is a stronger case of hybridization, since although it aimed to be an exemplary model of NPM,<sup>3</sup> it ended up being very pragmatic with a mixture of emerging post-NPM paradigms (Cavalcante and Camoes, 2017). Uruguay is the case that best fits within the concept of NWS. It was a laggard case in terms of NPM and with strong resistance to incorporate its most demanding postulates.

### *Can we find an NWS model outside Europe?*

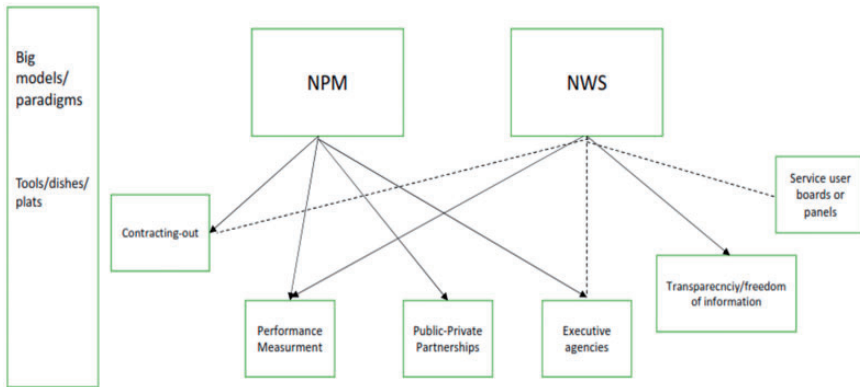
As Dunn and Miller (2007) have pointed out: 'NWS was developed in a context of concern with the inadequacies of NPM and other managerial reforms imported from the USA' (Dunn and Miller, 2007: 350). When Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011) originally coined the concept they focused on the empirics, derived from the observation of what was going on in public reforms in continental Europe (Pollitt, 2008). It was born as a descriptive concept rather than a normative paradigm for countries, but one that can now be understood as a model of public management reform. Whether this model can work outside Europe is an empirical question (see Table 1).

According to Pollitt (2008), this model can be seen as a political strategy which conveys two profound theoretical dimensions: '(a) the State remains a strong

<i>Weberian elements</i>	<i>Neo-Weberian elements</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reaffirmation of the role of the State as the main facilitator of solutions to the problems of globalization, technological change, shifting demographics, and environmental threat.</li> <li>- Reaffirmation of the role of representative democracy as the legitimating element within the state apparatus.</li> <li>- Reaffirmation of the role of administrative law—suitably modernized—in preserving the basic principles pertaining to the citizen–State relationship.</li> <li>- Preservation of the idea of a public service with a distinctive status, culture, and—to some extent—terms and conditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wider orientation towards meeting citizens’ needs through the creation of a professional culture of quality and service.</li> <li>- Supplementation (not replacement) of the role of representative democracy by a range of devices for public consultation.</li> <li>- A modernization of the relevant laws to encourage a greater orientation on the achievement of results, rather than merely the correct following of procedure.</li> <li>- Wider emphasis on ex-post controls and performance management.</li> <li>- A professionalization of the public service, towards a professional manager, oriented to meeting the needs of users.</li> </ul>

**Figure 1.** The neo-Weberian model.

Source: Adapted from Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011: 118–119).

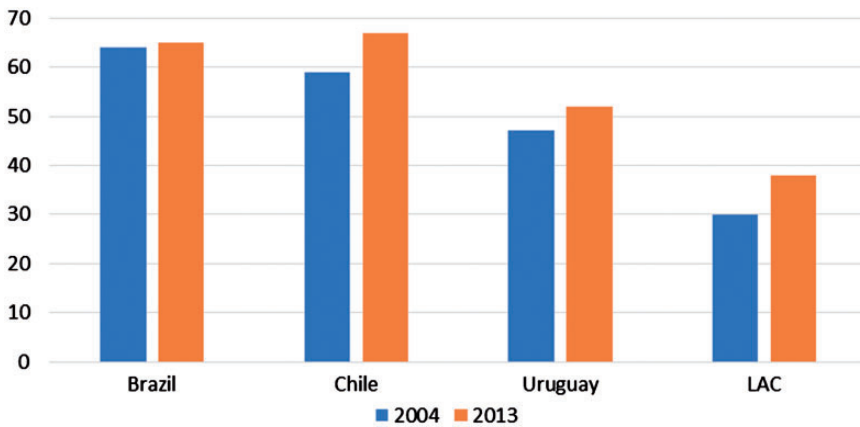


**Figure 2.** NPM, NWS and their tools.

Source: Adapted from Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011).

steering and regulating presence within society; (b) the State is steadily modernizing, professionalizing and seeking improved efficiency. But there is no assumption that aping the private sector is the only way to achieve efficiency and professionalism’ (Politt, 2008: 14).

The NWS restrains to a certain extent the technocratic impulse of the post-NPM strategies by its submersion in an administrative and legal rationality. It is about adding new standards rather than supplanting the old civil service ones (Esmark, 2016). That is why, despite macro-level differences, in practice both models share management tools which produces a sort of synergy between them (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). With different intensities, both NPM and NWS



**Figure 3.** Civil Service Development Index.

Source: Cortázar et al. (2014).

make use of contracting-out, performance measurement strategies or the creation of executive agencies.

Using an NWS framework for management reforms promoted by some NDSs in LA could cast doubt on the accuracy of the term as a description of what is going on there. It could be argued that each country is different, with specific reform trajectories. It would also be possible to object that because the pure Weberian model does not apply to these states, therefore they could never be post-Weberian.

We find these objections debatable. First, the NSW intends to capture the broadest features, not the details. Even in the European context, Pollitt (2008) pointed out that each state (such as Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands or Finland) has its own variations and contradictory tendencies in their reform pathways. So, the NWS is to a great extent an ideal type that cannot completely capture each country's details.<sup>4</sup>

First, it could be assumed that NDSs in LA, under left-of-center governments, share this political strategy containing the two aforementioned theoretical dimensions. Second, although we admit that NDS public administrations are not purely Weberian, having higher levels of politicization and patronage practices than most Western European countries (Kopecky et al., 2016), nonetheless they are well over the regional average in the Civil Service Development Index of the IADB, and making important progress towards meritocracy (Cortázar et al., 2014). It could be argued that these countries are working towards something like an NWS, but from a different starting position.

The next section will try to apply the NWS to a specific LA case: Uruguay. This country presents some of the 'neo' elements of the neo-Weberian public administration. Yet, it is an imperfect development as it starts from a lower threshold than European countries.

## **The Uruguayan public management model since 2005: a neo-Weberian experiment?**

With the arrival of the FA in office in 2005, Uruguay became part of the LA countries that participated in the shift to the left wing of the neodevelopmentalist type. Since then, the FA has enjoyed parliamentary majorities which have given it ample room for manoeuvre for reforms. Yet, it has done this within a programmatic strategy framework that responds to a moderate reformism, typical of the traditional pluralist presidentialism in Uruguay (Garcé and Yaffé, 2014; Lanzaro, 2008). This becomes clear in the speeches on economic policy, in which the use of terms such as ‘modernization’, ‘economic growth’, ‘management improvement’ or ‘fiscal responsibility’ became very common.

The FA government that took office in 2005 emerged from one of the worst economic crises ever seen in the country (2002–03). While the most acute moments of the financial crisis were left behind at the time of their access to power, the social consequences were still present. The agenda thus implied a prioritization of care for the most vulnerable populations through an increase in public spending and other progressive measures. These policies were not an obstacle in maintaining macroeconomic stability, strengthening financial regulation and restructuring foreign debt, in a game of balance between greater social redistribution, more economic growth and control of public finances.

Public administration reforms were a sensitive topic in the agenda. President Vázquez (2005–10) called it ‘the mother of all reforms’.<sup>5</sup> This announcement anticipated profound changes in the structure of the Uruguayan public administration. Under the heading, ‘Democratic State Transformation’ the Vazquez government proposed a series of initiatives to reform the central administration including organizational restructuring of ministries, transformation of the public career system, the development of information systems, the deepening of the e-government strategy, among others (Narbondó et al., 2010; OPP, 2009). These all pointed to a better quality of public policies in relation to decision-making and bringing the public sector closer to the people.<sup>6</sup>

By 2010, the arrival of José Mujica in office not only provided the FA with the possibility of consolidating policies initiated by the previous government, but also building a new agenda in a most promising economic and social context. In Mujica’s words: ‘As rightly said by President Tabaré Vázquez, this is the mother of all reforms. We should not allow that mother to keep waiting for us.’<sup>7</sup> These words refer not only to delays in undertaking reforms, but making the reforms part of the central concerns of the government.

Both FA governments gave the state a central role in society and economy. They also placed public sector reform on their agendas. This section aims to present the main milestones on public administration reforms, and also to identify the political and theoretical orientation adopted by these leftist governments. To do that, we divide the policies into three groups: performance management, human resource management



and public sector organization and coordination. All of them present special features under an NWS, and although interrelated, they entail a specific set of actions.

### *Performance management*

We understand performance management as a set of integrated processes of planning, budgeting and evaluation that incorporates performance information to improve decision-making (Bouckaert and Halligan, 2008; Van Dooren et al., 2010). To address performance management issues, a new group of agencies were developed. These were AGESIC,<sup>8</sup> responsible for leading e-government policy, and AGEV<sup>9</sup> for strategic planning and evaluation. A new output-budgeting scheme started to spread across different agencies, although mainly within the central administration.<sup>10</sup> There was progress, although timid, in the preparation of performance agreement contracts for some public organizations, mostly in the health system and state-owned companies.

Changes in information systems for financial accounting were put in place and some important progress was made in reducing red tape and paperwork through e-government plans. Progress on performance management and budget, although after several years' experience and being well spread across the central administration, still seems timid when it comes to guiding the strategic discussion and become real inputs for decision-making. Most of the controls and policy decisions are still taken under a logic of inputs and inertial planning and budgeting.

### *Human resource management*

Almost from the beginning, the first FA government launched a reform of the career system in central administration. Modernization and greater flexibility were the main premises of its conception (Narbondo et al., 2010). The reforms can be characterized under the neo-Weberian type to the extent that it sought to strengthen the career system but provide more flexibility and incorporating a logic of incentives at the top of the system. These reforms sought to modify the career system and its salary structure, making it simpler, more homogeneous and flexible. The creation of managerial positions at the top of the bureaucratic career was a novelty. It sought to professionalize the top bureaucracy and modify the public service bargain (Hood and Lodge, 2006) largely based on patronage relations (Ramos and Scrollini, 2013). Those who accessed these positions should have gone through a training process in public management, planning, and leadership, tied to performance agreements. Those selected were expected to return to lower positions in the hierarchy in cases of underperformance. The attempt to implement this new career system and managerial positions failed despite having achieved legislative approval. These positions were partially filled in some ministries but the tasks and the performance assessment mechanisms were never implemented. In practice, the lack of political consensus and the 'old bureaucracy' was successful in gobbling up the novelty and blocking the reform attempts.



A new on-line transparency mechanism for merit-based entry system to the civil service saw the light in 2011 (*Uruguay Concurso*). But perhaps the most important aspect of human resource management was the adoption, after 70 years, of a new Civil Service Statute.<sup>11</sup> This new legislation that was negotiated with the union of civil servants meant the advance in the reclassification of contractual relations with the state, and the redefinition of the rights, obligations and working conditions (Ramos et al., 2013). However, a large part of the discussions focused on the number of working hours, the obligation to work on public holidays or the sanctions system. Little discussion took place in relation to the characteristics of the new public servant and his role in the modernization of the public management model. The new statute kept the logic of a corporate career system, without the possibility of promotion between different state agencies and without creating new cross careers (Ramos, 2013). It even dismantled the management positions at the top of the civil service career created by the previous government. However, it offered no clear alternative to solve steering problems at high levels of the bureaucracy; or regarding the generation of informal practices of salary compensation or for the distortions caused by entry into the civil service under private law. Ultimately, the discussion about the Statute was absent or ran in parallel to other requirements and needs of the public management in Uruguay.

The reforms directed to human resource management were inspired by a neo-Weberian logic as they sought to strengthen the career system, but unlike Vazquez's attempts, the practices associated with managerialism were eliminated or limited. Issues such as bureaucracy autonomy and management freedom were off the table. Performance agreements, while remaining for some specific areas, were weakly tied to a performance management and accountability logic.

Mujica's reforms, in particular, swung between two perspectives of the civil servant. On the one hand was distrust of the bureaucracy (the idea that 'they are many and do little') that motivated the controls reinforcing and strengthening the administrative career. These controls are not enacted under a managerialist-type scheme linked to performance assessment, but merely as a procedure – the classic Weberian kind – to reinforce hierarchical controls. Moreover, the increase in political appointments, in the style of 'political commissars' in high government positions, in opposition to the mentioned management levels, corresponds to the idea of favouring political responsiveness over the bureaucratic one (Panizza et al., 2014).

### *Public sector organization and coordination*

Most policies both at the sectorial level and in public sector reform implied a heavy agenda of reorganization and coordination. At the central level, organizational restructuring of ministries and public entities was promoted to encompass the civil service and performance management reforms. Yet, most of them were developed under a low-intensity pace of reform, highly publicized in new acts or decrees that gave them formal structure, but not linked to an overall plan.

Some organizations adopted an NPM-type logic, separating policy design and regulation from implementation, such as the Ministry of Public Health that came to play a steering role in the public and private health provision systems (Freigedo et al., 2015). Also, the Ministry of Housing, Land and Environment transferred policy implementation to the newly created National Housing Agency. The Ministry of Social Development developed a service delivery system strongly based on outsourcing with NGOs (Midaglia et al., 2009). Finally, the creation of the Procurement and Contracting Agency was an important innovation to organize state purchases and promote transparency.<sup>12</sup>

This period is also characterized by the highest increase in the generation of non-state public entities, emphasizing the leak of public policies management to private law, and the adoption of the Public–Private Partnership Act<sup>13</sup> that shaped the search for a new type of relationship with the private sector.

In terms of policy coordination, to consolidate coordinated policies and breaking with fragmentation logics, thematic cabinets were implemented (Social, Productive and Innovation) in which the ministries involved defined and coordinated policies (Lanzaro, 2016). More recently, the intention has been to strengthen the steering of government, in particular of public companies where planning and investments have been poorly controlled by the Executive. Similarly, the recent creation of the Department of Planning and the National Competitiveness System, both in the Planning and Budgeting Office, are attempts to consolidate greater capacities for planning and coordination from the center.

## **Uruguay and its imperfect neo-Weberianism**

The FA governments were successful in reshaping the welfare state and providing assistance to the most vulnerable sectors (Antia et al., 2013). Also, the modernization of public companies and the definition of consistent strategies in key areas such as energy policy and others related to innovation, gave a new impetus to the state presence in the economy (Rubianes, 2014). However, the public sector reforms did not follow a consistent agenda.

The FA's reforms in the public sector were not a response to previous extensive NPM policies. They were not a search for bringing the state back in, as it never actually left. The general orientation of the proposed reforms was largely in line with the international trends associated with a post-NPM agenda, but avoiding falling into some of the excesses and unwanted consequences of the most orthodox recipes.

Rather than a privatizing emphasis or a focus on 'making managers' (Peters and Pierre, 2008), the reforms sought to strengthen the capacities of the government central machinery, incorporating the logic of performance management, decision-making based on evidence and a focus on citizens. A smaller central administration, but strong at the same time, was then proposed; that is, capable of designing policies and a powerful monitoring and evaluation system, as well as the regulation of all agencies (public and private) that are responsible for the provision of public services (OPP, 2009). In that context, the provision of some public services through contracts

with private companies was widely used. In addition, some projects focused on the simplification and interconnection of procedures in various government agencies.

In line with the logic of the neodevelopmentalist state, and helped by a favorable conjuncture, there was an effort to strengthen the state machinery both in the economy and in public services delivery. However, in terms of public administration reform, the FA has followed the trend of advancing with a hybrid strategy rather than formulating a clear paradigm. This hybridization does not really arise from an attempt to take the best of each model, but rather from spasmodic, unsystematic and fragmented processes. Nevertheless, there have been important contributions in strategic areas of management, like the deepening of e-government, information systems, financial regulation or tax management. It is not possible to mechanically deduce the public management model of the current Uruguayan government. Nor it is possible to turn to a presumed set of consistent or systematic measures aimed at modernizing the public management system to accompany the neodevelopmentalist model. In many areas, the reforms have been erratic, with ups and downs, hindering the formation of an integrated and coherent modernization process that provides the basis for meeting the challenges of development (Narbondo et al., 2010; Ramos et al., 2013).

Although it is possible to see, especially in human resources management, a trend towards the strengthening and modernization of Weberian logics (sometimes combined with NPM-type tools), some structural deficits could not be solved; nor the systematic incorporation of tools associated with performance evaluation or the relaxation of the career system. In many ways, the reforms have not moved from being a dead letter. As for the incorporation of public management tools (strategic

State role	Public administration	
Neodevelopmentalist elements	Neo-Weberian elements	More NPM-style elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing expenditure in welfare services.</li> <li>- Macroeconomic and fiscal stability.</li> <li>- Wider regulation in economic areas, particularly labor.</li> <li>- Stronger presence of public companies in the market.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wider focus on performance management (strategic planning, output-budgeting scheme, M&amp;E).</li> <li>- Strengthen of the civil service career system but with more flexibility.</li> <li>- E-government and strategies for red-tape reduction*.</li> <li>- Strengthening of the transparency mechanisms and the merit-based entry system to the civil service.</li> <li>- More steering from the center.</li> <li>- Wider public participation mechanisms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Performance agreement contracts (very timidly).</li> <li>- Creation of managerial positions at the top of the system (later discontinued).</li> <li>- Wider private provision of public services.</li> <li>- Adoption of the Public-Private Partnership scheme.</li> </ul>

\* It can be considered both NWS and NPM.

**Figure 4.** Uruguay's public sector reforms.

planning, evaluation, budgeting for results, etc.), although some progress should be recognized, they are not consolidated as institutionalized practices. The performance management tools are implemented in the agencies but they quickly pass to be part of the bureaucratic ritual ('another form to fill out') rather than a means for taking better decisions. Those things meant to encourage innovation processes quickly became swallowed up by procedural logics and normative practices.

In terms of organizational structure, the almost constant jump to private law or agencies outside central government with more management freedom, responds to the pragmatism for establishing *bypass* strategies in the face of difficulties for managing under public law and public agencies, rather than indicating ideological agreement with the NPM model. It seemed easier to generate new public and flexible institutions than to restructure an old ministry. While the attempts at institutional strengthening in some areas were clear, they often resulted in the generation of 'islands of excellence' (Parrado and Salvador, 2011). From a global point of view, the reforms were piecemeal, incomplete and ad hoc.

## Conclusions

This article has tried to take NWS theory to other latitudes. In a more general perspective, we emphasize that the public management models are not dissociated from the development strategies. Although different trends coexist in Uruguay, the neo-Weberian type predominates which seeks to strengthen the career system, meritocracy and a combination of regulatory controls linked to performance and policies. However, the situation appears more like an 'imperfect neo-Weberianism' to the extent that these practices fail, or function imperfectly, to permeate the management structures which remain largely indifferent to any substantive changes.

Where does this imperfect neo-Weberianism come from? A number of factors coexist. Some reflect the limits of the public administration itself while others can be found in the political context. We can underline at least two: institutional deficiencies and political difficulties in presenting a reform script.

The limited institutional capacities in some public agencies derived from poor merit-based entry system plays a part. First, some of the changes, particularly those in performance management, require a set of skills that are not always easy to find, especially in old-fashioned agencies. Second, although a period of economic growth has helped to improve public salaries, reforming human resource management implies a serious investment with no quick return. That partially explains why reforms tend to be fragmented and prioritize only some agencies.

But perhaps the most interesting explanations can be found in the political field.

The limits to advance in a NWS largely reflect the difficulties and lack of political consensus in the ruling party to reach an agreement on a reform agenda. Internal differences within the FA and the distribution of positions by political quotas among its factions does not help to achieve a coordinated movement.

A critical point is the relation that the political system has with the bureaucracy to implement either NPM-type or neo-Weberian strategies. The reforms,

particularly those related to human resources, were not inspired by managerialist foundations or public choice type. In the latter case, because the politicians do not have a vision about the presence of a bureaucracy that needs to be controlled or that appropriates public goods through the monopolistic control of the services; in short, of losing the reins of the state apparatus at the hands of the bureaucracy. Therefore, the logic to strongly advance in performance evaluation and management agreements have little place. On the other hand, the 'make managers' managerial model was fought not only from an ideological point of view (linking it to the neoliberal model) but also because it threatens the same public apparatus control associated with political appointments. Hence, there was no retreat from a Weberian, although rather imperfect, legacy but the inclusion of 'performance games' for the civil service (Barberis, 2011).

In this context, there was room to advance in the 'easy' stages of the reforms: the creation of new agencies (such as AGEV and AGESIC), although with limited political resources to modify the practices in the traditional public structures and the progressive incorporation of information systems. These aspects did not change, at least in the short term, substantive correlations of power either in politicians or in bureaucrats.

Moreover, unlike other LA countries such as Chile, Colombia, Perú or Mexico, where the technocratic class at the top of the civil service was a key element in promoting reforms (Dargent, 2015; Dávila, 2010; Panizza and Philip, 2005; Silva, 2006), in Uruguay the lack of an active agenda from the bureaucracy, especially from those at the top, may partly explain the timid and piecemeal adoption of public management tools, both post-NPM and the neo-Weberian type. This does not mean an absence of change. Uruguay has not been exempt from 'institutional isomorphism' (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff, 2015; Powell and Di Maggio, 1991). A series of performance management tools and trends have been adopted, but with poor actual transformative capacity.

The Uruguayan strategy for administrative reforms resembles what Dunleavy and Hood (1995) called the 'headless chicken model'. Although there is room for innovation in public management, no clear leadership is recognized. Public organizations make improvement actions but under an individual rationality rather than a systemic one since there are no clear rules or guidelines that set a strategy. This scenario is characterized by instability, overlapping actions and, as the image suggests, by its weak sustainability. Thus, it is not possible to identify a clear trend in reforms. While in some areas of the state apparatus managerialist-type reforms of agencification and flexibility may be happening, in others, the trend will be towards neo-Weberian models and strengthening of central control. Beyond the references to 'efficiency', 'quality' or 'modernization', the reforms usually have an intentional *sui generis* character to make them politically feasible.

As Panizza (2004) has pointed out, it is about presenting 'reforms without losers'. While it may have the possibility of making agreed incremental changes, the agenda often ends up fading away when the most difficult steps of the reforms cannot occur without conflict. The main consequence of this is the different

rationales and incentives that are generated within the state apparatus for the bureaucracy and for the politicians themselves.

Unfortunately, the NWS has not been sufficiently theorized across the region yet. We think that many aspects of the discussion made with regard to Uruguay could be useful to other LA countries, particularly those with certain levels of bureaucratic development. Whether the journey of the NWS in LA is a permanent one or not will hopefully be part of the public administration debate in the future.

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### **Notes**

1. The ECLAC used the term neostructuralism in a similar way (see Bárcena and Prado, 2015).
2. This does not ignore the severe political and corruption crisis that some countries face today in LA, particularly in Brazil and Venezuela, which has strong consequences for their development and public management reforms.
3. Especially during the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso when Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira was Minister of Federal Administration and State Reform (1995–98).
4. The Civil Service Development Index is measured by the IADB and it is composed of a series of subsystems in human resources management, these are: (1) Human Resources planning, (2) Work organization, (3) Employment management, (4) Performance management, (5) Compensation management, (6) Development management, (7) Human and social relations management, (8) HR function organization; and five indexes: (1) Efficiency, (2) Merit, (3) Structural consistency, (4) Functional capacity, and (5) Integrating capacity.
5. Speech to the Cabinet on 28 August 2006.
6. In addition, it promoted decentralization through the creation of a third level of government, at the local level, that materialized by the end of its mandate.
7. From Mujica's inauguration speech on 1 March 2010.
8. Act N° 17.930, Art. 72 of 23 December 2005.
9. This agency was created within the Planning and Budgeting Office originally through an international loan from the Inter-American Development Bank; its staff were later consolidated as part of the public sector.
10. It began from technical assistance from New Zealand experts.

11. Act N° 19.121 of 20 August 2013.
12. Act N° 18.362 Art. 81 of 6 October 2008.
13. Act N° 18.786 of 19 July 2011.

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