A Systemic Framework to Evaluate Political Clientelism and Citizens' Subjectivation Processes

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Abstract

Political clientelism and low quality of democracy are recurrent problems in Latin American societies. The purpose of this paper is to understand the complex processes of subjectivation introduced and fostered by various practices of political clientelism. To explore this complexity, a systemic framework encompassing three dimensions of analysis: structural, institutional, and subjective is adopted. To explore the impact that the subjectivation processes have on the formation of citizenship, we applied the framework examining eighteen in-depth interviews with beneficiaries of the Social Inclusion Plan in San Luis, Argentina. Our results suggest that practices and discourses of political clientelism foster citizens' dependence on the state and government. By focusing on the beneficiaries' perceptions, our findings facilitate a better understanding of the real impact of state policies and help to identify ways to empower low-income people to exercise their rights and to develop a democratic, less dependent and mature citizenship.

Keywords: Systems thinking; Citizenship; Democracy; Political Clientelism; Social Inclusion; Subjectivation processes; Argentina

1. Introduction

Political clientelism and low quality of democracy are two interrelated and recurrent problems in many Latin American societies. Low quality of democracy is characterised as a system, in which the actions of citizens and leaders do not adhere to formally approved rules, but rather to other informal notions, such as relationships of clientelism. Political clientelism can be seen as a network of relationships that promote mutual aid, loyalty and interpersonal solidarity in order to generate and foster specific beliefs, behaviours and daily practices among citizens, which would conceal the state's domination (Auyero, 2004). While some investigations of clientelism examined this phenomenon solely from the perspective of a social and political practice that is based on the exchange of aid for votes, hence, it opposes democratic values; in this paper, we account for the perceptions and beliefs that practices of political clientelism generate among people implicated in a clientelistic network.

We aim to contribute to the understanding of quality of citizenship and its link to institutional political clientelism practices in Latin America, particularly in Argentina. These practices are understood as the use of plans or formally approved social policies (through laws and in compliance with the formal instances that concern them), which are used informally by political leaders according to their own interests. Political clientelism implies a loss of an individual autonomy, thus creating a perpetuated cycle in which 'assisted' citizens are dependent on the actions of the government. However, as our results suggest, such subjectivation processes also (indirectly) contribute to the development of emancipated citizenship. In this context, subjectivation enables the citizens to acquire the awareness of their rights and obligations through their own subjective perception of the practices and values promoted in their daily life by means of clientelistic practices. Thus, for the purpose of this paper, we define subjectivation as a process that influences individuals' perceptions, understandings, feelings and actions through social practices promoted to these individuals. Since the individuals are influenced to different extents, subjectivation determines a unique way, in which one interprets, understands and acts in daily life (Vilchez, 2018).

We argue that the problems of the low quality of democracy and the deep roots of clientelist practices in the political culture of Argentina demand further examination because they pose substantial threats to the consolidation of democracy and the quality of citizenship. To explore these problems in more detail, we analyse the case of the social policy called *Social Inclusion Plan 'Work for San Luis'*. This policy was implemented in 2003 and has been in force to this day in the San Luis province, Argentina. The main purpose of the plan was to provide financial assistance to all unemployed people, in return must for hours of

work in the community, for example: cleaning green spaces; performing security tasks in public institutions (such as schools, hospitals); and also participating in training workshops (carpentry, basic electricity, bakery , etc.). Full details of the Plan are also described in Section 5: "The Institutional Dimension - The Analysis of the Social Inclusion Plan"

There is a number of circumstances that make the situation in San Luis prone to political clientelism, and a case worth analysing. Among them are the explicit conditions facilitating the implementation of political clientelism, such as particular characteristics of the institutional political regime operating in certain social and economic contexts. The regime that rules the San Luis province is characterised by the political domination of Rodríguez Saá's family, who have held important governmental positions for decades and belongs to one of the most important political parties in Argentina: the Justicialist Party. Adolfo Rodríguez Saá has governed the San Luis province for more than eighteen years; and, later, by his brother Alberto Rodríguez Saá for eight consecutive years (first mandate 2003-2007 and second re-elected mandate 2007-2019). In 2019 yet again, he has been re-elected for four more years, extending his mandate as governor for the third time from 2019 to 2023.

Concerning the current social and economic contexts, Argentina has experienced a serious economic crisis, which was preceded by the crisis of 2001 and 2002. As a result of the crisis, the government has implemented social policies aiming to mitigate the social and economic vulnerability manifested in levels of poverty, indigence, unemployment and job insecurity, ultimately leading to increasing levels of the 'precarisation' of the economy.

Precarisation in the employment conditions is concomitant to the processes of social vulnerability and can reach the maximum level in situations of social exclusion. Notably, after the economic crisis of 2001, numerous social groups of the population, including those in the San Luis province, became exposed to the processes of social and economic vulnerability after the increase of the unemployment rates.

The political regime has tried to hide these problems via the implementation of social plans and policies, which were designed by the political power to generate apparent social representations of work and social inclusion. These practices aim to create an illusion of employment and social inclusion, but, in reality, they secure further ties of citizens' dependence on the government, which hinders the development of an emancipated citizenship. Therefore, the proposed investigation contributes to the understanding of the low quality of democracy and citizenship.

The objective of this article is to understand how a specific social plan, such as the *Social Inclusion Plan 'Work for San Luis'*, influences the formation of citizenship. We explore whether the implementation of the plan acts as a driver towards an emancipated and mature citizenship, or whether it promotes an assisted and dependent citizenship. We argue that the practices and discourses driving dependent citizenship are intrinsically related and are a consequence of the political clientelism experienced in Argentina.

To address our objective we pose the following two research questions (RQ):

RQ1: What are the social, political and economic conditions that favour the development of institutional political clientelism in Argentina?

RQ2: What are the processes of subjectivation of citizenship and how are these processes deployed and fostered amongst the beneficiaries of the social plan in the province of San Luis?

By addressing the first question we intent to identify the social and economic indicators, such as the level of unemployment and the extent of poverty and indigence, which tend to justify the implementation of governmental social policies.

The second research question assumes that all common social practices, including participating in the social plan, produce a set of perceptions among its beneficiaries. These perceptions reflect the day-to-day social and political practices and can contribute to the formation of an emancipated citizenship. This can result in the development of an autonomous citizenship compatible with a high quality of democracy or an assisted citizenship, which depends on the actions of the government.

We attempt to answer these two RQs by proposing a systemic approach encompassing the key elements rooted in this situation.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows: Following this introduction, we briefly review the literature related to the topic of political clientelism and citizenship. In Section 3, we advance a systemic framework based on the three dimensions (structural, institutional, and subjective). Next, focusing on the San Luis province, we apply the framework discussing its implications. In sections 4 and 5 the structural and the institutional dimensions are discussed. In section 6, we discuss extensively the implications of the subjective dimension by assessing the results of eighteen in depth interviews with beneficiaries of *Social Inclusion Plan 'Work for San Luis'*. In section 7, we advance some conclusions that allow us to better understand the subjects' perceptions of the above social plan and to assess the real impact of state policies. Finally, we provide avenues for future research on the problem of the quality of citizenship and political clientelism.

2. Low Quality of Democracy, Political Clientelism and Citizenship in Argentina: A Literature Review

In this section, we review the two strands of the literature that underpins our research questions. First, we discuss the themes and interrelationships between low quality of democracy and political clientelism; and then, we focus on the effects of social policies on citizenship.

2.1 Low Quality of Democracy and Political Clientelism

The studies referring to political clientelism contribute to the reflections about the quality of democracy, in that the development of democracy demands the identification of the obstacles faced, which, in turn, urges the examination of the rules that guide social relations in formal and informal institutions. On one hand, democracy is based on formally institutionalised practices where the actions of people are predictable as long as they conform to formal rules. On the other hand, behaviours that do not conform to the formal rules of democracy are typical of the informal institutions. Political clientelism, which is governed by particular interests, is one of them (O'Donnell, 1997).

Among the various studies conducted in Argentina, and more specifically in the San Luis province, the examination of neopatrimonialism constitutes a distinctive body of theoretical literature devoted to the political regime. Formally, this regime is characterised as a republican system in which a leader - who controls the dominant political party - remains in the government for a long period appropriating the material and symbolic resources of the state. In this type of regime, both *formal* practices (i.e., periodic, free, competitive and, arguable democratic elections) and *informal* practices (i.e., non- democratic practices embedded within political clientelism) tend to coexist. Moreover, informal political clientelism becomes functional to the process of state patrimonialization, that is, the process by which the government and the leader(s) in charge appropriate and usufruct the state patrimony for their own political interest. A characteristic feature of the processes implemented in this regime is state-dependence of citizens, which materialises through favouring the individual arrangements that facilitate political domination (Trocello, 2008).

Indeed, the development and effects of political clientelism have been reported in various studies. Most of them understand clientelism as a form of social interaction involving the idea of exchange. That is, the exchange of favours, goods and services by a political leader

- who acquires the character of a patron in this relationship - that provides the support, and political loyalty of those who play the role of clients (Auyero, 1996).

Among related definitions of political clientelism is the study by Scott (1986), who defines this process as a specific type of exchange between people with their mutual relationship being instrumental. Others define clientelism as an inequality-based relationship (Scott, 1986; Powell, 1970; Zuckerman, 1986), mainly due to the unequal resource base between patrons and clients. An interesting contribution is made by Sayari (1986), who prefers to speak of political patronage instead of clientelism, and characterises it as a specific form of reciprocal exchange, through which patrons or political parties try to mobilise the support of clients in exchange of aids or different types of mediation. In addition, he highlights socio-economic inequality as one of the main causes of political patronage.

Similarly, Roniger (1997) argues that clientelistic arrangements are constructed by asymmetric transactions based on differential access to resources, which is founded on the place occupied by individuals in the socio-economic structure. As a result, clientelism is an exchange of mutual benefits nested in favouritism and the diversion of public resources. These mechanisms of the clientelist network are opposed to universal standards and formally institutionalised democracy, whose main rules are the accountability of the rulers and periodisation in their functions, among others. Therefore, relationships based on patronage emerge from the tension between formal and informal practices.

For Stokes (2007) patronage implies a trade of public resources (generally, public employment) by political actors for electoral support, and is classified as a subcategory of clientelism. A similar understanding of political patronage is presented by Weitz-Shapiro (2014) in the context of social policies. This author claims that these policies are manipulated by politicians through anti-democratic practices in order to secure electoral support. As a result, only a combination of a growing middle class and a strong political opposition can stop local politicians from implementing clientelistic practices.

Opting out of clientelistic practices is difficult, since they combine two important dimensions deeply nested in the networks of political clientelism. Using his studies conducted in Argentina, Auyero (1996, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2006) highlights that the objective and tangible dimensions of clientelistic relations are equally relevant as the subjective aspects of these relations. Indeed, both dimensions help understand how the clientelistic networks operate. In particular, the role of the subjective element is to grasp how the perceptions generated by the beneficiaries of the plan support and justify the

implemented practices. In line with the reviewed studies, the following insights are identified:

a) Together with political clientelism, the informal non-democratic institutions impede the consolidation of high quality democracy.

b) Socio-economic inequalities are a principal cause of the emergence and continuity of political clientelism.

c) Political clientelism is based on mutual relations of material and immaterial exchange. The material dimension is manifested through the diversion of public resources, such as social plans, towards satisfying political interests, like obtaining votes. The immaterial dimension involves subjectivity, and generates perceptions that increase the citizens' dependence on the state. To fully understand political clientelism it is necessary to investigate both.

These insights enable us to define political clientelism as the informal institutionalisation of a democracy, motivated by diverging public resources, which are used to support policies that contradict the formally institutionalised democracy. We continue our review of literature with social policies and the formation of citizenship.

2.2 Social Policies and the Development of Citizenship

In her studies on citizenship in Argentina, Levin (2015) provides a unique view of social citizenship. The concept derives from the social integration that is rooted in the access to social rights. A more general and philosophical approach to the problem of citizenship in Argentina is presented by Quiroga (2005), who argues that the construction of citizenship is historically based on two closely related concepts: political participation and a sense of belonging to a community. The first concept, political participation, transforms individuals into citizens by allowing them to be part of the process of political decision-making. The second concept implies the awareness of being a part a community, while simultaneously being endowed with own identity.

On the other hand, Trocello and Vilchez (2009) claim that citizens could have their rights formally recognised, had it not been these citizens' subjective point of view and the day-to-day practices that affect their awareness of these rights. The manipulation involving clientelism has built barriers that obstruct these people's option to claim their legitimate

rights. In addition, the social policies are often a means of manipulation aimed at converting citizens into loyal subjects and debtors of the government (Trocello and Vilchez, 2009; Vilchez and Feigelman, 2009).

Social policies can also be employed as mechanisms facilitating the expansion of citizenship, and, consequently, can lead to the progression of the assisted forms of citizenship to more advanced emancipated models (Bustelo, 1998). Emancipated citizenship is understood as one oriented to social inclusion with social equality being the main tenet; civil, political and social rights are demandable and negative as well as positive liberties are equally important. Negative liberties are understood as inaction on the state's part, which does not impede the exercise of rights, for instance, not making it difficult for citizens to vote in elections. Positive freedoms comprise the actions of the state to guarantee rights, that is, ensuring accessibility and the implementation of citizens' rights by providing them sufficient information of their right to vote and choose. Therefore, an emancipated citizenship implies access to information, knowledge of positive and negative rights as well as the existence of mechanisms facilitating their enforceability. Ultimately, citizens show an identity and a sense of belonging to the community, so that political participation is not limited only to the action of voting.

As opposed to emancipated citizenship, the assisted version accepts inequality as a natural characteristic of a society, implying that those who enjoy good living conditions are the most capable ones, the ones with 'best qualities'. This form of citizenship focuses on the formal fulfilment of the civil and political rights, which ensures only the basic right to vote. For this reason, this model of citizenship commonly favours negative freedoms, in that the state does not interfere with the citizens' choices to have their civil and political rights honoured.

As the review of literature demonstrates, the studies investigating the impact that clientelist practices have on the subjectivity and the quality of citizenship, are scarce. For this reason, we propose to contribute to the political clientelism debate from the angle of citizens' subjective processes. To facilitate this analytical contribution, we select the case study of the social policy '*Social Inclusion Plan*' in the San Luis province (Argentina), which is particularly suitable given the specific characteristics of the social, economic and political context in this region. In the following section, we propose a systemic framework underpinned by three levels of analysis, which will facilitate the understanding of the contribution that subjective processes have to the construction of citizenship.

3. Conceptual Framework and Methodological Strategy

The analysis of political clientelism and processes of subjectivation is based on a case study. Specifically, we study the case of the *Social Inclusion Plan 'Work for San Luis'*, designed and implemented by the government of the San Luis province.

In order to analyse the case, we use a systemic approach which enables us to tackle this complex problem. Accepting that social relationships are complex and intertwined with each other, and that these relationships are characterised by multiple contradictions, a systemic view in which different perspectives are discussed becomes useful to explore social complexity.

Moreover, social relationships are characterised by a large variety of meanings, beliefs, values, and attitudes. Hence, by applying a systemic perspective we aim to delve into the worldviews constructed by the participants of the *Social Inclusion Plan*. This gives us an opportunity to study the truly diverse and complex social reality of the San Luis province.

To explore this complex situation, we resort to systemic thinking, that is to the use of systems ideas when facing complexity, Maani and Cavana (2000). Broadly, systemic thinking opposes reductionistic thinking. Midgley (2000) refers to reductionism as belonging to the mechanistic worldview in that it concentrates attention to linear, causal relationships between variables and invariable fails to view relationships and understand the wider system. In the words of Ackoff an eminent systems thinker:

> Systemic thinking is holistic versus reductionistic thinking, synthetic versus analytic. Reductionistic and analytic thinking derive properties of wholes from the properties of their parts. Holistic and synthetic thinking derive properties of parts from properties of the whole that contains them. Ackoff (2004:1)

That said, we should be aware that systems thinking will guide an exploration of complexity provided that we adhere to its principles. As Checkland states, systems thinking should be seen as a 'way of thinking' and regarded as a meta- discipline

> The systems movement comprises any and every effort to work out the implications of using the concept of an irreducible whole, 'a system', in any area of endeavour. [ ]. Because systems ideas provide a way of thinking about any kind of problem, systems thinking is not itself a discipline.' Checkland (1981:99).

Systems thinking has been applied extensively to many fields of knowledge, particularly in organisational settings when problematical situation or 'messes' are most recurrent and has yield effective results. See Flood and Carson (1988), Jackson (2003) amongst others. In

particular, the importance of systemic thinking in public policy, has been acknowledged by Ackoff (2004:1):

> In general, those who make public policy and engage in public decision making do not understand that improvement in the performance of parts of a system taken separately may not, and usually does not, improve performance of the system as a whole. In fact, it may make system performance worse or even destroy it. Ackoff (2004:1)

Furthermore, he urges us to take a systemic perspective particularly when public policy is involved.

> Almost every problem confronting our society is a result of the fact that our public-policy makers are doing the wrong things and are trying to do them righter. Ackoff (2004:1)

Therefore, in this paper, we will firmly advocate a systemic position as opposed to a reductionist approach that sees to comprehend the nature of the whole by analysing its parts. By using a systemic view we aim to take seriously the idea that the whole is most that the sum of its parts and that considers the consequences of that; and most importantly, we expect to gain an understanding of a complex social systems as well as the human participating in the system we analyse here; (Jackson, 2019:25).

So, when we set up to study the *Social Inclusion Plan* and the subjects targeted by this policy, we ensured that these subjects are able to manifest their views and opinions freely. In addition, we emphasise that the object of this paper, the *Social Inclusion Plan*, is part of a certain space and time. As a result, we examine particular configurations of these two factors that underline the existence of political clientelism. Using the epistemology of the known subject (Vasilachis, 2000, 2007), this translates into interpreting a pre-interpreted field of inquiry. The scientificity of our analysis lies in the epistemological vigilance[1] (Bachelard 1949; Bourdieu, et al., 1991) of the theoretical perspective, and in the methodology used in this examination. Underpinning this methodological strategy, we used the above a systemic framework as a useful platform which enables us to integrate different levels of analysis. Although each of these levels is examined separately, all levels complement each other forming a dynamic process. These levels and dimensions are:

- **The macro-social level: the structural dimension**

This level encompasses the structural dimension of analysis, hence the pre-existing social and economic aspects of the San Luis province. The purpose is to understand the conditions that imply the formation of a specific social reality encountered in the context of the *Social Inclusion Plan*. Precisely, the perceptions and practices generated in this reality are located in

a particular time and place, which helps better understand the conditions that make their formation and reception viable. This level is examined quantitatively to capture the breadth and to emphasise the relevant social and economic aspects of the analysis.

- **The meso-social level: the institutional dimension**

This level includes the institutional dimension of analysis, which allows us to capture practices that become institutionalised, hence, appropriated by the government to achieve its goals. These practices, both formal and informal, are adopted to generate specific beliefs, behaviours, and interrelationships among citizens. In this way, the introduced practices become part of everyday life, and are easily reproduced socially within the framework of instituted and institutionalised networks. Therefore, this paper aims to unravel the formal and informal practices for institutionalising political clientelism, with the focus on the practices that make the establishment of client relationships feasible.

- **The micro-social level: the subjective dimension**

This level entails the subjective dimension of analysis, which examines qualitatively the beliefs, thoughts and perceptions acquired by the participants of the *Social Inclusion Plan*. Specifically, using the 'snowball' sampling technique (Guber, 2004) eighteen beneficiaries of the *Social Inclusion Plan "Work for San Luis"* are selected for an interview. Given interviewees' permission, their responses are audio-recorded and anonymised. Subsequently, the interviews are graded and analysed using a constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss, 2017). The purpose of such an analysis is to examine the participants' beliefs, attitudes and everyday practices in order to identify those that encourage them to legitimise and accept the political and social practices introduced by the government.

A systemic perspective to enquire social complexity is used as it integrates various theoretical streams, which allow us to examine clientelist practices from different perspectives.

In the following sections, we present and apply the systemic framework and discuss the main results of the underlying analysis. Following the methodological approach, we separate the results according to the three dimensions of the analysis: structural, institutional and subjective.

4. The Structural Dimension – The Analysis of Unemployment and Poverty

The structural dimension is analysed using the macro-social approach, which examines the tangible conditions that favour the development of practices related to political clientelism in the San Luis province.

With an area of 76,748 square kilometres, the San Luis province is located in the centre of Argentina. With population of 432,310, it represents only 1.1 per cent of the total population of the Argentine Republic (National Census in Argentina, 2010).

Figure1. San Luis province, Argentina

In relation to its economic performance, the San Luis province has undergone numerous transformations that changed the labour and social reality in this province. Until the 1980s, the primary sector with the focus on agriculture and livestock dominated the productive activity. During the 1990s, secondary (manufacturing) sector expanded, while services (tertiary sector) became prevalent since early 2000s (Vilchez and Olguín, 2008).

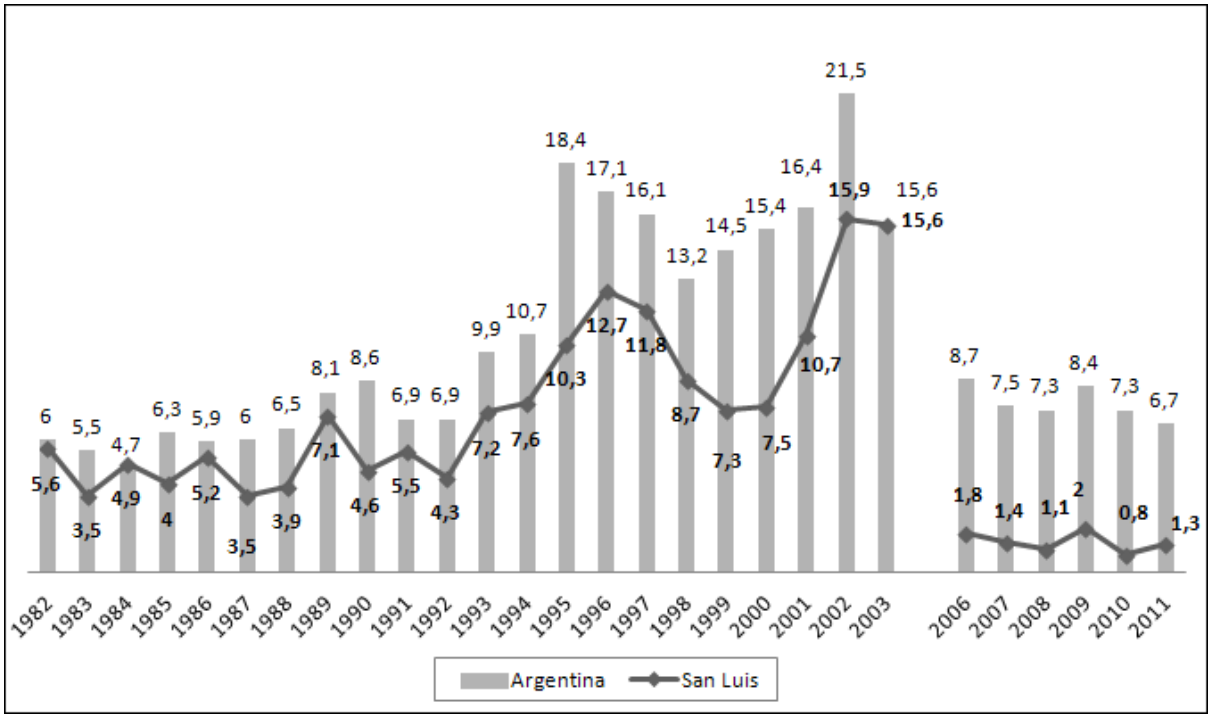
Following 2001, the adverse situation of the labour market in the San Luis province characterised by the high rates of unemployment led a large proportion of its population to engage in the informal labour market. In such a market, only unstable and precarious occupations were offered, and, upon their acceptance, workers became deprived of the benefits granted by the social security system (Olguín et al., 2009).

The Argentinean crisis of 2001 also penetrated the social, political and economic aspects of everyday life. In December 2001, the country suffered an outburst of a great collective violence, which caused significant material and psychological damage as well as injuries and loss of lives. Auyero (2001) offers an extensive study of this incident. In this difficult situation combined with the high level of unemployment and the precarious work conditions,

the introduction of the *Social Inclusion Plan 'Work for San Luis'* appeared legitimate. Thus, the government of the San Luis province implemented this plan in 2003.

It is important to highlight that the incorporation in the *Social Inclusion Plan* is not equivalent to obtaining employment, although it is accounted as such in the data from National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC). As a result, a considerable reduction in the unemployment rate in the San Luis province is recorded since the implementation of the plan. Indeed, Figure 2[2] illustrates the unemployment data for the period 1982-2011 and it contrasts them with the corresponding unemployment rate in the whole of Argentina. It is evident that as of the 4th Quarter of 2006[3] the unemployment rate in the province drops abruptly from 15.6 per cent to 1.3 per cent, while in the whole of the country it declines only by 8.9 per cent.

Figure2. The Unemployment Rate in Argentina and in the San Luis province, May 1982 - 2003, and the 4th Quarter of 2006 -2011



Source: Authors' elaboration from the EPH – INDEC (punctual and continuous) data.

Summarising, the *Social Inclusion Plan* has had a large positive impact on the employment rate in the San Luis province, where a notable decrease in the number of unemployed was recorded after its implementation. The extent to which this social policy has stabilised the labour market could also be judged by noting that had the *Social Inclusion Plan* been discontinued, unemployment would have significantly increased.

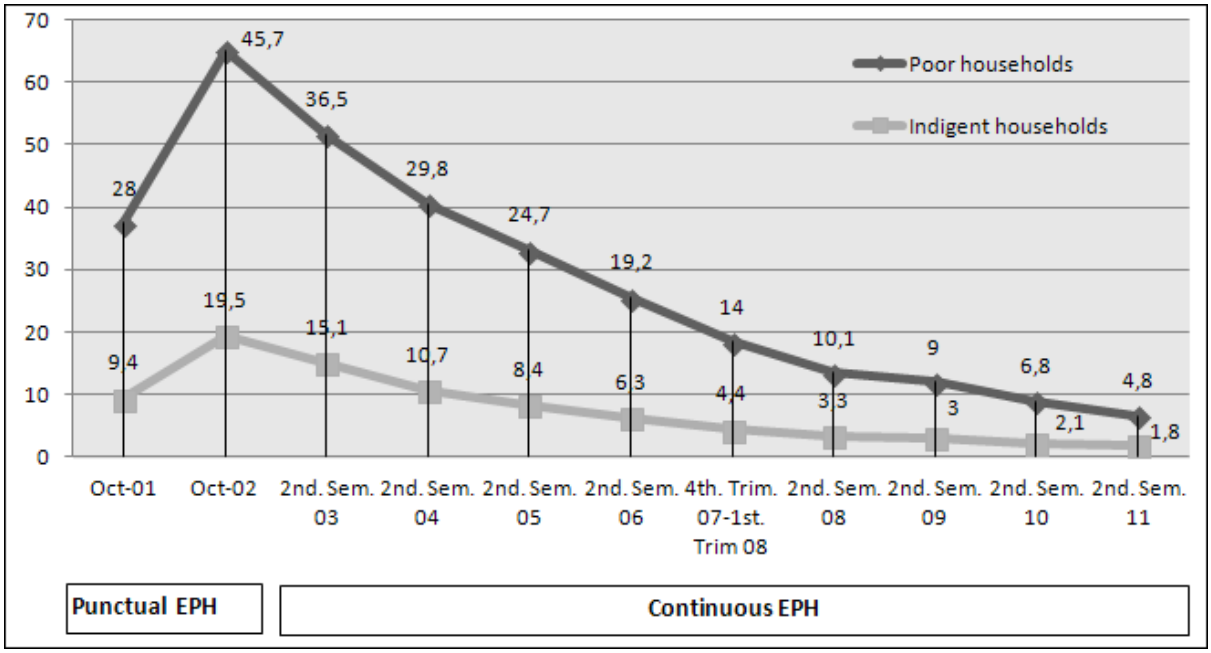
Nonetheless, analysing the quality of the jobs provided as part of the *Social Inclusion Plan* shows that neither the continuity of the plan nor the income is certain for the recipients. In addition, there is uncertainty of receiving any pension in the future, and payments are not documented, all confirming the incompatibility with the welfare objectives. Consequently, the *Social Inclusion Plan* does not gain the status of productive and quality work despite generating the lower rate of unemployment and income for its recipients. Moreover, the precariousness of jobs offered within the plan translate into a fragility of the proposed inclusion, which effectively makes workers more socially vulnerable.

It is also important to comment on poverty and indigence, which reached one of their highest values during the 2001-2002 crisis. More than 45 per cent of households and more than 57 per cent of the population in Argentina were poor in 2002. Figure 3 shows that among the poor, more than 19 per cent of households and more than 27 per cent of the population were indigent[4].

In accordance with the analysed data, we argue that the adverse economic and social conditions in the province and country have accelerated the introduction of the social plan. In light of high rates of unemployment, poverty and indigence, the *Social Inclusion Plan* appeared to be a solution to the difficult situation. Nonetheless, the economic improvement achieved by means of the plan does not fully reflect the real impact that this policy has had on the quality of citizenship.

Therefore, we argue that to comprehend the full impact of the plan the analysis should include qualitative as well as quantitative data. While we believe that the discussion of unemployment, poverty and indigence completes the analysis of the structural dimension, it is also necessary to examine the institutional dimension, to supplement our understanding of the political regime in the San Luis province.

Figure3. Rates of Poverty and Indigence in Argentina, October 2001 – 2nd Quarter of 2011



Source: Authors' elaboration from the EPH – INDEC data.

5. The Institutional Dimension - The Analysis of the Social Inclusion Plan

The social policy – the *Social Inclusion Plan* '*Work for San Luis*'– was implemented in 2003 in order to counteract the high rates of unemployment, poverty and indigence in the province. Officially, the policy has targeted all citizens of the province who were jobless and determined to improve their chances of gaining occupation by becoming a part of the work culture.

The policy was proposed as part of the Law Nº I-0001-2004, according to which, the plan is not equivalent to a contract of employment. Thus, it is the authority implementing the policy, who solely determines the rights and the obligations of the policy's recipients. A non-compliance with the directives prescribed in the policy leads to a discharge.

The recipients of the policy are entitled to an income, which is defined formally as an economic collaboration of a non-remunerative nature. In exchange for the income, beneficiaries of the plan must work eight hours per day, five days a week. According to the rules governing the policy, failure to comply with this requirement provides sufficient grounds for the termination of the collaborative relation between the recipient and the authority.

Apart from this requirement, the incorporation into the *Social Inclusion Plan* also offers a number of social benefits. One of them is the coverage provided by the Occupational Risk

Insurance Company. In addition, health issues are covered by the Directorate of Social Work in the San Luis province. However, this public insurance institution does not cover family members of the insured, but only the individual him/herself and his/her children up to one year of age.

In terms of the time span of the policy, a decision was made to maintain the *Social Inclusion Plan* until the last participant obtains a 'decent' job. As a result, and by the decree of the Executive Officer of the San Luis province, the policy has been extended every year from the day it was initially implemented.

Since his appointment as the governor of the San Luis province, Alberto Rodríguez Saá has discursively referred to the plan as a response to the issues of unemployment and social exclusion. He also applies the discursive practice to convince citizens that San Luis is a 'different country', where the issues of unemployment and social exclusion can be overcome.

In this context, it is important to recognise that social exclusion may also arise due to the pseudo-integration in the labour market, like the one proposed as part of the plan. Such an integration negatively affects the enforcement of the workers' rights. Referring to the policy '*Work for San Luis*', the governor reiterates on several occasions that this social initiative will provide new jobs, which could be understood as a form of an integration into the labour market. Yet, the plan is principally meant as a social policy, and not a source of employment, thus, it does not equip the involved with the set of rights that would correspond to workers.

The official discourse employed by the governor aims to generate the belief that the proposed policy is a response to social exclusion, where social exclusion is understood as a violation of human rights. Hence, the plan is said to protect human rights by providing work to the unemployed.

In accordance with the official discourse, the *Social Inclusion Plan* seeks to incorporate all those excluded in San Luis. The intention behind the plan is to revive the social covenant by means of re-establishing human rights.

Based on Alberto Rodríguez Saá's discursive practice, the authorities try to persuade citizens that the *Social Inclusion Plan* is promoting human rights and that it links to the concept of work and employment. The next section demonstrates how the plan is perceived by its participants.

6. The Subjective Dimension of the Analysis- The Processes of Citizens' Subjectivation

Another view of the *Social Inclusion Plan 'Work for San Luis'* can be gained by evaluating the subjective dimension. This dimension focuses on determining how citizens *interpret/perceive* various aspects of the *Social Inclusion Plan*.

In order to assess the impact of the citizenship' subjectivation process promoted by the *Social Inclusion Plan*, we adopt two typologies proposed by Bustelo (1998), namely, the emancipated citizenship and the assisted citizenship. To highlight the difference between them, it is important to note that to advance the assisted citizenship to the emancipated one citizens must have full access to their rights. For this access to be given, a set of effective measures, including law education, access to information, political participation, equality, and the presence of mechanisms for complaint handling and enforceability of rights, must be available.

Given these differences between the two forms of citizenship, we want to establish which of these forms is more compatible with the *Social Inclusion Plan 'Work for San Luis'*. To address this question, we analyse eighteen interviews conducted with the recipients of the policy[5] from a number of emerging perspectives. These include perception of work, the effect of new income, social relations, education, citizens' rights and their ability to exercise them, as well as political participation. We present a summary of these responses in the flowing sections.

6.1 The Processes of Citizens' Subjectivation: Perception of Work

In this section, we describe job opportunities offered in the formal labour market of the San Luis province, as perceived by our interviewees. Results indicate that the plan is viewed as an employment opportunity, although the *Social Inclusion Plan* itself is promoted solely as a social plan.

According to its recipients, the plan is interpreted as a 'new experience of work' ('Felisa', Not her real name, Interviews 2014), which allows those who have been excluded from the labour market to be re-incorporated. This interpretation dominates among the interviewees, who state that the policy incorporates all the unemployed regardless of their abilities, as 'Mariela' (Not her real name, Interviews 2014) confirms:

[...] people who were unable to walk were joining the plan, a lady was in a wheelchair, can you believe it? ***He*** *[Rodríguez Saá]* ***did not discriminate anyone****, on the contrary, he said: we give* ***jobs to everyone****, you see? ... aged 40 or more you are useless, forgive the*

expression, but for him you are good until 60 and more, people aged 100 were working [laughter] ... no, there were old people, aged 65 and 70 and over, and they were joining to ***work****, disabled, my uncle even with a crutch was* ***working***.

As can be seen from the extracts above, the view that the plan generated among its participants corresponds to an initiative that 'does not discriminate anyone and includes everyone'. This view is further supported by the incorporation of individuals with disabilities, illness or elderly into the plan. In this context, it is worth noting that the perception of the plan being linked with inclusion emerged because of the large number of people joining it. Although inclusion is one of the prerequisites to an emancipated citizenship, only if the rights of citizens are fully honoured and respected such citizens will be truly emancipated. In contrast, the statements of the participants suggest their unawareness of the violation of the sick, disabled, and elderly persons' rights as part of the 'inclusion' promoted in the plan. The perceived inclusion does not acknowledge that the named deficiencies provide grounds for 'positive discrimination'. The following statements by Felisa (Not her real name, Interviews 2014) and 'Mirta' (Not her real name, Interviews 2014), respectively, provide clear examples of this unawareness: '*And you saw people who were not in good health, who joined and worked, they earned their modest salary, they were paid and were happy, because they did not think they were going to have their money, the old people [...]*'('Felisa', Not her real name, Interviews 2014).'*Because he [the governor] gave work to all of us, because he did not care if you were sick, if you were hobbling, if you had any health problems [...]'* ('Mirta', Not her real name, Interviews 2014).

In summary, it is clear that the possibility of joining the plan together with the chance of having a stable monthly income, a job and an insurance policy, all point to the emancipated type of citizenship. This is particularly the case in light of the adverse labour conditions that forced individuals to accept precarious and unstable jobs. However, citizens being unaware of their own rights and their ignorance of other people's rights coupled with their violations, as promoted by the *Social Inclusion Plan*, are more compatible with the assisted version of citizenship.

6.2 The Processes of Citizens' Subjectivation: The Effect of New Income

In the context of economic benefits derived from the participation in the *Social Inclusion Plan*, the testimonies of the recipients suggest that the incorporation into the plan becomes equivalent to having a job that provides a 'safe' monthly income. In fact, 'Gladis' (Not her real name, Interviews 2014) highlights the importance of the plan as a source of '*a safe*

salary every month', which allows her to uphold her household. 'Rita' (Not her real name, Interviews 2014) holds a similar view:

Look, at that moment in time, it is a job for me and it is very good because I am a single mother, that is, I have two children and, in addition, two elderly people live with me, but one cannot work because he is very sick, he has a kidney problem, he does dialysis three times a week, so that, it is good for me because it is the only thing that sustains my family. Well, the father of the kids also gives me some money for rent, which gives me a few more pesos, because we are currently renting, so it is all good….

With the precarious nature of work and high levels of unemployment, which greatly affect the consumers' purchasing power, the plan appears to be a form of economic inclusion. Yet, the salary offered in exchange for participation is often insufficient, motivating the recipients to search for different sources of income. This, however, is challenging given that the labour market imposes various obstacles for those seeking jobs, including their age, disabilities or low qualifications. As a result, remaining in the plan is considered their only option. In 'Zulma's words (Not her real name, Interviews 2014):

Yes, because I say it is my job, but if I had the possibility to have something else, or to work in a factory I would have been delighted, but now being 39 years old it is a bit difficult, without studies and not having a career, it is even more difficult ... so for me [the plan] is my job [...].

Little hope of finding a job in the formal labour market and the necessity to remain under the protection of the social plan jointly facilitate a formation of an assisted citizenship. Moreover, in the presence of an economic crisis the participation in the plan ceases to be a transitory option and becomes the only alternative. Financial constraints and the clientelist manipulation of the government imply that the continuous participation in the plan is perceived as a gift and not as a right.

6.3 The Processes of Citizens' Subjectivation: Social Relations

Two types of relations emerge among the recipients of the plan: first, the relations among themselves, hence with other recipients of the *Social Inclusion Plan*, and, second, those established with the community.

In terms of the relations with other participants of the plan, the interviewees admit that their participation gives them the opportunity to meet other people. In fact, many people identify themselves as 'us, those participating in the plan' and 'others, those who are not in the plan'. Consequently, social practices are generated by means of new relationships.

Moreover, by embracing companionship and friendship into a working environment, many participants view the plan as a way to create a sense of social inclusion, which supports the subjectivation process of an emancipated citizenship. In practice, however, this form of social relation does not coincide with actual social inclusion. First, the participants identify themselves foremost with the social plan and the government implementing it, reducing the importance of belonging to a community and social identity. Second, various disagreements emerge between the policy' beneficiaries and the rest of the community. While some community members demonstrate their solidarity with the participants of the plan, many tend to discriminate and criticise them. Some of the accusations are: 'they do nothing, they are lazy, and they are being given the money from above'. 'Gladis' (Not her real name, Interviews 2014) expresses it as follows:

[... they told us] that we were wasting our time working, that the salaries we earned were stolen from us, and so, since we were not able or capable to get a different job, the money we were paid was wasted on us by the governor, and so on [...].

These examples suggest that the participants' relation to the plan and not the community governs a sense of belonging, and, as such, the community in some instances discriminates the plan's recipients. These findings are unsupportive of the consolidation of full citizenship.

6.4 The Processes of Citizens' Subjectivation: the role of Education

The recipients of the plan have also acknowledged that there are many illiterate people among them. Simultaneously, they state that various literacy workshops organised as part of the plan have allowed them to gain basic literacy skills. 'Mariela' (Not her real name, Interviews 2014) appreciates the value of these workshops stating:

[...] often I would come and she would bring me a piece of paper to read, and I would stare at her [as if to say: I cannot read] or she would realise it. She would tell me: can you read? and I stared at her as if to say no [she shook her head in shame]. But ... in order not to embarrass me, she would say: well read it, read faster, I knew to say I ... until later she realised that I could neither read nor write, and she would start helping me [...] they all would help me [...] thanks to my friend I learned a lot, she was quite stubborn ... [The friend would tell her:] It is for your own good, so that you can develop further. And ... until today I continue [...].

It is evident that the recipients of the plan are the first to recognise the problem of illiteracy, which is the reason to initiate - informally and spontaneously - the first literacy workshops.

Following this first initiative, which the recipients labelled as '*Escuelita/Little School*', other workshops were held from the initiative of the plan authorities. The workshops and other training courses are designed to teach skills in specific areas and professions, such as electricians, welders, turners, and cooks. All these initiatives are highly valued by the recipients, favouring the formation of emancipated citizens. Overall, the implementation of literacy workshops and other training courses reinforces the emancipated notion of citizenship.

6.5 The Processes of Citizens' Subjectivation: Citizens' Rights and Citizens' ability to exercise them

One of the implications of the *Social Inclusion Plan* is citizens' increased awareness of their rights and their enforceability. An example of such an increased awareness includes the plan's participants gaining knowledge of their right to a pension or retirement.

Various groups of plan's beneficiaries, including disabled, housewives, and senior citizens, learn of their rights. For instance, only when the authority governing the plan grants them the permission to carry out the procedures for rent/pension acquisition, they become aware of the availability of these options. In this way, many recipients with disabilities and those socially marginalised managed to demonstrate that the awareness of their rights increases with exercising these rights.

Regarding the ability to enforce their rights, the interviewees report that they would like to ask for a salary increase, but the majority admits that this is impossible. Even if they raise this point, they will not obtain any answers. This experience is shared by 'José' (Not his real name, Interviews 2014), who explains: '*[...] we* ***always asked for things but we never achieved anything****: job security, a decent salary, and formal employment, because the whole plan was an illicit thing, well they said* ***I feed you so stay quiet****, do no strike, because that is the last thing you could do: bye! No no! ... there was no escape*'.

The fear of complaining and being discharged is common in the social and economic contexts, which do not include formal employment. As 'Bruno' (Not his real name, Interviews 2014), an interviewee, states: *'people are very afraid here, because for many of them this is the only open door available'*.

Based on these observations, it is evident that citizens are assisted by the authority. Nonetheless, the fact that the participation in the plan simultaneously enables many recipients to gain the awareness of their rights to a pension and other benefits complies with the subjectivation process of emancipated citizenship.

6.6 The Processes of Citizens' Subjectivation: Political Participation

Political participation refers to the process in which individuals' interests, claims and suggestions are communicated to the authorities with the intention of shaping the latter's decisions. In the case of the *Social Inclusion Plan*, political participation is constrained by practices entrenched in political clientelism. Indeed, it is evident that many individuals attend political events organised by the government simply from fear of being excluded from the plan.

The fear of being discharged because of the absence at political events is permanently reinforced by the government, the authority implementing the plan, and by the people in high hierarchical positions, as explained by 'José' (Not her real name, Interviews 2014) and 'Viviana' (Not her real name, Interviews 2014), respectively:

*Yes, for instance, they would include this clause: '**sir, if you do not show up tomorrow, you will not be paid**', they gave those kind of orders to the coordinator and then [he] to us, and you had to go and demonstrate your presence [...] [they told us] 'tomorrow the Minister of the plan comes, and he will talk to us, so you had to be there [...] **who does not come will not be paid**', yes... **let us say that was the threat**, and you had to carry a medical certificate confirming your incapability in case you could not come* ('José' Not her real name, Interviews 2014). '*Maybe you could be absent and you might still keep the job, I think that everyone thought about it but did not dare to say it, because nobody ever told the coordinator **if I am not going will I lose my job**? No, nobody ever had the courage to ask, we were left with doubts* ('Viviana', Not her real name, Interviews 2014).

Specifically, the recipients of the *Social Inclusion Plan* are convinced that their attendance at political events as well as voting for the current government in elections is necessary to support the governor, so that the plan will not be discontinued. Therefore, the aspect of political participation does not contribute to the construction of an emancipated citizenship - the political participation converts into the political cynicism, where different practices, including participation in political events or in elections, are purely motivated by the participants' fear of being excluded from the plan, and, as a result discharged from work. Thus, the implemented practices purely reflect the interest in conserving the government and maintaining its power.

7. Conclusions and Further Research

The purpose of this article was to evaluate the practices of institutional political clientelism and their impact on the processes of citizenship subjectivation. To do so, we studied the implementation of social policy, the *Social Inclusion Plan 'Work for San Luis'*, in Argentina. To unravel the complexity of the plan, a systemic perspective encompassing three dimensions of analysis: structural, institutional, and subjective, was adopted.

At a macro-social level, a structural dimension was identified and the existing social and economic features of the San Luis province were analysed using quantitative techniques. This analysis allowed us to address the research question concerning the social conditions that favour the development of institutional political clientelism. The findings suggest that the social and economic crisis experienced in Argentina, the growth of unemployment and underemployment rates as well as an increase in the rates of poverty and indigence laid down strong foundations for the implementation of the plan.

The meso-social level was explored by analysing the institutional dimension of the *Social Inclusion Plan 'Work for San Luis'*. A suite of content and discourse methods was used to uncover the elements underpinning the institutional political clientelism. Given the prevailing political regime in the province, the economic and social analysis helped understand how the government of the Rodríguez Saá have taken advantage of the unfavourable conditions of unemployment, poverty and indigence to build the *Social Inclusion Plan* '*Work for San Luis'.* Our analysis at this level shed light on the plan as being supported by processes of a collective identification in a society that eliminates the unique point of view of each citizen, so that the processes have led to a formulation of a society dependent on the actions of the government.

The micro-social level of analysis corresponded to the subjective dimension. We assembled responses from eighteen in-depth interviews and analysed the subjective dimension from a number of emergent perspectives. Particularly, we explored the beneficiaries' views on the practices of the *Social Inclusion Plan*, specifically, practices related to political clientelism and citizenship. This analysis allowed us to address the research question concerning the type of citizenship that this process favours.

Our findings suggest that, to some extent, the social and economic conditions of the beneficiaries following the implementation of the *Social Inclusion Plan* have improved, mainly because the plan represented a new source of income, which allowed them to overcome the indigence and cover their basic needs. In addition, many participants of the plan acknowledged that this social initiative has facilitated the companionship based on the

principles of solidarity and friendship. Access to education, such as literacy workshops and other training courses, constituted another benefit of the plan. This, in turn, has allowed the recipients to expand their horizon in terms of the options available for exerting their rights.

Our findings indicate that in spite of numerous associations with work that this policy generates among the members of society, it does not count as employment. In addition, the income earned through participating in the plan barely suffices to cover the recipients' basic needs, thus only reducing poverty to a small extent.

The policy to adhere to the plan is also associated with the fear of losing the associated benefits, which considerably limits the recipients' willingness to make any types of justified claims or complaints. This effect is strengthened by the general lack of complaint mechanisms, and by an established belief of simply being ignored in such situations. It is important to highlight that the fear is also associated with the non-compliance of orders that specify the recipients' obligations outside of their working hours, including their attendance at various political events and the propagation of the practices linked to institutional political clientelism.

In combination with other examined factors, the desired process of identity formation is primarily directed at sustaining the social policy because becoming a part of a community with a complete set of rights is not promoted within the plan. Nonetheless, indirectly the plan increases the beneficiaries' awareness of their rights, which eventually could support the subjectivation process of the emancipated citizenship.

The results of our investigation can be the base for developing future research in the complexities of the political clientelism network, its causes and effects. This is important because such a network operates parallel to the formal rules of democracy, permitting political leaders to use policies and social plans for their personal advantage.

Future investigations must focus on this aspect in more detail in order to foster a desired quality of democracy. More attention should be given to the subjective dimension of this phenomenon, hence, the perceptions of people receiving social policies, their daily practices and their discourses. This would permit to better understand these subjects' perspective and, consequently, to assess the real impact of state policies. This knowledge could then be used to identify ways to empower people in exercising their rights, which would further contribute to a more active and less dependent citizenship.

To conclude, the assisted-emancipated form of citizenship emerges from the analysis of the *Social Inclusion Plan 'Work for San Luis'*. Despite various elements consistent with the emancipated type of citizenship, the dependence of citizens on the government and the

government's assistance are commonly instrumented for clientele ends. This together with the constraints on citizens' rights demonstrate that these citizens cannot be considered fully emancipated.

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Notes

[1] Epistemological vigilance is a correction of knowledge and an extension of knowledge schemes. It is not limited to an intellectual supervision of the whole knowledge scheme and its methods, but rather it implies a reflection on the modes of production of knowledge, where rational, theoretical and methodological certainties are tested, as well as socially accepted interpretations.

[2] It is important to clarify the change in the EPH data. Until May 2003, the employment data were collected twice a year: in May and in Oct. This form of measurement is known as "punctual EPH". After May 2003, the gathered data were quarterly, which resulted in a "continuous EPH" (EPH-INDEC n.d.).

[3] The 4th Quarter of 2006 data were used since 2003 when INDEC has begun to make changes in the calculation of data. This process lasted a long time and, as a result, statistical information for 2004 and 2005 was not published.

[4] In Argentina, according to INDEC measurements, the condition of indigence affects people or households whose economic income does not allow them to meet even their basic food needs, implying an extreme level of poverty. In contrast, poverty itself defines a situation of the people or households whose income does not allow them to satisfy needs, such as: health, education, clothing, transportation, etc.

[5] Interviews conducted in partial fulfilment of the MSc Society and Institutions degree. In order to ensure the anonymity of all respondents fictitious names were used for the interviewees Vilchez (2018).