When politics is a patrimony of matrimony

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Title: When politics is a patrimony of matrimony
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Abstract

Studies on political careers have focused on the structure of opportunities that the political system provides for individuals to enter and remain in power positions; however, it was only with the emergence of feminist political theory when the gender category has been incorporated as necessary to understand how that structure works. Also, it made visible how recruitment mechanisms act for men and women, particularly the place of family ties.

In this context, the category of “political marriage” that in Argentina's history had as a paradigm Juan Peron and Eva Duarte's leaderships, gains ground. Their model of building and exercise of power was a seal of origin from Peronism, which Cristina Fernandez and Nestor Kirchner are the most recent exponent.

The modality of “political marriage” extends to the sub national level. This article discusses how this category operates in Argentina's northeastern provinces that share common features such as political autonomy gained during the presidency of Peron and a dominant presence of Peronism in the political system.

These studies seem adequate to explore the configuration of alliances that combine gender and family relations, and answer to questions such as: the constitution of "political marriages" reset the boundaries between public and private?; did political marriages facilitate women’s careers?; this practice, will originate a new form of political representation, "a patrimony of matrimony"?

Introduction

To approach the study of political marriages, it is necessary to acknowledge that men and women had a differential access to political citizenship: men as soldiers and workers, women as mothers. This original mark in the attainment of citizens’ rights has been dragged in its future practice; consequently, the extension of suffrage to women did not involve gender joint access to representative positions.
On the other hand, to these limitations on female citizenship to achieving political power spaces, in the case of Argentina, like in many Latin American countries, we must add the difficulties inherent to a society with structural problems of social inequity and inequality, which particularly affect women.

Likewise, that citizenship was further weakened by a context of political instability characteristic of the region during the 20th century. This situation was brought about by the successive interruption of democratic governments by bureaucratic-authoritarian ones\(^1\). For women, deprived of enough support at times of call for participation— in contrast to men-, every democratic movement of the pendulum would be a false start and would translate into fewer opportunities of access to elective offices. For this reason, cycles of authoritarian regimes constituted a strong obstacle to consolidate a citizenship that was barely shaping up.

During the 1980s, since the recovery of democracy in Latin America, a period of stability was inaugurated for the first time since the full exercise of universal suffrage. A favourable international environment for the setting up of this kind of governments and the enlargement of civil demonstrations, contributed to strengthen her, and since then, “[...] elections with variable degrees of transparency, relative alternation of parties in government, nominal division of powers, certain public freedoms, less military presence in the political leadership of the State and encouraging expressions of citizens’ autonomy followed” (Tokatlián, 2005)\(^2\), generating a sense of optimism caused by the recovery of the institutions.

However, a decade later, that initial optimism started to lose impulse as the economic crisis diminished the chance of achieving more equitable societies. Numerous authors noticed the persistence of structural problems of social and economic injustice in several Latin-American democracies even though authorities were constantly renewed by popular vote. To make matters worse, lack of accountability, a weak justice system and a meagre division of powers amongst other peculiarities made these governments move further apart from the requirements for becoming representative democracies. In other words, it was about political systems in which democratic features coexisted with authoritarian characteristics, to which Guillermo O’Donnell has conceptualized as delegative democracies (1990).

…they are like a “new animal”, which although meets the polyarchy requirements identified with the electoral time and subsequent preservation of certain individual freedoms, maintains severe deficits in the mechanisms responsible for providing horizontal financial statements, characteristic of a representative democracy. This

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\(2\) In Spanish in the original. Translation of my own.
way, those who are elected feel authorized to govern as they see fit, and regard the other branches of government, and the controller bodies as an obstruction to their fulfilment of the "mission" people have entrusted them…" (O'Donnell, Lazzeta and Quiroga, 2011: 10).

Twenty years after the term was coined, several cases in governments situated on both sides of the political spectrum have increased the initial list, giving the concept a new vigour. In sum, several democracies in the region seem to move away from the representative polyarchies and approach the delegative type.

In this context and placing us in the Argentine Republic, from the year 1983 factors converged that facilitated the reinstatement of women in the public arena; such as the high frequency of female participation in political parties, the creation of institutional areas to implement public policies destined to achieve equality of opportunity between men and women, and the constitution of associations that fight for these rights. All this made it possible to raise new matters and implement some decisions to make progress in the construction of a more substantive political citizenship, such as measures of affirmative action that established the gender quotas. However, such measure of expansion of rights did not question women's status as "subjects-mothers". As a result, their larger inclusion in the public area took place without a generic redistribution of responsibilities in the private sphere.

Focusing on the field of political parties, the Argentine electoral competition has been monopolized by two parties since the 1940s: peronism and radicalism, each of which holding different points of view as regards the construction and exercise of power. In particular, they differ in the structure of opportunities available for women to have access to representation posts.

As regards radicalism, it may be pointed out that women have not generated institutional spaces for participating in disputes over power in the name of a collective. This may have resulted from a “neutral” conception of citizenship and the absence of decisive female leaderships in their symbolic corpus.

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3 In Spanish in the original. Translation of my own.

4 Argentina under Menem, Kirchner y Fernández, Brasil with Collor, Alan García's first Presidency in Perú and Fujimori's office, Uribe in Colombia, Venezuela with Chávez and Ecuador with Correa, among others mentioned in O'Donnell, Lazzeta y Quiroga (2011).

5 In 1991 it was sanctioned the Feminine Quota Act, which establishes that all the lists that postulate candidates to elective positions must take a minimum of 30 % of women in proportions of being elected. This measure made possible the revenue of a significant number of women to the national and provincial legislative power, positioning Argentina to the world’s 6th place in quantity of legislative women.
When politics is a patrimony of matrimony

On the contrary, peronism has, from its own origin, both a tradition of female leadership embodied by the figure of Eva Duarte -set within the framework of her "political marriage" to Juan Domingo Perón- as well as the explicit recognition of some degree of women’s involvement in the Female Peronist Party first and in the Female Branch later on.

Therefore, "political marriage" as a way of constructing power is a foundational landmark of peronism, because the couple represents the "founding fathers" of that political space. This explains that the category "political marriage", that has had its most recent exponent in the couple of Nestor Kirchner and Cristina Fernandez at a national level, is repeated throughout the history of that party. The cases we present in this article fit into the same category but at a subnational level.

Gender and family relationships: keys to the analysis of careers of political marriages

In the political science field, theories and conceptual categories alike try to explain how the elites are built up and how leaders develop their individual political careers. They revolve around the concept of the structural system which provides individuals with opportunities to access and remain in positions of power. These perspectives are strongly focused on the political actor and aim at explaining politicians’ behavior throughout their careers, for example Schlesinger’s theory (1966), based on the study of United States legislators. According to Freidenberg (2011), these theories have influenced …in the way this subject has been studied in other contexts, such as political careers in Latin America. In recent years, the study of political careers has deserved special attention in the region. Various authors like Altman and Chasquetti (2005) in Uruguay, Samuels (2003) in Brazil, Botero in Chile and Colombia; Jones et al. (2002) in Argentina, and more recently Alcantara Sáez (2008) with data of Latin America Parliamentary Elites Project, have studied political careers from this group of theories... (Freidenberg, 2011:162).

Precisely, Schlesinger’s studies propose a classification of political careers based on the theory of personal ambition. According to this author, there are three types of careers depending on the ambition of the political leader: discrete, when he aims at fulfilling the mandate, without desire for re-election; the static one, when the politician seeks to stay in the same position, and finally the progressive one, when what he wants is to ascend hierarchically.

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6 It could also be included in this hierarchy the case of Eduardo Duhalde and Hilda"Chiche" González.
7 In Spanish in the original. Translation of my own.
Likewise, Borchert (2001:8-9), distinguishes three types of careers: the *unidirectional* patterns, where the movements produced from one government to another follow a vertical axis in the hierarchical scale; characteristics similar to the progressive type introduced by Schlesinger. A second type of career movement “would be one where there are several *alternative* and equivalent career patterns. In this case there is not one hierarchy of attractive offices but several that apply according to the varying backgrounds and/or preferences of actors”; therefore, it founds similarities to the static careers category. Finally, Borchert establishes a third type of movement – which constitutes the originality of his contribution- the *integrated circuit careers*. Here “the boundaries between levels of government and/or types of institutions that are constitutive for the alternative career paths model do not exist. Neither is there a clear-cut hierarchy as in the unidirectional model. Political offices constitute opportunities among which actors choose according to the situational costs and benefits they perceive as being attached to them. The sheer number of opportunities encourages movement, but there is no clear top or bottom, and career paths therefore vary a lot”. In consequence, different levels of government are not considered hierarchical.

As Caminotti, Rotman and Varetto (2010) state

> politicians’ decisions are, in many cases, much more complex, and are determined not only by the pursuit of elected office (legislative and executive), but also by party positions and other state resources (through posts in the public administration for example) combining different levels of government (Caminotti, Rotman and Varetto, 2010: 5).

For his part, Sartori goes far beyond the subject and incorporates the concept of *structure of opportunities* to refer to the "general context of rewards and privation, payments and penalties, by which party men live and act" (Sartori, 1980: 130). This approach allows considering that the choice of a career pattern exceeds many times the mere individual ambition and is conditioned by a range of factors such as the influence of the electoral system, the form of government, organizational structure of parties and party competition. In general terms, the access to elite’s positions is determined by concrete rules, procedures and practices, established by the recruitment model that strike and modify individual options in relation to candidatures.

Inside the parties, the ways for selecting candidates vary according to the centralization degree of the regime and depends on formal rules as well as on informal practices. In formal systems the process to elaborate the candidacy is defined by the internal rules of the party. In contrast, in the informal ones the

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8 In Spanish in the original. Translation of my own.
nomination process is relatively closed: the steps are not made explicit; it’s less bureaucratic and more open to personal patronage (Norris, 1997). This author distinguishes four recruitments models:

1) Informal-centralized recruitment, when the candidates selection is decided by a process of negotiation between the leaders and the grassroots party members do not participate in the process.

2) Informal-local recruitment, which is almost a self-selection.

3) Formal-local recruitment is one in which explicit bureaucratic rules are established and are implemented in the selection process through the party organization at the national or regional level. Key decisions are taken following formal and democratic procedures by members of the local level.

4) Formal-centralized recruitment is one that party’s state leaders have the formal competence to decide which candidates will appear on the party list throughout the country.

Moreover, the above references state that in political science, classical conceptual and theoretical frameworks are thought in terms of individuals without gender, and are consequently insufficient to study the presence of women in the public sphere since the entire structure of opportunities of the political system is "gendered", and for that reason, it has a different impact according to gender. It is precisely this category, built by feminist theory, which will make it possible to shed light on those aspects which had not been covered by an androcentric conceptualization (Borner, Marx, Caminotti, Rodríguez Gustá, 2009; Archenti y Tula, 2008; Kenney 1996, Bird 2005).

The gender category becomes relevant with the emergence of the feminist political theory as it has substantially changed the perspectives for studying men and women’s relationship with power, and more specifically, the analysis of the way in which the recruitment mechanisms operate in both, in the political power field.

Scott defines gender as

... a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes and [as] a primary way of signifying relations of power […] As a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, gender involves four interrelated elements: first, culturally available symbols that evoke multiple (and often contradictory) representations...normative concepts that set forth interpretations of the meanings of the symbols ...; includes the notion of politics as well as reference to social institutions and organizations.; subjective identity (Scott 1986: 1067-1068).
Accepting the theoretical importance of gender perspective to study political careers, the approach to political marriages, as a particular form of construction and exercise of power, requires the incorporation of the concept of family relationships. With these keys, we reconstruct socio-cultural profiles of the couples who occupied the centre of the political arena in three provinces of the Argentine Northeast and explore their paths in office.

We start considering that the gender concept operates as a proper theoretical and methodological way, to explain how sexual dichotomy transversely crosses all levels human life and conceals with a mask of rationality what is nothing but a matter of inequity as to reason of gender among people. Every generic relationship bears a power relationship. Associated with this, we must consider that the ideas about the appropriate roles for women and men are manifested in long duration phenomena, such as symbols and multiple representations, but also in normative concepts that order and organize social and political institutions.

In addition to this contribution from the feminist political theory, it is necessary to resort to the place of family ties as a conceptual key. This is so because, as empirical evidence that transcends the case studies shows, these ties not only avoid the possibility of a crack in male structure of power, but also become functional for displaying the figure of a woman in the political showcase, as a proof that collective aspirations of political representation are being attended to. While for men to have access to the lists, their political capital must be made up of management experience, ability as operators, and/or economic resources, women’s family ties are a key requirement in their nomination as candidates. Consequently, family ties gain relevance when it comes to study the processes of selection of female candidates, “since these are decisive in their career towards power” (Uriarte, 1997: 63)\(^9\).

At this point, it should be pointed out that family relationships are not a uniform category. Taking a previous study\(^10\) as a precedent for this survey we distinguish two types:

a) "Political family", those family groups in which several people - including women - are engaged in this activity and occupy privileged positions in the parties. In these groups, we have recorded at least two profiles of women; those who register a practice of militancy and those who, without known political career or even without being linked to any political activity, are beneficiaries of an office, because he cannot - or it is not convenient for him--

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\(^9\) In Spanish in the original. Translation of my own.

to temporarily take it up. The latter case clearly shows the fact that these women do not reach these positions by their own merit. Sometimes they do not even run for office, they do so in place of "others"\textsuperscript{11}; be this, her husband, brother, father or any other relative that has a power position inside the party.

b) For "political marriages" we understand a couple that has built power in a joint way. That is, it is a certain type of alliance that combines gender and family relations in order to access to public office. In our research we focus the analysis on cases of political marriages located at the subnational level.

Coinciding with the hypothesis of an authoress when she says that in the career towards power, the family ties have greater weight in women that in men (Uriarte, 1997), and as a result of previous research concerning women’s places of power, we can assert that family relations are a relevant factor in the analysis of how women get to power. So for example, in one of the provinces studied – Misiones - empirical evidence shows that while 60% of legislative women have some sort of family link with a man in power, family relations are relevant only for 10% of men. Though the fieldwork has exhaustively systematized only this province, we have enough evidence to assert that the co-optation in family lines is a regular practice and it is widespread over the space that we are studying.

This verification is an important indicator to prove that power exercise by women is subject to male mediation. In this way, family relations allow men to strengthen a power network that extends their own spaces. In this regard, the introduction of gender quota into recent Argentine legislation\textsuperscript{12}, acts as an enhancing element of this kind of recruitment. Thus, during the data collection labour, women and men legislators reiterated statements such as the following:

\textit{It has happened that if a certain leader was positioned 3\textsuperscript{rd} in the list, he would say "well, let my wife go". I've seen this, not that much in Misiones, but I've seen it. That is not the purpose of the Quota Act...}\textsuperscript{13}

\textit{...with the quota, sometimes unknown women with shorter trajectories appear...}\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11}To this last category, we could add the personal relationships that doesn’t end in marriages, such as engagements, or clandestine relations.

\textsuperscript{12}In 1991, the Quota Act 24.012 is sanctioned, which establishes that political parties are compelled to incorporate to their lists a minimum of 30% of women in a proportion to be elected. This made Argentina the 6\textsuperscript{th} country in the world with a larger quantity of women in its National Legislative Power. In the subnational level the situation of progressive increase of the female participation repeats itself, thanks to provincial quota laws.

\textsuperscript{13}Interview made by María Elena Martin (3/12/08).

\textsuperscript{14}Interview made by María Elena Martin (2/12/08).
With the conceptual tools exposed, we propose a dialogue with empirical evidence in order to formulate hypotheses regarding the tension between democracy and modalities of power building that—such as political marriages—operate as gateways to forms of concentration of power with features of nepotism. We also provide reflections related to the limits imposed by the modality of political marriages to a parity democracy; since it introduces private relationships as an effective means to representative office thus displacing other political actors’ trajectories and personal conditions.

**The cases**

The cases that constitute our observation units are political marriages integrated by Adriana Bortolozzi and Floro Eleuterio Bogado (Formosa); Mercedes Margarita Oviedo and Julio Alberto Ifrán (Misiones) and Sandra Mendoza and Jorge Milton Capitanich (Chaco), three provinces of the Argentine Northeast who share as common features a political autonomy obtained during Perón’s Presidency, and a predominant presence of peronism in the political system. The table below sets out the main characteristics of their profiles and trajectories.
When politics is a patrimony of matrimony

### Table N°1: Profiles and careers in members of political marriages in the Argentina’s North East region. 1983-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leaders</th>
<th>Age entering political office</th>
<th>Academic training</th>
<th>children</th>
<th>Belonging to NGO / other entities</th>
<th>Public office positions</th>
<th>Position in political parties</th>
<th>Years of stay in political office</th>
<th>Simultaneity in office</th>
<th>Career path</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adriana Bortolozzi</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Lawyer Ph D in Law (incomplete)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>w/d</td>
<td>PEP 85-89</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>26 years takes office 2 years after her husband</td>
<td>1985-2011</td>
<td>Progressive (Integrated 97-01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1949...) Formosa</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>PLP 89-95</td>
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<td>NLP 95-97</td>
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<td>PLP 97-01</td>
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<td>NLP 01-05</td>
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<td>NLP 05-11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mercedes Margarita Oviedo</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Lic. in Social Work Postgraduate course in human development and Local development</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>President. NGO Casa de la Mujer. President Federation of NGOs of the Republic Argentina</td>
<td>PEP 87-88 PEP 88-95 PEP 95-97 PLP 97-99 NLP 01-05 PLP 05-09</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22 years takes office 14 years after her husband</td>
<td>1987-1997 Marriage divorced in 1997.</td>
<td>Progressive until 95, then Integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1952...) Misiones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra Mendoza</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Lic. in Kinesiology and Fisiatry Master’s degree in management and administratio n of health services and systems PhD (in progress)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>w/d</td>
<td>PLP 05-09 PEP 08-09 PLN 09-13</td>
<td>w/d</td>
<td>7 years takes office 18 years after her husband</td>
<td>2005-2009 Marriage divorced in 2009</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1963...) Chaco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Floro Eleuterio Bogado</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>PEP 83-87</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>29 years</td>
<td>1985-2011</td>
<td>Progressive until 94, then Static</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1929...) Formosa</td>
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<td>NLP 87-89</td>
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<td>PEP 95-15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Julio Alberto Ifrán</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>LLP 73-76</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>37 years (interruption dictatorship 1976-1983)</td>
<td>1987-1997</td>
<td>Progressive Static (83-95)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1949-2010) Misiones</td>
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<td>PLP 85-85</td>
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<td>PLP 09-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jorge Milton Capitanich</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Accountant Master’s degree in Economics and Political Science Master in Admin. and public policy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>President Club Atlético Sarmiento</td>
<td>PEP 87-91 PEP 94-98 PEP 01-02 NLP 01-07 PEP 07-15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>2005-2009</td>
<td>Progressive (87-07) integrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1964...) Chaco</td>
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</table>

**Claves:** NEP: National Executive Power; PEP: Provincial Executive Power; LEP: Local Executive Power (Municipality); NLP: National Legislative Power (Chamber of Deputies and Senators); PLP: Provincial Legislative Power (Chamber of Representatives); LLP: Local Legislative Power (Deliberative Council); PJP: Provincial Judicial Power.

Source: Own elaboration
When politics is a patrimony of matrimony

From the presented data we can infer that

In all cases, men get to public office before women, soon after graduating from university\(^{15}\), and remain in their political careers for approximately thirty years. Women, instead, get to public office when they reach middle age and after their husbands have been in the political arena from two to eighteen years. Furthermore, they stay in office for a little more than half the time their husbands do.

Members of studied marriages have the same level of academic training. This feature, as well as the number of children, two in each case, is a typical characteristic of the Argentine middle class.

Both members of the three couples have tradition of political activism and held important positions within their parties\(^{16}\). Concerning the connection with civil society organizations, in the studied cases, Misiones\(^{17}\) was the only province to have a female leadership associated with a membership to a women’s organization: la Casa de la Mujer, entity which came to have a subsidiary in every town council of the province with more than 10,000 associates. As for males, the most prominent case is Chaco’s Governor, Jorge Capitanich, who presides over one of the most important football clubs in his province.

In all cases it was found that women hold any political office when their husbands simultaneously exercise another public office. For example Adriana Bortolozzi was Minister of Social Action when Floro Bogado was Governor of Formosa; Mercedes Oviedo entered the Provincial Institute of Housing’s Directory and then became Minister of Social Welfare, Women and Youth, when Julio Ifrán was the President of the Justicialist caucus at the Provincial Chamber of Representatives and had an important position in his party. In turn, Sandra Mendoza is a Provincial Deputy, Vice President of the Chamber, and then Minister of Public Health while her husband was Governor of Chaco.

\(^{15}\) The exception is Floro Bogado, who according to our data, accedes for the first time to office at age of 44.

\(^{16}\) In the case of Chaco’s couple, whose militancy goes back to the stage in which both were members of the Agrupación Evita at the University, the wife’s family with a long tradition in the provincial Peronism was key in Capitanich’s political ascent; who only occupied party positions after his arrival to the provincial government. In the other provinces both occupied party power positions; though it is to underline that only in Misiones, the feminine exponent arrived through the vote of her pairs to the leading of Secretaría de la Mujer (Secretariat of the Woman), the most important post for representing a generic group inside the structure of the Party Peronist.

\(^{17}\) In the same province there is registered another relevant case of feminine leadership, which corresponds to the Housewives’ Union General Secretary.
With regard to spaces of power for which women have circulated, they have prevailed in parliaments, making progressive careers; in most cases, the movements are from the Provincial to the National Legislature. This fact is directly related to the introduction of gender quota in 1991, which became an institutional component to facilitate their inclusion into the legislative branch at all State levels.

An important data to note down is that at some point in their office, all of them left the post to run for another. To explain the reasons of these quasi erratic decisions about their political career, our interpretation as researchers differs from the actor’s perspective.

According to a testimony

The first time [I was nominated] was by party’s consensus. I did not know, at the last moment they put me ... I think it was because of a poll… I must have had a high percentage of acceptance... Then in 1999 I was asked to be vice-governor, I gave up my office as a provincial deputy... and then again when I was offered to be national senator [2001] I gave up as vice-governor. For my political career it was good to change positions... and as I am a cadre formed in the 70's, I was always a soldier of the cause.\(^\text{18}\)

For us, the resignation must to be read as a breach of electoral contract with their voters, as well as a feature of subordination to men’s power of nomination.

In men’s cases, their careers start progressive until they reach national spaces of various levels of hierarchy, and then become static, once they concentrate on consolidating power in the sub-national district. This is so because the junction between a position of governor or vice governor in a province and the territorial party control, place them in better conditions to influence in national politics. In short, their careers, while they credit more circulation by power in different levels of government, could be considered integrated.

**Conclusion**

Political marriages do not constitute a society of pairs for planning ways to get to positions of power and prolonging their stay in office, but a replica of the same gender inequalities common to society. This explains why men take up power spaces first. To this general rule, we could add the observation that women’s incorporation took place when their husbands were at the right time to expand their political capital. In other words, this incorporation was functional for increasing

\(^{18}\) Interview made by María Elena Martin to Mercedes Oviedo (17/12/2008).
men’s political power by combining different levels of government, outside the mere influence of the party.

Following this line of reasoning, it can be explained that all of these women hold power positions in social political areas, since they do not involve a substantial break with their traditional gender roles and give their husbands control over the assistance resources for poor people. In short, women who take office later for reasons related to their own motherhood, come out in the public arena to exercise social motherhood.

Although we have no evidence to analyze women’s influence in strategic decisions to build power, there is proven record that - regardless party affiliation - no leader ignores how important state resources are as a tool of political manipulation. Because these are the resources that facilitate the mobilization of large groups of people in times of electoral campaigns, particularly in societies characterized by structural inequalities, such as the Latin American ones.

Associated with this, we are also interested to note that often, women not only contribute to the power construction of their main partners, but also serve other men’s interests. This is the case, for example, of the female leader of the province of Misiones, when she was nominated for the offices of vice-governor and national senator.

Projecting a popular and Peronist image, which the party candidate as governor lacked; her presence in the ballot was important for Peronism success in 1999. Both political speeches and electoral propaganda highlighted her feminine condition and the historical fact that for the first time a woman reached such a high office as a vice-governor. Two years later, however, she left her position as vice governor because she was elected National senator, where her presence was further diluted as it generally happens with representatives of smaller provinces.

In terms of career path, this decision resulted in an estrangement from the leaders’ cadres and from women’s organizations, which had facilitated her access to power. It also moved her away from the management of the state resources, useful to support social networks. Thus, even when there was “gender collective power” groundwork, it collapsed just a few months after their leader took her seat as national senator. We assume that these displacements, disrupting electoral

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19 The spaces on which it was based - la Casa de la Mujer NGO and the Women’s Secretariat in Peronist Party- were cracked after her departure from the province to take over as National Senator in 2001. Thus, many members moved away from the NGO and several delegations closed; therefore, its ability to influence on the names that could integrate the ballot list was reduced.
office, were part of a party leaders’ strategy that would allow them to put her “out of the game” without losing the flow of votes necessary for the 2001 parliamentary elections or risking her possible candidacy for the post of governor in 2003.

Another consequence of the constraints this form of access to office brings about is the replacement of political actors’ paths and personal merits by private relationships.

In other words, in political marriages women’s incorporation takes place within an informal-localized framework, because the decision depends on leaders; although this implies a negotiation between the male leader and his peers as well as with his wife. The first is more or less open and takes place inside the party, while the other is carried out in the private-domestic sphere. As it is obvious, no matter how interesting it would be to analyze the way in which these private-agreements are made, they are difficult to reconstruct.

Regarding the career paths of political marriages that are part of our universe of study, we can point out that – focusing on gender key concepts- there is a higher percentage of women with progressive careers in relation to men, and they are particularly developed in the legislative branch. This is explained as a result of women’s quota act. Despite being progressive, their careers are not linked with higher degrees of autonomy or self-power within their parties, but with the network of power their husbands use to nominate them.

Among men, there is a link between static and integrated careers, as they occupy and remain longer in different positions of power. Contrary to what might be assumed in a first analysis, men with static political careers will not necessarily have a stagnating trajectory. Having a permanent position in office is a choice made by governors and provincial party leaders who have the influence to determine who gets into the ballot lists and in which place. That power only results from the daily exercise of territorial control.

The evidence gathered entitle us to state that women – even when they are partners of the most powerful man in that territory- are allowed to move forward in their career path, only if they do not conflict with party leaders’ interests. Only then can women get to office, but they do without an investiture that would enable them to exercise power autonomously. Power mediated by male can never fulfill its essential requirement: the possibility of being transferred. Even though we can only speak about the cases we have studied, we believe that this statement can be extended to a larger universe.
A final thought concerns the tension between democracy and power building modalities such as the political marriage type. This practice, increasingly widespread in Argentina democracy, becomes an obstacle to consolidate representative democracy, because it shapes a form of power concentration with features of nepotism. The creation of a hierarchy through which women relate to men with power in order to hold an office, relegates gender alliances necessary to build a collective power that would pave the way for a parity democracy.

The displacement of boundaries between public and private affairs as a political sign is equally disturbing as well as the fact that there is the strong possibility that the political marriage modality will be the threshold of a citizenship’s progressive distance from political power in its process of becoming "a patrimony of matrimony ".

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When politics is a patrimony of matrimony

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