THE INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF PUBLIC POLICY IN ARGENTINA

The authors have two purposes in this book, and they succeed admirably at both. They develop a general model of public policy making focused on the difficulties of securing intertemporal exchanges among politicians. Their model enables them to derive a series of empirical propositions about the conditions under which policies are likely to be volatile, rigid, or high quality. They combine the tools of game theory with Williamson’s transaction cost theory, North institutional arguments, and contract theory to provide a general theory of public policy making in a comparative political economy setting. They also undertake a detailed study of Argentina, using statistical evidence when and where it is available to complement their nuanced account of institutions, rules, incentives, and outcomes. They manage to make comprehensible the reasons for Argentina’s seeming inability to design and implement high-quality public policies over a sustained period of time.

If the book does nothing else (and it does a lot more), it would be required reading based just on the empirical material and its interpretation.

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THE INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF PUBLIC POLICY IN ARGENTINA

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Dedicated to Addy and Elisheba and to Paula
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This book, as most, had a long gestation period. It started in August 1998 when, thanks to the financial support of Fundación Gobierno y Sociedad, Spiller was able to spend a sabbatical year at the Center of Studies for Institutional Development (CEDI) and at Universidad de San Andrés in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The academic year 1998/1999 was the foundational year for this book; much of the research we report here originated and was presented in its early stages in the weekly interdisciplinary seminars at CEDI. In those seminars, we elicited the right mixture of skepticism, criticism, and excitement, which helped us push our agenda forward. Some of the scholars and researchers then at CEDI appear in this book as coauthors of various chapters.

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