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## Politicized Enforcement in Argentina

Countries throughout the world have passed regulations that promise protection for workers and the environment, but violations of these policies are more common than compliance. All too often, limitations of state capacity and political will intertwine, hindering enforcement. Why do states enforce regulations in some places, and in some industries, but not in others? In *Politicized Enforcement in Argentina*, Amengual develops a framework for analyzing enforcement in middle-income and developing countries, showing how informal linkages between state officials and groups within society allow officials to gain the operational resources and political support necessary for enforcement. This analysis builds on state-society approaches in comparative politics, but in contrast to theories that emphasize state autonomy, it focuses on key differences in the way states are porous to political influence.

Matthew Amengual is an assistant professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the MIT Sloan School of Management. He is affiliated with the Institute for Work and Employment Research and the Sustainability Initiative. His research on labor and environmental politics has been published in *Politics & Society*, *World Development*, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, and *Desarrollo Económico*.

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# Politicized Enforcement in Argentina

## *Labor and Environmental Regulation*

MATTHEW AMENGUAL  
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## Acknowledgments

This work was born out of a set of conversations that began for me at MIT in 2005, when a group of graduate students and faculty became intensely interested in the role of regulation in development. The gap between the promise of policies and actual practices on the ground drew our attention to the regulators who are charged with implementation on a day to day basis. We read broadly, debated intensively, and traveled to learn firsthand what was happening inside bureaucracies, firms, and societal organizations involved with regulation. We periodically reconvened at MIT to share our findings from the world and debate how regulation works, as well as ways to improve its practice. I learned a tremendous amount from my friends, mentors who were part of these discussions, and from the rich literature on regulation and states. Yet, when I set off to Argentina in 2008, the theoretical toolkit that I brought with me was, in many ways, terribly inadequate. I chose to study Argentina, in part, because I believed that I would find differences in the organization of the state bureaucracies that could account for variance in the ways regulations were implemented. The regulatory bureaucracies I encountered, however, were all far removed from the Weberian ideal-types highlighted in the literature. As a result, dominant theories were of little guidance for understanding what I encountered on the ground. The puzzle became to understand how and why seemingly flawed bureaucracies sometimes enforced regulations and sometimes did not. In searching for an answer, I needed to build upon the literature that had informed my thinking so deeply and develop a new set of tools to make sense of aspects of regulatory politics that had been otherwise hidden. Through the lens of the Argentine cases, this book is my attempt to offer a new way of thinking about the way politicized states enforce the rules of the game. By doing so, my hope is to not only shed some light on what drives different actions by states that had been otherwise homogenized, but also to reveal the possibilities and constraints of regulation that had been obscured.

In the process of writing this book, I incurred many debts. They began with my dissertation committee, who have left a huge mark on my work. Suzanne Berger patiently helped me cut through the haze to identify the contours of a theory when I could not. Steve Levitsky's careful reading and insightful suggestions immeasurably improved my work, and he provided an example of detailed field research and theoretical development to which I aspired. Mike Piore's characteristically stimulating ideas shaped my research agenda and constantly encouraged me to recognize what was truly surprising about my findings. While all members of my committee helped me tremendously, Rick Locke played an outsized role in all stages of this project. He has been a continual mentor from the inception of this work to its publication, and has demonstrated by example what it means to be a scholar committed to generating and diffusing knowledge that is rigorous and relevant.

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