

Political Rights Regulation by Deferral: Obstacles to External Voting in Uruguay

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ABSTRACT

Why hasn't Uruguay enfranchised emigrants yet? This study examines an underresearched case of nonenfranchisement and engages with debates on external voting, diaspora politics, and citizenship beyond borders. Building on qualitative and participatory methods, the analysis unveils the obstacles to franchise reform despite significant progress from 2004 to 2019. Although external voting was not enacted legally, emigrants' voting rights were debated, formally acknowledged, and encouraged. It is not the lack of norm entrepreneurs but the cumulative effect of indecisive actions that perpetuates a counterproductive dynamic and de facto uneven access to this right. An unresolved debate simultaneously advances conversations but precludes compromises, turning resolution deferral into an implicit form of regulating emigrants' political inclusion or exclusion. Presenting original evidence, this study expands existing accounts, highlights the interaction between institutional and social drivers of change, and invites further research on the role of policy diffusion, domestic politics, and timing.

Keywords: Uruguay, external voting, diaspora politics, citizenship

From the 1990s on, legislative and policy changes to enfranchise individuals residing outside of the state in which they hold citizenship have been introduced in all regions of the world. External voting (EV, also known as voting from abroad, extraterritorial, or out-of-country voting) is thus consolidating a trend toward inclusion of nonresident citizens in the polity and broadening the notion and practice of citizenship beyond borders (e.g., Bauböck 1994; Ellis et al. 2007; Collyer 2014).¹ Among a minority of countries in the world that have not yet joined this trend is Uruguay, which, along with Suriname, is one of only two countries in South America to hold out (International IDEA 2020).

Uruguayan citizens enjoy the right to vote as per constitutional norms, provided that they are physically present in the country on election day and properly

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registered in the country within the previous three months (Parlamento del Uruguay n.d.). A significant percentage of Uruguay's native population resides abroad (OIM 2011).² Diaspora engagement policies have been implemented steadily since the early 2000s (Margheritis 2016; Taks 2006).

EV in national elections has become particularly contentious in the last two decades (Stuhldreher 2012). As this study will show, instead of ruling out the possibility of EV, Uruguay has ambivalently cultivated aspirations to introduce changes. It has also fostered emigrants' political mobilization to travel and vote in national elections, in what has become an institutionalized transnational practice (Merenson 2013, 2016a). It recently passed a national law recognizing that residing abroad by no means impinges on citizens' rights (IMPO 2018). Nevertheless, a resolution to the intricate controversies around EV is being deferred indefinitely. In other words, there is no explicit legislation, but the right has been repeatedly acknowledged, debated, and encouraged. Such an outcome defies expectations, since, in terms of citizenship rights, democratic practices, and diaspora engagement policies, Uruguay stands out in Latin America as an innovative, relatively stable, inclusive, and in several respects, progressive country. It is also a relatively underinvestigated case in the specialized literature.

This study aims at explaining the lack of emigrant enfranchisement in Uruguay despite a robust, albeit sluggish and ambivalent, progress toward that goal in the period 2004–19. This period is the most relevant, since it covers an intense mobilization campaign for the 2004 national elections; the rise of the issue on the government's agenda, in sync with diaspora engagement policies; and the peak of legislative activity in 2017–19, ending with positive recommendations of an honorary commission in mid-2019. Relying on qualitative methods and impact-oriented activities, this project involved key stakeholders to expose not only their understanding of the issue but also the dynamic that precludes compromises. This confirmed that Uruguay offers much more than a record outside the statistical pattern: this case study shows that expanding political rights and democratic practices beyond territorial borders may proceed through multiple paths and paces rather than simply enacting rights at once for all, and that the debate itself is consequential in terms of rights regulation.

The findings suggest that resolution deferral manages expectations by feeding hope through minimal responses to EV claims and perpetuates uneven access to political rights (i.e., it encourages some Uruguayans to travel regularly to register and exercise voting rights while making it almost impossible to do so for those residing far away).

The main argument unveils the factors impinging on franchise reform and the political dynamic behind the controversies. On the one hand, political parties' stances lead to ambivalent support for change or inaction. These positions are shaped not only by electoral calculus but also by indifferent and negative public reactions and longstanding, territorially based ideational and legal frameworks. On the other hand, emigrant transnational activism keeps the debate alive, but effectiveness is undermined by internal dissent and discursive and organizational problems.

Thus, it is not the lack of political and social norm entrepreneurs but the cumulative effect of indecisive actions that perpetuates a counterproductive dynamic. The debate simultaneously advances conversations but precludes compromises, turning resolution deferral into an implicit form of regulation of the inclusion or exclusion of citizens abroad in the demos.

The article is structured around three main sections. The following section critically engages with the relevant bodies of literature. Subsequent sections elaborate on methodology and provide an in-depth analysis of the case study. This includes background information on the case, the main milestones of the EV debate, the main actors' positions on the issue, the interaction among them, and the factors that obstruct a resolution. The concluding section summarizes the empirical and analytical contributions and suggests venues for further research.

POLITICAL RIGHTS BEYOND BORDERS

The rapid spread of migrant enfranchising is one of the key features of the contemporary evolution of state (national, single) citizenship as a tool to govern populations on the move and their access to rights (Rygiel 2010). Such transformation reflects the global trend toward “expansive citizenship” (Bauböck 2005), embodied legally and politically in the broadening of electoral rights for both emigrants and immigrants. This is part and parcel of broader transnational phenomena involving migrants, citizenship, and diaspora-related institutions in countries of origin and destination (e.g., Gamlen 2008; Ragazzi 2009; Collyer 2014; Bauböck and Faist 2010; Lyons and Mandaville 2012).

Bauböck (2003) notes that overlapping memberships affect not only migrant practices but also identities and conceptions of citizenship that transcend borders; such a shift from national to transnational citizenship highlights the problematic nature of political membership of mobile populations. Citizenship thus becomes “transnational by reaching beyond boundaries of formal membership as well as territorial residence” (Bauböck 1994, viii). In voting rights studies, citizenship is often qualified as “external” (Kernaleggen and van Haute 2020, 5).

Migrant transnationalism and citizenship transnationalization provide a general framework to engage with overarching debates. These concepts help account for elements invoked by Uruguayan emigrants who, oblivious to legal and academic distinctions between citizenship and nationality (e.g., Escobar 2015; Pedroza and Palop-García 2017; Finn 2020b, 737), use these terms interchangeably and frame EV claims within new forms of deterritorialized, transnational citizenship. Yet this study takes a critical stance toward these conversations. It does not take for granted, but investigates the nature and scope of emigrants' engagement with home country politics and the meaning of transnational citizenship practices. It also makes the case for investigating country-specific factors, thereby endorsing the idea that reimagining membership in the political community is to be analyzed as “geographically and historically embedded” (Dickinson and Bailey 2007, 761).

In particular, this study builds on studies on franchise reform and EV, which have been rapidly growing in the last two decades. Some works aim at conceptualizing the phenomenon and categorizing variation in outcomes (e.g., Ellis et al. 2007; Collyer 2014). Others address states' motivations to engage in franchise reform (Lafleur 2012, 2015), such as capturing emigrants' resources (e.g., Erlingsson and Tuman 2017) and normative principles that justify or question policy reform (e.g., Bauböck 2007).

However, the quest for remittances has not been the main reason for the Uruguayan state to court its diaspora or grant EV, even though diaspora engagement policies have advanced steadily (Margheritis 2015c).³ Comparative studies also concur on the significant degree of variation observed across countries and regions regarding EV eligibility, registration, voting procedures, and electoral levels that states apply (e.g., Lafleur 2015; Ellis et al. 2007; Arrighi and Bauböck 2017; Escobar 2017), as well as contradictions between stated policy goals and actual results (Margheritis 2017a). Very few studies that address lack of franchise reform show that, unlike those in Uruguay, contentious debates were closed with a defined outcome (e.g., Hartmann 2015).

Variation in outcomes refers to actors with the capacity to mobilize resources and get changes institutionalized, and actors with veto capacity. These are also known as drivers and brakes, respectively, because they are sources of dynamism or setback on the path to reform. Political parties often become "norm entrepreneurs" (Østergaard-Nielsen et al. 2019; Burgess 2018; Wellman 2015). Increasing democratic competition has arguably been a relevant factor in the past few decades (Rhodes and Harutyunyan 2010), as has pressure to conform to the new global norm (Turcu and Urbatsch 2015). However, the literature has explored only a few older cases and non-democratic regimes (e.g., Courtis 2017; Finn 2020a; Escobar 2015), and a coherent theoretical framework that integrates all explanations is missing.

Overall, most works are concerned with the expansion of policy reform rather than outlier cases like Uruguay. In this case, we note that capturing votes might be an incentive to facilitate EV, but most political parties oppose it, and party ideology has not been a determinant of support for innovation. In contrast to European political parties (Østergaard-Nielsen et al. 2019), for instance, the territorial definition of the demos is an argument of the right in Uruguay rather than the left. Since its early stages, the EV debate has referred mostly to national democratic traditions and expansion of political institutions and practices, with occasional references to the international experience (Stuhldreher 2012, 25–26). Thus far, norm diffusion and policy emulation have been insufficient to induce policy change.

Regarding Latin America, it has been suggested that democratization is a relevant factor in the extension of EV (e.g., Lafleur 2015; Escobar 2007, 2015; Carmani and Grotz 2015). It has also been argued that EV is generally enacted under leftist governments (Erlingsson and Tuman 2017). If the Southern Cone defies both generalizations, Uruguay does even more so.⁴ Having enfranchised all citizens (without distinctions of migration status) in the early nineteenth century, Uruguay became a pioneer regarding immigrant enfranchisement in 1934 (Escobar 2015,

930, 935, 942). Under a leftist, pro-EV government, it has remained an outlier concerning emigrant enfranchisement.

Intraregional comparisons also indicate that the timing of franchise reform is an elusive variable. EV contentiousness may lead to delays in implementation (Palop-García and Pedroza 2019; Hartmann 2015) and even policy reversal (Wellman 2015). A sample of 15 South and Central American cases reveals no general pattern in the timing of enacting and implementing emigrant enfranchisement in presidential elections (Palop-García and Pedroza 2019, 405). Uruguay does not fit neatly on the regional spectrum, as it still eludes legal enactment and defers a resolution.

The link between emigrants' activism and the process of franchise reform has been relatively less explored in the literature. However, this study contends that the interaction between state offices and policy elites and policy addressees (i.e., citizens residing abroad) is analytically relevant. The EV debate in Uruguay gained momentum in parallel to the implementation of new diaspora engagement policies (Margheritis 2015c). Emigrants' lobby for franchise reform has been an important (albeit not sufficient) factor for the outcome to occur in other cases (e.g., Şahin-Mencütek and Erdoğan 2016; Hartmann 2015) and therefore needs to be investigated.

Although emigrant support plays a role in political parties' support of franchise reform, outreach abroad represents a challenge (Wellman 2015; Paarlberg 2019, 2020), and emigrant activism may not translate to support for the party that enacts enfranchising, as in Bolivia (Hinojosa Gordoñoava et al. 2016). Thus, migrants' organizational and transnational dynamics, which differ considerably across ethnic groups, contexts of settlement, type of political activity, migrant generations, and other variables (Morales and Giugni 2011), require investigation.

Most South American migrant communities exhibit intermittent and fragmented social and political mobilization, ambivalent attitudes toward politics, low organizational capacity, formal and informal forms of political participation, and low turnout in electoral contests (e.g., Bermudez 2010; Boccagni and Pilati 2015; Margheritis 2017b). In Uruguay, scattered studies document a high level of diaspora mobilization around EV at an early stage of the debate (Moraes Mena 2009), especially for the community residing in neighboring Argentina (Merenson 2016a, 2013). However, there is no comprehensive work on Uruguayans abroad and their engagement with the EV debate. Their growing (albeit insufficient) capacity to press for a resolution and close links with the former governing coalition beg for an explanation.

In sum, lack of emigrant enfranchisement in Uruguay has been under the radar of specialists. Notable exceptions are works in Spanish (Moreira and Pellegrino 2001; Stuhldreher 2012). Neither of these works addresses the period or answers the research question posed here. Literature in English on Uruguay is very scarce. As demonstrated here, the case does not fit clearly into existing generalizations.

METHODOLOGY

Uruguay is investigated here as an instance of nonenfranchisement of emigrants. Such an outcome constitutes a deviant case (Bennett and Elman 2010, 505–6). Uruguay does not fit with the aforementioned theoretical explanations or empirical patterns: out of 216 countries worldwide, Uruguay is among 53 (24 percent) that have not adopted any form of EV and, along with Suriname, one of only 2 in South America (International IDEA 2020). It is a rare instance of nonenfranchisement also classified as a “no but” case, as nonresident voters effectively registered may return to the country and cast a ballot there (Arrighi et al. 2019).

This deviant case stands out in South America, a region with a long tradition of migrant franchise expansion (Escobar 2017). It is often mistakenly mentioned as the only country in the region that does not permit EV (e.g., Galán 2019; Agencia EFE 2016), probably because the other outlier, Suriname, does not have a comparable democratic record.⁵ In this respect, Uruguay ranks first regionally, according to the EIU Democracy Index (15 in the global ranking) and is one of only three full democracies in Latin America and the Caribbean. Uruguay exhibits sustained improvement in all measures for the last 15 years and a perfect score on the indicator “electoral process and pluralism” (EIU 2020, 37, 23). It has been classified in other indexes as a high-performing democracy since the late 1980s, achieving the highest scores in “inclusive suffrage” and “electoral participation” (International IDEA 2021). By deferring a resolution on EV, Uruguay is at odds not only with global and regional trends but also with its own historical trajectory of upholding equalitarian and democratic principles.

Being a “no but” case suggests the need to go beyond classification of outcomes in statistical distributions or regional patterns. Explaining that the right is recognized in numerous official documents and legislation (see Law 19654 below) but not legally enacted, while emigrants’ mobilization to cast a ballot has been intense, regular, and encouraged, requires digging into actors’ perceptions, discourses, and interactions. Therefore, qualitative methods are the most appropriate for the task. Relying on multiple sources of data, an exploratory, an empirically rich single case study (Gerring 2004, 342), is presented here to capture such nuances.

Inferences were made by combining several techniques. Process tracing was used to describe and analyze the unfolding of events. Descriptive inferences relied on evidence from typical sources (Collier 2011, 824). Existing literature provided prior knowledge and conceptual framework; archival research led to elaboration of a chronology of major turning points in the events sequence; several sources, including personal interviews, helped describe and interpret actors’ stances and choices and apply counterfactuals. Content analysis captured the evolution of policies and political discourses in various texts (e.g., government reports, legislation, public officials’ speeches, publications by international organizations, websites and social media used by migrant associations, published surveys, etc.). Since 2012, several rounds of semistructured interviews investigated stakeholders’ views and interaction. Key informants included public officials, members of migrant associations,

social activists, international organization officers, legislators, and academic and media specialists. Participant observation was conducted in meetings of Consultation Councils of Uruguayans abroad held in Paris and Montevideo between 2016 and 2018.

To reach out to nonacademic audiences, in the last stage of the project (2017–19), impact-oriented activities were carried out in Montevideo. The goal was to generate an intense exchange of views and to engage actors in the process of knowledge “coproduction” (Boswell and Smith 2017, 2, 5). Additional archival research was conducted, as well as analysis of recent official documents and minutes of parliamentary sessions, more interviews, and workshops with stakeholders with a focus on finding alternatives to unblock the debate. An intense information diffusion campaign was also conducted, together with live transmission of events via social media. This allowed reaching out to Uruguayan communities abroad and the general public.

Project events were crucial to unveil nuances in actors’ stances and to collect original evidence about their interaction. Besides filling information gaps and permitting triangulation, the value added of such engagement was to give voice to key stakeholders and to explore if subtle changes could unlock the stalemate. This research strategy also pushed the limits of “productive interactions” between academics and policy actors (Spaapen and van Drooge 2011, 212), gaining for this research project multiple acknowledgments, including a formal “declaration of ministerial interest” for its contributions to knowledge and dialogue on EV (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores 2018).

URUGUAY: A “NO, BUT” CASE

Uruguay has maintained a relatively open and stable citizenship regime, which has undergone little change since the first National Constitution was drafted in 1830. Suffrage and citizenship notions were shaped by postindependence problems and nation- and state-building efforts. The myth of being a country of reception was intertwined with the construction of national identity, thus precluding an action plan on emigration during the twentieth century.

The Source of Controversies

The foundations of the citizenship regime thus reflected postindependence demographics and politics (Margheritis 2015a, b), the ideas in the 1812 Constitution of Cádiz (Escobar 2015, 928–29), and a notion of the subject of representation used in most Latin American countries: *vecino* (neighbor, resident of a locality), which overlapped with (and subsumed) that of citizen (Sábato 2001). Nationality and citizenship have been used as synonymous colloquially and have often required juridical interpretation (Sandonato de León 2007). This has added sensitive elements to the EV debate. Overall, the Uruguayan legal framework for citizenship has remained “closer to its roots,” and residence is still a key requirement for the exercise of citizenship rights (Pedroza and Palop-García 2017, 597).

Demographics and migration patterns have historically reinforced the link between suffrage and physical presence in the territory. A large area of the country is not populated; most of the three million inhabitants reside along the coast and half of them in the capital alone, which is the locus of domestic politics. As noted earlier, emigration has been a structural problem since the mid-twentieth century. Citizens, defined in Article 77 of the Uruguayan Constitution as members of the nation, are enfranchised to vote and to run for office under certain conditions. Suffrage is secret and compulsory. Physical presence in the country on election day and updated registration in the National Civic Registry are necessary conditions for the franchise. Proof of updated registration is to be obtained within three months before elections.

This requisite may require more than one trip and be significantly costly, depending on the site of the voter's residence and length of stay abroad. Voters who do not vote in two consecutive elections may be removed from the electoral registry. Law 18858 of 2011 modified previous legislation to interpret Article 74 of the constitution and thereby define *avecijnamiento* as unequivocal acts to show intention to reside in the country, such as physical permanence for more than three months, renting or buying property to reside in, establishing a commercial or industrial activity, and so on (Parlamento del Uruguay n.d.). Major electoral laws and procedures regarding the scope and practice of the franchise were established in the early decades of the twentieth century (e.g., Laws 7690 and 7812 of 1924 and 1925, respectively). This framework was subject to regulation and further refinement, but overall, the electoral system underwent little change.

Lack of consensus on whether and how to modify the aforementioned rules has generated a debate involving both constitutional norms and electoral legislation. The EV debate has progressed in this century, but opinions still differ on whether enactment requires a constitutional reform.⁶ The two-thirds of affirmative votes required by the constitution (Article 77) to pass a new electoral law or an amendment have never been achieved. Yet the interpretation of this article is also part of the controversy. A simple majority vote was also proposed (e.g., Pérez Pérez 2014).

Awareness of the importance of the topic has been growing. Political leaders' stances have flexibilized little. The issue is contentious and involves complex, fundamental questions that still remain unaddressed (Interviews U1 2017, U13 2017). Bills to enfranchise emigrants focus on national elections only (except that of 2005, which comprises all levels). Advocates make no reference to such levels, though; they request suffrage without restrictions instead; that is, exercise of an inherent citizenship right regardless of the voter's residence.

Main Milestones

Low population growth, depopulation of large areas of its tiny territory, and continued emigration of the economically active population have remained structural problems in Uruguay since the 1950s (OIM 2011). However, emigration entered the governmental agenda and political discourse only in 2005, when the center-left coalition Frente Amplio (FA, Broad Front, 2005–20) actively engaged with emigrants' needs and claims, including voting rights (Margheritis 2015c). Building on a few unsuccessful bills (Moreira and Pellegrino 2001), the executive sent a bill to Congress in March 2005 proposing epistolary voting (Cámara de Representantes 2005). Long debates and the reports from majority and minority blocs exposed the disagreements. Congress voted against a revised bill in October 2007 (Cámara de Representantes 2007). The executive subjected the project to a plebiscite at the time of the 2009 national elections, again with no success: only 36.93 percent of voters supported the initiative (Corte Electoral, n.d.).

A special parliamentary commission to study the issue was created in September 2013, but the persistence of opposite views among political parties and upcoming elections were the main obstacles to prompt action (Asamblea General 2013). In the meantime, citizens abroad coordinated efforts, and in 2012 and 2013 created new organizations with a local presence: Plataforma Voto Exterior Uruguay, Ronda Cívica por el Voto Exterior Uruguay, and Coordinadora por el Voto Exterior—Uruguay. By then, a specialized office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Dirección General de Asuntos Consulares y Vinculación, had become a key actor in a regular dialogue with Uruguayans abroad; it also served as a liaison with Congress to encourage the flexibilization of requirements on *avecijnamiento* and to propose consular voting (Cámara de Representantes n.d., Anexo Documental XII).

In 2014 a new bill proposing consular vote was submitted to the consideration of the Chamber of Deputies by FA legislators (Cámara de Representantes 2014). It was discussed in commissions but not treated by the chamber. In April 2016, aware that a major change was not politically feasible and disagreements persisted even among supporters of EV, the FA adapted its proposals. It suggested only minor changes to electoral procedures, such as allowing nonenrolled citizens to cast a vote and reinterpretation of constitutional norms (Interviews U2 2017, U3 2017). In order to build consensus, the FA started to negotiate specific points with the opposition, such as registration by consular offices, optional rather than mandatory EV, and avoiding voters' removal from the national electoral registry in case of no voting in two consecutive elections (*El Observador* 2017a, b). The last point was included in a project elaborated in consultation with the Electoral Court, the national body in charge of electoral matters (Cámara de Representantes 2016).

Legislative activity gained momentum in late 2017, when FA deputies managed to win approval for their project (Cámara de Representantes 2017b). Except for Unidad Popular, this move did not gather the support of other political parties, which objected to the procedures (i.e., how many votes were necessary to pass the bill) and left the session (Cámara de Representantes 2017a). Nevertheless, the proj-

ect became Law 19654, approved on August 17, 2018. This law provided interpretation of Articles 77 and 81 of the constitution. It established that residing abroad by no means impinges on citizens' rights. By the same token, an honorary commission was created to study the issue within 120 days (IMPO 2018).

The commission's legitimacy was questioned, though.⁷ Its final report (made public on May 15, 2019) recommended gradual reforms, revisiting constitutional provisions about *avecijnamiento*, creating "special reception commissions" to vote in consular offices, having a single registry to unify records, and making EV effective for the first and second levels of government (i.e., president, vice president, deputies, and senators) plus referenda and plebiscites (Cámara de Representantes n.d., 1 (3), 21, 23–24).

The current situation is characterized by uncertainty. Before ending its term in office, the FA announced that a new bill was in the making. Yet 2019 was a turning point, since the FA lost the elections, as well as a majority in both chambers of Congress. In early 2020, the Supreme Court declared Law 19654 unconstitutional (*El Observador* 2020).

Stakeholders' Stances

The FA's initiatives on EV have resonated with reparative arguments about reintegrating the nation after the military dictatorship (1973–85), which triggered massive emigration and suspended political participation (Moreira and Pellegrino 2001). This is attuned to the views of some emigrants, who see the full enactment of voting rights as the measure that would give meaning to all other ties with the homeland. At the core of emigrants' claim is the issue of belonging to the nation. They also point out that the constitution does not explicitly rule out EV and that Uruguay has signed international conventions that recognize EV as a fundamental human right (Stuhldreher 2012, 12, 20).

However, the diaspora's stance reflects its internal diversity and geographical dispersion. Activists are a minority, and positions vary. In the 2004 campaign, some leaders were ambivalent about the cost benefit of mobilizing. Others enthusiastically supported the 2009 plebiscite campaign, claiming that the existing legislation in their home country marginalized some emigrants and kept them as "citizens of nowhere" (Morales Mena 2009, 114, 119). Discourses have changed over time, and lately have also referred to a "just and necessary vindication" for those who have a constant "presence" (i.e., involvement) in the country despite geographical distances. Migrant associations make reference to citizenship beyond borders and argue that democratic institutions need to adapt to new, transnational forms of citizenship in order to make inclusion in the nation effective: "Uruguay cannot marginalize us. The Uruguay of Abroad claims for integration into the construction of a new Uruguay" (cited in Sosa González 2009, 50–52, 58).

In other words, advocacy largely revolves around belonging and inclusion, moving at times from a focus on rights to discrimination (Merenson 2016b, 128). Yet site of destination and generational gaps also shape stances. For some emi-

grants, political rights are not a key concern because they are relatively indifferent toward the matter (e.g., those of younger age), feel more concerned with host politics (those residing in the United States, among others), or live close enough to exercise citizenship rights every time they travel to vote (Interviews U4 2017; U5 2016; U6 2017).

In the framework of the new diaspora engagement policy, the FA official discourse consistently emphasized notions of national identity and unity, collective commitment to nation building, citizens' interest in contributing to a shared future, and sense of responsibility toward the country's fate (Crosa 2014). In contrast, the Colorado Party argued against emigrants' voting rights on the basis that physical presence in the territory at the moment of suffrage ultimately contributes to reinforcing the nationhood bond. Legal, moral, and logistical arguments were also expressed to oppose change, including the risks and costs of carrying out elections abroad.

The main concerns have revolved around how to legally implement secret absentee ballots while preserving transparency and efficiency and how to justify that those who are physically absent can decide on the lives of those who will actually endure the consequences of decisions (Moraes Mena 2009, 117–18; Taks 2006, 151). This last point has been raised by Colorado Party leaders; namely, former president Julio María Sanguinetti (1985–90, 1995–2000), who vehemently opposes EV on the basis of all the political, legal, and ethical reasons above. He also rejects the idea of following international trends: “That other countries have different criteria does not change our criteria, because, first of all, Uruguay has always had [its] very own system, which has proven better than any other” (Sanguinetti 2017).

Positions are not homogenous in parties, though. For example, in the Colorado Party, one of its young leaders often collaborated with the *Coordinadora por el Voto* and has consistently voiced support for emigrants' claims (Interview U7 2017). The National Party has eluded an official declaration but has opposed norm change. Its internal positions oscillate between a strong defense of the constitutional amendment path to resolve the matter with broad social consent and “eclectic” stances. For instance, some leaders are keen on recognizing emigrants' political rights and even supported a project to award emigrants parliamentary seats; they might compromise on who qualifies to vote if conditions are established, such as proof of recent residency in the country or first generation of emigrants only (Interview U8 2017).

Public opinion remains divided. Opinion polls indicate that favorable responses to franchise reform have been relatively stable over the years. These oscillated between 43 and 56 percent in the months prior to the 2009 plebiscite (Stuhldreher 2012, 20–21), reaching 59.3 percent in 2016 (Mora 2016) and 57 percent in 2018 (Opción Consultores 2018). Our impact-oriented activities confirmed that the topic is of intermittent interest to an attentive—albeit reduced—public.⁸ The media echo the debate sporadically; op-eds voice positions both in favor of and against EV. Migrant associations point to social indifference: “Historically, voting from abroad has not been able to position itself as a priority issue regarding rights and political obligations of citizens, nor has it occupied an important place on the

political, social and even academic agendas in Uruguay” (CVE-UY 2016, 4). In other words, the issue does not resonate enough domestically, and as a result, emigrants’ claims do not get amplified in a broader social debate.

Although the public’s sentiment may not represent a strong obstacle to policy innovation, it is assumed to be one of the reasons for the negative vote in the 2009 plebiscite (Stuhldreher 2012, 14–15, 21). It works as contextual factor that conditions political positions, which often lean toward ambivalence or evasion as a way of avoiding the cost of going against the public mood. In the words of a legislator, “This topic has bad press; it does not collect many flowers” (Interview U3 2017). This generalized perception is, in turn, explained by reference to social hostility toward those who left: “There is a certain feeling of anger or rejection toward the person who leaves the country . . . [who] is punished, ignoring all the ties that person surely has with Uruguay” (Interview U7 2017).

Top-Down Moves: The Effect of Political Parties’ Actions

Political parties have kept conversations moving mostly through proactive initiatives by the FA and minimal interventions in responsive mode by all others. However, they all seem trapped in an uncertain political calculus. Justification of their stances usually refers to repercussions in social attitudes and the need to preserve the aforementioned longstanding notion of territorially based political rights. This leads to ambivalent actions or inaction in the midst of a recurrent, tepid debate.

Parliamentary debates, media reports, and activists’ testimonies confirm that political calculations have always played a role in both promoting and obstructing change (e.g., *La Diaria* 2016). Although accurate and reliable information about the number of potential absentee voters is not available, in tight elections (e.g., 2004 and 2019), even 1 percent of the votes may matter, and Uruguayans abroad proved to be able to mobilize.⁹ Thus, during the FA’s three terms in office, opposition parties opposed change, assuming that the emigrant community was mainly formed by senior political exiles who would eventually vote for the FA. This assumption is perhaps overrated, as emigrants’ preferences are unknown, and party affinity has probably evolved as the diaspora has become more heterogeneous.

The evidence also indicates that the FA has been proactive regarding EV, supporting emigrants’ mobilizations, contributing to keep the debate alive via various initiatives, and incorporating EV in broader diaspora engagement policies. But these efforts inevitably intersected broader electoral strategies, which were somehow at odds with this goal. In contrast to other cases (Paarlberg 2019; Kernalegenn and van Haute 2020), the FA builds on its own transnational background to operate across borders. It has had a tradition of fragmentation and international dispersion since its creation in 1971, cemented by coordinated resistance to dictatorship when several leaders and a number of followers were in exile (Merenson 2015). It has developed a strong presence in Argentina, where about 117,564 individuals constitute the largest group of Uruguayans abroad (OIM 2011, 54; Cámara de Representantes, n.d., XII.1.2).

The FA has also relied on a mobilization practice: the organization of “voting trips” to Uruguay, which used to be relatively informal but have become a complex logistical challenge involving transportation companies, political leaders, intermediaries of sorts, and even Argentine authorities (Merenson 2016a). For the last two decades, the FA has encouraged and partly financed this practice, which occasionally has involved long-distance emigrants, too, thus benefiting from both the so-called *voto Buquebús* and *voto amigo*.¹⁰

Therefore, it is plausible to argue that the FA has been seriously committed to policy change and, at the same time, not dramatically affected by delays and lack of resolution of the EV debate. In other words, to be consistent with diaspora engagement policy, the FA could not afford inaction regarding the emigrants’ claim, but it has not faced too high a cost from the lack of emigrant enfranchisement. As shown below, activists often deem this an ambivalent position.

The dynamic among political leaders is not conducive to a resolution. The FA’s proactive stance has reinforced the widespread idea that the main motivation is electoral gains and EV is basically “an FA issue” (Interview U12 2017). Participant observation confirmed that this perception is magnified by the fact other political actors are not frequently heard. The topic generates recurrent dialogues but no in-depth discussion. For example, except for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, project event participants showed relatively low engagement, offering vague, formal speeches or cautious responses but no intention to explore new ideas.

While the FA speaks in favor of the emigrants’ claim, opposition parties bluntly reject the idea of normative changes or voice diverse, succinct objections as a way of furtive rejection. Minority political forces tend to simply support dialogue. A few statements showed that views are not uniform within each party—a problem we had identified in individual interviews, too (Interviews U8 2017, U7 2017). Pragmatic considerations seem to prevail and are intertwined with the contextual factors above. For instance, a few political leaders would admit that since some of the public opposes reform, they tend to prioritize home constituencies over taking a more committed stance on EV (Interview U7 2017). Others would add that internal disagreements are silenced: “[EV] was a flag of the left and it continues to be, because in the founding parties no one is risking saying publicly that they support it. There are people I know who are a bit in favor but afraid of going out and raising that flag, because it has been a historic flag of the Front” (*Semanario Voces* 2017).

However, reducing the blockage to a political calculus would be a misleading simplification. Should the electoral concerns be overcome, there are still controversies about the interpretation of constitutional norms and the appropriate legal path to reform. A territorial notion of the polity keeps reappearing in all instances of the debate via references to the aforementioned legal framework (e.g., Cámara de Representantes 2013, 2017a). Legislators are reluctant to break the historical record and often invoke its value in the context of what most accounts refer to as “a conservative country” in terms of a general attachment to traditions.

The deliberations of parliamentary and special commissions provide evidence of this point. Legislators’ arguments recurrently appeal to preserving traditional dem-

ocratic practices, the territorial dimension of the state's responsibilities toward citizens, and the need to guarantee the quality of the electoral process. Most of them also demand prudence and a progressive approach to change (Cámara de Representantes 2013). Likewise, the 2019 Honorary Commission's report takes note of the need to update notions of citizenship beyond borders, but its recommendations distil an incremental and mostly conservative approach (Cámara de Representantes, n.d., 1(3), 23–24).

Furthermore, legislators are also reluctant to engage with the details of EV and implementation, thus making delay inevitable. The Electoral Court has warned of specific procedures that require discussion and consensus (e.g., registration of voters abroad, mechanisms to cast ballots and count votes), as well as the need to guarantee transparency in the process of suffrage (Interview U13 2017). Local specialists call policymakers' attention to the historical record and comparative experience (Cámara de Representantes, n.d., Anexo Documental II. 13; Interviews U1 2017, U9 2017). Yet parliamentary records and minutes of meetings demonstrate the lack of engagement of all actors with these complex aspects of the issue.

In general, actors make little use of existing specialized knowledge when advocating for change. Just to mention an example, the 2019 report produced by the Honorary Commission provides evidence of this point. Although the commission consulted related legislation, minutes of previous meetings, and public documents, its final report is oblivious to specialized literature and cites only the 2007 study by International IDEA (Cámara de Representantes, n.d., 1(3), 14, 23). This is relevant because, as the comparative works indicate (e.g., Laffeur 2011; Laffeur and Calderón Chelius 2011), the small print usually reflects political parties' agreement to shape (and even limit) the electoral impact of EV. In other words, Uruguayan parties are missing the opportunity to negotiate the details of regulation in such a way as to dispel their fears. They prefer to defer indefinitely an in-depth discussion and resolution.

Bottom-up Activism: The Results of Emigrants' Campaigns

Associations of Uruguayans abroad have been very active. They have managed to keep the issue alive through transnational coordination. They rely on informal collaboration with other actors for expertise and visibility, such as human rights or migration-related organizations (e.g., the Institución Nacional de Derechos Humanos y Defensoría del Pueblo; the International Organization for Migrations). Their advocacy has played an equivocal role. It has maintained a latent claim and has obstructed negotiations, mainly because heterogeneity and organizational problems undermine the effectiveness of their actions and because the nature of discourses and strategies takes the dialogue to irreconcilable positions and precludes compromises.

On the one hand, older emigrants (i.e., political exiles who left under dictatorship) tend to be a vocal minority, mostly in favor of EV, more resourceful and available to lead than younger, more recent emigrants (i.e., those who left around the

turn of the century in search of better economic conditions). Attendance, participation, and interactions at migrant meetings confirm that this creates a gap in terms of representation, which translates into low capacity to amalgamate positions. As documented above, some emigrants are simply indifferent to this issue.

Online activity and input at migrant meetings show that associations have diverse objectives, resources, and trajectories in each destination and have developed limited collaboration with political parties, except for Uruguayans in Argentina. Their use of social media is intermittent and limited, mostly focused on information diffusion rather than canvassing. Advocacy largely relies on the voluntary work of a few, and organizational capacities remain low. Activities focus on raising awareness, diffusing information, and demanding legislative action (CVE-UY 2014, 2016, 12).

For some activists, dispersion and long distances are a major obstacle to lobbying at home (Interview U10 2015). Off the record, others admit that transnational collaboration is usually undermined by personalism and disputes over protagonism. The emigrant community residing in Argentina stands out for being well organized around neighborhood committees and a branch of the FA. It has been politically active across borders for several decades (Merenson 2016a; Crosa 2014).

Heterogeneity translates into some rifts when it comes to the notion of citizenship and the exercise of political rights. For Uruguayans in Argentina, lack of enfranchisement does not deprive them of a right, as they feel able to recreate nationality bonds and exert citizenship rights regularly. Oral testimonies suggest that they experience voting trips as a celebration, comparable to carnival, which is a very important popular celebration in Uruguay. Voting carries emotional and identity connotations. Some emigrants would probably continue traveling to vote even if EV became available (Merenson 2013, 13). For trip organizers, this practice has been a source of political influence and access to higher leadership and institutions in both Argentina and Uruguay. Therefore, some of them were reluctant to collaborate with the Coordinadora's campaign (Merenson 2013, 2016b). In short, differences and tensions foster ambivalent attitudes and undermine advocacy strategy.

On the other hand, discourses are unlikely to facilitate dialogue, as extreme positions preclude compromises. A focus on national identity adds a highly symbolic and emotional component to the debate. Advocates have used the slogan *Uruguay somos todos* (We are all Uruguay) and related visual symbols. During deliberations at the 4th Regional Meeting of Consultation Councils in Paris (August 28–30, 2016), participants fervently argued that “voting is the umbilical cord” that ties them to the country.

While legitimate, these arguments often become an obstacle to moving discussions forward. As soon as national identity is invoked, the conversation acquires an emotional tone and silence and discomfort are observed. These sentiments push actors to extreme stances (i.e., validating or denying the identity of the other), as if opposition to franchise reform were an implicit denial of the conational. Dialogue then comes to a dead end and stalemate is reinforced.

In addition, human rights organizations contributed to framing the issue with human rights considerations. For instance, the National Institute of Human Rights

and Ombudsman's Office (INDDHH) issued several reports and recommendations in favor of the implementation of EV in the understanding that the constitution does not establish citizenship suspension (and thus the suspension of voting rights) for nationals residing abroad (INDDHH n.d.). While such framing resonates with Uruguay's experience of flagrant human rights violations under dictatorship, it opens additional controversies. This is because it portrays suffrage as a universal, inalienable right, thus downplaying both philosophical debates on the relationship between universal human rights and constitutional rights and normative debates on whether nonresidents should decide on issues affecting resident citizens. Facing this last question, activists fall back on the argument of voting as a human right, and the dialogue stalls.

A Counterproductive Dynamic

By all accounts, the EV debate has gained momentum in the last few years. Awareness has increased in both the general public and policy elites in Uruguay. Informants argue that over time, substantive arguments against EV have weakened (Interview U11 2017). Moreover, in 2016, EV was included in the main document drafted by the Junta Nacional de Migración (the main collective body dealing with migration issues), together with the main guidelines that would steer national migration policy in the future, approved by the executive power, Res No. 576, on August 29 (Junta Nacional de Migración 2016). However, the effect of actors' indecisive actions continues feeding a counterproductive dynamic as it encourages endless argumentative detours, which lead to saturation and no final resolution. Together with the slow motion, this unfruitful dynamic has become a defining feature of the process.

It is beyond the limits of this project to measure the impact of this dynamic on public opinion and social activists. However, there are some indications that it has not shed positive light on the issue. It has contributed more to social fatigue than to amplifying emigrants' claim. For instance, early initiatives led to misunderstanding and delays. Frustration has nurtured advocates' feelings of being offended and resentful. In particular, the 2009 plebiscite set a milestone in terms of preferences and added confusion, too. It remains in the collective memory as the expression of society's ultimate wish. This is recurrently used to revive arguments against EV or to revisit a complex discussion about what exactly was voted: legislative change or the specific mechanism to implement EV rights.

These types of argumentative or discursive blockages have contributed to the aforementioned negative reactions or indifference from the public. They have also fostered saturation and doubts. For instance, local activists doubt political actors' intentions because those actors elude concrete issues and implementation and delay a resolution; activists note that technical issues end up being used as obstacles to progress (Interview U12 2017). Signs of annoyance can be found in emigrants' statements to the press. For instance, a member of the Consultation Council in Paris affirmed that "Uruguayans abroad are exasperated by the lack of progress on EV"

(*Medios Públicos* 2015). Frustration is often voiced: “By now, it is felt as a grievance,” exclaimed a prominent local activist during one of our workshops.

In addition, given the slow motion the debate has taken, locals have popularized the idea that Uruguay is an atypical case, presumably meaning that something is wrong with it because it is taking too long to conform. Our project challenged that assumption by asking stakeholders to discuss the question of timing and providing plenty of information about other cases and broader issues. We were able to confirm that the idea of being atypical is based only on an uninformed counting of how many other countries in the region have adopted EV, rather than the factors that preclude consensus. In general, stakeholders’ knowledge of arguments in favor of or against reform and global trends is limited—an element further confirmed in personal interviews. This further validates the above point about lack of deep engagement with substantive aspects of the issue. It also shows limited influence of the new global norm. Advocates’ discourses incorporated references to this trend recently (e.g., *La Diaria* 2019). The label serves as an argumentative tool, but in a simplified fashion. Thus far, it does not seem persuasive enough. During deliberations, portraying the case as the exception exacerbates the sense of annoyance and social fatigue. It reinforces emotional reactions and makes dialogue more difficult.

CONCLUSIONS

Our findings make a contribution to knowledge on the contentious dimensions of EV by expanding existing accounts and shedding light on the specifics of an under-researched, deviant case. In Uruguay, EV resolution deferral manages expectations by feeding hope through minimal responses to emigrant claims and perpetuates uneven access to political rights. Thus, this case study exposes the blurred distinction between citizens’ political inclusion and exclusion and whether and how political elites might choose to address the fact that dispersed citizens are experiencing uneven access to citizenship rights. The analysis explains the lack of emigrant enfranchisement and brings novel evidence on nuances in actors’ stances, their capacity to induce change, and ongoing EV controversies. It demonstrates that it is not the lack of political and social norm entrepreneurs but the effect of indecisive actions that has perpetuated a counterproductive dynamic. A convoluted debate on EV has simultaneously advanced conversations but precluded compromises, turning resolution deferral into an implicit form of regulation of inclusion and exclusion.

The evidence suggests some qualifications of existing accounts and new lines of inquiry, as follows.

First, political rights regulation may take diverse forms. In Uruguay, the EV debate itself is consequential in terms of rights regulation: it has not led to a single outcome or definite decision, it has advanced by fits and starts, it has kept expectations alive and costs of lack of resolution low. The main implication is that the lack of resolution perpetuates uneven access to voting rights; it is thus a *de facto* form of regulation. In the meantime, expanding political rights and participation beyond

territorial borders has made progress in Uruguay through multiple, indirect paths. These paths include society's and policy elites' awareness, weakening of opposition arguments, transnational physical and virtual mobilization, migrant lobbying, and political dialogues, all of which have become embedded in official documents and new legislation. This finding supports the idea of looking at enfranchisement reform as a process (Palop García and Pedroza 2019, 404). It also suggests that there may be more relevant stages than a neat, progressive sequence of enactment, regulation, and implementation. Uruguay shows that the way toward enfranchisement (the preenactment path) may take indefinite detours, during which perceptions and actions are shaped and some relevant precedents are set.

Second, the links among policy diffusion, domestic politics, and timing require further research. Characterizing Uruguay as an atypical case for being "late" in conforming to the current global norm is debatable, since there is no universal standard on the right timing. Focusing only on Uruguay as an outlier is like seeing just the tip of the iceberg. Our analysis demonstrates that policy diffusion does not lead to franchise reform unless political consensus is built domestically. Looking at underlying controversies allows us to infer that policy diffusion may nonetheless set a normative standard and can be used instrumentally to expedite the process (e.g., to reinforce prochange arguments by exposing the reputational cost of being an outlier).

The EV debate also shows that timing is nonetheless relevant, inasmuch as a lengthy discussion may have detrimental side effects (e.g., social fatigue, exasperation, misunderstandings, deception). These findings are consistent with elements of the local political culture documented in studies on reforms in various policy areas but relatively neglected in the EV literature thus far. These elements include the cultivation of exceptionalism; the defense of an "Uruguayan way" to change that reflects an idiosyncratic adaptation and its own timing rather than urgent foreign demands or trends; deliberate attempts to avoid social and bureaucratic resistance and vetoes (Panizza 2002, 76, 85); a significant tolerance for *vaivenes* (comings and goings); a gradual and slow but sustained pace to innovation; and a territorial notion of citizens' contributions to the home country, including those who reside abroad (Margheritis 2016, 86, 91, 188). As this study shows, political actors have a vested interest in maintaining traditional ideational frameworks, particularly if the public is not overly positive about innovation. More research is needed to connect explanatory factors, and future studies on emigrant enfranchisement may benefit from exploring timing in connection to country-specific political culture.

Third, integrating both the top-down and bottom-up dynamics of enfranchisement processes is analytically relevant. Nevertheless, in both realms, the categories of drivers and brakes of franchise reform seem insufficient to explain nonenfranchisement. The ambivalent positions of both advocates and detractors of EV indicate that some actors can play both roles. The FA was indeed a source of dynamism and at times a hindrance to the EV debate. Emigrant activism attained good results, as well as counterproductive ones. Neither alone can explain nonenfranchisement, but the intersection of their actions is most telling. Comparative studies of nonenfranchisement are just starting to develop (e.g., Umpierrez de Reguero et al. 2021).

These would enrich our understanding of how institutional and social actors interact, as well as when and how controversies on EV might be resolved.

Fourth, the above interaction unveils facets of the ongoing transformation of national citizenship in relation to migrant transnationalism and diaspora politics. As McIlwaine and Bermudez (2015) argue, emigrant enfranchisement often reflects a disconnect between states' formal and legal view of citizenship rights (which usually targets elite members of the diaspora and assumes certain homogeneity within it) and emigrants' ideas and lived experience of citizenship. Dispersed emigrants often feel a strong sense of belonging to the home nation, which is conflated with the notion of citizenship, and leads to both formal and informal engagement with politics. Their response to enfranchisement reflects varied, and often ambivalent, socio-cultural rather than legal understandings of citizenship. This study expands and complements this argument. It documents ambivalent positions and an interaction between policy elites and emigrants that perpetuates uneven enfranchisement, which seems at odds with declared intentions to expand rights. It also illustrates that diaspora self-perceptions of inclusion and EV strategies are shaped not only by a fluid mix of emotional and identity considerations but also by geographic spaces and organizational resources.

As the exercise of citizenship is significantly shaped by emigrants' experiences in contexts of exit and residency, the "transnational citizenship" those experiences invoke acquires different meanings and connotations for different generations at various destinations. Said concept does not provide a uniform signifier for the diaspora. For this reason, citizenship beyond borders remains bounded by localized pre- and postmigration socialization. In relation to EV, it is inherently a fluid notion, a work in progress.

NOTES

I am grateful to the LAPS editors and two anonymous reviewers for their suggestions to improve the manuscript. The last stage of this project was supported by an ESRC-Impact Acceleration Account Award from the University of Southampton and carried out in collaboration with Universidad de la República in Uruguay. Special thanks to the UDELAR team for their valuable assistance: Javier Gallardo, Ana Laura de Giorgi, Julián González, and Marcela Schenck.

1. Voting from abroad is defined as "procedures which enable some or all electors of a country who are temporarily or permanently outside the country to exercise their voting rights from outside the national territory" (Ellis et al. 2007, 8). For an overview of legal, political, and operational issues involved, see Aman and Bakken 2021.

2. Emigration intensified in the second half of the twentieth century, due to political violence, military rule, and economic decline. Massive emigration in the 1950s and 1970s went mostly to Argentina and Brazil. At the turn of the twenty-first century, these were still the top two destinations, followed by the United States and Spain. Other destinations included Canada, Australia, France, and Italy. Emigration peaked to 600,000 individuals (18 percent of the total population) in 2006, but this time 42.3 percent went to Spain and had a more diverse profile. These emigrants were younger, predominantly male, with a high educational level (OIM 2011, 57, 59, 71, 100). The Foreign Affairs Ministry estimated that about

530,000 Uruguayans lived abroad in 2018. Around 80 percent of them resided in Argentina, Spain, Brazil, the United States, Australia, Chile, and New Zealand (Cámara de Representantes, n.d., 1 (3), 4; Anexo Documental XII, 1 (2), 1–8).

3. At their highest point in this century, in 2003, remittances amounted to 0.513 percent of Uruguay's GDP. Since then, they have been falling, to stabilize in the last decade at about 0.17 percent of the country's GDP (World Bank n.d.).

4. EV was established in Brazil in 1965 under dictatorship, in 1989 in Argentina (effective in 1991), and in 2014 in Chile (effective in 2017); that is, several years after democratization in the last two cases. The same applies to neighboring countries, such as Bolivia and Paraguay, where democratization and first implementation of (limited) EV occurred 27 and 24 years apart, respectively.

5. Suriname has struggled to consolidate democratic institutions since its relatively recent independence in 1975 (Ramsøedh 2017). This country is currently characterized as a flawed democracy, has a sustained low score in all indicators of democratic practices (EIU 2020, 22), or is not recorded in some indexes (International IDEA 2021).

6. Local legal experts disagree on the need for a constitutional reform. Some deem it absolutely unnecessary, since Article 77 of the constitution states that suffrage is carried out in the form established by law, thus leaving the specifics to regulatory electoral laws (Korzeniak 2013). Others interpret constitutional norms as clearly indicating that suffrage is to be conducted within the territory of the country only and, therefore, relaxing the point on *avicinamiento* requires a constitutional reform (Sapolinski 2013; Correa Freitas 2013).

7. Besides representatives from main state offices, the commission included only a member from the FA and one other political party, Unidad Popular. Opposition parties (Colorado, National, and Independent) declined commission membership and formally questioned the constitutional character of Law 19654 and the commission's legitimacy. The Independent Party declared itself in favor of finding a consensus on the issue (Cámara de Representantes, n.d., Anexo Documental I).

8. This research project gathered considerable attention from local mass media, with team members being interviewed at prime time. Our activities via a dedicated webpage and social media reached out not only to local audiences but to viewers in 16 countries (mostly 55-to-64-year-old women and 35-to-44-year-old men), who followed mostly live events rather than posts on specialized analysis or data on EV. Engagement with content beyond "likes" was not intense and included a few comments against EV.

9. There is no electoral registry of citizens abroad to tell us how many actually qualify to vote. Official data on the number of people crossing the national borders weekly prior and post the 2019 election were relatively stable, and there are no records of how many of those qualified for voting (see details in *El Observador* 2019). Estimates suggest that about 7,000 Uruguayans residing in Argentina mobilized to participate in the first round. About 15,000 did so to vote in the balloting; that is, approximately 1 percent of the electorate (*Ambito* 2019).

10. Buquebús is the name of the main transportation and shipping company operating on the Plata River, connecting the capitals of Uruguay and Argentina. This company has offered discount tickets to Uruguayans residing in Argentina who travel to vote. For the 2009 election, FA supporters living in distant foreign countries were invited to donate the amount of their airfare to finance several trips of conationals living close to Uruguay. More than US\$150,000 was collected through the so-called *amigo* vote (friend's vote) campaign and served mainly to support trips of Uruguayans residing in Argentina (Moraes Mena 2009; Merenson 2016a).

INTERVIEWS

- U1. 2017. Political scientist, Universidad de la República, specialist on electoral systems; leader of opinion poll firm; former FA leader. Team member interview. Montevideo, November 17.
- U2. 2017. Congressman, FA (Socialist Party), 2015–20; author of EV bills. Team member interview. Montevideo, November 9.
- U3. 2017. Congresswoman, FA (Movimiento de Participación Popular), 2015–25; historian; MPP liaison with Uruguayans abroad; advocate for EV. Team member interview. Montevideo, November 23.
- U4. 2017. Emigrant; member of Consultation Council of Los Angeles. Author interview. Montevideo, December 14.
- U5. 2016. Head of Dirección General de Asuntos Consulares y Vinculación, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Uruguay. Author interview. Paris, August 29.
- U6. 2017. Head of Dirección General de Asuntos Consulares y Vinculación, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Uruguay. Author interview. Montevideo, December 15.
- U7. 2017. Party leader, Colorado Party; former member of Plataforma Voto Exterior Uruguay. Team member interview. Montevideo, November 7.
- U8. 2017. Congressman, National Party, 2005–20. Team member interview. Montevideo, December 1.
- U9. 2017. Political scientist, Universidad de la República, specialist on government, political parties, and elections. Team member interview. Montevideo, December 11.
- U10. 2015. Emigrant; activist for EV; cofounder of Ronda Cívica Uruguay; member of Consultation Council of Paris. Author interview. Paris, July 8.
- U11. 2017. Researcher; human rights specialist; former public official. Team member interview. Montevideo, October 30.
- U12. 2017. Social activist; leader of Coordinadora por el Voto en el Exterior Uruguay, Team member interview. Montevideo, November 7.
- U13. 2017. Minister of Electoral Court. Team member interview. Montevideo, November 3.

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