

MUNICIPAL TRANSPARENCY REFORM IN ARGENTINA: THE CASE OF PODER
CIUDADANO'S ZERO DISCRETION ACCORD PROGRAM (2003-2006)

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ABSTRACT

Transparent government reforms have begun to appear in municipal contexts in Argentina, signaling a new trend in public policy. As subnational governments have taken on new policy responsibilities under federal decentralization processes, many have struggled to respond adequately to local development needs due to a combination of factors including financial constraints and poor administrative capacity. As a response to these broader issues, different civil society groups have identified and begun to posit solutions to systemic corruption problems at the municipal level, including collaborative initiatives to increase citizen participation, pass pertinent legislation, and enhance access to public information. One such initiative introduced in the wake of the 2001 financial and institutional crisis was the “Zero Discretion Accord” program, developed by the local Transparency International affiliate, *Poder Ciudadano*. Revolving around a public pact to introduce a series of policies designed to improve government transparency in the short term, this program was carried out in three important localities (Cordoba, Moron, and Rosario) with variable success. A qualitative analysis of implementation across cases indicates the existence of institutional and procedural impediments to reform, specifically bureaucratic resistance and intergovernmental relations on the one hand, and decentralization and administrative setbacks on the other. Preliminary results suggest that reforms were most likely to succeed when multiple branches of local governments signed on to the program. The incorporation of multiple key actors undermined institutional and procedural impediments in different ways. A similar program that

recently appeared in San Luis appears to have incorporated this lesson, designing workshops led by experts in areas such as procurement, public ethics, and publicity regulations in order to produce viable ordinance projects for submission to city council for deliberation.

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This project is dedicated to the countless, tireless advocates who devote their lives to improving society; may shared ideals never fade away.

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INTRODUCTION

One clean hand can go a long way for setting into motion transparent government initiatives. In 2015, Enrique Ponce was entering his final term as the mayor of the capital city of San Luis province, Argentina, when he contacted long-time good governance advocate Carlos March to discuss the possibility of inaugurating a municipal initiative to improve citizen participation and bolster government transparency, considering it valuable for his legacy. Mayor Ponce would commit to incorporating non-governmental actors into the process of designing pertinent legislation while March would convoke civil society organizations and experts for providing training sessions and advice for local citizens. The program “San Luis: Capital of participatory democracy” was formally introduced in 2016. Its objective was to produce new ordinances for procurement, transparency, publicity, and public ethics over the course of mayor Ponce’s final term, working with city council to define the legal parameters for regulating discretionary power in local government and society.

The program in San Luis represents the latest iteration of comprehensive transparency reform in Argentina, a multifaceted strategy hinging on state-society agreements to address and delimit discretionary decision-making in subnational contexts by introducing initiatives in local participation, legislative frameworks, and access to public information. In principle, these holistic strategies promote transparent government as a response to abuses in official discretion. They employ core anticorruption best-practices such as presentation of sworn declarations and procurement procedure oversight as well as participatory mechanisms for confronting local public administration deficiencies, for example, associated with strategic development plans or budgeting programs.

For anticorruption advocates in Argentina, the focus on subnational governments began to take shape in the early 2000s, a period of crisis characterized by intense nationwide political, social, and economic turmoil. In the ensuing months, federal government initiatives began to emphasize decentralized government reform, the institutionalization of anticorruption legislation in provinces and municipalities, as well as citizen auditing procedures to improve participation and accountability at the local level.¹ Meanwhile, territorial mobilizations in large municipalities provided opportunities for civil society to demand from local governments improved channels of citizen participation and oversight.

Under these circumstances, in 2003, the country's *Transparency International* chapter, *Poder Ciudadano (PC)*, introduced the "Zero Discretion Accord" (ZDA) program, designed to commit municipalities to improving transparent government through holistic participatory, legislative, and informational reform packages. The ZDAs contained around fifteen initiatives to be implemented within one year, and local civil society groups would facilitate and monitor implementation. Much like the 2016 program in San Luis, each municipal ZDA contained a comprehensive, multi-faceted strategy to address official discretion by promoting public policies and administrative innovations for transparent government. However, unlike San Luis, the ZDA program did not always incorporate the city council or other entities like the judicial branch or school board into the agreements, excluding key municipal government actors with a heavy

¹ These initiatives include, among others: *Diálogo Argentino*, a program organized during 2002 by congressmen, the Catholic Church, and UNDP, which called for the "urgent rationalization of the political and administrative apparatus" to make government more efficient and transparent, emphasizing political and institutional reform at all levels of government (UNDP 2002); the national Anticorruption Office's *Plan Provincias*, a medium- to long-term investment beginning in 2004 with support from the World Bank to improve institutional transparency and anticorruption at the subnational level to meet international agreement standards; and *Auditoría Ciudadana*, a national cabinet initiative beginning in 2003 from the *Subsecretary of Institutional Reform and Democratic Strengthening*, designed to carry out town hall meetings in municipalities around the country for the purposes of training citizens and measuring perceptions of existing participatory and accountability mechanisms.

influence on reform efficacy. In the end, the ZDA program's variable success is indicative of its status as a "pilot" initiative, whose operation has been overshadowed by its production of a holistic framework for transparency reform strategies at the municipal level.

PC's ZDA program lasted roughly three years, and although ZDAs were designed for major cities such as Ushuaia, Salta, and Mendoza, in only three cases did a reform package agreement enter the implementation stage: Cordoba, Moron, and Rosario.² Follow up reports³ from these three cases indicate variable success, with only cursory explanations for why success was not achieved. The reports provide an opportunity to further empirically assess how the ZDA program operated and performed in municipal contexts between 2003-2006. The following investigation focuses on these three sites and draws from primary and secondary sources, as well as personal interviews with key local actors involved with the ZDA program.

Upon closer examination, the ZDA program reflects recent trends in municipal development, transparency policy, and civil society incidence in Argentina. Existing literature, however, has not explored state-society collaboration or comprehensive reform strategies from the perspective of municipal transparency. The present investigation includes assessments of institutional and procedural impediments to the ZDA program, and its results point to the importance of multiple-branch adherence for success, given the wider number of key municipal actors sharing common reform objectives. The results have implications for similar comprehensive municipal reform programs based on state-society collaboration. They suggest that civil society

² The background explanation for *PC*'s selection of these municipalities is not the object of this investigation, although it likely revolves around personal ties between *PC* and local advocates on the ground as well as political will among incipient, reform-oriented municipal administrations.

³ Reports refer to primary documents from local monitoring organizations as well as *PC*'s official publication assessing implementation of the ZDA program, *Seguimiento del cumplimiento de los "Acuerdos de Discrecionalidad Cero" en los municipios de Córdoba, Morón y Rosario* (Astarita, Alonso, and Secchi 2006).

planners should design programs that incorporate mayors as well as city council members and representatives from other entities into the discussion and implementation of reforms.

1. Subnational government, transparency policy, and civil society incidence

The comprehensive reform strategy embedded in the ZDA program speaks to broader trends in subnational development, transparency policy, and civil society incidence in Argentina. Subnational governments have been affected in recent years by decentralization and globalization processes, both of which provide obstacles for municipal autonomy but also opportunities for innovative development strategies. Secondly, transparency legislation has been incrementally introduced in Argentina and Latin America, although ongoing political resistance and analytical challenges continue to impede reformers. Finally, the comprehensive reform strategies studied here are driven by civil society organizations, speaking to broader state-society relations and forms of incidence. This section will briefly describe these larger policy trends and how they relate to the ZDA program.

1.1. Subnational development

In recent years, provincial and municipal governments have undertaken reform strategies in order to adapt to decentralization and globalization trends, however multiple jurisdictional, financial, and political limitations undermine their responses to development issues. Nonetheless, subnational contexts may benefit from administrative, political, and economic innovations as well as participatory institutions when it comes to strategic development plans or even transparency agreements. This section will explore the setbacks and opportunities for subnational development in order to provide contextual information for comprehensive transparency reform.

In Argentina, decentralization policies designed to shift economic as well as juridical and administrative responsibilities from the federal government to subnational governments were implemented under both military and civilian governments.⁴ Under the current democratic regime, the revision of juridical aspects of provincial and municipal autonomy via constitutional reform in 1994 provided increased *de jure* subnational autonomy, contributing to stronger federalization in Argentina through legal means, however *de facto* dependence on federal government support persists for many subnational governments.⁵ Large city governments in particular have had difficulties transitioning from centralized bureaucratic structures due to limitations in human resource capacity or informational technology, for example.

Despite limited autonomy, municipal structures have had to confront effects of globalization (Arnoletto and Beltran in Delgado 1997). Historically, municipalities were responsible for regulating territory, infrastructure, and basic services such as street sweeping and waste collection, but recently cities have had to assume new regional collaborative and organizational responsibilities (Tecco 2005; Tecco and Bressan 2001). New demands include social policy management, economic promotion, and environmental protection. Although this process involves local-regional development strategies as well as organizational change, municipalities are “tied-down businesses” (Soria 1997), with administrative efficacy representing a sometimes marginal reform priority.

⁴ As a development strategy, decentralization typically involves privatizing services and utilities in order to stimulate or liberate the economy while minimizing bureaucratic inefficiencies associated with publicly administered services. Military-led decentralization, though in step with the recommendations from the international financial community at the time, was unsustainable for various political and economic reasons. After the return to democracy, civilian-led decentralization was undertaken most effectively during the Menem administration (1989-1999).

⁵ Article 123 in the National Constitution dictates that provincial governments must design their constitutions to give municipal governments autonomy over local affairs.

Working against municipal governments are jurisdictional, financial, and political limitations. With regard to jurisdictional issues, municipal governments are juridically organized according to statutes outlined in provincial constitutions, meaning the contingencies affecting provincial legislatures have produced different levels of municipal autonomy (Arques in Welp and Serdült, 2014, 165). Provincial governments standardize constitutions (*Cartas Orgánicas*) or city charters (*Leyes Orgánicas*), defining functions and attributes of public interest, resource and co-participation regimes, the possibility of inter-municipal contracts, and mechanisms for cooperation with the provinces.

Secondly, financial needs and resource management present important obstacles for provincial administrative capacity and economic independence, a condition referred to as autarky, or *autarquía* in Spanish (Gusman 2013). Historically circumscribed by provincial co-participation and extra-local policies, the ability for municipal governments to collect revenues and distribute services remains an ongoing challenge. In some cases, revenues are collected indirectly due to structurally impoverished local populations. Outside political pressures, especially in historically autarchic provinces with traditions of dedicating significant resources to social policy and poverty relief, may permeate local party dynamics and social structures.

Finally, political party subsystems are important and are interconnected with larger systems. As argued by Gibson et al. (2010), subnational parties have varying levels of autonomy, political constitutions, and offices in different jurisdictions, and their patterns are uniquely shaped by local institutions. Although municipal legislation may exist for campaign financing or political party activities, regulatory capacity is generally weak and sometimes undermined by provincial standards.

Despite jurisdictional, financial, and political limitations, municipal governments provide opportunities for innovations and structures for citizen participation that are not readily available at higher levels of government. Daniel Garcia Delgado (1997) identifies three areas of innovation in Argentine municipal governments: administrative performance, political institutions, and economic development. Given the organizational size and composition of local governments, the transition from bureaucratic, top-down management to horizontal, inter-institutional administration may be easier to achieve, providing viable opportunities to reconstruct a new local social contract among governments, citizens, and local institutions focused on accountability and budget diversification (19). Secondly, local political institutions provide opportunities for officials to move away from traditional partisan behaviors historically associated with clientelism to coordinated leadership in conjunction with social organizations and attuned to global investment programs. Finally, economic development at the municipal level has moved from centralized, technocratic redistribution of resources to strategic planning with industrial associations, universities, and the international community. New municipal economic models focus on developing industrial districts and small business networks, incorporating inter-jurisdictional entities such as regional organizations or universities for coordination and planning, as well as fomenting productive consortiums or corridors (24).

Complementary to these innovative tendencies are decentralized structures that provide channels for semi-direct democracy and proximity to institutions that provincial or federal governments typically lack. Mechanisms such as popular initiatives, referendums, popular audits, and town halls are more accessible to local institutions such as neighborhood centers, participation *juntas*, and economic and social councils, allowing these groups to exert and prioritize sectorial

necessities. Additionally, local public-private spaces provide opportunities for so-called third sector⁶ participation, with civil society organizations helping to execute plans, provide information, and apply social accountability pressure (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz 2000; 2006).

1.2. Transparent government and anticorruption efforts

Transparent government and anticorruption efforts have become central issues for public policy agendas within Latin American countries since the 1990s. Parallel to decentralization processes, the Argentine government as well as civil society actors have participated actively in the regional and global anticorruption movement, which began to take shape through international treaties like the OAS's Interamerican Convention against Anticorruption (IACAC) introduced in 1996, the OECD's Antibribery Convention in 1999, and the UN's Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2003.⁷ These treaties continue to influence national and subnational anticorruption policy, contributing to public ethics laws, the creation of anticorruption and ombudsman offices, and installation of financial and administrative oversight entities such as administrative investigations prosecutors (*fiscales de investigaciones administrativas*) at different levels of government. With regard to subnational anticorruption, Article 47 of the 1999 national Public Ethics Law 25,188, "invites provinces and the autonomous government of the city of Buenos Aires to draft legislation regarding financial disclosure regulations, business gifts (*obsequios*), and incompatibilities with ethics in public office." This article sets the stage for a series of reforms at

⁶ The third sector refers to institutions and actors whose task environments (Thompson 1967) are distinguished from task environments within the public or private sectors. The terms "third sector" or "civil society" are used interchangeably in this study.

⁷ The UN defines corruption as personally benefitting from an abuse of power, in political institutions, private businesses, or national or international institutions (UN 2012, 19).

the subnational level. Additionally it opens the door for civil society groups to organize behind anticorruption efforts on legal grounds.

Advances in the institutionalization of anticorruption are generated by forces at three broad levels: the international community, specific agencies within national governments, and civil society organizations (UN 2012, 42). Regarding international standards, the OAS has integrated a follow-up mechanism to evaluate countries' progress implementing the IACAC terms of agreement. Intergovernmental cooperation initiatives, preventive measures, and sanctions have characterized the first five periods (2003-2017) of the IACAC follow-up mechanism (also known as MESICIC⁸), with Argentina reporting specifically on legislation (2003), public sector contracts and acquisitions (2006), anti-bribery (2009), corruption control entities (2013), and witness protection (2017). Secondly, many national governments in Latin America have prioritized access to public information and transparency, third sector participation and public policy monitoring, as well as awareness-building campaigns. International bodies and development banks have provided financial and technical assistance to upper level comptrollers and Public Ministries (*Ministerios Público*), Attorneys General, central accounting offices, and anticorruption entities. Finally, many civil society actors—including organizations as well as universities, individual experts, and journalists—have increased advocacy via the political, technical, and juridical foundations of regional and international anticorruption agreements (Ibid, 57), co-aligning around transparency and implementation issues.

⁸ MESICIC is the Spanish acronym for *Mecanismo de Seguimiento de la Implementación de la Convención Interamericana contra la Corrupción* (Follow-up Mechanism for the Implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption).

Characterizing corruption control policymaking in the region, researchers Morris and Blake (2009) note that, as countries struggle to consolidate and deepen democratic participation and institutions, state actors as well as third sector advocates are faced with obdurate political and analytical challenges. On the one hand, although transparency in democratic regimes may be considered crucial for improving government efficacy, the manner and extent of information made accessible to the public continues to revolve around a core political debate concerning the constitutional limits of official discretion. Additionally, leaders may simply lack the incentive to genuinely engage with transparency reform, either out of a “corporate” interest in maintaining the status quo or out of partisan interest not to cede political points to opposition reformers⁹. On the other hand, transparent government is a relatively new policy area with little empirical evidence to guide discussions for how to implement effective reforms. Corruption itself is an elusive concept, generating intense intellectual discussions that offer few practical solutions. As an illicit phenomenon, moreover, systematic measurements of corruption other than those based on perceptions or direct experiences with bribery are not readily available. Anticorruption advocacy to this day suffers from these political and analytical challenges, suggesting that any cases of successful reform in this area should be studied carefully in order to understand how and why these impediments are overcome.

Although given an increasingly central position in international anticorruption campaigns, transparency faces serious implementation limitations at the municipal and provincial levels of government, even when targeted by federal-level anticorruption entities. Unlike adjustments or acute policy decisions, transparent government requires considerable reinforcement of

⁹ In interviews with Carlos March and Enrique Ponce, both referred to the term “*corporación política*” to describe politicians’ resistance to transparent government reforms.

administrative bureaucratic entities. Obstacles for systematic administrative reform in the transparency sphere may stem from complex jurisdictional disputes between municipalities and provinces, limited financial resources, technological deficiencies, and other factors. Unlike individual national-to-subnational assistance programs (e.g., the Anticorruption Office's *Plan Provincias*), or prioritization of single issues within international anticorruption agreements (e.g., MESICIC), the initiatives included in comprehensive transparency programs such as the ZDA agreements take on these systemic obstacles through a multifaceted strategy for enhancing citizen participation, sanctioning pertinent legislation, and improving access to information, providing an alternative path to reform.

1.3. Civil society incidence

The comprehensive reform programs implemented in Cordoba, Moron, Rosario, and more recently in San Luis, are an example of civil society incidence in public administration, an important trend characterizing democratization processes and policymaking in the region (see Feinberg, Waisman, and Zamosc 2006; Leiras in Acuña and Vacchieri 2007). In recent years, there has been much written on the development and increasingly important role of incidence-oriented civil society organizations (CSOs) in Argentina,¹⁰ with recent studies providing theoretical conceptualizations of third sector capital and incidence mechanisms such as social accountability that improve understanding of how these groups affect policymaking (Peruzzotti and Smulovitz 2000; 2006; Acuña and Vacchieri 2007). However, financial restrictions as well as fundamental cause-and-effect uncertainties associated with advocacy, especially in emerging policy areas like

¹⁰ With regard to development, Andrés Thompson (1994) describes the history of Argentine CSOs and their subtypes, Mario Roitter and Inés González Bombal (2000) provide a map of third sector actors during the 1990s, while Catalina Smulovitz and Daniela Urbarri (2008) create a taxonomy of incidence-oriented CSOs.

transparency or anticorruption, pose ongoing challenges for CSOs (like *Poder Ciudadano*) in Argentina. This section will briefly describe civil society development and identify basic challenges to incidence in order to characterize how comprehensive transparency reform packages, like the ZDA program, have emerged and how they operate.

With the expansion of civil society activity in Argentina in recent decades,¹¹ the associations and projects undertaken within the third sector have been studied within the framework of democratization and public policy. Campetella, González Bombal, and Roitter (in Roitter and González Bombal 2000) provide a structural-operational definition of these organizations as semi-permanent and formal associational structures that are not for profit yet privately controlled (that is, separated from the state), with decision-making autonomy and voluntary affiliation (27). Regarding democratization, Munck (2007) has described how recent civil society activity has come out of the devastating legacy of the Argentine Dirty War (1977-1983) and transition from authoritarianism, and how it expanded within a contentious process of democratic stabilization. Oxhorn (in Feinberg, Waisman, and Zamosc 2006) incorporates the dynamics of collectivism and *la lucha* (“the fight” or resistance) as atypical characteristics of Latin American civil society groups, underscoring ambiguous forms of confrontation, negotiation, and compromise undertaken by this sector in relation to “fluid” state boundaries.

Yet, despite the expanding number of CSOs and development of state-society relations since authoritarianism, financial restrictions and high levels of uncertainty pose important

¹¹ According to Catalina Smulovitz and Daniela Urribarri (2008), the universe of CSOs has experienced three major booms in the country since 1970, first in response to military intervention in universities and educational institutes, then during the 1980s and 1990s with democratic consolidation, government decentralization, multi-lateral investment, and political crises, and finally after the 2001 institutional and economic crisis that led to the advent of policy research centers and political action centers. Within this contemporary phase, the authors identify sixty active CSOs and dozens of well-known experts influencing policy discourse in ten different areas ranging from citizen participation and democratization to anticorruption and access to information.

limitations for civil society incidence in public policy. On the one hand, unlike for-profit companies, project-based advocacy organizations often produce output for highly specific clienteles with a stake in the policy agenda being pursued (Thompson 1967), such as transnational networks or foreign embassies. This often means that input is scarce, irregularly available, or conditioned, forcing organizations in this sense to function with a high degree of flexibility and relatively less budgetary discretion. Although CSOs may attract a considerable amount of volunteer advocates, they still require a stable core of professional members in order to design and carry out funded projects, and in volatile macroeconomic contexts, organizations may struggle to maximize their potential, unable to offer competitive salaries or offer clear job descriptions. On the other hand, beliefs about the cause and effect of advocacy work is undermined in complex societies with institutional deficiencies, weak rule of law, and persistently high levels of perceived corruption. General consensus is lacking as to how best to address governmental deficiencies, policy implementation, or undemocratic practices under these circumstances.

These tangible and intangible circumstances pose considerable constraints on CSO programs, pointing towards the importance of identifying the determinants that allow organizations to mitigate uncertainties and plan successfully. For example, in order to overcome limited financial and human resources, CSOs may undertake incidence strategies with subnational governments rather than national government entities, or articulate the interests of citizens and officials that have been mobilized by an acute crisis. As a response to causal uncertainty, organizations may be certain of the benefits of pursuing collaborative state-society programs focused on improving administrative procedures or enforcing existing regulations, for example.

Such was the case of *Poder Ciudadano*'s ZDA program, whose comprehensive transparency reform strategy was introduced into Cordoba, Moron, and Rosario and likely succeeded because they reduced complexities and involved low costs. For these subnational governments, the participatory contents of comprehensive transparency reform programs were complementary to existing strategic development plans, which, if successful, could provide political and economic benefits for municipal leadership. For local CSOs, these reform programs offered opportunities to participate in local decision-making, leading town hall meetings or providing legal or technical assistance for access to information innovations, in addition to improving capacity to monitor and evaluate local government performance. Finally, as the program's overseer, *Poder Ciudadano* countered complexities by reducing the scope of action to local government institutions and minimized costs by articulating local governmental and non-governmental interests around the prospect of transparent government.

2. Gaps in state-society and local development literature regarding transparency

Existing literature features investigations of state-society collaboration around collective good issues as well as participation and access to information in local development within the context of decentralization in Argentina. Gaps are evident when it comes to understanding the operation of civil society-driven transparency reform packages at the municipal level.

Studies of state-society collaboration have identified opportunities for synergy around the provision of collective goods, but have given less attention to possible synergy around ethics- or principle-based policies such as those seeking to curtail discretionary decision-making. The case studies compiled by Peter Evans (1997) provide valuable insights regarding collaboration behind the securing of collective goods such as irrigation or enhancements to citizens' social capital, but

they do not explore the potential for state-society synergy behind legislative or administrative improvements at the municipal level, such as the initiatives presented in the ZDAs. In the sense that less discretionary decision-making may be considered a collective good, the concept of state-society synergy has not been applied to ethics-based reform programs that offer benefits to government and non-governmental actors alike.

Secondly, authors have studied municipal decision-making, participatory policies, and modernization initiatives within local development in Argentina, however empirical analyses of transparency program implementation in this context are not common. Madoery (2009) evaluates the evolution of strategic development in subnational contexts in Argentina, showing the advantages of endogenous, territorial decision-making in the context of broader decentralization tendencies. Caminotti (2005) investigates local development policies in Mendoza, finding that positive municipal-provincial government relations have beneficial effects on the implementation of policies for improving rural productive capacity. Additionally, Iturburu (2007) compiles evidence of the incorporation of systems of modernization into municipal governments since the 1990s. Lopez (2007) identifies structural, institutional, and transversal dimensions of public administration that have been transformed by these systems. Though they describe these development trends, the authors acknowledge their studies do not provide extended empirical analyses of variable implementation, much less the factors that may increase or decrease the likelihood of successful reforms at the municipal level in areas such as access to information or semi-direct democracy.

Some authors have given more attention to specific aspects of transparent government in Argentine municipalities. Looking at the evolution of information technology, for example.

Schejtman, Calamari, and Basombrio (2014) have created an index of municipal government web transparency across Argentina, studying content and accessibility of institutional, historical, and legislative information on official websites. In a recent study, Wacker (2016) explores the effect of information technology on participatory democracy in Rosario, providing a summary of the legal developments in this area since the early 2000s. These studies provide relevant insights into the evolution of access to information in subnational contexts, and offer multiple observations regarding their implications for transparency and participatory democracy, but they do not assess the nature or operation of programs that incorporate information technology as a method to reduce official discretion.

In essence, previous investigations provide valuable assessments of the institutional impediments for development programs but do not empirically evaluate the operation of transparency initiatives or of comprehensive reform packages at the municipal level. In light of this, the present study of the ZDA program provides an opportunity to compare the operation of state-society transparency agreements across varying subnational units, demonstrating how discretion reduction may mobilize governmental and non-governmental actors around participatory mechanisms, organize and inform local deliberative procedures, and introduce new technologies into public administration.

3. Investigation of the Zero Discretion Accord program for improving understanding of municipal transparency

Analysis of comprehensive transparency reform strategies through a case study of the ZDA Program suggests that the potential for state-society collaboration around transparency exists, and is bolstered by the incorporation of multiple key government actors. The recent case of San Luis

indicates that comprehensive transparency reform strategies are still relevant in Argentine municipalities experiencing broader processes of government decentralization, modernization, and civil society expansion.

A better understanding of municipal transparency reform program dynamics provides opportunities for improving general awareness of typical institutional and procedural impediments for participatory, legislative, and informational initiatives and points to pathways for success. Insights into comprehensive transparency reform program implementation may inform future analyses of similar state-society agreements. This analysis leaves aside for future research the selection process that brought the ZDAs to these municipalities, the negotiation process between state and non-state actors leading to agreement contents, and comparisons with alternative state-driven or binding transparency reforms.

3.1. Transparency through key actor mobilization

Mobilization of key actors appears to be the primary causal pathway by which comprehensive transparency reforms are successful. Comparative analysis of ZDA implementation in Cordoba, Moron, and Rosario indicates that Moron was more successful than the other two cities due to the adherence of the city council and school board to the program. Cordoba and Rosario implemented executive-led agreements, meeting with an array of institutional and procedural impediments for improving participatory mechanisms, passing legislation, and enhancing access to information, efforts to which other key government actors had little incentive to respond. By incorporating other branches of government, Moron's initiatives succeeded because more key actors participated in their design, implementation, and oversight, suggesting that the multilevel synchronization of key actor interests around clear proposals laid

out by civil society actors increases the likelihood that action will be taken within government to incorporate such proposals.

The central finding from this ZDA implementation analysis—that the higher the number of key municipal actors that sign on to the program, the more likely reform efforts succeed—is not surprising, nor does it provide a silver bullet for making governments more transparent or less corrupt, but it does have implications for future reform strategies in this area, and may improve understanding of institutional and procedural impediments for transparency at the municipal level as well as provide pathways for future research.

3.2. San Luis: Incorporating lessons and developments

The case of San Luis is not thoroughly studied in this investigation, but rather is included to provide a recent example of comprehensive transparency reform at the municipal level whose operation validates the key finding that reforms benefit from key actor mobilization. This latest iteration of the comprehensive reform strategy confronts similar institutional and procedural obstacles as the ZDA Program but has internalized lessons from the previous experiences as well as developments in different areas related to transparency.

With the clear objective of producing legislation for different dimensions of transparent government, the initiative in San Luis has incorporated city council members from the beginning, utilizing collaborative design procedures enhanced by national experts in key areas. The organization of specialized task forces in areas such as procurement, participatory mechanisms, publicity, or public ethics provide more specific objectives and produce more elaborate ordinance projects around which legislators can effectively deliberate. Building off of lessons provided by the ZDA Program, the designers of the initiative in San Luis have put more emphasis on

stimulating reforms with the city council, “rather than resolutions that depend solely on [the mayor]” (March 2018).

The San Luis initiative also benefits from developments in technology, transparency advocacy, as well as interpersonal relationships between officials and long-time advocates, pointing to the role of social capital for actor mobilization behind these reform strategies. Apart from developments in digital government, multiple CSOs with national scopes intervene in San Luis to fortify the articulation of local actors, a considerable contrast to the ZDA Program where only one national-level organization (*Poder Ciudadano*) was involved. Moreover, the San Luis initiative is linked to the ZDA Program as reflected by the years-long relationship between the mayor and the architect of these comprehensive transparency reform programs, who since the ZDA Program has accrued enough social capital to convoke experts and collaborate directly with government leadership.

The case of San Luis provides new interrogatives centered on these developments. This investigation however incorporates this case to demonstrate the continuity of comprehensive transparency strategies, whose operation will at length be described through a case study of the ZDA program. Through key actor mobilization, the initiative in San Luis appears to apply a primary take-away from the ZDA program, namely the effectiveness of multiple branch adhesion for reform procedures.

4. Methods

This investigation of the ZDA Program is essentially descriptive. It focuses on how these agreements were implemented in different subnational contexts in order to identify the factors that impeded or facilitated successful reform. The study draws from primary and secondary sources for

contextual information, and identifies the specific initiatives introduced in each municipality as well as their implementation status at the time of the follow-up reports. Finally, the chapters are organized in order to differentiate the complexity across initiatives within the comprehensive reform approach employed by the ZDA program.

4.1. Methodology

In order to build the case study, this investigation drew from both primary and secondary sources. On the one hand, interviews were carried out with multiple advocates that have worked with *Poder Ciudadano*, including during the period under analysis. Two semi-structured interviews with key actors in municipal transparency reforms, namely the designer of the ZDA program as well as the mayor of San Luis where a similar initiative is currently underway, were recorded in 2018.

Secondary sources consisted mainly of reports from municipal organizations and *PC*, local newspaper articles, as well as city government websites. After contacting *PC* and explaining the objective of this investigation, the author was given access to archival documentation related to this program, such as presentations, original training session material, and different follow-up reports from local organizations directed to *PC*. Primary assessments of each accord's contents were drawn from *PC*'s final assessment report of the ZDA program (Astarita, Alonso, and Secchi 2006). This assessment report provides basic explanations for initiative failure or success, which in turn were subjected to further examination. Contents and implementation information of the ZDAs in Cordoba, Moron, and Rosario can be found in Appendix A, while a selection of secondary sources can be found in Appendix B.

4.2. Chapter structure

In order to synthesize information, the ZDAs' individual initiatives were categorized by the author into three broad policy areas according to the nature of action involved and difficulty of mobilizing the necessary key actors. These policy areas—citizen participation, legislative action, and access to information—comprise the content analysis within the three body chapters. Although a subjective exercise, the categorization of initiatives facilitates implementation comparison across municipalities, in addition to generating conclusions about the complexity and obstacles to the reforms being pursued.

By grouping individual initiatives into three categories, this structure qualitatively differentiates the complexity involved in reform efforts. Thus, citizen participation initiatives are the most complex, requiring both governmental and non-governmental actors to mobilize in order to be successful. Next come legislative actions, which require fewer actors to mobilize but also intra-governmental bipartisanship for progress to be made. Finally, access to information initiatives are the least complex in the sense that they require a smaller universe of actors to mobilize and depend fundamentally on government administrators' incorporation of available technology. Each chapter begins by briefly describing the reform area under analysis before entering into case contents. A summary of implementation results across municipalities utilizing this re-categorization are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Completion Rates of ZDA Initiatives across Municipalities

Municipality	Content Analysis	Policy Area			Total
		Citizen Participation	Legislative Reform	Access to Information	
Cordoba	N° of Initiatives	5	6	10	21
	Incomplete	2	5	5	12
	Partial	2	1	3	6
	Complete	1	0	2	3
	% Completion	40.00%	8.33%	35.00%	27.78%
Moron	N° of Initiatives	8	7	10	25
	Incomplete	1	1	0	2
	Partial	2	2	5	9
	Complete	5	4	5	14
	% Completion	75.00%	71.43%	75.00%	73.81%
Rosario	N° of Initiatives	5	2	8	15
	Incomplete	2	1	3	6
	Partial	1	0	3	4
	Complete	2	1	2	5
	% Completion	50.00%	50.00%	43.75%	47.92%
Total Initiatives		18	15	28	61
% Completion Total		55.00%	43.25%	51.25%	49.83%

Note: The implementation results are based on information provided by PC's general ZDA follow-up report (Astarita, Alonso, and Secchi 2006). Moron's initiatives refer to those agreed upon by the executive branch (8 initiatives), city council (11 initiatives), and school board (6 initiatives). Completion rates are calculated by assigning the following values: Incomplete = 0; Partial = 0.5; Complete = 1. Note that Moron's rate of success across initiative categories was higher than in Cordoba and Rosario, a tendency that this investigation attributes to multiple branch adherence to the ZDA program.

5. Road Map

This project comprises a case study of the ZDA program from 2003 to 2006 with the aim of understanding how the program operated and performed in Cordoba, Moron, and Rosario. The chapters will examine participatory, legislative, and informational initiatives separately in order to identify the mechanisms that allowed for successful or non-successful implementation in each policy area. The chapters are sequenced to reflect the order of difficulty in mobilizing key actors. Initiatives appear to benefit most when multiple government branches engage with to the ZDA program. Their complementary objectives act to streamline action and may introduce healthy competition across agreements¹².

The first chapter analyzes the implementation of citizen participation initiatives across municipalities. Citizen participation initiatives were less successfully implemented overall, given that the primary mechanism for success requires the mobilization of a larger array of actors both within and outside of municipal governments. Local decentralization processes presented impediments for strategic plan participation, while participatory budgeting programs suffered from institutional and procedural impediments associated with legal ambiguities and project delays.

The second chapter examines the implementation of legislative actions across municipalities as stipulated by the agreements. Though not requiring as wide a range of actors as citizen participation initiatives, legislative action hinges on deliberative procedures as the primary change mechanism. The alignment of complementary objectives across key government actors appears to be beneficial. When alignment did not occur, inter-governmental relations impeded

¹² In the only case of multiple-branch adhesion, Moron, three individual ZDAs were designed and signed by the executive branch, city council, and school board.

statutes for city charter articles, for example, and executive-led decentralization procedures sidetracked city hall participatory mechanism reforms.

The third chapter examines how access to information initiatives were implemented across the municipalities. These initiatives depend primarily on the use of available technology as the primary mechanism. They require fewer actors to mobilize and less deliberation. However, access to public information is also influenced by internal resistance and disagreements about the scope of information to be made accessible. Results from the ZDA content analysis indicate that these initiatives generally suffer from broader administrative obstacles such as deficient social program management, lack of software development resources, and procedural delays. Nonetheless, access to information initiatives demonstrate how web development provides opportunities for synergy between state-society relations in the area of transparency.

The concluding chapter summarizes the findings from the ZDA content analysis, arguing that multiple-branch, multilevel adherence to the program improves the likelihood that initiatives in all three policy areas will be successfully carried out. Executive-led agreements in Cordoba and Rosario are more susceptible to institutional and procedural impediments to implementation than in Moron, where multiple government branches sign on to the program. Alternative explanations point to weaknesses in the articulation mechanisms through which *PC* mobilized actors in distant localities, as well as to uncertainties arising from the novelty of transparency reform for local governments. Future agreements, such as the transparency program introduced in San Luis in 2016, provide evidence that multiple-branch adherence has been incorporated into planning around these reform packages. They offer opportunities to further assess institutional and procedural impediments for these types of reforms.

CHAPTER 1: DIFFICULTY OF INSTITUTIONALIZING PARTICIPATION

Initiatives to increase citizen participation in decision-making and governmental affairs are high-intensity challenges, requiring strategies for organizing government officials and non-governmental actors alike in order to find ways to coordinate and institutionalize their action. Governments must have trained officials to disseminate, organize, and implement instances of dialogue with non-governmental actors on topics ranging from service provision and budgeting, to social development and education, to bureaucratic efficiency and transparency. Citizens must have sufficient time, motivation, and training to actively engage with public administration issues and to posit attainable solutions. The high investment required to institutionalize and administer instances of citizen participation along both of these dimensions is a common theme in all participatory initiatives introduced under the ZDA program, and it is also a primary source of implementation setbacks.

Evidence of participation initiatives under the ZDA program suggests that *coordinated leadership across municipal branches* is a central variable for improvements in this area because it augments the number of key actors and processes involved in attaining participatory objectives. Evidence also points to the importance of contextual factors in the municipalities at the time of the accords, specifically prior experiences with participatory initiatives as well as proximity to *PC*. They determine in part whether important information and expertise can be utilized to incentivize and institutionalize participation. Finally, analysis of the participatory initiatives across cases indicates that the more specific the objectives of a given initiative, the more likely it will succeed. One implication is that the *timing* of the accord (as it pertains to the chronological order of the ZDAs signed: first in Cordoba, next in Moron, and lastly in Rosario) may impact the selection and

scope of the agreed-upon actions. In this way, institutional, procedural, and technical variables influence implementation of citizen participation initiatives under the ZDA program.

Among the three cases, Cordoba best exemplifies the difficulty of implementing citizen participation initiatives under the ZDA program. In the first of the ZDAs signed, Cordoba's executive department agreed to undertake various actions to foment participation in the city's *Strategic Plan (Plan Estratégico de la ciudad de Córdoba, or PECba)*, as well as in participatory budgeting processes and town hall meetings. However, implementation of these initiatives appears to have suffered due to poor dissemination procedures and to protracted legal and bureaucratic impediments that an executive department acting unilaterally can scarcely overcome. In comparison, Rosario and Moron, having incorporated a wider range of local key actors than did Cordoba, had antecedent experiences to build on. They were able to agree to more specific initiatives for improving citizen participation, and to commit to implementing monitoring programs and participatory legislative projects with well-defined objectives.

The sections that follow describe the citizen participation content agreed to in each municipality, beginning with the most expansive and technically challenging strategies in Cordoba. The case shows how executive branch-led strategies, facing bureaucratic and administrative obstacles, are less effective than the multiple-branch-led strategies pursued elsewhere. When the objectives for participation are citywide in scope, the experience in Moron points to the importance of multiple-branch adherence to program success. Positive antecedent experiences with semi-direct democratic mechanisms, in addition to close proximity to *PC*, further enhance participation. As a comparator to Cordoba's agreement, Rosario's citizen monitoring initiatives underline the importance and effectiveness of technical soundness, particularly initiative

specificity and accord timing, for executive-led strategies. In summary, the evidence suggests five general trends that characterize the institutional, procedural, and technical difficulties of implementing citizen participation initiatives in the municipalities under the ZDA program: (1) multiple branch adherence to the ZDAs facilitates effective participation on a larger scale, overcoming bureaucratic resistance and incorporating key actors; (2) antecedent experiences with semi-direct democratic mechanisms facilitate implementation through procedure standardization, even leading to innovations; (3) proximity to *PC* provides organizational support and expertise; (4) initiative specificity orients state and non-state actors around clear objectives and timelines, and; (5) later timing of the accords allows for more policy learning so that the nature and scope of initiatives correspond more closely to the context.

1. Executive-led participation plans in Cordoba

This section explores the three central participatory initiatives in Cordoba in order to reveal the weakness of the executive branch in incentivizing and institutionalizing meaningful mechanisms of citizen participation in government affairs on a citywide scale. The mayor of Cordoba, Luis Juez, agreed to foment citizen participation in three initiatives under the ZDA program: the municipal development plan (*PECba*), the citywide participatory budgeting program, and periodic town hall meetings. The mayor's strategic plan took center stage for his new administration, building on previous government plans' citywide fora and professional associations¹³. However, participation lagged due to *weak dissemination, bureaucratic*

¹³ Antecedent development plans had fomented similar fora for citizen participation by offering technical training, legal and financial advice, and access to networks through semi-private municipal institutions such as the Agency for Economic Development (*Agencia for Desarrollo Económico*, or *ADEC*) and the Business Incubator Foundation (*Fundación Incubadora de Empresas*, or *FIDE*), positioning *PECba* to inherit relatively robust channels for participation.

impediments, and citizens' *negative perceptions* of municipal offices. The participatory budgeting program formed part of *PECba*, but was only partially carried out, impeded by *juridical disagreements* affecting the decentralized municipal structures. Only at the neighborhood level was the mayor successful in fomenting effective citizen participation, narrowing the scope of participation to town halls for debating a neighborhood-level re-zoning project. The Cordoba case shows that executive-led participation programs can be difficult despite antecedent experiences. The case also highlights the utility of initiative specificity under the ZDA program. A more detailed analysis of the three Cordoba initiatives provides evidence of how executive-led citizen participation plans did not meet objectives although initiative specificity favored implementation.

Before assuming power in late 2003, Mayor Juez introduced *PECba* as the core development initiative for his administration. It called for civil society groups (including universities, foundations, and religious communities), professional associations, and experts to participate in workshops and civic fora along different lines of action: social values and citizenship, social inclusion, employment, infrastructure and services, urban dynamics, small- to medium-size businesses, and environmental sustainability (*PECba* #4 2004, 24). Official reports claimed the initiative involved hundreds of sectorial experts in the plan's executive committee. Around 300 civil society associations representing over 197,000 citizens reportedly participated in the plan's "validation assembly" where specific projects were approved. The civil society group monitoring the ZDA, *Red Ciudadana Principio del Principio*, presented a different picture. It criticized the program for not undertaking proper *dissemination* procedures for the civic fora from the outset, illustrating the difficulties facing executive-led planning in highly populated, decentralized cities.

Important structural shortcomings associated with *organizational capacity, policy evaluation, and citizen perceptions* appear to have undermined proper dissemination and broad participation in the *PECba* initiative. In 2004, when the ZDA was put into effect, Cordoba's municipal government structure was significantly smaller than similarly sized cities like Rosario or Mendoza. Municipal offices were unprepared to incorporate decentralized participatory initiatives into their functions (UNC 2007, 17-19). When asked about the bureaucratic structure at the time, political leaders agreed that "organizational culture" for participatory programs was lacking, that public sector syndicalism had created resistance to administrative procedural changes, and that no effective diagnostic mechanisms for policy implementation or efficiency were being utilized by public administrators. Additionally, citizens' perceptions recorded in the 2004 *PECba* diagnostic report signaled low levels of confidence in leaders, a simplistic understanding of the municipal Communal Participation Centers (*Centros de Participación Comunales*, or *CPCs*) as being relevant only for administrative tasks, and a general politicization of intermediary spaces such as neighborhood centers (*PECba* #4 2004, 63; UNC 2007, 109). This evidence suggests *weak organizational capacity* for generating participation in the *PECba* plan as well as *negative experiences* with the municipality's decentralized structures on behalf of the citizenry that would have required multiple lines of action and perhaps participation from city council members or opposition leaders in order to revert.

Secondly, as part of the *PECba* initiative, the executive branch committed to carrying out a form of participatory budgeting called "micro-planification"¹⁴ organized around the ten *CPCs*

¹⁴ This program built on decentralized budgetary initiatives from the previous city administrations of Ruben Marti and German Kammerath, programs that allocated relatively small amounts of money for community projects or allowed citizens to vote for infrastructural projects in their neighborhood but which did not specifically follow participatory budgeting methodology.

located in the city.¹⁵ For the 2004 fiscal year, the municipality allocated a total of ARS \$2,000,000 (approximately USD \$667,000) to the CPCs to be used to organize forty different sector (neighborhood) level participatory budgeting experiences around the city. Only about half (twenty-three in total) were carried out, meaning a little over ARS \$1,000,000 of the ARS \$2,000,000 budget was utilized.¹⁶

Despite ample participation during the project's initial election phase and high approval ratings from neighbors during the 2004 process, multiple inconsistencies during the implementation phase negatively affected the participatory budgeting plans for 2005 and alienated many potential participants. According to follow-up reports by local monitoring organization *RCPdP*, *delays in project execution, inefficient material and human resources administration* (especially at the commune-level), as well as distracting *political campaigning* activities for city council elections that year, led the municipal Coordination for Participatory Budgeting to centralize the scope of the program from neighborhood sectors to the CPC level for 2005 (*RCPdP Monitoring*, July 2005). As a result of partial budgetary allocations and numerous project delays, the 2005 participatory budget process was not initiated in August 2005 as scheduled.

¹⁵ As one of the central components of *PECba*, the activation of the participatory budgeting process involved planning, implementation, and monitoring stages. After defining the neighborhood sectors within each commune, municipal representatives heading each CPC held informative meetings with local institution leaders and proceeded to disseminate information to the general public. The neighborhood sectors then underwent elections to select twelve representatives and replacements to form commune councils that would elevate and prioritize urban development and social policy projects with guidance from municipal technicians. Once the representatives were selected, workshops were led by participatory budgeting experts to formulate project matrices with assigned costs for each initiative which would then be presented to neighborhoods for their approval and elevated to the municipal government in the form of memoranda. Once projects were received by the central participatory budgeting office, the corresponding technical areas of the government—authorization, supply and purchases, and various public works offices—implemented the projects, which in turn were monitored bi-monthly by the CPCs.

¹⁶ In order of funding, projects included in the 2004 micro-planification process centered on road maintenance (31%), street lighting (24%), and social policy (17%), with remaining projects in the areas of green spaces, transit, neighborhood centers, architecture, and urban sanitation (28%).

In addition to administrative deficiencies, an important impediment to the participatory budgeting project under the ZDA program in Cordoba involved a *jurisdictional debate* surrounding the nature of the neighborhood participation *juntas* or committees designed by the city charter to direct participatory affairs at the commune level (City Charter Articles 155 and 156). A series of meetings took place between 2004 and 2005 among municipal officials, civil society organizations, the Community Relations Program from the National University of Cordoba, and the city's Permanent Participatory Budgeting Forum, in order to draft statutory legislation for these entities. However two years after the ZDA was signed, statutes were still not passed. As a result, participatory policies like the micro-planification program suffered setbacks. As described in the following chapter concerning legislative reforms, the Juez Administration gave priority to drafting pertinent legislation for neighborhood centers and the *juntas'* governing body, before considering the ordinance proposals. Given *bureaucratic deficiencies* and a *jurisdictional debate*, and the absence of multiple-branch adhesion to the ZDA, which would have increased the likelihood of consensus around allocations and even comprehensive legal reform for decentralized units, effective citizen participation in participatory budgeting in Cordoba was undermined.

Finally, apart from the citywide *PECba* and micro-planification initiatives, Cordoba's executive agreed to implement town hall meetings, which they successfully did by fomenting neighborhood participation in a re-zoning process. During 2005, the municipality organized a series of town halls to discuss the terms and conditions of a re-zoning project in one of the city's districts which would directly impact service provision and development contracts. The existence of *legislation* for town halls—guaranteed in Article 150 of the city charter, and regulated by

statutes in Ordinance 9,542 from 1996—in addition to the *specificity* of the subject matter facilitated the use of this mechanism.

Although monitoring organization *RCPdP* highlighted dissemination and accessibility issues on multiple occasions, the town halls achieved high levels of participation overall. Success was due in part to the *specificity of the project* under discussion. With many local sectors set to bear the social, environmental, and economic effects the decisions would have¹⁷, the relatively short time span during which these town halls were organized undermined the production of exhaustive and accessible studies of the re-zoning proposals. Additionally, weak publicity, inconvenient scheduling, and poor location impeded the participation of many citizens. Nonetheless, as a first step for opening the policy discussion to citizens, the re-zoning town halls ran without interruptions or scandals, generated substantial media coverage, and, at the very least, formed part of a “continual approximation between the Municipality and its citizens” as aspired to by the mayor (Astarita, Alonso, and Secchi 2006, 144). The experience allowed the municipality to improve upon organization and participatory aspects for a second series of town halls, which focused on a debt renegotiation with the city’s waste collection service provider, *CLIBA*, in 2006. This indicates a positive trend in executive-branch-led citizen participation initiatives in Cordoba, with the caveat that they pursued narrow, specific objectives.

To conclude, the three participatory initiatives in Cordoba provide evidence of the procedural and legal impediments facing executive-led enhancements to citizen participation

¹⁷ Applying as a model Moron’s experience with the “Transparent Public Procurement” program, designed in part by *PC*, the town halls permitted attendees to argue for and against the measure. Proponents highlighted the potential accrual of outside investor interest in addition to improving the preservation of green spaces in the city, while detractors cited fragmentation among technical analysts studying the issue and weakened control capacity on behalf of the municipal government to apply sanctioning power once the zoning regulations came into effect.

under the ZDA program. As the most technically challenging, participation in the city-wide *PECba* initiative was impeded by *weak dissemination*, *poor administrative planning*, and *negative citizen attitudes* towards government institutions, suggesting the need for multilateral, comprehensive government action in order to overcome structural deficiencies and cultural prejudices. Similarly, although the participatory budgeting initiative completed some of its initial objectives, *bureaucratic deficiencies and legal debates* impeded implementation and, ultimately, continuity. Finally, although neighborhood town halls suffered from dissemination and logistical setbacks, they were generally successful, due in part to the *pre-existing statutes* and relative *specificity* of the re-zoning issues being discussed. This evidence suggests that without other parts of the government in synchrony, executive branches aiming to strengthen citizen participation through civil society-municipal collaborations should focus on piecemeal reforms, such as defining district level channels for participation, rather than implementing citywide programs with broadly defined objectives and large-scale community involvement. The following cases will provide further evidence of the advantages of multiple government branch cohesion and initiative specificity for citizen participation under the ZDA program.

2. Cohesive multilateral participatory initiatives in Moron

The participatory initiatives in Moron demonstrate the effectiveness of *multilateral adhesion* to the ZDA program, in addition to the relevance of *previous experiences* and *proximity to PC* for further institutionalizing citizen participation channels. Multiple branch adhesion improved the effectiveness of participation initiatives, most importantly in the participatory legislative design (*elaboración participativa de normas*) procedure, because shared objectives across the wide range of actors involved—agents of the executive department, city council, and

civil society—facilitated organization and confidence in the efficacy of the desired results, avoiding bureaucratic uncertainties or political standstills that characterized the executive-led initiatives in Cordoba and Rosario. Additionally, previous experiences with participatory mechanisms in collaboration with *PC* and other civil society organizations improved the likelihood of initiative success. They also favored the city council’s commitment to generating participation through multiple mechanisms such as town hall meetings, neighborhood council sessions, and Open Bench initiatives. The evidence suggests horizontal, cross-branch induction of participatory best-practices. This section describes the participatory legislative design process in Moron, followed by a brief description of the individual initiatives carried out by the three municipal entities—executive branch, city council, and school board. The Moron case shows the effectiveness of multiple branch adhesion, as well as the benefits of previous experiences and proximity to *PC* for the general institutionalization of participatory mechanisms under the ZDA program.

At the onset, Moron’s executive department and city council both agreed to implement participatory legislative design and to pass a municipal ordinance for access to information, thereby sharing complementary objectives under the framework of the ZDA that were not shared in either Cordoba or Rosario. A closer examination of the procedure behind the access to information ordinance (Ordinance 7,187 of 2005) passed under Moron’s ZDA program highlights the unique influence of antecedent experiences and of the proximity to *PC*.

Since 2000, the municipality of Moron had worked with *PC*’s “Transparent Procurement Program,” organizing town halls and focus groups with the aim of renegotiating the terms and conditions around waste collection in the municipality and reversing years of corrupt negligence

on behalf of the contractors. The sweeping action brought Mayor Sabbatella much popularity among constituents, in part providing him the impetus to form a new political party (*Nuevo Morón*) and to consolidate local political actors behind his agenda. By 2004, Sabbatella's party had a majority in the city council, and the president of the council joined the mayor's transparency fight by signing on to the ZDA program.

Under the framework of the ZDA, introduced in March 2004, the executive department subsequently issued Decree 1,307, which outlined multiple lines of action for improving transparency in Moron. It included statutes for participatory legislative design, in which organizations and experts in a given reform area could be given the opportunity to intervene and provide recommendations to the bill in question.¹⁸ The city council quickly approved these statutes (Decree 266/2004). After drafting an access to information bill, Mayor Sabbatella began a participatory legislative design procedure, inviting community associations to provide observations to the design. Nine associations responded, including *PC* and three other CSOs with offices in proximity of the city as well as Moron's bar association, local development organizations and a number of retiree centers.¹⁹ After incorporating the recommendations, the draft document was submitted to the city council and passed in June of 2005 via Ordinance 7,187, in a neighborhood city council session. In September of the same year, the executive department created an access to information office (Decree 1,855) in order to centralize and efficiently distribute information to citizens.

¹⁸ This initiative, designed by the national Anticorruption Office and legally regulated by Article 3 of federal Decree 1,172 (2003), permits authorities to reach out to experts for specialized analysis as well as to conduct forums and workshops for the purposes of collecting opinions and information for a specific legislative initiative, all of which should be described in a summary report at the end of the process.

¹⁹ Five of these entities provided recommendations to the executive bill, establishing consensus around technical aspects such as timelines, solicitation procedures, and sanctions.

Apart from the contextual factors leading to political consolidation around the ZDA program in Moron, the *shared legislative and participatory objectives* across branches, coupled with the *specificity* of the reform initiative and the broad civil society support, provide an explanation for citizen participation initiative success.

The same pattern of multilateral action, based not only on Decree 1,307 but also on previous experiences and pre-existing legislation, facilitated the implementation of individual participatory initiatives by each municipal entity. The executive branch implemented town halls for the purpose of designing a new waste collection contract beginning in August 2004, again benefiting from previous town hall experiences directly assisted by *PC* and other experts. The city council committed to implementing both neighborhood council sessions²⁰—introduced via council Decree 264 in September of 2004—and Open Bench²¹ (*Banca Abierta*) procedures; there was considerable participation in the former but not the latter. Additionally, the city council implemented a series of unrelated town halls during the ZDA program, demonstrating some degree of institutionalization around this mechanism. Finally, Moron’s school board agreed to carry out town halls for designing the terms and conditions for direct contracts involving at least ARS \$40,000 pesos (around USD \$13,300 in 2004), and for promoting integrity pacts with bidding companies. Due to internal restructuring, the school board was unable to initiate public bidding processes and therefore did not organize any town halls, however, the board did sign an integrity pact with cafeteria food providers.

²⁰ This tool gives citizens the opportunity to solicit a special session in their neighborhood in order to address a particular set of issues affecting the area. In March 2004 and in June of 2005, Moron’s city council successfully implemented the neighborhood sessions.

²¹ Guaranteed by council Decree 083 (1998), *Banca Abierta* permits any citizen to solicit time at the beginning of an ordinary legislative session to present a complaint or proposal that can be attended to by the council. The procedure requires the person or organization to present a formal request to the central council desk that is then evaluated and assigned a turn for exposition. This tool was not implemented during the period of the ZDA program under analysis.

A brief analysis of the participatory initiatives in Moron indicates the positive effects of *multiple-branch adherence* for the ZDA program. Additional contextual factors such as *antecedent experiences* and *proximity to the ZDAs' head organization, PC*, increase the likelihood of relevant legislation, effective civil society mobilization and networks, as well as general civic participation among municipal residents.

3. Civil society monitoring in Rosario

As part of the second executive-led ZDA, citizen participation initiatives in Rosario provide a counterpoint to Cordoba. An analysis of the initiatives in Rosario underline the importance of *specific procedures and objectives* for the introduction of meaningful participation in governmental affairs in lieu of multiple-branch adherence or proximity to *PC*, as well as the benefits of *antecedent experiences* with transparency initiatives dating back to 1995 and of *collaborative parallel accords* with local organizations. Whereas in Cordoba the ZDA aimed to foment general participation in citywide programs, Rosario's ZDA included two monitoring initiatives. They were substantively different in scope and specified the type of participation foreseen: civil society organization members creating diagnostic reports and neighborhood center members monitoring public service provision. Rosario's place within the chronology of the accords signed suggests that *policy learning* may have favored the selection of monitoring programs over broader development-based plans, embracing a narrower, more focused approach to citizen participation. The following paragraphs describe how participation initiative specificity, the primary trend in this case, led to stronger results in police and service provision monitoring in Rosario.

The most specific of the Rosario monitoring initiatives was led by local CSO *Ejercicio Ciudadano (EC)*. Tasked with measuring general levels of transparency and administrative efficiency in the executive branch offices with power to police or undertake inspections, *EC* and Rosario's mayor signed a direct collaborative accord whereby members of the organization would be given access to government offices in order to interview public employees and implement a survey that could be used to produce a diagnostic report for the municipality. Buttressing this investigation, *PC* provided guidance by defining methodology and indicators for the study and trained a handful of members from *EC* and municipal officials beforehand on monitoring strategies to be applied for analyzing government transparency and accountability best-practices.²² Selected government officials were also invited to individual meetings with *EC* to receive debriefings on the auditing process, respond qualitatively to questions concerning internal processes, and obtain questionnaires for distribution to their primary officers.

The objectives and methodology for the analysis were clearly laid out and substantiated before the process began: *EC* would monitor executive branch offices to create an informed analysis of transparency levels that could serve to systematize best-practices and incentivize citizen interest and active participation in public affairs, in turn strengthening institutional transparency (*EC* 2005b, 2-5). The municipal offices studied were relatively complex. The scope of participation remained relatively small, with only a handful of civil society members and government officials becoming involved. This meant broader dissemination or mobilization efforts were not necessary. Additionally, the parallel agreement between *EC* and the municipality allowed

²² For more information, see the Second Stage report (*Ejercicio Ciudadano* 2005b). The study aims to measure levels of transparency using 22 indicators reflecting structural boundaries, internal procedures, operational parameters, human resources, and organizational communication.

the participants to override basic bureaucratic impediments to the evaluation. In summary, the formulation of *clear objectives and methodology*, existence of a designated and trained group of *participants*, and a formal *collaborative civil society-government accord* increased the specificity of the participatory monitoring initiative, culminating in a thorough 2005 diagnostic report on executive branch transparency.

The second example of initiative specificity effectiveness was a public services oversight program called “Volunteer Neighborhood Overseers” (“*Veedores Vecinales Voluntarios*” or VVV). Wider in scope but less technical and more relevant to day-to-day citizens’ interests, VVV provided a clear path for incentivizing participation at the neighborhood-level. Introduced in mid-2005, VVV gave individual citizens the ability to monitor the quality of service provision in their communities using a standardized report card to be submitted to Municipal District Centers twice a month. Across the city’s six districts, monitoring of waste collection, street maintenance, and sweeping services was to be undertaken every day by volunteer community members at checkpoints close to their homes. Because this method of communication required minimal training and mobilization efforts, citizens were able to effectively participate in monitoring and to offer valuable qualitative information that the municipality used to evaluate service provision across neighborhoods at little additional cost.

The successful implementation of this participatory mechanism reflects again the utility of initiative *specificity*. Provision of a specific service was monitored at the neighborhood level using standardized communication methods fit to citizens’ daily domestic routines. The municipality designed standardized report cards requiring no more than a handful of simple yes-no checkmarks. The data could be easily compiled and analyzed by district-level oversight offices, which could

rapidly implement sanctions on deficient companies if flaws were detected. The program capitalized on citizens' day-to-day interactions with service providers and enabled them to efficiently transcribe their experiences on paper. When the time came to rotate responsibilities, neighborhood centers simply designated new local volunteers. Both standardization and localization processes were possible, given the *procedural and territorial specificity* of the VVV program.

To summarize, the experience in Rosario indicates that the institutionalization of citizen participation under executive-led ZDAs is most promising when initiatives include *specific objectives and targeted populations*. The monitoring programs not only provided mechanisms for citizen participation, but they also benefited the local government by generating valuable service provision data. Transparency and the effectiveness of internal processes were clear for all to see. Rosario's participation initiatives were better attuned to the local mayor's capacities and to the organizational objectives of the local partnering NGO (*EC*) than was the case in Cordoba. Some of the difference could be attributable to *policy learning* between the first and second ZDA accords.

4. Conclusion

Of the three municipalities, Moron exhibits the highest readiness for implementing citizen participation and semi-direct democratic mechanisms under the ZDA program. The *multilateral action* generated by three primary government entities signing on to the program facilitates the incorporation of more actors when implementing instances for participation. *Positive antecedent experiences* and *proximity to PC* serve to increase confidence among key actors regarding the efficacy of participatory initiatives. Without these variables, the participatory initiatives in Cordoba and Rosario either suffered implementation setbacks or were narrowed significantly in

scope. Because participatory initiatives in executive-led ZDAs are side-tracked by institutional and procedural issues such as inefficient *administration* and *less than robust dissemination*, initiative specificity provides a temporary solution, as Rosario demonstrates, reducing the scope of initiatives and targeting particular populations in order to facilitate successful planning and implementation of citizen participation instances.

One of the three pillars of the ZDA program, citizen participation is likely the most complex for the municipalities to implement because it requires outreach to mobilize everyday citizens. In the process, reforms and capacity building accrue to municipal offices that facilitate the participatory processes. The Cordoba and Rosario cases clearly demonstrate the limits of executive branches leading popular mobilization. The success of Moron's multiple-branch ZDA program was due largely to earlier advancements in participatory processes in that municipality which provided citizens experience with these mechanisms and made it politically feasible for officials to collaborate. The following chapters describe implementation of the remaining pillars of the program, legislative reform and access to information initiatives. The argument is that these efforts presented fewer challenges to the municipalities than citizen participation. However, obstacles associated with executive-branch-led agreements continued to pose challenges.

CHAPTER 2: VARIABILITY IN LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

In addition to citizen participation initiatives, the ZDAs committed municipalities to passing or updating legislation that would enhance transparency and reduce official discretion. Like citizen participation, introducing effective legislation is a highly intensive undertaking, requiring not only political consensus among key actors in the executive branch and city council, but also legal and technical expertise during the policy drafting process, and municipal administrative capacity to operate and oversee policy implementation. Unlike citizen participation, these initiatives are not inherently set back by citizen mobilization obstacles. Rather, they come up against legislators' interpretations of the practicality or relevance of the proposed transparency or anticorruption legislation. The experiences in Cordoba, Moron, and Rosario highlight the complexities involved in drafting legislation, and point to the influence of these and other policymaking obstacles on the overall impact of the ZDA program.

As expected, the unilinear accords signed only with executive departments in Cordoba and Rosario precipitated many challenges to passing legislation. Despite the multiple accords signed in Moron, even that city council wavered when it came to reforming town hall procedures as agreed upon under the ZDA program. The most successful reforms—the creation of an Ombudsman office as well as lobbying regulations—took place in Moron. They point again to the advantages of having *multiple government branches* on board to meet the high-intensity challenges posed by the ZDA program. They also hint at the *extraordinary consensus* among key municipal and outside actors around the potential impact of transparency reforms in that particular subnational context. In the cities of Cordoba and Rosario, by contrast, legislative reforms were resisted in different ways, including by actors within the executive branch that had signed the agreement.

The following sections describe the scope of the accords' legislative initiatives and the wide range of obstacles these municipalities faced, from jurisdictional disputes, to technological issues, to simply prioritizing other reforms. As with citizen participation initiatives, evidence from the ZDAs indicate relevant institutional and procedural obstacles in all three municipalities. Cordoba's initiatives to sanction campaign finance regulations, reform procurement procedures, and operationalize decentralized entities all came up short. The evidence suggests that these represented *secondary priorities* on the administration's agenda. *Resistance from areas within the executive branch* appeared in Rosario when it came to expanding the scope of sworn declarations, although *preexisting oversight institutions* offered other opportunities for legislative enhancements. Finally, decentralization processes taking place in Moron sidetracked the city council's town hall reform procedures because of the new role that commune centers would have in channeling citizen participation. The few successful cases of legal reforms under the ZDA program, described below, provide evidence that *expert commissions* and *initiative alignment with specific oversight institutions* may be necessary for successful and effective legislative actions.

1. Internal resistance, priorities, and decentralization in Cordoba

Cordoba's experience embodies three examples that illustrate how internal resistance and decentralization complexities impede transparency legislation initiatives under the ZDA program. The first initiative, reforming public procurement processes, was not completed due to executive department advisors' conformity with existing regulations, coupled with low prioritization for reform. Similarly, campaign finance reform appears to have been abandoned early on by executive department officials, due in part to the extra-jurisdictional status of political parties which are overseen by provincial regulators. Finally, the initiatives designed to operationalize two

participatory entities in the city charter demonstrate the complexity of decentralization for the municipal administration, whose leadership found it more expedient to address development plan objectives and normalize statutes for intermediary entities than to formalize the Economic and Social Council and the neighborhood *juntas*. This section will describe why Cordoba's three legislative initiatives under the ZDA were unsuccessful, due primarily to institutional factors such as *internal resistance* to reforms, *prioritization* or substitution of other actions as alternatives, and legal impediments involved in *decentralizing* municipal powers.

To begin, Cordoba committed to making procurement processes more transparent through an ordinance project that would update existing legislation²³ to coincide with modern norms of transparency and participation, and to increase available procurement information online. Existing legislation, dating back to 1957, detailed procedures for multiple types of public and private procurement. It provided statutes for the execution of projects, payment methods, and inspections but did not stipulate current standards in such areas as online content publishing and civil society oversight mechanisms during the bidding process. According to local monitoring organization *RCPdP*, the executive branch submitted an ordinance update project to the city council during 2004, however, the project was stalled and never approved.

Evidence from early follow-up reports indicates there was *internal resistance* to this legislative reform, in addition to *low prioritization* of procurement reform. Economic advisors to the mayor signaled months into the ZDA program that, in their opinion, the legislation regulating procurement procedures was sufficiently comprehensive (*RCPdP* 2004a). Considerable

²³ Ordinance 244 and statutory Decree 1,665, both from 1957, provide basic guidelines for public works projects that involved more than ARS \$18,000 pesos, while Ordinance 8,041 from 1984 outlines the registration process for potential public contract bidders in smaller public works projects.

information regarding procurement procedures was already published online, including concessions made in previous years, contractor information and links to supporting legislation. Legal reforms that would ultimately affect this information was probably considered by the municipal government to be of low priority. In this way, officials' *conformity with existing legislation* and *lacking pressure* to initiate changes likely impeded the introduction of procurement procedure reforms.

In a second example, Cordoba's ZDA contained a series of three priorities related to Article 141 of the city charter ("Political parties at the municipal level must publish the origin and destination of their funds and electoral platforms under the conditions determined by the ordinance."), which refers to political party and campaign finance transparency. The three priorities included creating procedural statutes in line with Article 141, soliciting funding information at least 30 days before the following city council elections, and publishing this information on the municipal website. None of these components was carried out by the time of the follow-up reports in 2006.

This initiative appears to have been of *low priority* for the municipal administration and outside of its scope of action given the legal *jurisdictional* qualities of party oversight mechanisms at the provincial level. In an early follow-up meeting in June of 2004 between monitoring organization *RCPdP* and the mayor, the administration initially claimed that this initiative was "forgotten" (*RCPdP* 2004a). In light of this, the local CSO in charge of monitoring the ZDA was encouraged to draft a regulatory ordinance for political party transparency to be presented to the city council via the executive department in late 2005. This initiative also failed to materialize. In an interview in August of 2006, mayor Juez claimed that regulating this charter would be

impossible, "...because the parties have provincial and not municipal status, and therefore [the municipality] has no coercive power in this matter" (Curto 2006). Given the legal aspects impeding progress in municipal campaign finance reform, collecting and publishing this information during the election period in 2005 remained latent. In summary, *low prioritization* of the initiative as well as *provincial over municipal* powers to oversee campaign financing stymied the legislative initiative for campaign finance reform.

Finally, Cordoba's ZDA contained two more initiatives focused on operationalizing city charter articles. Specifically, the municipality committed to creating statutes for two entities outlined in the charter's "articles of decentralization": the Economic and Social Council (Article 149), which channels professional sector participation in government decision-making, and the neighborhood participation *juntas* (Articles 155 and 156), which gather group interests at the sub-district or territorial level. The evidence around implementation suggests that the municipal government simply *prioritized* other actions that took the place of, or superseded, both entities.

According to its charter, the former entity, Cordoba's Economic and Social Council was to be composed of volunteer sectorial representatives from "production and labor, unions, professionals, cultural, social, and university and investigative centers," who would provide the government with non-binding advice and recommendations. Although the municipal administration had agreed to design statutes for this council under the ZDA program, it opted instead to create an *alternative entity* with similar attributes for the city's new development agenda, *PECba*. Like the professional council prescribed in the city charter, the *PECba* executive cabinet was to be multi-sectorial, representing members of organizations across the city and providing consultation services for the executive branch. As added justification for circumventing the

proposed Economic and Social Council, the executive branch cited the existence of multiple entities—the Consultation Council, the Cordoba Development Agency, as well as the Commercial, Urban Planning, and Competition Councils—that facilitate citizen participation, arguing that citizens lacked the time to participate in additional spaces (UNC 2007, 111). The unsuccessful implementation of this item provides evidence of *alternative interpretations* regarding the role of this charter-based entity as well as the existence of *other priorities*, such as forming a similar council for the *PECba* initiative.

With regard to the formulation of regulatory statutes for neighborhood participation conglomerates, called *Juntas de Participación Vecinal*, the executive branch again prioritized other legislative action that addressed superseding entities called neighborhood centers. Within Cordoba’s decentralized municipal structure, the *juntas* would represent the most direct link to citizens²⁴, falling under the orbit of neighborhood centers (*centros vecinales*). The centers would then elevate certain administrative tasks to Communal Participation Centers (CPCs), which are headed by directors designated by the mayor. Though some headway was made in drafting legal statutes for the neighborhood participation *juntas*²⁵, follow-up reports indicate that the city prioritized the design of basic regulatory statutes for the neighborhood centers instead (Ordinance 10,713, passed in July of 2004).

²⁴ Made up of individual neighbors, religious and education institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations within each municipal territory, the *juntas*, as guaranteed by the city charter, are designed to channel citizen participation in the presentation of public works and services priorities, execution of development projects, and monitoring of activities within each jurisdiction.

²⁵ In mid-2004, local civil society association *RCPdP* headed a commission to design drafts of the regulatory statutes for the *juntas*. The commission gathered municipal directors, city councilors, advisors, political party representatives, and neighbors, producing five different projects that were converted into an ordinance draft subsequently distributed to the CPCs across the city for debate. During the process, consensus formed around the *juntas*’ role in the participatory budget process, an attribute that would be included in 2008 when the regulatory ordinance was finally passed (Ordinance 11,448). Despite *RCPdP*’s considerable investment in the ordinance project, the statutes remained a secondary priority for the executive branch.

The complexity involved in government decentralization explains in part the lack of consensus regarding statutes for the *juntas*. A primary hurdle for creating these statutes are irregularities concerning the *juntas*' governing body, neighborhood centers²⁶, which are only given legal status by the provincial government when in compliance with Provincial Law 8,652 (1997). Of the 250-plus centers and commissions around Cordoba city, only 14 had juridical status by 2006, and it remained unclear whether the municipal or provincial government should be responsible for normalizing and monitoring the administrative actions and activities that take place within these institutions (UNC 2007, 108). According to reports from the national Anticorruption Office, many deregulated commissions had become heavily politicized by local partisan militants. Juez's administration gave priority to drafting pertinent legislation for the existing institutions before considering the *junta* ordinance proposals. Ordinance 10,713 and Regulatory Decree 2,653, both passed in mid-2004, formalize control and confer monitoring power over how these institutions interact with the community.

To summarize, the three broad legislative initiatives in Cordoba faced a wide range of institutional obstacles. These included *internal resistance* to reform, limited *jurisdictional capacity*, and *prioritized strategies for decentralization* that effectively sidelined aspects of the ZDA. Compared to the Cordoba legislative experience described above, the Moron and Rosario cases suggest that procurement, campaign finance, and decentralization legislation posed too many institutional requirements for an executive department acting unilaterally to meet.

²⁶ Neighborhood centers as well as non-juridical neighborhood commissions not only channel complaints, administer local services and subsidies, as well as collect dues, but they also manage registers of the neighborhoods' electorate for elections of the centers' and commissions' governing bodies.

2. Commissions, decentralization, and informational technology in Moron

In contrast to Cordoba's legislative shortfalls, the case of Moron demonstrates the effectiveness of multiple-branch adherence to the ZDAs for the implementation of legal reforms²⁷. The Moron case also points to the role of three additional factors: consolidation of key actors, technological barriers, and municipal decentralization. *Key actor consolidation*, in the form of professional commissions, contributed to the viability of installing a municipal Ombudsman office that met universal standards and buttressed legislators confidence in sanctioning the ordinance. On the other hand, *technological impediments* in web development undercut effective lobbying regulation. Complexities associated with *decentralization* provided obstacles for town hall reform, despite consensus around ZDA initiatives across municipal branches. The following paragraphs will explore how these factors affected legislative initiatives in Moron, beginning with the creation of the municipal Ombudsman, followed by lobbying regulations, and town hall reform.

The executive branch and city council both agreed to create and sanction statutes for an Ombudsman office in Moron, a position designed to provide constituent-based oversight and accountability across all parts of the city's public administration. For the purposes of designing this ordinance, Mayor Martin Sabbatella created a *Commission for the Implementation of the Institute for an Ombudsman*, which included city council members from multiple political parties, in addition to leading experts from around the country.²⁸ After receiving the bill produced by the commission, in August of 2004 the city council approved the legislation (Ordinance 5,932),

²⁷ As mentioned in the previous chapter, the ZDA program in Moron was bolstered by municipal transparency Decree 1,307 and city council Decree 266 both passed in September of 2004, allowing the agreement to focus on specific enhancements to lobbying, access to information, and citizen participation initiatives across different government entities.

²⁸ Apart from city councilors, the commission included the vice president of the Argentine Association of Ombudsmen, the President of the Latin American Institute of Ombudsmen, current and former subnational Ombudsmen, as well as legal experts, and others.

creating the Ombudsman office under the council's purview. The legislation specified the procedures for election, the entities approved to submit candidates, the selection process on behalf of the council, and a five-year term limit for officeholders. In early 2005, the city council president presented a decree beginning the selection process for Moron's first Ombudsman.

The Moron Ombudsman initiative provides evidence of the effectiveness of incorporating municipal actors and national experts for successful legislative reform under the ZDA program. The mayor's initiative to create a specific *commission* for the ordinance draft increased the likelihood of successful and efficient deliberation and produced an Ombudsman office that met universal standards and would likely exist for posterity. This is the only instance under the ZDA program of the intervention of an expert-led coalition for building political consensus around new legislation. It may be the most effective form of inducing such legislation at the municipal level.

The successful sanctioning of lobbying statutes in Moron provides additional evidence of the effectiveness of multiple-branch adherence to the ZDA program for legislative actions but also highlights the relevance of *technological* and *administrative barriers* to implementing novel transparency reforms. Moron's executive and legislative branches both agreed to begin registering and publishing lobbying meetings via legislation promoted under the ZDA program. One of the first subnational jurisdictions in the Province of Buenos Aires to pass lobbying regulation in line with federal access to information legislation (Decree 1,172/2003), both Moron government branches successfully sanctioned regulatory statutes in 2004 (Decree 1,307 for the executive branch and Decree 265 for the city council). However, the policy was only partially implemented. Around half of the required officials and council members complied and websites published registered meetings online with semi-regularity.

Though complementarity provided the base for consensus around legislation, it did not sufficiently prepare either branch to implement the new policies. According to *PC*'s 2006 monitoring report, the content related to lobbying meetings was not kept up to date by either the municipal or city council website administrators, undermining the fundamental objective behind the initiative to make government activity as transparent as possible. Additionally, to the detriment of citizens, neither website provided public lists of non-compliant officials for the purposes of holding them accountable. Despite publishing detailed information on reported lobbying activity, technical and administrative impediments stood in the way of effective lobbying regulations under Moron's ZDA program.

Lastly, evidence suggests that *decentralization processes* taking place in Moron during the ZDA program undermined the city council's town hall statute reform. According to a 2004 report from the federal program *Citizen Audit (Auditoría Ciudadana*²⁹), the city council's town hall legislation³⁰ included abnormalities that impeded citizen participation, specifically the obligation for at least half of the council to be present during these instances. This provision allows party majorities to essentially block any proposal they do not favor, as might occur in a regular legislative session (*Subsecretaría* 2006, 73). Despite successfully carrying out three town halls during 2004, Moron's city council legislation remained unchanged throughout the ZDA program.

The failure to implement this reform likely stemmed from *impending changes to citizen participation channels* introduced by the executive's municipal decentralization program, which

²⁹ The *Citizen Audit* program was carried out by the federal Sub-secretary of Institutional Reform and Strengthening of Democracy (*Subsecretaria de Reforma Institucional y Fortalecimiento de la Democracia*) beginning in 2003, designed to collect citizen perceptions and incentivize participation in government affairs in various municipalities across the country.

³⁰ Council Decree 250 from 1998 requires city council to implement town halls before undertaking changes to urban planning codes, modifications to industrial or commercial norms, naming of monuments or historical sites, selling off government properties or legal domains, and exemptions from regular order.

was launched in 2004. The decentralization program centered on the inauguration of seven district centers, which entailed the transfer of administrative tasks and public relations traditionally managed by the central government. Considering the impact this program would have on districts' ability to channel citizen opinions and needs for decision-makers, it is likely that city council town hall legislation would need to contemplate the forms of dissemination, organization, and participatory parameters required by these new spaces before undertaking legislative action. In this way, contemporaneous plans to decentralize municipal administration likely precluded the design process of city council town hall reform.

To summarize, the three examples of legislative reform in Moron indicate a range of positive and negative variables for successful implementation. Multiple-branch adherence provides a positive impetus for consensus through expert commissions around new transparency legislation, as shown by the introduction of a municipal Ombudsman office and the lobbying regulations approved in both executive and legislative branches. However, *technological* and *administrative* obstacles sidetracked the implementation of the novel lobbying regulations, while concurrent *decentralization* plans circumscribed the re-design of town hall statutes for the city council under the ZDA program.

3. Executive limits and municipal oversight in Rosario

The experience of legislative transparency reform in Rosario suggests similar patterns of implementation to that of citizen participation initiatives under their ZDA program, namely the difficulty of executive-led agreements and the advantages of initiative specificity for successful implementation. Rosario's executive branch agreed to introduce modifications to sworn declaration regulations that would expand the scope of the information to be submitted, in addition

to implementing systematic external oversight mechanisms in order to increase transparency. Evidence suggests that the former was unsuccessful, likely as a result of internal resistance, given that legislation would only apply to executive branch officials. Meanwhile, the latter initiative benefited from aligning with preexisting institutional objectives such as the city council's Accounts Tribunal (created in 1996 via Ordinance 6,199), or the executive branch's Direction of Administrative Investigations (created in 1989 via Decree 2,619). In comparison to the accords in Cordoba and Moron, Rosario's accord included relatively few and modest initiatives requiring legislative action, hinting at the possible role of policy learning for avoiding reforms that would be likely unattainable. This section describes the legislative actions agreed to in Rosario in order to show how executive-led initiatives were met with *internal resistance*. Meanwhile, specificity bolstered alignment with the objectives of *preexisting oversight institutions*.

The legislative initiative to expand sworn declarations³¹ in Rosario to include family member patrimonial information was not completed within the framework of the ZDA signed. At the time of the accord, the existing ordinance was dated (Ordinance 6,485 from 1997) and it only obligated publication of the declarations in the official city bulletin (*boletín oficial*). Any reform of this ordinance in the way of publication requirements or expansion would require collaboration from the city council, otherwise expansion of declarations' contents as stipulated in the ZDA item would only apply to the executive department if carried out successfully. In the 2005 ZDA progress report filed by local organization *Ejercicio Ciudadano*, an expansion bill was being drafted for the executive department for these purposes, but no legislative action had been introduced.

³¹ As basic indicators of officials' property and potential conflicts of interest, sworn declarations (*declaraciones juradas*) in Argentina are addressed in Article 4 of the federal Public Ethics Law 25,188 passed in 1999. Fundamentally, they provide oversight agencies such as anticorruption offices with investigative information.

Though not directly observable, the initiative to expand sworn declarations in Rosario likely suffered from *weak consensus* around reforms that would only apply to the executive branch, even though this information is equally relevant to the decision-making actions undertaken by city council members. Additionally, given the scope of the new information to be published, it is likely that there was *internal disagreement* about including personal information incorporating the lives of those related to officials. As shown in the following chapter regarding the debate in Cordoba around publishing sworn declarations online, the boundary between political and family life may represent a sensitive issue at the municipal level, given the increased proximity of city politicians to their constituents. Less than significant progress with this initiative therefore suggests *internal resistance* to transparency reform, in addition to the importance of *multiple-branch adhesion* for consensus around sworn declaration expansion.

Apart from sworn declarations, Rosario's ZDA included an initiative to implement external oversight mechanisms to produce systematic evaluations of government transparency, including but not necessarily limited to, reports from public administration entities such as public accountant offices or anticorruption bodies. By the time the ZDA was introduced in Rosario, the municipal government had incorporated a public accountant office (*Contaduría General*) and office for Administrative Investigations (*Dirección General de Investigación Administrativa*), while the city council included an Accounts Tribunal (*Tribunal de Cuentas*) to oversee government expenditures. The objectives of all three entities include some form of transparency evaluation that is reported to officials, and with proper access to information legislation, made available to the public.

Though not strictly a legislative reform initiative, Rosario's government was successful in improving the regularity and content of the reports disseminated by the Accounts Tribunal through

legislative action. In November of 2004, while the ZDA program was being implemented, Ordinance 7,767 introduced modifications to the statutes for the Accounts Tribunal determining the transparent selection of members of the tribunal as well as the use of annual fiscal reports to be remitted to the executive and legislative branches. These reports were published online, allowing the general public access to transparency oversight evaluations, as outlined by the ZDA initiative. Therefore, although not specifically the result of executive action, the municipality successfully complied with the ZDA through legislative reforms applying to external oversight entities which regulated the dissemination and systemic publication of transparency reports.

The case of Rosario's legislative actions under the ZDA program demonstrates the difficulty that executive branches may face when implementing transparency reforms as well as the advantages of pursuing enhancements to transparency via oversight institutions. As a central method of ensuring officials have no conflicts of interest, sworn declarations should apply to all government leaders, meaning that reforms such as expanding their scope may suffer *internal resistance* if the changes only applied to some officials. The legislative reforms in Rosario also demonstrate that *preexisting oversight institutions* provide an opportunity for legislative reform under the ZDA, given their objectives align with those of the program.

4. Conclusion

Analysis of the legislative reforms introduced across municipalities under the ZDA program produces a wide range of observations. In the executive-led programs of Cordoba and Rosario, with no city council backing for bills assured, legislative actions appear to face obstacles such as *internal bureaucratic resistance* as well as unforeseen *planning and administrative* growing pains involved with municipal decentralization. As with citizen participation, successful

legislative initiatives appear to take shape when *multiple-branches* sign on to the ZDA program, but also when *preexisting municipal institutions* associated with transparency become the specific object of reform initiatives.

In addition to these trends, the legislative reform initiatives highlight important procedural and technical factors affecting implementation. The process of municipal *decentralization* may sometimes conflict with ZDA objectives, especially when it comes to passing reforms altering citizen channels for participation, as shown by the delays formalizing Cordoba's neighborhood *juntas* and or reforming Moron's city council town hall procedures. Secondly, apart from the contextual variables that allowed Moron to incorporate a considerable amount of transparency-related legislation during the ZDA program, the successful experience of the Ombudsman legislation suggests that the *inclusion of key outside experts* for participation in institutional commissions improves the likelihood of effective and efficient transparency reforms. Finally, regarding the ZDAs' scope of action, Rosario's accord includes fewer legislative reforms than that of Cordoba or Moron. This hints at the technical benefits of *policy learning* for improving impacts: given the difficulties encountered in the executive-led reform initiatives in Cordoba, for example, Rosario's civil society organization *Ejercicio Ciudadano, PC*, and Rosario Mayor Lifschitz may have undertaken a more strategic approach by incorporating fewer reforms and designing enhancements to institutions with objectives complementary to the ZDA program.

CHAPTER 3: PROMISING TRENDS IN ACCESS TO PUBLIC INFORMATION

Initiatives to improve access to public information represent the third pillar of the ZDA program, alongside citizen participation and legislative reform. Apart from providing general information such as government structure, human resource registries, legislation directories, or annual governance reports, access to information action under the ZDAs also encompasses innovations such as publication online of sworn declarations and financial management mechanisms. Generally speaking, in comparison to citizen participation and legislative action, improving access to public information requires less consolidation of interests at the municipal level in order to be implemented, although it does require implementing methods of systematic and technological curation.

Importantly, many of the ZDAs' information-based initiatives capitalized on the proliferation of *website development* in the early 2000s. In the direct aftermath of the financial and institutional crises that destabilized the country in 2001, municipal websites provided platforms for recuperating legitimacy. Increased communication through information technology induced greater proximity between governments and citizens. Although the cases analyzed in this chapter benefited from the emergence of internet platforms, they were also met with *technological barriers* in addition to *procedural* and *legal-political* questions surrounding the scope of information to be made accessible. Information content and access online has improved significantly since the ZDA follow-up reports were submitted 2006, and to different degrees the cases studied have experienced deeper institutionalization of communication technology for government purposes in comparison to other localities, providing some evidence of the impact of these early initiatives.

This chapter describes how the ZDAs included multiple lines of action across municipalities for improving access to information and identifies which obstacles they confronted. In Cordoba, the design of a digital registry of social program beneficiaries required considerable *technological* and *administrative* resources. General government information was published online with assistance from *ongoing collaboration* between local civil society actors and municipal agents. Conversely, the initiative to bolster access to hiring information never proceeded because of *insurmountable financial strains* on provincial coffers needed to provide municipal employees' severance packages. Moron's ZDAs benefited from *timely transparency reforms* across all three government entities, however *non-compliance* with sworn declarations standards suggests the weak sanctioning power of novel legislation. As with citizen participation and legislative design, *multiple-branch adherence* to the ZDA program likely introduced *horizontal pressure* across entities for improving access to information. In Rosario, the initiatives to create an online staff directory and digital legislative registry benefited from the *preexistence of a municipal website* that provided the framework for such actions, while financial management initiatives suffered from broader *procedural setbacks* in participatory budget implementation and challenges to procurement software *accessibility*. In general terms, the following analysis will describe the experience of government information expansion, sworn declaration enhancement, and financial management initiatives under the ZDA program in each municipality, beginning with Cordoba.

1. Institutional impediments and civil society collaboration in Cordoba

The ZDA signed by Cordoba included initiatives designed to expand government information online as well as publish sworn declarations and improve financial management transparency. The expansion of government and social program information, though met with

administrative issues, increased with *web development* and set a path for long-term enhancements in transparency through *civil society-municipality accords*. Secondly, public access to sworn declarations improved under the ZDA program due to an *executive decree*, although *existing legislation*, falling short of federal standards of publication, maintained the privacy of city council declarations. Finally, while a fair and open public employee hiring process was never undertaken due to broader *financial impediments* standing in the way of severance packages, procurement terms and conditions transparency did improve through *web development*. The following section will describe how *technological development* facilitated access to information in all three areas, while *privacy norms*, *city council resistance*, and *financial impediments* restricted the content available to the public under the ZDA program in Cordoba.

Beginning with general access to government information, Cordoba's ZDA sought to enhance online content along two dimensions: social program transparency and governance evaluation. With regard to the former, the municipality agreed to create a digital registry centralizing social program beneficiary information and to establish an external auditing entity to monitor provisions. However, evidence suggests that *technological and administrative challenges* stood in the way of full implementation. To begin with, an official municipal government website did not exist at the time mayor Luis Juez was elected in late 2003, delaying the publication of basic information online. Partially as a result of this, by 2005 only two of the six beneficiary lists outlined in the ZDA (*Jefes de Hogar* and *Vale Lo Nuestro*) were made accessible online, and even then users were only given the option to enter individuals' identification numbers in order to confirm their enrollment in a program rather than access the entire list of beneficiaries. Secondly, social program administration underwent significant changes within the months following the Juez

inauguration. Perhaps most notably, management of the National Food Security Program (*Programa Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria*³²), which initially covered 60,000 local citizens, shifted to the municipal government during the implementation stage of the ZDA in mid-2004 (Municipal Decree 1,512). This required an unprecedented expansion of responsibilities for the new administration as outlined by agreements with federal and provincial governments.³³ In addition to the challenges involved with managing frequent changes to the beneficiary list and addressing individual privacy issues, *technological and systemic administrative setbacks* complicated the installment of beneficiary registries in Cordoba under the ZDA program.

In another initiative for expanding general access to government information, the municipality committed to publishing policy developments, commune budgets, and budget execution information online in addition to creating two publicly accessible computer terminals for the purposes of improving citizen access to governance evaluation. Although some information regarding previous budgets, public works projects, and employment programs was published online within the time-frame of the ZDA, neither development program execution figures nor computer terminals were properly incorporated, limiting citizen access.

Again, these transparency setbacks may be attributed to the *technological and financial difficulties* of integrating web development and public administration. Nonetheless, this web-based initiative did appear to improve with *civil society-government relations* in the medium to long-term. Partial fulfillment of the governance evaluation initiative under the ZDA program set the

³² The city of Cordoba inaugurated the *Vale lo Nuestro* plan under the auspices of the National Food Security Program (*Programa Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria*) signed into law in 2003 (Argentine Law 25,724), targeting pregnant women, children under 14 years of age, and adults over 70 years of age living below the poverty line.

³³ Indeed, systemic administration issues pervaded all levels of government; implementation of the program lacked effective control measures such as consolidated beneficiary data bases that could be used to identify irregular subscriptions to different health and social development programs (Aulicino and Langou 2012; Weitz-Shapiro 2012).

precedent for two subsequent civil society-induced accords, in 2007 and 2008, followed by an ordinance requiring incoming mayors to submit and implement long-term development programs based on campaign promises.³⁴ The 2011 Objectives Plan ordinance (Ordinance 11,942), which set clear parameters for development strategies with simple metrics for citizen oversight, followed these agreements, representing in part the original ZDA's governance evaluation standards.

With regard to sworn declarations, Cordoba agreed to uphold legislation obligating officials to submit documentation and to expand its scope to include direct family members' assets. Though sworn declarations were successfully presented by both branches of the municipal government during 2004, only those pertaining to executive branch members were published online under *mayoral decree* regulations passed the same year, while family member information remained outside the declarations' scope. Although Cordoba's initiative to establish sworn declaration presentation was successful, it highlights familiar patterns obstructing city-wide implementation or reform under the ZDA program, namely the *lack of multiple-branch adhesion* to the accord as well as *internal resistance* to including more personal information.

On the one hand, government-wide publication of sworn declarations came up against *outdated legislation*³⁵ that required this information to be limited in scope and hidden from public

³⁴ Two accords were undertaken by local NGO *Red Ciudadana Nuestra Córdoba* (an offshoot of the original ZDA program local affiliate): according to the local organization, the 2007 “*Por Una Córdoba Sustentable*” agreement and the 2009 “*Por un Concejo Deliberante Transparente y Participativo*” accord incorporated understanding that “political representatives’ public commitments” and even legislation requires citizen oversight to be successful (Romanutti 2012, 4).

³⁵ Sworn declarations are inscribed in Article 22 of the city charter while Ordinance 7,985 (1984) provides regulatory statutes for their obligatory presentation by all elected officials, however, unlike federal standards recommended by the national Anticorruption Office, sworn declarations in Cordoba are secret documents, only available with permission by the official, by court order, or via city council resolution. In addition, Ordinance 7,985 requires only basic patrimonial information related to the official and their direct family members to be included in the sworn declaration, leaving out antecedent employment information, for example. In 2004, the city council passed Ordinance 10,754 that provided statutes for an Ethics Code in Public Office, making mention of the obligation to present sworn declaration but not requiring their publication.

view. Although executive branch officials' sworn declarations were presented and published online in 2004, this was only possible after Mayor Juez introduced an executive decree (Decree 1,647 from June 2004) overturning their restrictive nature. Even then, access to this information was only allowed after a prior request, with justification, while the city council avoided publication altogether. The *unilinear nature* of the ZDA with the executive department meant that the municipality's outdated sworn declarations legislation (Ordinance 7,985 from 1984) would not be reformed unless the city council collaborated.

On the other hand, the executive department was not itself in complete agreement with the scope of sworn declarations promoted by the ZDA, including information "that bordered on illegality": "As an official, I can obligate myself to present my patrimonial goods, but I cannot do the same with family members," explained Mayor Juez. "Why do they have to be accountable to my status as a politician?" (Curto 2006) In this way, the lack of *multiple-branch adhesion* and *sub-prime political will* undermined executive branch willingness to promote reform efforts for sworn declarations regulations within the framework of Cordoba's ZDA.

Finally, Cordoba agreed to improve access to information in the area of municipal financial management by providing procurement terms and conditions online and introducing fair and open public employment hiring procedures to fill public sector vacancies. With regard to the former, by January 2006, the municipal website published terms and conditions for public and private concessions, a list of contracts signed since 2004, as well as price offers for different procurement processes from previous years, suggesting that this initiative benefited from improvements in *web development*. The latter financial management initiative, however, was less successful. Although the municipality provided transparency for the appointment of judges, teachers, and health sector

workers, general public sector hiring was delayed in 2004 due to *financial constraints* in the provincial budget that undercut the availability of severance packages for employees in positions to retire. As described in *PC's* 2006 follow-up report, the municipal government contained around 1,500 retirement-eligible employees at the time. Pressed to offer indemnities, the mayor created a commission in conjunction with local labor unions to solve the issue, but this process, too, was delayed because consensus was lacking regarding the actual number of municipal employees. Financial management initiatives in Cordoba therefore benefited from advances in *web development*, but suffered from *provincial budget constraints* primarily, in addition to *unfavorable municipal relations* with local public sector unions.

To summarize, *administrative issues* and *external financial constraints*, among other factors, impeded full implementation of the ZDA's initiatives to increase access to general government information in Cordoba. With the advent of *web development*, however, access to basic public works and budgetary information, sworn declarations, as well as procurement terms and conditions were attainable. Additionally, enhancements to governance evaluation information online appear to have benefited and set the stage for ongoing civil society-municipality *collaboration* in this area.

2. Timely legislation and horizontal pressure in Moron

Moron's ZDA contained relatively fewer initiatives to expand access to public information in comparison to Cordoba and Rosario, due in part to the introduction of a municipal access to information law discussed in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, initiatives in this area were substantive, buttressed by municipal transparency reform Decree 1,307 passed in September 2004 and *accompanying statutes*, as well as by *horizontal adherence* to shared initiatives. Moron's

executive department, city council, and school board were all successful in publishing periodic governance evaluations online, presenting sworn declarations to the local Anticorruption Office, and increasing budget execution information online. The following section will describe how the implementation of access to information initiatives reflected promising trends for general institutionalization of transparency in Moron, based on the introduction of *relevant legislation* as well as the *horizontal pressure* produced by multiple-branch adhesion to these procedures.

To begin, Moron's executive department, city council, and school board all successfully produced governance reports containing financial, legislative, and social development activities under the ZDA program, though with some qualitative variation. According to follow-up evaluations, executive branch reports were published bimonthly, monthly, and annually, with some abnormalities in regularity and content specificity. For example, the 2004 executive fiscal report included basic accounting information but excluded detailed progress evaluations of public works or health care improvements and omitted completion timelines as well as additional costs. By leaving out fundamental monitoring information, the executive department demonstrated less ability than the city council to supply the general public with transparent figures, or worse, a lack of control or planning over project expenditures and execution. In contrast, despite any legislation for reporting governance activities, the school board produced a 2004 governance report describing legislative achievements such as service provider regulations, human resource management, student center organization, and the production of news bulletins, among other legal dispositions.

The successful implementation of these governance evaluation initiatives points to the relevance of *timely legislative action*, *horizontal pressure* generated by multiple branch adhesion to transparency reform, as well as *web development* and *organizational size*. Statutes for

governance evaluation reports were passed in 2004 by both the executive branch and city council³⁶, increasing the likelihood that outlined procedures synchronized with officials' interpretations of transparent government in practice. Secondly, despite the relatively new legislative requirement for producing the reports, all three bodies complied with the ZDA initiative, hinting at the possibility that pressure to increase transparency may have existed horizontally, across government entities. Finally, the proliferation of *web development* during this period provided an adequate medium for governance reports to be published and updated with semi-regularity, at little cost, while the school board's governance reports benefited from the *small size of its organization*. All four factors appear to have contributed to the success of governance evaluation access under the ZDA program in Moron.

Secondly, Moron's initiative to improve sworn declaration presentation was partially successful but undermined by officials' *non-compliance* with existing legal standards. *Although* municipal Ordinances 6,244 and 5,932 stipulate that lists of non-compliant officials must be published on the executive department and city council websites, respectively. And despite the existence of a municipal Anticorruption Office (created in 2000 via Decree 1,331) for managing documentation and issuing sanctions, neither entity provided such information. The same problem occurred with the municipality's school board, though the omission in their case largely results from a lack of resources to build and maintain an official website.

³⁶ The executive department followed statutes in Decree 1,307 (2004) while the city council followed statutes outlined in council Decree 269 (2004). By law, municipal departments needed to design policy implementation plans, provide detailed objectives and indicators, as well as publish year-end assessment reports, while the city council had to provide annual budget information, productivity indicators such as the quantities of memoranda filed, town halls and council sessions, and legislation passed, as well as lobbying meetings and other activities in their governance reports.

Although sworn declarations were presented on municipal and city hall websites, omission of lists of non-compliant officials undermined citizens' ability to investigate or encourage the Anticorruption Office to investigate specific cases. This suggests there was *insufficient local consensus* around the practicality and effectiveness of these mechanisms for checking corruption. Just as horizontal pressure increased the likelihood of governance report publication above, the *lack of such pressure* to publish sufficient sworn declaration information may have thwarted this multiple-branch ZDA initiative, suggesting, additionally, *insufficient sanctioning power* on behalf of the Anticorruption Office.

Finally, Moron's executive branch, city council, and school board all agreed to increase access to financial management information by strengthening online monitoring of municipal budget execution. In compliance with Decree 1,307, the executive branch successfully published relevant budgetary information online, with reports on previous budgets, projections for the subsequent budget (fiscal year 2005), calls for public procurement procedures, general terms and conditions, a catalogue of generic prices associated with various public goods acquisitions, as well as a Fiscal Accountability report submitted to the city council in 2004. Though less information was required of Moron's city council, this entity also published budget execution for 2004 and the first half of 2005, allowing adequate monitoring to take place. Finally, the school board was unable to provide online access to budgetary information due to lack of a functioning website under the ZDA program. However, interviews with officials indicated that monthly and trimestral accounting reports were presented regularly to board members for monitoring budget execution. To conclude, the case of financial management transparency in Moron demonstrates the importance of *web development* for budget transparency as well as the efficacy of *multiple-branch*

adhesion for implementing access to information initiatives, suggesting these were organizational responses to horizontal pressure.

The general compliance with governance evaluations, sworn declarations, and financial management initiatives across all three entities in Moron points to the centrality of *relevant timely legislation* and *positive horizontal pressure* caused by multiple-branch adherence to the program. Although each initiative encountered setbacks—governance evaluation information, especially from municipal branch offices, was not always complete; non-compliance with sworn declarations was not consistently reported online; and financial management on behalf of the school board suffered technical setbacks for publication—transparency Decree 1,307 and other pertinent legislation for each aspect of information access included in the ZDA provided important foundations for action. Horizontal relationships across branches appear to have determined in part the implementation of certain aspects of the initiatives.

3. Promising online access in Rosario

The access to information initiatives in Rosario's ZDA did not include sworn declaration presentation procedures, as in Cordoba or Moron, but rather focused on amplifying government information online and increasing transparency around financial management. (Rosario did agree to expand the scope of sworn declaration legislation, as described in the previous chapter, however this did not address the presentation or publication of these documents for public access.) Unlike the other two municipalities, Rosario had developed an official website in the late 1990s, providing a considerable amount of official information online as well as a framework for web-based initiatives under the ZDA program. The agreement sought to expand access to information online

by digitalizing legislation and creating a digital registry of municipal employees, as well as providing users with procurement projects and budget execution information for oversight.

Evidence from the implementation of online transparency initiatives in Rosario suggests that a *preexisting municipal website* and *collaboration* with local experts facilitated digitalization, and that *existing legislation* improved the likelihood of a municipal employee registry, however, *technological* and *administrative* issues limited full implementation in some cases. Access to financial management information also suffered from *procedural impediments*, specifically, allocation delays that hampered the budget monitoring initiative designed for the city website. Additionally, procurement-related information required further *simplification* to be accessible to the public. The following section describes how these factors influenced ZDA implementation of access to information initiatives in Rosario, beginning with digitalization of government information, followed by budget execution monitoring and procurement accessibility.

Rosario's ZDA capitalized on the proliferation of web development and digitalization, incorporating multiple initiatives designed to improve general access, amplify the amount of government information online (city government structure, department functions and objectives, city council attributes, and council-member information), and introduce simplified online directories of legislation and municipal employees. In addition, access to information improvements benefited from legislative developments such as Ordinance 7,827 (March of 2005), which lowered the barriers for individuals to request information by removing discretionary power from the government office receiving the solicitation. Apart from information dissemination online, Rosario's ZDA included innovations such as creating a digital library of municipal

legislation and a registry centralizing municipal government officials' and inspectors' salaries and position information.

Across digital registry initiatives, the preexistence of a *municipal website* and *relevant legislation* provided a valuable framework for action, however *legal-technical* and *administrative* impediments remained. While the digital legislative library was implemented successfully by 2005, the centralized municipal employee registry—which would consolidate basic information of the universe of municipal employees, helping users gain access to their governments' management of human resources, in line with existing legislation³⁷—proved more difficult. Unlike the legislative directory, the human resource registry was to include mechanisms for citizens to solicit more information and/or submit complaints regarding the behavior of municipal police officers.

Unlike the library's digitalization of ordinances, decrees, and other legal documents, the human resource registry required the intervention of *legal experts* for designing forms to solicit information, as well as pressure to *incentivize collaboration* across offices. Several months after the ZDA was signed, local organization *EC* and legal experts from the municipality had just finished designing a standardized form for building employee profiles but had not yet distributed the form to the hundreds of directors, inspectors, police officers, and administrative personnel contemplated within the objectives of the accord, suggesting that *bureaucratic obstacles* stymied the ZDA initiative. Subsequent to the ZDA program, Rosario's municipal website began to

³⁷ In part a response to the effects from the 2001 institutional crisis that provoked general alarm and discontent surrounding the productivity of public sector employees, City Ordinance 7,303 from 2002 dictated that the executive department must publish lists online of “permanent, contracted, temporary, and transitory staff of the municipality of Rosario and the city council, as well as any other entities that receive budget allocations for salaries, indicating salaries for each employee and their professional category.”

incorporate personnel registries for all government offices, including individuals' positions and annual salaries. Despite implementation setbacks, online-based digitalization initiatives in Rosario benefited from a relatively established institutional *website* and *legislative backing*, in addition to *expert intervention* provided in part by the local monitoring CSO.

Apart from digitalization initiatives, Rosario also agreed to enhance access to participatory budgeting³⁸ information for the purposes of improving monitoring. Although District Participation Councils (*Consejos Participativos de Distrito*, or *CPDs*) responsible for monitoring the implementation of projects produced execution reports and hosted thematic permanent fora (Gorban 2006, 7), budget execution information was not generally available to the public online. Modifications to the participatory budget ordinance were introduced in July 2005 via Ordinance 7,869, incorporating a need-based index for distribution of allocations and obligating the executive branch to report budget execution for the previous year during the subsequent budget's planning stages. These modifications did not offer citizens a gateway to participation in the policy monitoring stage either. In the end, despite the successful compilation of participatory budgeting projects online, monitoring mechanisms were underdeveloped by the time the ZDA follow-up reports were written.

Procedural flaws and *deficient legislation* appear to have impeded progress in accessing budgetary information, highlighting in turn the difficulty of executive-led transparency initiatives. According to Rosario's General Secretary at the time, the participatory budget execution phase in

³⁸ Rosario's participatory budgeting program was established in 2002 under Ordinance 7,326. Through neighborhood assemblies organized by District Participation Councils (*Consejos Participativos de Distrito*), the participatory budgeting project in Rosario between 2002 and 2004 produced six to ten public works, urban planning, and citizen participation projects per district on average (in total, this amounts to around forty projects across the city) (Ford 2007, 71). Planning for fiscal year 2005, the city's six districts organized forty neighborhood assemblies during April and May of 2004 followed by district council meetings from June to August for project prioritization, allocating a total of around 8% of the city's annual budget (dubbed *Presupuesto Comunal*) for different improvements.

2005 was complicated by prolonged procurement processes that exceeded the *fiscal year limits*, as well as *ambiguities in the prioritization* phase which lacked strong exchanges among officials and district representatives regarding project practicality (Astarita, Alonso, and Secchi 2006, 67-68; Bifarello 2006, 112-113). Any form of citizen monitoring through the CPDs or online would be unable to rectify the lack of established timelines or clear objectives. Additionally, existing legislation did not stipulate any citizen monitoring mechanisms. Years would pass before the municipality made project monitoring available to the public (via Ordinance 8,557, 2010) by requiring publication of information regarding chosen projects, allocations, entities responsible for execution, and implementation status online. This evidence suggests that the combination of *unmet implementation deadlines*, *prioritization ambiguities*, and *deficient legislation* derailed the participatory budgeting monitoring phase enhancements under the ZDA program. Additionally, because project management and execution involved in participatory budgeting requires coordination across multiple government dimensions—city council budget approval, procurement office operation, decentralized municipal branch representatives, among others—any enhancements to the project monitoring process likely exceeded executive branch capabilities, suggesting that the initiative itself was too broad in scope and would have required multiple branch adherence to the ZDA in order to be completed.

Finally, Rosario agreed to increase procurement information and opportunities for participation in terms and conditions design. Although the municipal website included no information allowing for general citizen monitoring by the time of the follow-up reports, the website did contain a digital platform called “Data Room” which since 1996 allowed bidding companies to consult historical information regarding public works projects and to participate in

the formation of terms and conditions for some procurement practices. Although this data base provided opportunities for participation from non-governmental or private sectors, facilitating transparency and public-private communication in an authorized digital space (Gaztañaga 2005, 194), it blocked the general public from participating or even monitoring the procurement process.

The “Data Room” system may have provided opportunities for participation and transparency among competing contractors, but it excluded the general participation of citizens in the procurement processes. The inability to incorporate mechanisms for citizen participation into this procurement platform suggests that the municipality lacked additional *technical resources* to improve accessibility and internal processes. Technological difficulties associated with software development therefore likely impeded broader access to procurement monitoring mechanisms in Rosario.

Access to information initiatives in Rosario’s ZDA benefited from the *existence of a municipal website*, providing the framework for amplifying government and legislative information, while *relevant legislation* provided the foundation for requests procedures as well as human resource management. Nonetheless, online-based initiatives confronted multiple challenges, such as *administrative* and *legal obstacles* that impeded the development of a municipal employee directory, and *procedural flaws* in the participatory budgeting program that undermined project execution reporting. Finally, modifying the existing online Data Room platform in order to increase general access to procurement information required *additional web development* resources not readily available during the ZDA program.

4. Conclusion

The ZDA program's access to information initiatives varied in content and scope across municipalities, depending less on transversal consolidation of key actor interests and more on horizontal pressure, civil society collaboration, and legal backing. In Moron, multilevel, multiple-branch adherence to accords with similar best practices initiatives in online content, sworn declarations, and financial management served to generate *horizontal pressure* across entities for improving websites and governance reports. In the executive-led agreements in Cordoba and Rosario, *civil society collaboration* permitted web development and digital registries, requiring less support from city council but more technical resources for implementation. In all three contexts, *existing legislation* facilitated accessibility to information, as shown by the mayoral Decree 1,647 that guided sworn declaration publication in Cordoba, municipal Decree 1,307 that provided statutes for declaration presentation in Moron, and city Ordinance 7,326 in Rosario that required the municipality to publish human resource information.

Despite technical improvements to access to information, deeper *inter-governmental*, *bureaucratic*, and *procedural* factors affected implementation. The evidence provided by Cordoba points to *provincial financial constraints* for engaging in hiring procedures, raising questions regarding the quality of the inter-governmental relationship between the municipality and province during the ZDA program. Non-compliance with sworn declarations in Moron suggests *weak sanctioning power* on behalf of the municipal Anticorruption Office, as well as *bureaucratic resistance* to holding government officials to account. Finally, *procedural flaws* in the participatory budgeting program delayed the production of financial management information in

Rosario, while *lacking administrative resources* undercut the initiative to improve accessibility to procurement information on the online Data Room platform.

CONCLUSION: MULTIPLE-BRANCH ADHESION FOR EFFECTIVE REFORM

Results from the analysis of the ZDA program suggest that executive-led agreements are less successfully carried out than those that incorporate *multiple branches of local government*. All three ZDA cases show, nonetheless, that these initiatives generally suffer from a range of institutional impediments, including *bureaucratic resistance* and *poor municipal-provincial relations*, as well as procedural setbacks associated with *decentralization complexities* and *administrative circuits*. Alternative explanations for imperfect implementation of these agreements point to individual municipal characteristics that separate Moron from the other cities, as well as technical factors of the program itself, namely, lack of agreement oversight and the novelty of transparency policies being introduced.

Institutional and procedural factors may serve to explain how state-society agreements like the ZDAs may be implemented, providing implications for understanding larger processes involved in municipal development as well as for generating new policies. With regard to municipal development, the ZDA program demonstrates how the project of reducing discretion and institutionalizing preventive measures against corruption at the municipal level interacts with broader decentralization and modernization tendencies. With regard to public policy, evidence suggests that non-binding agreements are more successful when both executive and legislative branches sign on. Any new comprehensive transparency reform strategy without legislative backing should, at a minimum, include these entities. Conveniently, an experiment to test the viability of multiple-branch adherence for transparency reform has been taking place in a new context in the city of San Luis, beginning in 2017. However, this case differs in that it involves multiple key actors and nationally recognized NGOs advising the city council in the design of

binding transparency legislation. The case of San Luis provides a significant development in municipal transparency initiatives, providing a potential avenue for institutionalizing the same core participatory and informational initiatives to which municipalities committed through the ZDAs in the early 2000s.

Finally, this investigation has sought to improve understanding of municipal transparency reform in Argentina, focusing on non-binding state-society mechanisms whose operation and implementation have not been empirically assessed to date. Some limitations undermined this study of the ZDAs, specifically the lack of available documentary evidence, paucity of key actor interviews, and the author's limited knowledge of the local politics and complex interactions taking place in Argentine municipalities. Future research should consider in more depth the difference between binding and non-binding transparency reform strategies, incorporating deeper analyses of the institutional and procedural frameworks with which local civil society actors interact on a day-to-day basis in these subnational contexts. Ideally, major findings could be extrapolated to provide recommendations for improving transparent government in other Argentine localities.

This chapter summarizes the institutional and procedural challenges facing the ZDA program, and then provides observations regarding technical obstacles that may account for the less than ideal initiative completion rates. After a summary of the findings, the implications of the ZDA findings for understanding decentralization and modernization processes will be explored. Finally, the chapter will conclude by showing how this study of civil-society-driven policy packages has extended previous research. Significant project limitations will be acknowledged and avenues for future research will be sketched.

1. Major findings: Institutional and procedural impediments

Analysis of the ZDA program suggests that the initiatives were susceptible to both institutional and procedural impediments. With regard to institutional factors, the analysis indicates that bureaucratic resistance and inter-governmental relations had pernicious effects on implementation across municipalities. Only when these factors were reduced in scope or when supplementary resources such as expert commissions were included, could institutional obstacles be mitigated. Within the context of subnational institutional development, program initiatives were often unable to overcome macro-processes such as municipal decentralization policies or defective public administration of material and human resources. Similarly, only when the scope of the initiatives was reduced did concerted collaboration take place among civil society actors and previous experience emerge to guide reform actions. The following sections compile examples of participatory, legislative, and informational initiatives under the ZDA program that demonstrate how institutional and procedural setbacks impeded success.

1.1. Institutional impediments: Bureaucratic resistance and inter-governmental relations

Analysis of the ZDA program indicates that successful implementation is more likely when multiple government branches adhere to the agreement, in part because the mobilization of key actors undermines bureaucratic and inter-governmental barriers that stand in the way of participatory, legislative, and informational reform initiatives. This section will describe how institutional variables impeded progress in all three municipalities, even in Moron where multiple branches signed on to the program.

1.1.1. Bureaucratic resistance

Resistance from municipal bureaucratic actors affected the implementation of procurement reforms in Cordoba, human resource management in Rosario, and sworn declarations enhancements in all three municipalities. In these cases, bureaucratic resistance came in the form of internal disagreements over the effectiveness of reforms, excessive legal precautions surrounding the scope of access to information, and weak sanctioning capacity for addressing non-compliance.

As one of the multiple legal reforms agreed to under Cordoba's ZDA, procurement reform stood out as particularly promising. Extant legislation was decades old and lacked contemporary transparency standards, such as citizen participation in the bidding process or online publication regulations. However, the municipality never carried out this initiative due in part to the assessment of the mayor's economic advisors that existing legislation provided sufficient regulations for procurement procedures. Additionally, the municipality's publication of procurement information online likely convinced the actors involved that transparency reform in this area was not an immediate priority. In this way, bureaucratic resistance impeded procurement reforms in Cordoba.

Secondly, bureaucratic resistance delayed information collection procedures in Rosario, after the municipality had agreed to create a digital registry of municipal employees in accordance with existing legislation (Ordinance 7,303 from 2002). As the first ZDA follow-up data shows, this initiative was partly delayed by bureaucratic obstacles for the standardization of information-collecting mechanisms for position and salary data. In order to protect the personal information of government officials, and inspectors in particular, municipal and civil society legal experts

collaborated extensively to produce a standardized collection mechanism. Therefore, in Rosario, bureaucratic resistance in the form of legal precautions less actively impeded this information-based objective in comparison to Cordoba, but nonetheless raised significant barriers for designing standard procedures and implementation.

In a final example, bureaucratic resistance impeded the initiatives designed to improve sworn declarations in all three municipalities. In Cordoba, evidence suggests that existing legislation protected city councilors from publishing sworn declarations online and that internal resistance restricted the online publication of executive branch declarations, only allowing citizens to receive this information after submitting inquiries with prior justification. Responding to journalists' questions about this ZDA initiative months into the agreement, Mayor Juez expressed his uncertainty regarding the inclusion of family member information for local official declarations. Rosario's initiative to expand sworn declarations' content to include family member patrimonial information was ultimately blocked, likely because any executive action would not apply to city council members or to staff. Basic transversal cooperation among key bureaucratic actors over this issue was therefore lacking. Finally, despite new legislation introduced by both executive and legislative branches in Moron, not all government officials appeared to have submitted these documents, nor did websites publish lists of those who did not comply, suggesting internal resistance and weak bureaucratic capacity for oversight. In all three cases, bureaucratic resistance undermined sworn declarations enhancement, whether it entailed publication, content expansion, or holding non-compliant officials accountable.

1.1.2. Inter-governmental relations

Apart from local bureaucratic resistance, the legal-jurisdictional and financial issues between municipal and provincial governments posed disadvantages for the ZDA program, particularly in Cordoba. As the first of the ZDAs undertaken, legislative reform and access to information initiatives in Cordoba proved to be susceptible to these inter-governmental frictions. This likely caused the ZDAs in Moron and Rosario to avoid including initiatives that might have been negatively affected by similar negative dynamics.

Jurisdictional issues with the provincial government impeded campaign finance reform and regulations for municipal decentralized entities. With regard to the former initiative, the province's role in political party campaign monitoring provided an opportunity for Mayor Juez to shift responsibility to the central government, claiming the municipality had no sanctioning power over infractions. Although the mayor committed to creating statutes for city charter legislation on political party financing, which would obligate local parties to submit expenditures in the weeks before local elections, months into the agreement he reversed his resolve, claiming that provincial authorities such as the Provincial Electoral Authority had legal jurisdiction, given that the same parties existed outside the municipality of Cordoba. Whether or not the mayor was correct in this exculpation, the presence of this jurisdictional ambiguity between municipal and provincial regulators undermined the implementation of legislative action agreed to under the ZDA.

The municipal-provincial juridical debate over decentralized municipal entities also produced obstacles for Cordoba's ZDA initiative to create regulatory statutes for neighborhood *juntas*. At the center of the debate was the existence of provincial legislation recognizing the juridical status and institutional attributes of only a handful of neighborhood centers, the governing

bodies that consolidated neighborhood *juntas*. Bypassing the broader jurisdictional debate, Mayor Juez's administration normalized municipal government relations with the over 250 city centers by drafting pertinent juridical legislation for these entities, but this meant legislation for the *juntas* was delayed. In this way, the ZDA initiative for formalizing neighborhood *juntas* was eclipsed as a result of inter-governmental debates regarding city centers.

In a third example, the access to information initiative designed to improve public hiring procedures in Cordoba also suffered from inter-governmental issues, specifically financial constraints. Because municipal employees were unable to count on receiving retirement packages as normally financed by the provincial budget, Mayor Juez's administration was unable to let these workers go in order to engage in fair and opening hiring procedures for new candidates.

All three initiatives in Cordoba therefore suffered from negative dynamics with the provincial government. This inter-governmental dynamic provided Mayor Juez with the opportunity to shirk his agreement to reform political party oversight and normalize neighborhood *juntas* in the midst of legal disagreements, while delaying hiring transparency because of provincial financial constraints on municipal severance packages.

1.1.3. Overcoming institutional impediments

Despite the obstacles produced by institutional factors, further analysis of the ZDA program provides some evidence of successful tactics for overcoming these barriers. Although inter-governmental relations presented insurmountable difficulties in Cordoba, bureaucratic resistance was mitigated by initiative specificity in executive accords, while expert commissions and complementary objectives across multiple government branches in Moron permitted the municipality to make advancements in institutionalizing oversight mechanisms.

In Cordoba and Rosario, initiative specificity provided a path to successfully overcoming resistance from bureaucratic actors. On the one hand, Cordoba's implementation of town halls was successful because they were organized around a neighborhood-level re-zoning issue, effectively reducing the scope of objectives and number of relevant actors involved. On the other hand, the collaborative accord between civil society group *Ejercicio Ciudadano* and the municipal government in Rosario, parallel to the ZDA program, facilitated the implementation of the executive branch transparency monitoring initiative. It set clear objectives and reduced the number of actors involved. Executive-led accords facing bureaucratic resistance therefore benefited when the scope of the initiatives—namely, the actors and objectives involved—was reduced.

In Moron, evidence from the creation of the Ombudsman office shows how complementary objectives across government branches under the ZDA program and expert commissions provided sufficient mobilization for overcoming local bureaucratic obstacles to create substantive transparency legislation. Because both the executive branch and city council included this initiative in their ZDAs, legislation was able to pass from one branch to another with relative efficiency. More importantly, Mayor Sabbatella's creation of an expert commission that incorporated various key actors ultimately streamlined the deliberation process and strengthened the likelihood of institutionalizing the Ombudsman office as a new oversight mechanism in Moron.

1.1.4. Summary of institutional impediments

In summary, analysis of the ZDA program across municipalities highlights the pernicious effects of bureaucratic resistance and inter-governmental friction on initiative implementation. When it came to legislative actions and access to information, institutional impediments undermined the accords' objectives. Resistance from bureaucratic actors blocked reforms to

procurement procedures, digital human resource registries, and sworn declarations enhancements while poor inter-governmental relations disadvantaged municipal governments trying to create regulatory legislation and to carry out transparent hiring procedures in the face of financial constraints. Only through initiative specificity did executive-led accords counteract these institutional impediments by reducing the scope and number of actors involved, while expert commissions facilitated multiple-branch accords by streamlining deliberation and incorporating key actors.

1.2. Procedural impediments: Decentralization and administration

All three cases highlight the complexities of municipal decentralization and local public administration, which impeded the implementation of ZDA initiatives. Municipal decentralization, the process by which degrees of decision-making and administrative tasks are transferred from city hall to district-level entities, produced multiple obstacles for the ZDAs' participatory and legislative action initiatives. In addition, inefficient administrative circuits undermined primarily the access to information initiatives. Although some evidence indicates that collaboration with civil society groups provides executive-led accords added support to overcome procedural difficulties, generally speaking, the initiatives in these contexts suffered more setbacks than those in Moron, where the municipal government, city council, and school board undertook complementary actions that overrode traditional procedures. The following sections describe how procedural impediments stood in the way of various ZDA initiatives and identify cases where these obstacles were overcome.

1.2.1. Decentralization complexities

Municipal decentralization complexities constituted significant obstacles for the ZDAs in Cordoba and Moron, especially for participatory and legislative actions. In Cordoba, the city-wide *PECba* initiative experienced endogenous and exogenous challenges when it came to incorporating effective channels of participation. In Moron, impending changes to district responsibilities derailed town hall reforms. As the examples from the ZDA program demonstrate, municipal decentralization requires continuous investment from governments in order to process information, address citizens' needs, and coordinate actions, otherwise participation and legislative enhancements may be undermined.

The initiative to increase citizen participation in Cordoba's *PECba* development agenda was undermined by poor dissemination regarding participatory instances in program design. The inability to properly mobilize citizen participation reflected deeper organizational and societal pitfalls associated with decentralization plans. According to ZDA follow-up reports, municipal government offices were unprepared to process and implement the development programs selected by the sectorial focus groups. Not only was the government structurally smaller than those in comparable Argentine cities, but basic monitoring tools were not in place to ensure efficient policy implementation by municipal offices. Externally, official sources indicated that citizen interpretations of decentralized municipal offices were generally negative, hampered by perceptions of these entities as politicized and only useful for administrative tasks. The combination of internal and external factors associated with decentralized planning therefore undermined successful participation in the *PECba* initiative.

In Moron, the process of municipal decentralization had negative effects on legislative reforms contemplated in the city council's ZDA. The impending changes to the organization of citizen opinions and needs to be channeled by commune centers provided potential complexities that would likely need to be addressed by any reforms to town hall legislation. The introduction of decentralized mechanisms would affect the nature of town hall participation, given the representative power that commune structures would incorporate. Coordination between the municipal government and city hall therefore was likely deficient when it came to planning for decentralization procedures.

1.2.2. Administrative obstacles

Apart from decentralization complexities, the ZDAs suffered from administrative impediments, especially when it came to improving access to information in the municipalities. Administrative obstacles were characterized by uneven transfer of social program management responsibilities in Cordoba, insufficient technical resources in Rosario, and non-standardized criteria for governance reporting in Moron. As the following cases show, administrative procedures are effective when local governments have the capacity to undertake additional management responsibilities, access technical resources for software development, and provide specific standards for reporting information.

Unprecedented administrative responsibilities for social programs were transferred to Cordoba city during the ZDA program, undermining the implementation of a publicly accessible beneficiary registry. Municipal Decree 1,512 officially transferred management responsibilities to the municipal government in 2004. Despite the creation of a municipal office to control and monitor program implementation, the administrative tasks required to centralize beneficiary

information were evidently insurmountable for the local government. Insurmountable tasks included making frequent changes in enrollments as well as attending to legal issues concerning individual privacy.

In Rosario, the initiative to improve access to procurement design and monitoring was similarly undermined by administrative deficiencies. However, demands on administrative resources were fewer than in Cordoba. The expansion of the “Data Room” digital platform to include non-bidding participants would have advanced the reforms, however the technical resources to enhance this software were not readily available. The municipality may have evaluated alternative, offline mechanisms to enact these reforms, however, efforts to develop the Data Room platform may have precluded such action. Integrating the two systems would have eventually required more administrative resources than the municipality could muster. Under either scenario, Rosario’s initiative to enhance access to procurement design and monitoring was enfeebled by weak administrative capacity.

Moron’s initiatives to improve governance reporting was undermined by the non-standardized administration of information. Though all three government entities were partially successful in publishing evaluation reports, the lack of any baseline criteria allowed for incomplete information to be reported. In this case, rather than lacking procedural efficacy or technical resources, administrative discretion undermined effective governance evaluations.

1.2.3. Coping with procedural difficulties

Despite many setbacks, the ZDAs do provide evidence of government actors neutralizing procedural difficulties by reducing the scope of initiatives, fomenting collaboration with civil society actors, as well as building on valuable previous experiences. In Rosario, decentralization

complexities were ameliorated through standardization and participation procedures that accommodated the daily routines of citizens. In Cordoba, administrative obstacles were mitigated when civil society actors collaborated with web development. And in Moron, previous experiences with participatory processes and proximity to *PC* provided citizens and officials valuable knowledge and control over legislative procedures.

The “Volunteer Neighborhood Overseers” program in Rosario was successful in part because it was designed for neighborhood level engagement and streamlined the administrative task of compiling information. Neighborhood association representatives were given power to introduce the program gradually and to select individuals to inspect routine service provision. Simple standardized forms were designed to collect information, allowing for timely and efficient channels of communication.

Civil society collaboration also helped counteract procedural setbacks over the medium to long-term, especially when it came to establishing standards for development action transparency and enhancing government information online. Cordoba’s initiative to improve government website information, though partially successful under the ZDA program, laid the groundwork for civil society collaboration and executive branch accountability, as subsequent development plans show.

Finally, Moron’s implementation of the participatory legislative design initiative underscores both the effectiveness of multiple-branch adhesion for the ZDAs and the role unique contextual characteristics, namely, previous experiences with participatory mechanisms and proximity to organizations with resources and expertise in citizen participation, plays in mitigating procedural impediments. The earlier experiences in participatory procurement procedures

provided basic knowledge that could be applied to the legislative process. The longstanding presence of a CSO with expertise in ordinance design added logistical support to municipal organizers. It also contributed to local actor conformity by applying best-practices that facilitated confidence in the overall process.

1.2.4. Summary of procedural impediments

The ZDA program was beset by implementation difficulties associated with decentralization and competing public administrative procedures. All three municipalities experienced different degrees of procedural setbacks. In Cordoba, decentralization complexities posed endogenous and exogenous obstacles for incentivizing citizen participation in the *PECba* program, while administrative capacity shortfalls undermined social program transparency. In Rosario, access to procurement information was undermined by the lack of technical and administrative resources to expand existing software platforms or to create complementary mechanisms for terms and conditions design or bidding monitoring. Faulty executive and city hall coordination of decentralizing processes in Moron undermined town hall procedural reforms, while the absence of procedures for governance evaluations meant reports were susceptible to administrative discretion. Procedural difficulties were overcome and executive accord initiatives were successful when programs adopted standardized, close-to-home participation, or when local civil society assisted in administrative processes such as website development. In Moron's multiple-branch ZDA program, previous experiences and proximity to *PC* provided citizens and officials with practical knowledge that counteracted procedural difficulties.

1.3. The case of participatory budgeting: Institutional and procedural setbacks

Among the ZDA initiatives, few faced as many institutional and procedural setbacks as the participatory budgeting programs in Cordoba and Rosario. Participatory budgeting programs generally involve multiple policy phases, including primary budget allocation, neighborhood or district representative elections, decentralized project deliberations, project selection, implementation, and monitoring. These programs present multiple opportunities for improving citizen participation and increasing access to information. Because these programs utilize significant portions of the municipal budget, financial management mechanisms must be in place to secure proper use of funds. Under the ZDAs, participatory budgeting initiatives faced institutional as well as procedural impediments when it came to project implementation and monitoring.

Cordoba's ZDA included a participatory budgeting program, which was only partially carried out during 2004. The program was substantially sidetracked by procedural inconsistencies in the organization of neighborhood programs as well as the distribution of materials and human resources for the commune centers. Legal disagreements with the provincial government over the neighborhood *juntas*, described earlier, created difficulties for participation and ambiguities in the organization of projects. As a result of these complexities, only half of the forty or so neighborhood infrastructural and social development projects were given allocations in 2004, resulting ultimately in the suspension of the participatory budget program for the following fiscal year period.

Similarly, the ZDA initiative in Rosario for improving participatory budget monitoring mechanisms was not completed due to deficient legislation and to procedural delays. Participatory budgeting legislation did not incorporate any mechanisms for citizens to monitor project execution.

Any changes to the legislation would require city council approval, presenting important institutional obstacles for the executive-led ZDA. Procedurally, the budget monitoring initiative was undermined because of prioritization ambiguities among planners as well as implementation timelines that were too tight. Although the city had successfully completed initial planning and allocation stages for participatory budgeting in 2005, effective mechanisms for neighborhood-level deliberations or for assessing project practicality were not implemented.

In both Cordoba and Rosario, evidence from the participatory budgeting initiatives suggests that institutional and procedural impediments combined to undermine successful implementation. Fundamental legal issues effectively blocked the cities' capacity to enhance participation or access to information, as revealed by Cordoba's disagreements with provincial legislation over the *juntas* and by Rosario's deficient participatory budgeting legislation. Additionally, decentralization and administrative obstacles undermined improvements to participatory budgeting, producing delays in materials and human resource distribution in Cordoba as well as ambiguities in the prioritization of development projects.

These institutional and procedural impediments might have been mitigated if Cordoba and Rosario had incorporated the city council or other government entities into the ZDA program. The unilateral nature of the initiatives to improve extensive, citywide programs like participatory budgeting ultimately excluded other key actors from providing basic collaboration, exerting any oversight role or facilitating participation through constituency outreach. As implementation results show, the ZDA program in Moron, to which multiple branches adhered, was qualitatively more successful because of the involvement of key actors around complementary objectives.

1.4. Alternative explanations

Analyzing the implementation of ZDA initiatives across cases has provided insight into how certain institutional and procedural forces undermine successful reform, and how multilevel, multiple-branch adherence to the program can mitigate these setbacks. Alternative explanations for the variation across municipalities include individual municipal characteristics, the articulation mechanism used by *PC* for distant localities, and the novelty of transparency reform. This section examines these three alternative explanations for ZDA implementation variability, but ultimately concludes that multiple-branch adherence provides the best causal explanation for implementation variability.

Individual case characteristics such as government size and municipal public policy responsibilities partly determine ZDA success or failure. The case of Moron is unique in that the municipality is less populated and less autonomous than Cordoba or Rosario. Moron is also anomalous in that it received direct assistance from *PC* on numerous occasions. The finding that multiple-branch adherence facilitated ZDA implementation also suggests endogenous causes were at work. They were not evident in Rosario and Cordoba, where institutional and procedural obstacles precluded the involvement of multiple government branches in the ZDA program. Bureaucratic obstacles and inter-governmental tensions may have dissuaded key actors in these cities from buying into the ZDA program objectives and initiatives. City council members may have shared the perception that municipal bureaucracies were too large for ZDA initiatives to be effective, or they may have been politically wrapped up in the tensions characterizing provincial-municipal relations. Alternatively, the information reforms espoused by the ZDA program, as mentioned earlier, may have generated disagreements on the range and depth of information to be

made public. Comparing the three cases, Moron stands apart for both exogenous and endogenous reasons. It had a smaller government and constituency, previous experiences with transparency policies and anticorruption, close proximity to *PC*, and there was a shared consensus among multiple branches of government around the ZDA program.

Secondly, as a collaborative agreement for developing transparent government, ZDA success was contingent on strong civil society presence. An assessment of ZDA Program oversight capacity suggests weaknesses in the articulation mechanisms used by *PC* in Cordoba and Rosario. Technical advice was provided at a distance and there were few training sessions due to financial limitations. Local organizations may not have had the capacity to oversee implementation of all initiatives in these cities. Because *PC* was the primary oversight organization in Moron, capacity to undertake systemic evaluations of initiative implementation was likely higher. Rosario's incorporation of initiative specificity and parallel accords in the case of police force monitoring activities exemplifies how distant accords emerged to counterbalance weak ZDA oversight capacity. As comprehensive reform programs have evolved, more civil society groups have been incorporated, strengthening particular aspects of these agreements. The Cordoba and San Luis cases demonstrate this. The first-wave ZDAs lacked sufficient civil society pressure for implementation.

The novelty of transparency policy provides a third alternative explanation for the variable success in the ZDA program. ZDA Program documents propose a wide range of mechanisms for improving transparency in municipal contexts, however understanding and incorporating transparency into political contexts is distinctly different. The relative scarcity and inconclusiveness of evidence that such political investments produce tangible rewards remains a

barrier to implementation. Transparency reforms have an extensive legacy in Argentina. When the ZDA program was introduced in 2003, advocacy for transparent government was a heterogeneous and multi-layered endeavor. A range of mechanisms was used. There was multilayered legislation and multiple international agreements with little coherent articulation with national, provincial, and municipal levels of government.

Despite the significance of the factors included in these alternative explanations, multiple-branch adherence to the ZDA program continues to be the most promising causal explanation for implementation success. First, municipal particularities were met with individualized agreements. ZDAs were designed to respond to specific municipal issues, including reduced potential for key actor mobilization. This is reflected in the accords' contents themselves: executive-led programs either contained a lower proportion of citizen participation initiatives than Moron (24% in Cordoba, compared to 32% in Moron) or required qualitatively different forms of citizen participation, such as the parallel agreements for CSO monitoring initiatives in Rosario. Individual ZDA design and initiative specificity neutralize the effects of individual municipal characteristics.

Secondly, reforms fundamentally depend on municipal branch activity. Although civil society strength affects the policy design and implementation process, cohesion or dissidence across municipal government branches ultimately decides the posterity of public policy. As shown by the strategy in San Luis, even as civil society presence increases, this pressure is directed in large part towards the ordinance drafting process, because reform is more likely to succeed when the city council deliberates refined proposals. Whereas civil society presence may vary, municipal democratic institutional formation remains a constant and essential characteristic determining reform.

Finally, the novelty of transparency reform is international in scope, reducing the likelihood that this factor explains reform implementation variation across subnational units with similar cultural, historical, or socioeconomic conditions (Snyder 2001). While transcendent questions of novelty continue to stymie anticorruption reformers in any context, multiple-branch adherence to comprehensive transparency reform programs provides a causal explanation for implementation variability at the subnational level.

2. Implications: Broader processes and future policies

The central finding from this analysis of the ZDA program is that institutional and procedural impediments are more likely to be overcome when multiple government branches undertake transparency reform initiatives in unison. This has implications for understanding broader municipal development processes, such as government decentralization and administrative modernization. Future transparency reform packages modeled on the ZDA program would benefit from engaging both executive and legislative branches, as was done in Moron. A current program taking place in San Luis offers an experiment for testing the hypothesis that multiple-branch adherence improves the likelihood of successful transparency reform package implementation.

2.1. Broader processes: Decentralization and modernization

The municipalities that carried out the ZDA program did so within the context of government decentralization processes that transferred public administrative responsibilities from national to subnational governments beginning in the 1990s. In addition to traditional responsibilities such as waste collection or minor infrastructural projects, municipal governments have increasingly taken on education and health care administration as well as subsidy management while facing financial and human resources constraints. Although the 2001 crisis

exacerbated local development issues, citizens in large cities began to mobilize at the district level, presenting opportunities for improving municipal decentralization through participatory initiatives such as those presented by the ZDA Program. Strategic development plans such as *PECba*, as well as transparent procurement reforms and participatory budgeting programs presented opportunities for municipalities to improve and institutionalize decentralized structures and, in the process, regain legitimacy and credibility. The wide array of institutional and procedural setbacks confronted by the ZDAs exemplify the complexities encountered by municipal decentralization, especially in the aftermath of a nationwide financial and institutional crisis.

Secondly, the administrative tasks involved in access to information initiatives highlight broader modernization processes occurring through the integration of information technology into state structures. Content analysis of the ZDAs demonstrates that access to information initiatives represent nearly half of the programs' contents, and that the majority of these initiatives such as sworn declarations transparency, governance reporting and budget monitoring, called for website development and online publication. Although generally more successful than participatory or legislative actions, a wide range of administrative, bureaucratic, and even inter-governmental dynamics impeded modernization innovations such as digital registries or transparency in municipal hiring.

Both of these processes present continuous opportunities for improvement for municipal governments. The ZDA initiatives in many ways complemented these broader processes, while the program itself served to improve linkages between civil society groups and local governments.

2.2. Policy directions: The case of San Luis

Evidence from ZDAs suggests that non-binding comprehensive transparency reform agreements are likely to be more successful when executive and legislative branches sign on. Not only does such multiple-branch adherence facilitate legislative actions, it also creates a mutually reinforcing incentive structure among municipal government entities, which makes reforms more viable within the context of broader political processes. Previous experiences with participatory initiatives or anticorruption campaigns also facilitate consensus around policies such as those presented by the ZDA program. In their absence, horizontal interaction among government actors makes decision-making more effective, especially in municipalities exhibiting and adapting to decentralization and modernization tendencies. Therefore, if similar reform packages are to be introduced, they should be designed to include both executive and legislative branches, ideally at various levels of governance.

In this vein, the 2017 “Integrated System for Transparency and Participation” ordinance proposal in San Luis provides a policy experiment that may serve to test this hypothesis. In April of 2016, San Luis mayor Enrique Ponce began a program called ‘San Luis: the Capital of Democratic Participation,’ a municipal government effort designed to train local civil society actors and introduce transparency legislation as well as participation mechanisms for local decision-making. According to Ponce, the objective of this program is to generate legislation that can “last over time and positively condition administrations to come” (Ponce 2018).

Much as the ZDA program before it, the San Luis program offers a toolkit of reforms that require civil society involvement and training. It has a more elaborate structure, with multiple fronts of action to elicit the collaboration of national-level CSOs and develop deeper methods of

incidence. Additionally, it benefits from the mayor's positive experience with earlier collaborations with *PC* and the ZDA program.

Unlike the ZDAs, the San Luis program includes the intervention of *PC* as well as other nationally recognized NGOs, like *Avina* and *Directorio Legislativo*. Individual experts also provide financial resources, training sessions for decision-makers and citizens, and workshops with local actors to develop specific projects within the program. ZDAs lacked the intervention of multiple national-level NGOs. Because the projects were meant to be monitored by local groups, the transfer of knowledge from *PC* to the signing organization was qualitatively different, based mainly on progress reporting and less on training or logistics. The ZDA initiatives appear ambitious in part because of these weaker ties. Some appear large enough in scope to be individual, freestanding projects. In contrast, the San Luis program is organized into separate projects guided by multiple national NGOs. For example, as advocate Carlos March explains, the contracting and purchase ordinance project is based on a "*Transparency International* program designed to bring transparency to the procurement process." It was created over some months in 2016 with intervention by *PC*. Multi-sectoral workshops were held with members of the business sector as well as the city council (March 2018).

The quantity and quality of resources involved in the implementation of the San Luis program surpass those available for *PC*'s ZDA program and so do the incidence strategies themselves. As mentioned above, the San Luis program was founded on the principle of posterity; the hope is that following administrations will be subject to transparency legislation and participatory democratic mechanisms. For that reason, the workshops and projects, such as the 2016 transparent procurement ordinance, the "integrated system for transparency and

participation” ordinance proposed in 2017, and the public ethics code being designed now, are undertaken by organizations and experts with an eye towards creating ordinances or modifications that can be sanctioned by the city council, “rather than resolutions that depend solely on [the mayor]” (March 2018). In the ZDAs, this depth of engagement was lacking. All but one of the comprehensive transparency reform agreements were signed by no more than three actors (*PC*, the executive branch, and a local CSO), often to the exclusion of the deliberative branch.

Differences aside, the San Luis program is intimately linked to the ZDA program even though it appears a decade after the accords were designed and implemented. Carlos March, long-time member and director of *PC* during ZDA Program implementation, and Enrique Ponce, who headed a participation-based organization called *Creceer San Luis* in that municipality, had crossed paths in the late 1990s and again in 2005 when *PC* was planning a potential ZDA mechanism for San Luis. The initiative was ultimately derailed by a jurisdictional dispute in the municipality that politicized the process. “That conflict over jurisdiction had to be resolved by the [National Supreme] Court,” explains Ponce today. “That is, it was a first attempt to bring forth a ‘zero discretion pact.’ But precisely ten years later, I get to be on the other side of the table (*mostrador*), and be coherent not only with the promises that one commits to keeping, in keeping with what one considers to be values, and promote actions and government policies, but also to not forget what it means to be on the other side of the table, be part of civil society...” (Ponce 2018). Ponce was certainly inspired by the ZDA program, having been on “both sides of the table.” These previous interactions permitted a channel of communication to be established between the municipal official and non-state actor promoting the reform package.

Despite the difference in resources, scope, and experience, the ZDA program and elements of the San Luis program follow a consistent logic: to promote participation and transparency along multiple fronts, ideally through consensus-building among key government actors. In late 2017, members of *Fundación Avina* and *Directorio Legislativo* presented an ordinance project to mayor Ponce within the program’s framework labeled “Integrated System of Transparency and Participation” (“*Sistema Integral de Transparencia y Participación*”), which introduces guiding norms for access to information, participatory budgeting, town halls, and participatory legislation design, resembling in many ways a comprehensive reform ZDA introduced in 2003, but now with sanctioning power. As Carlos March today comments, “The logic is exactly the same: how to promote institutionalization, citizen participation to control public administration, and contain discretion through instruments, call it ‘Zero Discretion Pacts’ or ‘*San Luis: Capital de la democracia participativa*’—it’s all under the same focus.”

This consistency between the ZDA program and San Luis therefore offers an opportunity to test the central hypothesis deriving from the ZDA analysis that comprehensive reform packages are more likely to be implemented when multiple government branches are included in their design and implementation. If the “Integrated System” ordinance project is passed by the city council it will be an important step for the institutionalization of the participatory, informational, and legislative components central to comprehensive transparency reform packages.

3. Contributions, limitations, and future research

This study has sought to increase understanding of the implementation of subnational transparency policies in Argentina using the case of the ZDA Program to identify institutional and procedural obstacles to reform. This thesis tracked the implementation of a single program

designed by *PC* that sought to introduce transparency best-practices into municipal institutions through the mobilization of local collaborators. Though previous research has examined the role of incidence-oriented CSOs in Argentina³⁹, few have examined the implementation of individual programs within this context. Studies on *PC* specifically have focused on the framing of corruption (Pereyra 2013) as well as the development of advocacy strategies over time (Malagamba Otegui 2013, Doctoral Thesis), but have not provided an assessment of the subnational obstacles that confront the organization's transparency reform initiatives. In this way, this project may contribute to further understanding of transparency advocacy in Argentina.

Several factors limit the conclusions that may be drawn from this investigation. First, significant portions of the ZDA content analysis are based on a number of primary documents, but it would have been beneficial to have more documentation available. A fundamental source of information has been a follow-up report produced by *PC* in 2006. This increases the potential for bias in determining successful, partial, and unsuccessful initiative implementation. Primary documents from local organizations provide important inputs for the ZDA content analysis, however these, too, present an incomplete picture of the obstacles facing implementation. Apart from less than ideal amounts of documentation, there were other impediments such as limited resources, few channels of communication, and minimal participant or key actor interviews. Finally, this investigation of the ZDA program does not include comprehensive analyses of the municipalities. More information on subnational historical development, civil society demographics, political party formation, economic or private sector interests, and cultural

³⁹ As mentioned in the introductory chapter, there has been considerable effort to characterize the development and role of incidence-oriented CSOs in Argentina. See Thompson (1994); Roitter and Gonzalez Bombal (2000); Acuña and Vacchieri (2007); Smulovitz and Uribarri (2008); Peruzzotti and Smulovitz (2006); Lester Salamon and the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies.

perspectives on corruption would provide additional important insights into initiative implementation.

Future research on the ZDAs and other transparency reform programs would benefit from deeper analyses of municipal characteristics, a more exhaustive collection of primary and secondary documents, and more strategic interviews with key actors including representatives from civil society, municipal government officials, and experts in subnational policy implementation. Future research might focus on other aspects of the ZDAs as well, such as the selection processes that brought the program to these municipalities, the negotiation process between state and non-state actors in establishing agreement contents, and comparison with other state-driven or binding transparency reforms.

APPENDIX A: DETAIL OF ZERO DISCRETION ACCORD CONTENTS

The ZDAs implemented in Cordoba, Moron, and Rosario contained a total of 61 initiatives that have been categorized into three reform categories: Citizen Participation, Legislative Action, and Access to Information. The following tables summarize ZDA contents and initiative completion status across municipal accords utilizing these categories.

Table 2.1. Detail of ZDA contents and implementation results: Citizen Participation

Reform Category	Subcategory	Initiative	Cordoba	Moron			Rosario
				Executive	HCD	School Board	
Citizen Participation	Participatory Ordinance Design (POD)	Ordinance for POD			0.5		
		Ordinance + Implementation of POD		1			
		"Access to Information Ordinance"		1	1		
	Mechanisms	Annual Strategic Plan	0.5				
		Town Halls		1		0.5	0
		Citizen Forums					0.5
		Neighborhood Sessions			1		
		Open Bench			0		
	Procurement and Service Provision	Planning (Town Halls)	1				
		Oversight					1
		Integrity Pact	0*				0*
		Integrity Pact Monitoring	0*				
	Participatory Budgeting	Comprehensive Program	0.5				
	Governance evaluation	Police force monitoring					1

Note: The implementation results are based on information provided by PC's general ZDA follow-up report (Astarita, Alonso, and Secchi 2006). Total Citizen Participation initiatives: 18. Values represent completion status: 0 = Incomplete; 0.5 = Partial; 1 = Complete. Values with asterisks () were not included in the chapter analyses.*

Table 2.2. Detail of ZDA contents and implementation results: Legislative Action

Reform Category	Subcategory	Initiative	Cordoba	Moron			Rosario
				Executive	HCD	School Board	
Legislative Action	Special Interests	Statutes for Campaign finance	0				
		Presentation of Campaign Funding	0				
		Publication of Party Fund Regulations	0				
		Lobbying Statutes		0.5	0.5		
	Transparent Procurement	Ordinance Reform	0				
	Ombudsman	Ordinance			1		
		Position		1			
	Governance evaluation Ordinances	Expansion			1		
		Systematic external evaluation					1
	Employment	Designation of auxiliaries (Disposition)				1*	
	Legislative design	Sworn Declaration Expansion					0
		Economic and Social Council	0.5				
		Neighborhood Juntas	0				
		Town Halls			0		

Note: The implementation results are based on information provided by PC's general ZDA follow-up report (Astarita, Alonso, and Secchi 2006). Total Legislative Action initiatives: 15. Values represent completion status: 0 = Incomplete; 0.5 = Partial; 1 = Complete Values with asterisks () were not included in the chapter analyses.*

Table 2.3. Detail of ZDA contents and implementation results: Access to Information

Reform Category	Subcategory	Initiative	Cordoba	Moron			Rosario
				Executive	HCD	School Board	
Access to Information	Public Registries	Social programs	0.5				
		Public employees					0.5
		Accessibility Online					0
	Public Employment	Fair and Open hiring	0				
		Hiring exceptions	0				
	Sworn Declarations	Presentation	1	0.5	0.5	0.5	
		Publication	0.5				
	Governance Evaluation	Expansion of Info.	0.5				0.5
		Town Hall presentation	0				
		Annual Report		0.5	1	1	
		Digitalization of Legislation					1
		Police force external audit					0
	Awareness	Dissemination of Semi-direct Democratic Mechanisms	0*				
		Displays of Request Procedures	0*			1*	1*
	Transparent Procurement	Publication Terms and Conditions	1				
		Bidding Monitoring					0.5
Budget Monitoring			1	1	0.5	0	

Note: The implementation results are based on information provided by PC's general ZDA follow-up report (Astarita, Alonso, and Secchi 2006). Total Access to Information initiatives: 28. Values represent completion status: 0 = Incomplete; 0.5 = Partial; 1 = Complete Values with asterisks () were not included in the chapter analyses.*

APPENDIX B: SELECTED SECONDARY SOURCES

The following tables include selected archival documents, official reports, and newspaper articles that were utilized for analysis of ZDA initiative implementation.

Cordoba	
Archival documentation	Red Ciudadana Principio del Principio. 2004a. “Entrevista con el Intendente Luis Juez. Jueves 17 de junio de 2004.” <i>Red Ciudadana Principio del Principio (RCPdP)</i> follow-up report created 12 July, 2004, sent to <i>Poder Ciudadano</i> .
	Red Ciudadana Principio del Principio. 2004b. “Primer informe: mes de octubre.” <i>RCPdP</i> follow-up report created 27 October, 2004, sent to <i>Poder Ciudadano</i> .
	Scicolone, Angel Carlos. 2004. “Primer Informe - Referente a la implementación del presupuesto participativo para la ciudad de Córdoba - Año 2004.” <i>RCPdP</i> follow-up report dated 27 October, 2004, sent to <i>Poder Ciudadano</i> .
	Scicolone, Angel Carlos. 2005. “I Informe para <i>Poder Ciudadano</i> Año 2005.” <i>RCPdP</i> follow-up report dated 5 July, 2005, sent to <i>Poder Ciudadano</i> .
	Red Ciudadana Principio del Principio. 2005. “Última reunión con el Lic. G. Marianacci.” <i>RCPdP</i> follow-up report created 4 August, 2005, sent to <i>Poder Ciudadano</i> .
	Mellibosky, Raúl L, David Malik, Sabrina Neira, Nicolás Avellaneda, and Natalia Molina. 2006. “Monitoreo de consulta pública sobre ordenamiento urbano.” <i>Red Ciudadana Principio del Principio</i> follow-up report created 21 February, 2006, sent to <i>Poder Ciudadano</i> .
Official reports	Municipality of Cordoba. 2004a. “Plan Estratégico de la Ciudad de Córdoba (PECba): Resultados de los FOROS y acciones municipales en marcha.” Official report from the Municipality of Cordoba, Dirección de Planificación Estratégica, dated February 2004.
	Municipality of Cordoba. 2004b. “Documento 2: Diagnóstico consensuado de la ciudad. Documento Preliminar.” Official report from the Municipality of Cordoba, Secretaría de Gobierno y Planificación Estratégica, dated June 2004.
	Municipality of Cordoba. 2004c. “Documento 4: Diagnóstico consensuado de la ciudad.” Official report from the Municipality of Cordoba, Secretaría de Gobierno y Planificación Estratégica, dated July 2004.
News articles	Cañas, Julián. 2002, May 5. “La política no tradicional se multiplica.” <i>La Voz del Interior</i> . Retrieved from https://www.lavoz.com.ar .
	Castellanos, Teresa and Alicia Rolando de Serra. 2002. “Ciudadanos cordobeses atrapados en una asfixiante telaraña jurídico-política.” <i>Punto de Inflexión</i> [blog], June 21. http://www.perspectivassociales.com/periodismocivico/monitoreo.html .
	Ybarra, Gustavo. 2003, October 6. “Un opositor ganó la capital de Córdoba.” <i>La Nación</i> . Retrieved from https://www.lanacion.com.ar .

Cañas, Julián. 2004, February 2. “Buena voluntad y realidad.” <i>La Voz del Interior</i> . Retrieved from https://www.lavoz.com.ar .
La Voz. 2005, October 26. “La oposición pide precisiones sobre números de Tamse.” <i>La Voz del Interior</i> . Retrieved from https://www.lavoz.com.ar .
Fernández, Luciano. 2006, July 8. “El presupuesto que no llegó a los vecinos.” <i>La Voz del Interior</i> . Retrieved from https://www.lavoz.com.ar .
Curto, Rubén. 2006, August 20. “‘Discrecionalidad Cero’: a mitad de camino.” <i>La Voz del Interior</i> . Retrieved from https://www.lavoz.com.ar .
La Voz. 2006, November 18. “Piden que se obligue al municipio a ejecutar el presupuesto participativo.” <i>La Voz del Interior</i> . Retrieved from https://www.lavoz.com.ar .
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Moron	
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