In the first Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, in 1995, Brazil was ranked the fifth most corrupt – after Indonesia, China, Pakistan, and Venezuela - of the 41 countries surveyed. As more countries were added to the index, Brazil consistently ranged between the 45th and 55th percentiles (where higher percentiles indicate better control of corruption) in the rankings in the late 1990s and early 2000s. From 2003 to 2014, the country placed around the 60th percentile, ranking as the 72nd best out of 180 countries in 2007, for instance. In the most recent years, however, Brazil has fallen several places in the rankings, placing 79th out of 176 countries in the 2016 rankings, leaving it back at the 45th percentile.

The most recent years of Brazilian history have revealed the persistence and pervasiveness of large-scale political corruption in the country, despite high-profile anti-corruption initiatives undertaken over the past 20 years. In this chapter, we first describe the persistence of corruption in Brazil with reference to major scandals, statistics about the criminal accusations made against politicians at all levels of government, and information about the variation in state- and local-level corruption across various regions of the country. In the second part of the chapter, we describe the institutional innovations
that the country has introduced in its attempts to curb corruption. We, then, describe patterns in Brazilian public opinion toward corruption before concluding the chapter with some informed speculation about what might happen in light of the latest political scandal that has led already to the impeachment of one president and a court-of-first-incidence conviction of a former president.

**Persistent Corruption in Brazil since the 1985 Transition to Democracy**

Contemporary Brazil is no stranger to political corruption. High profile corruption scandals have regularly permeated the political environment in Brazil since its 1985 transition to democracy. Every presidential administration in the present democratic era has witnessed the eruption of at least one major corruption scandal during its tenure (Power and Taylor 2011). At the level of the highest political office, these scandals have led to the impeachment of two Brazilian presidents. Fernando Collor do Melo was impeached in 1992 following the public revelation of fraudulent business dealings, and Dilma Rousseff was removed from office in 2016 for the inappropriate presentation of government accounts.

The depth of political corruption in Brazil can be witnessed in the extent to which the major scandals of the last three decades have affected not only presidents but also large numbers of federal legislators. These scandals include the Anões do Orçamento (“budget dwarves”) scandal of 1993-94, the Sanguessuga (“bloodsucker”) scandal of the mid-2000s, the Mensalão (“big monthly payment”) scandal of 2005, and the Operação Lava Jato (“car wash”) scandal that emerged in 2014 and continues to reveal more information about nefarious financial relations within the Brazilian national government.
at the time of this writing (Power and Taylor 2011; Carson and Prado 2014). The allegations of corruption within these scandals range from the allocation of funds to phantom non-profit institutions by budget committee members in the Anões do Orçamento scandal to the funneling of public and private funds to members of the Worker’s Party (PT) in an effort to drum up support for legislative initiatives in the Mensalão scandal. Between two prominent impeachments and four wide-reaching scandals, political corruption has proved a regular grievance and has impeded economic development in Brazil’s present democratic period.

While these high-profile scandals are notable for both the political reaches to which they soar and the brazenness of some of the financial exchanges involved, Brazil’s broader experience with corruption also involves the pervasive permeation of malfeasance in local politics. Brazilian state and local governments are commonly believed to be rife with corruption. In local contexts, corruption is most visible in the areas of procurement and public works (Melo 2014). Local politicians have frequently been found to use fake receipts and to create phantom firms in an attempt to falsely signal legal compliance while diverting funds allocated for public goods provision (Ferraz and Finan 2011). Additionally, mayors and councilmen have been found to use noncompetitive procurement processes that privilege politically-allied business partners (Ferraz and Finan 2011). In addition to these more discreet strategies, local-level bureaucratic corruption commonly manifests itself through the public’s interactions with government officials and, most notably, bribe-soliciting police (Melo 2014). Across AmericasBarometer surveys conducted every other year between 2006 and 2014, the proportion of Brazilian respondents saying that they have had to pay a bribe in their
interactions with public officials has ranged between 9 and 21 percent (Senters, Weitz-Shapiro, and Winters Forthcoming). Perhaps, in part, a function of bribe solicitations, public opinion surveys reveal that the Brazilian public perceives the police, political parties, and the legislature to be widely corrupt (Melo 2014). The average response given by Brazilians when asked to evaluate the commonality of corruption among public officials on a scale from one to four (where one indicates “very common”) has been around 2.0 in the 2008, 2010, and 2012 rounds of the AmericasBarometer survey. This evaluation is actually slightly better than the region-wide average of 1.8 during those same years but not at the level of 2.3 obtained by Canada, for example.

Although corruption in Brazil remains widespread by objective measures and prominent in the national discourse, the country has seen a number of efforts to identify and sanction malfeasance in recent years. Such initiatives were rare in the “reign of impunity” in the early years of the present democratic period, but with the progression of time, Brazilian politicians at all levels of government have been convicted of or are currently facing corruption charges (Pereira et al. 2011). In addition to the impeachments of Collor and Rousseff, former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva is presently on trial as a defendant in six criminal cases for his alleged involvement in corrupt political practices; in July 2017, he was convicted in one of these cases, although he remains free on appeal as of this writing.1 In 2008, over one-third of federal deputies faced corruption charges (Melo 2014). With the eruption of the Lava Jato scandal, this percentage has ballooned to an almost unbelievable 60 percent of sitting lawmakers who have been confronted with legal challenges due to alleged malfeasance. The number of state

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1 Lula, who remained widely popular despite the Mensalão scandal that erupted at the end of his first term in office, had been expected to run again for the presidency in 2018.
legislators identified as engaging in fraudulent practices in 2008 was, similarly to the number of federal deputies, approximately one-third (Melo 2014). It is unclear whether or not the number of implicated state officials has been increasing in more recent years. At the most local level, municipal audits from the mid-2000s revealed evidence of corruption in 80 percent of the municipalities audited by the federal Comptroller General’s Office (CGU) (Ferraz and Finan 2011).

These statistics conceal important inter-regional and inter-state variation in politicians’ involvement in corruption. According to Melo (2014), corruption has traditionally been more prevalent in states in the north and central-west regions of the country. For example, in 2008, 75 and 63 percent of federal deputies faced criminal charges in the northern states of Tocantins and Rondônia, respectively, and 73 percent of politicians from Goiás in the central-west region faced charges of malfeasance (Melo 2014). These proportions exceed the national average.

Variation in subnational corruption patterns might be attributable to disparities in the proper functioning of checks and balances, institutional quality, and the degree of political pluralism across states. Alston et al. (2010) find that a decrease in checks-and-balances within a state – measured using an index that captures the existence, effectiveness, and independence of seven state institutions – significantly increases the probability of corruption, as observed using a measure of the average variation in wealth of state deputies. Biddle (2013) looks across municipalities and finds that the existence of local radio stations contributes to explaining inter-municipal variation in corruption (as revealed in municipal audits). Perhaps unsurprisingly, Biddle (2013) makes the broad

2 These institutions include the judiciary, public prosecutors, state audit offices, and the media.
argument that corruption is most prevalent in areas where resources funneled into public accountability are low.

Aside from institutional quality, the degree of political competition and fragmentation within subnational polities influences levels of malfeasance (Melo et al. 2014, Biddle 2013). Melo et al. (2014) finds that, “a 50 percent margin [of victory of mayoral candidates over their rivals] is predicted to cause a very substantial increase in the number of [state-level] corruption irregularities, from 6.2 to 9.8.” Biddle’s (2013) work substantiates Melo et al.’s (2014) findings and also observes that fragmentation in local councils increases the likelihood of corruption in municipalities insofar as fragmented councils provide less effective oversight of mayors.

Widespread corruption at both national and subnational-levels of government has been controlled in recent years with the increased number and proper functioning of accountability-enhancing institutions in Brazil (Michener and Pereira 2016). The prominent and highly visible nature of national corruption scandals has served as an important periodic impetus to develop and empower new institutions designed to discourage politicians from engaging in corruption. For example, the congressional budgetary malfeasance revealed in the Anões do Orçamento scandal led to the adoption of budgeting reforms that tightened procedural and reporting requirements and more evenly distributed political power that was previously concentrated in the congressional reporter (Melo 2014; Michener and Pereira 2016). A scandal involving the dramatic diversion of funds allocated to the construction of the São Paulo Regional Labor Court (TRT) in 1998 resulted in the empowerment of the Comptroller General’s Office (Controladoria-Geral da União, CGU) in an effort to improve internal control
mechanisms and enhanced coordination in matters involving the oversight of federal funds (Carson and Prado 2014). Finally, the funneling of private funds to members of the Worker’s Party (PT) in the Mensalão scandal triggered reforms in campaign finance (Carson and Prado 2014). These initiatives represent a mere sample of the efforts initiated to enhance accountability in Brazil.

In the next section, we provide a historical introduction to these and other prominent accountability-enhancing institutions in Brazil. These institutions are similarly charged with the related tasks of investigating, overseeing, and sanctioning political malfeasance. We, then, proceed to document the consequences of corruption as uncovered by these institutions.

**Brazil Fighting Back: Institutional Innovations in the Fight Against Corruption**

Over the past 30 years, there have been numerous initiatives undertaken to curb the persistent and widespread corruption at all levels of government in Brazil. The country’s investment in combatting corruption in the current democratic period commenced with the installation of the 1988 constitution. Provisions in that document guided the federal bureaucracy in Brazil toward universal procedures and merit-based recruitment (Pereira 2016), vested increased power in the Public Prosecutors Office and the audit courts, and guaranteed full press freedom (Melo 2014, Carson and Prado 2014). In the present democratic period, the powers of the judiciary in the country have also been expanded to allow for an increasingly autonomous and professional federal judicial system to investigate elected and appointed officials, and the legislation that regulates the punishment of individuals and companies implicated in corruption has become stricter.
Finally, the number and power of monitoring institutions has grown substantially, represented most notably by an ambitious program of regular municipal audits through which cities are randomly selected for inspection.

The institutions primarily responsible for the investigation and sanctioning of corruption are, or have been, the Federal Court of Accounts (Tribunal de Contas da União, TCU), the Federal Public Prosecutor (Ministério Público Federal, MPF), and the Comptroller General’s Office (Controladoria-Geral da União, CGU). The TCU is the body of Brazil’s federal legislature responsible for preventing, investigating, and sanctioning corruption and malfeasance. The MPF exists outside the three formal branches of governments and consists of independent public prosecutors responsible for conducting criminal investigations. The CGU was created as part of a transformation of the Federal Control Secretary (Secretaria Federal de Controle) in 2001 and was the comptroller and anticorruption agency of the federal government; it played the lead role in auditing small- and medium-sized municipalities across the country (Melo 2014). The creation of the CGU led to the introduction of new initiatives, laws, and rules aimed to make use of the institution’s independent powers (Praça and Taylor 2014). As a part of government reorganization under President Temer, the CGU was folded into the new Ministry of Transparency, Inspection, and Control (MTFC) in May 2016. In general, these bodies have exhibited broad mandates, high levels of independence and professionalism, adequate funding, and meritocratic recruitment (Speck 2011, Melo 2014, Carson and Prado 2014). According to data on Brazilian institutions, the CGU, especially, has been viewed as an extremely autonomous and relatively high capacity
institution that is free from political influence and staffed by career civil servants drawn from the Planning and Finance Ministries (Bersch, Praça, and Taylor 2016, 2017).

Perhaps the most prominent and widely studied anti-corruption program in Brazil is the randomized auditing of Brazilian municipal expenditures under the CGU and MTFC. Beginning in 2002, the new government under Lula empowered the CGU to randomly select Brazilian municipal governments for the auditing of their expenditures. The program initially investigated the accounts of twenty-six randomly selected municipalities (one in each Brazilian state) (Ferraz and Finan 2011). However, it quickly expanded to investigate the spending of fifty and, eventually, sixty randomly selected Brazilian municipalities per month.³ Municipalities are randomly selected for auditing through a lottery at the Caixa Econômica Federal in Brasília (Ferraz and Finan 2011). Under the program, auditors investigate irregularities in municipal expenditures by assessing accounts and documents, examining public works and services, and interviewing community members. They, then, report malfeasance to the Tribunal de Contas da União (TCU), public prosecutors, and local legislatures.

The body of data provided by these municipal audits has been used to study the effects of corruption and corruption revelation.⁴ The most prominent among the findings produced from audit studies is that voters punish incumbent mayors seeking reelection who have been revealed to be corrupt by the audits (Ferraz and Finan 2008; Brollo 2009). Ferraz and Finan (2008) pioneered the use of the audits to study the effects of political corruption revelation. They estimated a drop of seven percentage points in the

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³ Only municipalities with populations under 450,000 are included in the lottery (Ferraz and Finan 2011).
⁴ The random selection of municipalities for auditing helps scholars create plausible comparison groups that they use to make compelling inferences about the effects of corruption and (threatened) corruption revelation.
probability of reelection for incumbent mayors in municipalities where at least two audit violations associated with corruption had been revealed before the election. Brollo (2009) confirmed that corruption revealed in the audits reduced the probability of reelection but clarified that the information needed to be released within several months of the elections in order to have this effect.

Using data from the State Audit Court of Pernambuco, Pereira et al. (2009) and Pereira and Melo (2015) find somewhat different results. Pereira et al. (2009) find that revealed municipal corruption is not as damaging to incumbent politicians as irregularities revealed in electoral campaigns, while Pereira and Melo (2015) find that revealed corruption harms incumbents but less so if they have been engaging in high levels of public spending in the city. These works suggest plausible variation in cross-state experiences with corruption.

Several other studies from Brazil substantiate the findings from the municipal audit studies by providing more direct evidence that voters will electorally sanction politicians who are revealed to have been involved in corruption. De Figueiredo et al. (2012) undertook a field experiment in São Paulo in which they distributed flyers describing corruption convictions associated with each of the two candidates in the 2008 mayoral election. They find that turnout and the vote share for one of the two candidates dropped in areas where the flyers were distributed. Winters and Weitz-Shapiro (2013) provide information about corruption and service delivery in the context of a hypothetical mayoral election to a subset of survey respondents: those respondents who are exposed to information about corruption say that they would vote against the corrupt candidate, and

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5 The audits that these authors study are not implemented at random and, therefore, lack some of the analytical advantages of the CGU audits for making plausible causal inferences.
this negative reaction is not substantially moderated by positive information about service delivery. In subsequent work, Winters and Weitz-Shapiro (2016) show that voters are more likely to sanction mayors who are personally involved in corruption as compared to mayors overseeing corrupt municipal administrations.

While the existing evidence suggests that politicians have something to fear from having corrupt behavior revealed, a question remains about whether they fear the revelation of corruption enough to reduce their involvement in it. Ferraz and Finan (2011) argue that fear of the revelation of corruption influences mayors’ behaviors and, specifically, their calculations on the advantages and disadvantages of engaging in malfeasance. Comparing mayors who are eligible for reelection to those who are not, Ferraz and Finan (2011) use CGU audits to show that mayors who are eligible for reelection misappropriate 27 percent fewer resources than mayors who are term-limited. Likewise, Litschig and Zamboni (2015) show that increasing the propensity of being audited reduces the likelihood of corruption and changes the willingness of municipal officials to use certain procurement modalities.

In contrast with Ferraz and Finan (2011), Pereira et al. (2009) find that politicians running for reelection are actually more likely to engage in corrupt behavior. They justify this seemingly counterintuitive finding by claiming that high rent extraction obtained from being in office offsets the cost of engaging in corruption. Similarly, Mondo (2016) fails to find statistically significant evidence that electoral accountability – measured by voters removing corrupt incumbent mayors from office – reduces future misdeeds in corruption-inflicted municipalities.
Perhaps these opposing camps are reconcilable when one accounts for supplementary strategies corrupt politicians can invoke to counteract popular disfavor stemming from malfeasance. Jucá et al. (2016) suggest that corrupt incumbents can effectively offset some electoral penalization following corruption revelation with increased campaign spending. They calculate that in order to avoid penalty for malfeasance, implicated federal deputies must spend approximately BRL 1,500,000 (approximately USD 500,000 in 2017) on their campaigns (Jucá et al. 2016). They suggest that this amount is unfeasible for the average federal deputy engaged in malfeasance, who spent approximately BRL 840,000 (USD 325,000) on campaigning over the 1995-2010 period (Jucá et al. 2016). Pereira and Melo (2015) similarly argue that public expenditure mitigates the negative electoral consequences of political malfeasance. These findings correspond with conventional wisdom in Brazil that voters overlook corruption when politicians “rouba, mas faz” (“rob but get things done”) (Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2013, Pereira and Melo 2015).

The most recent studies in Brazil have started to look at how the revelation of corruption has longer-term consequences on municipal politics. Timmons and Garfias (2015) show that in municipalities where the CGU audits revealed corruption, property tax revenue has fallen and participatory budgeting has become more likely.

Finally, the audit data has been helpful for scholars trying to understand the origins of local-level corruption in Brazil. In a study that examines the relationship between per capita transfer award amounts and corruption incidence, Brollo et al. (2013) find that larger transfers per capita correspond not only with increased corruption but also

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6 The actual findings in Winters and Weitz-Shapiro (2013), however, are in the contrary direction. In their survey experiment involving a hypothetical mayoral election, they do not find evidence that voters are willing to condone corruption in the presence of public works provision.
with less capable candidates running for municipal office. Avelino et al. (2013) show that more well-established municipal health councils lead to lower levels of corruption in municipal health expenditures, providing important evidence that decentralized governance institutions can improve governance outcomes.

Current research is building off of Avelino et al.’s (2013) project and working to understand which Brazilian institutions are likely to be most effective in combatting corruption. Bersch, Praça, and Taylor (2016) show how their agency-specific measures of capacity (based on the extent of meritocratic recruitment, the longevity of civil servant careers, and average salaries) and autonomy (based on political party membership among civil servants) predict the number of corruption scandals associated with individual Brazilian government institutions. In addition, they provide evidence that institutions associated with a political party are likely to exhibit lower capacity (and, therefore, to be more susceptible to corruption). Carson and Prado (2014) study the thirty-three subnational audit courts in the country (27 state courts and six municipal courts) and show how their structure varies with political competition and their integration with Public State Ministries (Ministérios Públicos Estaduais, MPEs). Melo et al. (2009) find that states with more frequent alternation in political power espouse more activism in these state audit courts than their counterparts with less political competition.

In sum, a host of accountability-enhancing institutions have been created and developed since Brazil’s 1985 democratic transition. Scholars have leveraged the adoption of these institutions—especially the system of randomized municipal audits—to study the causal effects of corruption and corruption revelation. Based on this research, scholars have affirmed that corruption impedes the likelihood of incumbent mayoral
reelection. Moreover, they have shown that citizens may react to revealed corruption by changing the ways in which they interact with their local governments and, specifically, in their electoral choices. While the federal audits have been undertaken by a highly autonomous and capable agency, research has shown that there is variation in the susceptibility of different Brazilian institutions to corruption and even that there is variation in the level of politicization of some of the anti-corruption institutions.

That Brazilian voters are willing to take action against corruption suggests that the latest corruption scandal may lead to major political turnover in Brazil. In the next section, we explore how the Brazilian public thinks about and reacts to corruption in greater depth and provide some evidence that if major change does not come soon, then it may need to wait for yet another round of grand corruption and public reaction to it.

“Vamos Para Rua”: Public Perceptions of and Reactions to Corruption

The fact that Brazilian voters publicly express their exasperation with corruption represents one part of a larger paradox when it comes to the persistence of corruption in Brazil: Citizens in the country have frequently mobilized against corruption and yet corruption remains pervasive. We make a tentative argument here that this may have to do with the lack of sustained public attention to corruption at moments in which there is no major scandal in the news.

The most visible display of popular discontent with political malfeasance comes – with the call of “vamos para rua” [“we’re going to the streets”] – in the form of mass protests. Allegations of President Fernando Collor de Melo’s corruption and self-enrichment in 1992, for example, prompted a series of large-scale protests in August and
September of that year in which the Brazilian public demanded his impeachment. Fast-forwarding to 2013, protests that were initially sparked by public transport price increases grew into large demonstrations across the country motivated by perceived failings of the political elite; corruption was foremost among the public’s grievances (Saad-Filho 2013, Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2014). Although protests waned in the following months, they powerfully reemerged in the lead up to Dilma’s impeachment. In the spring of 2016, at least three million Brazilians rallied to express their discontent with the Rousseff government, with tens of thousands of these individuals calling for her impeachment and many thousands arguing against impeachment (Watts 2016). As recently as June 30, 2017, nationwide protests deadlocked Brazilian cities over the unpopular labor and pension legislation proposed by the scandal-hit Temer administration (Fonseca 2017).

Linked to these protests have been other changes in the way that citizens position themselves in the political landscape. Winters and Weitz-Shapiro (2014), for instance, show that Brazilians became less willing to express a partisan identity (and particularly identification with the ruling Workers’ Party (PT)) at the time of the 2013 protests. The rate at which respondents declined to express a partisan identification climbed five percentage points from the month before the protests to the month after.7 Interviews and assessments conducted as a part of Alonso and Mische’s (2017) recent work further substantiate these findings; they argue that the 2013 protests signaled a strong rejection of all political parties due either to a craving for national unity or to disenchantment with the PT regime.

7 Winters and Weitz-Shapiro (2015), on the other hand, provide some evidence that highly educated respondents may be more likely to describe themselves as partisan in the wake of information about corruption.
Despite these very prominent manifestations of anti-corruption sentiment and disassociation with political parties, it is unclear whether the Brazilian public is willing to consistently pressure politicians to reduce corruption. Senters, Weitz-Shapiro, and Winters (Forthcoming) study the long-term trends in Brazilian attitudes toward corruption using data from about 50 public opinion surveys. From the period 1988-2005, they found that a relatively consistent five percent of the population described corruption as the “most important problem” facing Brazil. In the wake of the Mensalão scandal in 2005, this number shot up to 20 percent. However, it quickly dropped back down to about half that level (which is still higher than the 1990s average) over the period 2006-2014, only to shoot up again in 2015 as evidence began to emerge from Operação Lava Jato. Looking only at Latinobarometer data, the authors show how the proportion of Brazilians concerned about corruption was four times the Latin American average at the time of Mensalão but then dropped back down to the regional average over the period 2008-2013.

Although it is difficult to assert that individuals should remain doggedly committed to pursuing particular public policy reforms, it also does not seem unfair to speculate that this ebb-and-flow in the attention of the Brazilian public to corruption may help explain its persistence over the past 30 years. Despite moments of impressive mobilization, the crowds have dissipated afterward, thereby relieving the pressure on politicians to take additional action. For all of the institutional innovation and reform that Brazil has seen, at the highest levels, it seems not to have been enough.
Conclusion

The revelations of Operação Lava Jato beginning in 2014 suggest that corruption in Brazil is as rampant as ever. This is despite the fact that scholars generally concede that the country has undertaken major initiatives to create institutions that can help citizens hold corrupt politicians accountable (Michener and Pereira 2016; Praça and Taylor 2014). Praça and Taylor (2014) interpret the enhanced transparency of public accounts and availability of government data, the increased number of civil servants removed from their posts as a consequence of malfeasance, and the rise in the number of actions taken by accountability institutions as tangible evidence of institutional progress. Moreover, they view a series of laws enacted to preemptively deter corruption – such as the Clean Record Law (Lei de Ficha Limpa), which allowed electoral courts to ban politicians from running for office based on criminal convictions, and the 2013 anti-corruption law that extended criminal liability to corporations\(^8\) (Richard 2014) – as important advancements for proper democratic functioning.

In spite of these advancements, there is still much room for improvement in accountability and for a more cohesive integration between institutions involved in the broad network of accountability institutions in Brazil. In the words of Taylor and Buranelli (2007), “the weakness of the ‘web of accountability’ in Brazil is not due solely, or even primarily, to the weakness of individual institutions in that web…[but rather] the larger problem is the imperfect ‘orthodontia’ of the institutions that make of the web of accountability in Brazil.” Carson and Prado (2014) also concede that the way forward in the fight for accountability depends integrally on improving coordination between

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\(^8\) This law earned comparisons to the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and the U.K. Bribery Act (Melo 2014). However, implementation of this law lagged. As of 2016, no company had yet been punished under the law (Vasconcellos de Figueiredo 2016).
different types of accountability institutions; they specifically emphasize strengthening institutions charged with sanctioning.

In addition to improvements in oversight and sanctioning, scholars, anti-corruption agencies, and others have identified a number of places where the anti-corruption regulatory framework in Brazil remains stunted. There remain possibilities for fighting illegal campaign contributions to politicians who are expected to compensate donors with political contracts if elected; for speeding up criminal proceedings, protecting the identities of whistleblowers, and extending the statute of limitations on corruption-related crimes; for improving asset retraction capabilities; and for adopting more stringent requirements for election to the legislature (Lagunes and Rose-Ackerman 2017). In this chapter, we put forth the preliminarily argument that public mobilization and involvement can help to bring about desired changes in these areas.

The third section in this chapter highlighted the intense anti-corruption mobilization of the Brazilian public in the wake of high-profile corruption scandals and situated these periods of heightened activism among longer periods of tranquility. The observed ebb and flow in anti-corruption mobilization suggests that the public loses interest in corruption after the initial outbreak and, consequently, that the extent to which citizens hold politicians accountable fluctuates in accordance with the eruption and warning of scandals. On the one hand, the Brazilian experience provides concrete evidence of citizens mobilizing around corruption by coordinating to remove corrupt public officials from office or by taking to the streets to demand legal changes. However, in between major scandals, there is some evidence that the public’s interest wanes, and it
seems possible that this faltering of attention to corruption allows corruption-inclined politicians to embark on the road to robbing the public coffers once more.

Corruption is a remarkable constant in and long-term staple of Brazilian politics. Through the adoption and advancement of accountability-enhancing institutions, both informed citizens and scholars have learned about the scope of malfeasance in the country and about the broader effects of its revelation, although our understanding of subnational variation in these experiences remains limited. We hope that continued research on corruption in Brazil will lead to useful refinements to the institutions that seek to combat corruption in the country.
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