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GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY

State of the Art and New Perspectives

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Government Transparency

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Abstract: This Element argues that to understand why transparency “works” in one context but fails in another, we have to take into account how institutional (macro) and organizational (meso) contexts interact with individual behavior (micro). A review of research from each of these perspectives shows that the big promises thought to accompany greater transparency during the first two decades of the twentieth century have not been delivered. For example, transparency does not necessarily lead to better government performance and more trust in government. At the same time, transparency is still a hallmark of democratic governance, and as this Element highlights, for instance, transparency has been relatively successful in combating government corruption. Finally, by explicitly taking a multilayered perspective into account, this Element develops new paths for future research.

Keywords: government transparency, freedom of information, open government, public administration, good governance

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Contents

1 The Need for a Layered Understanding of Government Transparency 1
2 From Idea to Legislation and Organizational Practices 6
3 What Is Transparency? 9
4 The Macro-Level Perspective on Transparency 16
5 The Meso-Level Perspective on Transparency 27
6 The Micro-Level Perspective on Transparency 42
7 Linking and Integrating Research on Government Transparency 55

References 66