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Abstract

The objective of the article is to analyze the process of development of local governance of social policies in municipalities of Greater Buenos Aires in Argentina, particularly in two fields: social economy and childhood and adolescence. To do this, we focus on addressing interju-

risdictional frameworks and on the participation of civil society actors in different programs and participatory design devices in the aforementioned fields. The methodology is qualitative, and we use sources such as regulations and institutional documents as well as semi-structured interviews with municipal, provincial, and national officials and referents of social organizations. The reconstructed characteristics for the chosen programs and devices show the wide universe of citizen participation mechanisms that structure its management, a diversity of social actors throughout their cycle and allow us to appreciate the complexity of the interjurisdictional network.

Key words: Great Buenos Aires, governance, social policy, municipalities, participation.

Resumen

El objetivo del artículo es analizar el proceso de desarrollo de la gobernanza local de las políticas sociales en municipios del Gran Buenos Aires en Argentina, particularmente en dos campos: economía social y niñez y adolescencia. Para ello, nos concentramos en el abordaje de los entramados interjurisdiccionales y en la participación de los actores de la sociedad civil en diferentes programas y dispositivos de diseño

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participativo en los campos referidos. La metodología es cualitativa y utilizamos como fuentes normativas y documentos institucionales, así como también entrevistas a diferentes funcionarios del ámbito municipal, provinciales y nacionales y referentes de organizaciones sociales. Las características reconstruidas para los programas y dispositivos elegidos evidencian el amplio universo de mecanismos de participación ciudadana que organizan su gestión, una diversidad de actores sociales a lo largo de su ciclo y permiten apreciar la complejidad de la trama interjurisdiccional en que se inscriben.

Palabras clave: Gran Buenos Aires, gobernanza, política social, municipios, participación.

INTRODUCTION

We are currently witnessing a generalized consensus about the growing complexity assumed by the management of the social, because of the great societal and territorial transformations of the end of the 20th century. Part of this same process is the diversification of problems and social demands that have led to the incorporation of new issues to the public agenda, together with strategies to address problems that are based on innovative methodologies and networks of expanded actors.

These transformations are evident in the development of public policies, while the historical centralist and *top-down tradition* is undergoing strong changes, guided by a more articulated

governance model. The process of expanding institutional governance frameworks for public issues and diversifying intervention strategies is especially relevant through social policy. It is in these sectors where the multi-stakeholder articulation, the inclusion of civil society and multi-level networks are prefigured as the protagonists of public management.

In this framework, the general objective of the article is to analyze the development process of local governance of social policies in municipalities of Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina. We focus on two fields of policy, both incorporated at the beginning of the 21st century into the local social agenda of our country: the promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents and the promotion of the social economy. To study governance processes, we focus particularly on the two aspects mentioned: multilevel networks and the participation of local civil society actors.

The management of social policy, as a field of state action directly linked to the production and reproduction of life, offers spaces for the intervention of civil society, since it plays an indispensable role in channeling state social action towards the most disadvantaged sectors and in complex territories.

These two specific fields have been selected, the programs for the promotion of the social economy and the policy for the protection and promotion of the rights of children and adolescents, because they constitute central areas of the new local social policy agenda. On the other hand, as

will be explained further on, they are fields structured based on very different principles, since childhood policies are based on a rights-based approach and a universal horizon, while interventions in the social economy are focused on the sectors most vulnerable and are sustained by the self-managed work of the recipients themselves.

To do this, we focus first on characterizing the complexity of state articulations and the inter-jurisdictional framework that is involved in each field, with a particular focus on the analysis of the role of the municipality in said network. Second, we will analyze the participatory mechanisms involved in the selected policies, aiming to characterize the social actors involved and their intervention modalities in the policy process.

The article begins by detailing the methodological design of the research that gives rise to these reflections and is then organized in a first theoretical section where, on the one hand, we present the management approach, moving away from monopolistic visions to think about network management, emphasizing the multilevel and participatory dimensions. On the other hand, we address the concept of participation in the public policy cycle, as well as its modalities. Secondly, we present the field of social economy, where through the changes of a program we show the interjurisdictional framework and the participation of social organizations. Thirdly, we address the field of promotion and protection of the ri-

ghts of children and adolescents and we focus on various programs and devices that allow us to visualize the proposed dimensions. Finally, the final reflections seek to synthesize the results to illustrate the governance processes of social policy in local areas of Greater Buenos Aires.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used comes from an ongoing investigation in¹ which it is proposed to identify and analyze the changes and continuities in the relations between the State and civil society in the field of public policies at the local level, in Greater Buenos Aires.

The methodological design focuses on a meso-level scale, that is, the intermediate management level, to analyze the deployment of the selected policies in local spaces over a long period of time, which implies setting aside both the macro levels - of policy design - as well as the micro - relative to the specific experiences of implementation in the territory. The spatial cut-out refers to the group of municipalities of Greater Buenos Aires in Argentina, since the main characteristics of these local spaces - the richness and density of the associative fabric, especially the popular base, and the complex multilevel articulation generated by the condition of metropolitan municipalities (Pirez, 2010) are elements common to the universe of the 24 municipalities. Finally, the selection of the two fields of policy responds to

¹ "Public policies of participatory design. Relations between the State and civil society organizations at the local level of Greater Buenos Aires" directed by Adriana Rofman, with the support of the National Agency for Scientific and Technological Promotion of Argentina.

the fact that they have been increasingly incorporated into the government agenda of local social policy in recent years, currently constituting nodal issues of the same.

Regarding the data collection strategy, the sources used were, on the one hand, semi-structured interviews with² state officials: they were carried out with municipal officials responsible for the areas of childhood and adolescence and social economy, from the 24 municipalities of the Conurbano. The range of interviewees included undersecretaries, directors, deputy directors and/or coordinators, depending on the case; as well as officials of the national Ministry in charge of such policies. Likewise, interviews were conducted with territorial social agents involved in local implementation. These interviews had as thematic indices the dimensions and categories that operationalize the objectives of the work: the multi-level interjurisdictional structure and the modalities of citizen participation.

On the other hand, we use documentary sources, such as regulations, institutional pages and brochures, management reports, program guides and resources, among others. Likewise, in the case of the provincial and national programs that are implemented at the local level, information was requested from the responsible agencies at the level of the 24 districts of Greater Buenos Aires. The techniques used to address the latter consisted of systematizing and analyzing the documents in relation to the categories.

Regarding the processing of information, it was based on a systematization matrix in which the dimensions of analysis of the policies chosen for the investigation were included, generating then summary tables for each municipality, and at the scale of the region as a whole. This general matrix formed the basis for the analysis.

Participatory and multilevel governance of social policies in local spheres

The complexity of social dynamics in recent decades makes it clear that governing a society requires making the centralist model more flexible based on the notion of the state monopoly of public management. In contemporary realities, the management of public processes needs to base its decisions and actions on a network governance structure, where the State constitutes the central node of a network that links different actors and interests (Subirats, 2019).

The notion of governance seeks to describe this emerging model of government, whose capacity is strengthened thanks to its inscription in networks of articulation with other state levels, organizations and entities representing civil society and economic life (Blanco et al., 2018). This approach refers to a more open management model, based on network articulation strategies that include the State and civil society actors in interventions on public problems (Mayntz, 2006).

² Throughout the article we will use the grammatical generic masculine to avoid complexities in language and reading, but it should be noted that we are referring to all genders without distinction.

It is argued from this approach that the participation of society in public policy processes would allow improving state management and, thereby, strengthen the state's capacity for democratic government (Prats, 2001).

In this sense, it is indicated that a "reticular" public management (Natera, 2004), based on plural networks of actors, would allow to improve intersectoral articulation (between different policy areas), multilevel (between governments of different levels) and territorial (between different jurisdictions). Subnational regional government bodies and supranational institutions would thus assume a more relevant role and, in particular, local management spaces would gain relevance. In other words, it is postulated that the public management of local processes should consist of the territorial articulation of this multilevel framework together with the network of local actors (Gomà & Blanco, 2017).

In terms of political and management practices, emphasis is placed on a management model that generates value in more horizontal coordination strategies between the actors involved, fosters more inclusive decision-making dynamics, and facilitates greater flexibility in state management (Mayntz, 2001). This would ensure better quality of public policies, both in relation to their effectiveness and efficiency (Prats, 2001) as well as in terms of their democratic quality. Along the same lines, it is observed how different forms of participation emerged, through an innovative form of collaborative governance, in which citizens play a fundamental role in the creation of public policies (Zurbriggen, 2014).

In this framework, we understand citizen participation as the strategy in which citizens intervene on decisions in public policies that involve them. From this point of view, citizen participation encompasses collective or individual actions, their incidence and reorientation in the definitions assumed by policies throughout their development process. These intervention experiences assume different institutional formats, ranging from external participation in the deployment of the policy in decision-making and/or monitoring and evaluation instances, to internal involvement modalities in the management of state actions (Ziccardi, 2004; Schneider & Well, 2011).

The second format, which introduces the public, or more precisely the target population, to management around public policies, constitutes a growing brand in social policies in the country. This has resulted in management structures that involve social organizations or individual recipients at various times in the construction of public policies, from their formulation to the implementation of activities. In addition, and especially in local spheres, these forms of participation are the basis of institutionalized mechanisms, which are being incorporated in an increasingly formalized manner in the policy management apparatus. Indeed, it is in local spheres where an expansion and complexity of the agenda takes place, as well as how proximity facilitates participation. Consequently, in recent times participatory forms have been launched that involve different actors focused on various policy fronts, which contain a broad institutional infrastructure at the local level that allows citizen participation (Rofman & Foglia, 2015).

In Argentina, the participation of social organizations in the environment of public policies is not something new. In particular, from the neoliberal reforms and phenomena such as globalization, decentralization and territorialization have a determinant in political and social management in the territory (Rofman, 2019).

Previous studies have shown that the universe of citizen participation is extremely diverse and encompasses mechanisms with different degrees of institutionalization, in a broad spectrum that ranges from sustained and formalized instruments from the state institution to protest, that is, the public mobilization of movements social. In this work, we focus on the participatory management mechanisms of the selected policies, which take place at different stages of public policy and assume different modalities, such as deliberation, co-production, consultation or incidence (Rofman & Foglia, 2014).

The socioeconomic and political crisis of the year 2000 in Argentina, generated a change in the issues addressed by local governments, which became the main door to the citizen demands generated in that context. As of that year, the responsibility of the municipalities in this expanded agenda begins to change and social policies have been installed as a fundamental field of the municipal agenda. A good part of these policies is based on a complex interjurisdictional structure, where the national and provincial levels of government have a funda-

mental role in terms of their design and financing, but the municipalities are actively involved in the territorial management of the actions.

The municipalities of Greater Buenos Aires: government structure and civil society

In this framework, the municipalities of Greater Buenos Aires (GBA) exhibit their own characteristics, which distinguish them within the heterogeneous municipal universe of Argentina. This region, called GBA or Conurbano Bonaerense, is made up of 24 municipalities that surround the City of Buenos Aires, and are part of another provincial jurisdiction (the Province of Buenos Aires)³. It consists of a densely populated region, where about a quarter of the country's total population lives, in extremely heterogeneous social and housing conditions, while localities with very favorable social conditions and others with high poverty rates converge.

The government of this territory is in the hands of several governments: the national/federal level; the government of the Province of Buenos Aires, that of the City of Buenos Aires -which is equivalent to a province- and the governments of all the municipalities. The action of the municipalities, then, is in a scenario marked by a complex, and generally poorly articulated, multi-jurisdictional intervention. In this not always coordinated distribution, municipal governments have a narrow

³ The municipalities of the Greater Buenos Aires (24 districts of the Province of Buenos Aires that make up Greater Buenos Aires) form part, together with the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires (CABA) and a group of contiguous districts, of the Metropolitan Region of Buenos Aires. Ace (RMBA) a political conglomerate. Macrocephalous, without rigid jurisdictional borders, linking different political units (Pérez, 2010).

margin of freedom -due to institutional and budgetary limitations- to develop their own policies⁴. As a result of the combination of limited powers, budget restrictions and their location on the outskirts of a large metropolitan city, the local governments of Greater Buenos Aires assume a subordinate role in the interjurisdictional framework for the configuration of public policies. The state interventions that generate the greatest impact on the social and economic life of the territory are designed and/or financed at the national or provincial level of government, with little participation at the local level in their formulation (Couto et al., 2016).

However, this does not mean that local institutions assume a passive role in the policy processing circuit, since municipal governments are important state references in the articulation with the different alliances between social organizations. The popular-based civil society of the GBA is a dense network of small associations with strong territorial registration, extremely active and mobilized and solidly articulated with state institutions at all levels of government, as a result of a dense history and very committed to the generation of the conditions that allowed the expansion of the city, since since the last century they have been fundamental actors linked to public policies, in relation to the development of social structures and services in the territories (Rofman, 2014).

The network of popular social organizations found in the GBA is the result of the articulated consolidation between organizations and the social and political representation of the popular world, strengths that have been favored through the social policies of recent decades. This explains the leading role played by territorial-based organizations in the management processes of various social programs, since they constitute key links in the implementation circuit of the actions provided for in said programs.

Local social policy in Greater Buenos Aires: social economy and rights of children and adolescents

Characterizing the field of social economy

In the first years of the 21st century, the reinclusion of the population expelled by neoliberalism was attempted through the generation of employment, revitalizing the industry, encouraging consumption and promoting self-management and cooperativism from the social economy. The latter was a central strategy within social policy for the social and economic inclusion of the unemployed population (Maldovan & Dzembrowski, 2010). To do this, measures were combined under a work-centric matrix that will generate employment (Grassi, 2012). Within this framework, two large sectors can be distinguished that act

⁴ The regulations of the Province of Buenos Aires do not allow municipalities to collect taxes, but only enable them to establish rates, rights and contributions in exchange for the provision of specific services. For more detail, see Martínez (2019).

simultaneously and complement each other. On the one hand, the policy of work through state interventions that regulate the way of carrying out work activities and, on the other, the assistance policy in terms of interventions in vulnerable individuals who alone, despite the other two modalities of action, cannot meet their material needs and are in a situation of vulnerability. The latter has evolved through mechanisms of transfer of goods and services, both to individuals and to groups that were not absorbed by the labor market (Falappa & Andrenacci, 2008).

In this way, as of 2003, social economy initiatives gain importance through the promotion of associative work, self-management and the promotion of work cooperatives as a strategy within social policy (Hudson, 2016; Hintze, 2014; Vuotto, 2011). One of the programs that was created in 2009 and becomes relevant in terms of coverage is the Argentina Works National Program – Social Income with Work Program (AT-PRIST). Specifically, it is launched with 150,000 headlines, from there it has tended towards a plateau that increases in 2017 reaching 250,000.

PRIST went through transformations over the years, which had repercussions on the role assumed by both the municipalities and the social organizations. Next, we present, through the path of regulatory changes, the specificity of the participation of territorially based social organizations and municipalities in social policy in the field of social economy.

The Argentina Works and its modifications in the field of social economy

Argentina Works – Social Income With Work Program (AT-PRIST) (2009-2016)

The primary objective of the program was to generate social inclusion, it was aimed at people - called right holders - in a situation of vulnerability and who did not belong to the formal labor market. It was structured based on a transfer to the holders, requiring a consideration in exchange. The compensation that the owners of the program had to carry out consisted of low-intensity socio-community and socio-productive tasks such as sweeping and cleaning or public works that did not require expert qualification. To carry out this consideration, work cooperatives had to be formed in order to unite and strengthen the aforementioned holders⁵. In this way, under the umbrella of the program, the generation of “regulated cooperatives” was encouraged because it was the State that formed them and determined their tasks (Ferrari, 2019).

In the institutional sphere, for the execution of the program, agreements were signed between the Ministry of Social Development of the Nation (MDSN) and the municipalities that were established as executing entities (Ferrari, 2020). These agreements established the tasks to be carried out by the owners -which were organized under the figure of a work cooperative- and the expect-

⁵ Resolution 3182/2009 <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/resoluci%C3%B3n-3182-2009-152122>

ted products. For the selection of the municipalities where the program was implemented, criteria were established through a document “National Distributor of Social Income Program with Work” (Di-Prist) prepared by the MDSN. Specifically, the following were considered: the requirements of the program (target population/eligibility criteria) and the institutional conditions, capacities and management possibilities of the municipal executing entities.

As previously indicated, in the first place, the training processes of the cooperatives were framed through agreements between the MDSN and the municipalities that acted as executing entities of the program in the different territories. Following demands from social movements, the MDSN allowed social organizations to create cooperatives within the framework of the program, although the realization of this depended on each municipality. On the one hand, the social organizations did not make agreements directly with the Ministry, through the intermediary of the municipality. Likewise, social organizations were organized in cooperatives that were not formally institutionalized, that is, they were grouped without a legal figure, nor were they part of the economic circuit of production and sale. At the same time, the different inputs and materials were provided by the municipality, and they did not have a space in which to develop the activities. Once they formed the cooperative in informal terms, they began to carry out different functions consisting of collaboration

in neighborhood institutions such as promotion societies, schools, gardens, dining rooms and with cleaning activities in a variety of places.

In this sense, regarding the type and role of social organizations in said program, participation through the instrument of the work cooperative stands out, emphasizing socio-productive compensation as a response to community needs. Regarding the interjurisdictional structure, at the national level, the Ministry of Social Development of the Nation fulfilled the role of designing and financing the program, while the municipalities had a leading role in its implementation.

Argentina Works – Social Income With Work Program (2016-2018)

In 2016 there was an institutional change⁶ that consisted of social organizations establishing themselves as new executing entities parallel to municipal management. Regarding the interjurisdictional structure, agreements were reached between the MDSN and social organizations, which made the latter the figure of executing entity of the program in the territory. The number of entities in the period 2016-2018 at the national level between civil associations, cooperatives framed in social movements, foundations, municipalities and universities was 178 (Gamallo, 2017). Regarding the Greater Buenos Aires, there was an average of 6.75 executors per party (Muñoz, 2019).

⁶ Resolution 592/2016. <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/verNorma.do?id=260489>

In this stage, the social organizations signed agreements with the MDSN directly, without the mediation of the municipality. Agreement that allowed them to manage economic resources that were destined for training, tools and materials, likewise, through the agreement they had the opportunity to organize the owners and direct the different jobs. To do this, they had to institutionalize the figure of the cooperative as an instrument that channeled the work. In the agreements, the activities were established through a plan of the different works, in which the type of workshop was selected (carpentry, candy making, blacksmithing, orchard, nursery, block making) and people were assigned to it. For the choice of activities, the one that was linked to the different needs of the neighborhood, through problems detected by social organizations, predominated. In short, we observe how the participation of the organizations was strengthened, given that through an agreement they became executing entities with a certain autonomy to manage the program.

By way of closing, at an initial moment and until 2016, the municipalities were responsible for the execution of the Argentina Works program and the social organizations participated organized in cooperatives that were not institutionalized. Later, the organizations agreed directly with the Ministry of Social Development and became executing entities of the program under the figure of a work cooperative.

We Make the Future Program (2018-2019)

At the beginning of 2018, the AT – PRIST is reconfigured in the program We Make the Future⁷ with the purpose of empowering people in situations of social vulnerability and promoting their autonomy to enter the labor market. This program is defined in the institutional sphere as a conditional income transfer program and had as consideration the completion of primary and secondary education, as well as comprehensive training made up of a variety of courses.

In this stage, a disintermediation strategy is promoted after the elimination of the figure of the executing entities. In some cases, both municipalities and social organizations managed to relocate in Training Units (UCAP) under agreements with the MDSN with the conditionality of providing training. The Training Units, in regulatory terms, were spaces from which courses were offered that the holder had to take to continue being part of the program.

Specifically, both social organizations and municipalities could offer theoretical courses or practical workshops. For both, they used the supports built previously both from their previous role as executing entity and as a social organization that carried out socio-community tasks. Some of the courses taught within the framework of the agreements were: promotion of education,

⁷ Resolution No. 96/2018. <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/resoluci%C3%B3n-96-2018-313887> . Resolution No. 151/2018 . <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/normativa/nacional/resoluci%C3%B3n-151-2018-311695>

promotion of justice, promotion of health, work, habitat and environment.

By way of closing, at this stage both the social organizations and the municipalities continued to participate in the implementation stage of the program. However, they had less maneuver to act on the needs of the territorial network, given that the agreement did not formally allow low-infrastructure works to be carried out as established in the Argentina Works program.

National Program for Socio-productive Inclusion and Local Development Empower Work (2020- Current)

At the end of 2020, the Make the Future program is reconfigured into the National Program for Socio-productive Inclusion and Local Development Empower Work, with the aim of improving employment and generating productive proposals through socio-productive, socio-community, socio-labour projects. and educational completion⁸.

For implementation, the UCAPs were reconfigured into Management Units. They are made up of social organizations or municipalities, which through agreements with the MDSN receive transfers of funds and tools. In these agreements, five productive sectors are prioritized with which it is tried to reactivate the economy and production from a perspective of local development and the social economy. They are : construction, food

production, textiles, care economy and collection and recycling of urban waste.

By way of closing, in this last stage, both the social organizations and the municipalities participate as a management unit implementing the program.

Recapitulating the Argentina Works and its modifications in the field of social economy

Summing up, and as can be glimpsed in synthetic table No. 1, in the case of programs in the field of social economy, the link between different actors is observed: National Ministry, municipalities and social organizations. The Ministry plays a role in the financing and design of the programs, while in the implementation the local actors take on a leading role, be they municipalities or social organizations. Likewise, the latter have a certain power in the design, after certain agreements that give substantive form to the agreements in which the areas of action are established.

At the same time, in addition to the inter-jurisdictional framework, the table shows the figure paid by social actors by joining work cooperatives that are initially informal, until they manage to become legally constituted cooperatives. Likewise, both the organizations materialized in cooperatives and the municipalities were changing the institutional figure granted in the agreements, namely: first Executing Entities, then Training Units

⁸ Resolution 121/2020. <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/verNorma.do?id=336701>

(UCAP) and, finally, Management Units. The common denominator lies in having an impact on the implementation stage of the programs in the field of social economy, by virtue of their belonging to the local territorial scope (Table 1).

Table 1.

Interjurisdictional framework and social actors in programs in the field of social economy.

		Programs			
Interjurisdictional plot		Argentina Works – Social Income with Work Program (2009-2016)	Argentina Works – Social Income with Work Program (2016-2018)	We make Future (2018-2019)	National Program for Socio-productive Inclusion and Local Development Empower Work
	Nation	Design and financing	Design and financing	Design and financing	Design and financing
	Municipality	Implementation + Marginal intervention in the elaboration	Implementation + Marginal intervention in the elaboration	Implementation + Marginal intervention in the elaboration	Design + Marginal intervention in the elaboration
	Political stage where they participate	mediated implementation	Implementation + Marginal intervention in the elaboration	Implementation + Marginal intervention in the elaboration	Implementation + Marginal intervention in the elaboration
Social actors	Predominant type of actor	Cooperatives without formalization	Formalized cooperatives	Formalized cooperatives	Formalized cooperatives

Source: Own elaboration based on the regulations (2021).

Characterizing the field of promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents

The field of childhood and adolescence policies in Argentina has undergone structural changes in recent decades. In the mid-2000s, new legislation was passed that laid the regulatory foundations

for a new paradigm that broke the hegemony of a form of intervention that, with nuances, had been deployed throughout the 20th century. The new regulation of the year 2005, called “Law of Comprehensive Protection of the Rights of Children and Adolescents” (No. 26,061⁹) is adapted to the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, with constitutional hierarchy in Argentina

⁹ National Law 26.061 <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/110000-114999/110778/norma.htm>

since 1994, which constitutes a milestone in the way children are considered, by recognizing children under 18 years of age the same human rights as adults, plus special protection because they are people in development and growth (Barna, 2012).

The new national legislation for the comprehensive protection of the rights of children and adolescents structures a protection system that notably reorganizes the state apparatus and establishes the decentralization of enforcement agencies as a guideline, sanctioning each Argentine province with regulations and specific agencies in their jurisdictions. The Province of Buenos Aires advanced in this process of legal and institutional transformation simultaneously with the Nation, also sanctioning a new regulation (Law No. 13,298)¹⁰ that makes the social areas of the provincial and municipal levels responsible as the guarantors of access, effective exercise and /or the restoration of the rights of children and adolescents. These changes had a notable impact on the distribution of powers between the powers and levels of the State, producing a deconcentration and decentralization of intervention in the territory that gave municipalities and community responses a central place in the promotion and protection of children's rights, girls and adolescents (Magistris, 2013; Foglia et al., 2021). This deconcentration also includes the active participation of social organizations to achieve the validity and full enjoyment of the rights and guarantees of children and adolescents.

National and provincial regulations require joint and co-responsible work between different areas and levels of government as well as between social and private sector entities (Goldstein, 2018). Although not all of the policy is organized effectively, including citizen participation, it is possible to observe a hierarchy of this logic of joint work in the process of designing and implementing various national, provincial and municipal public policies and in the generation of local articulation devices.

We will focus the analysis on four participatory programs with a wide scope and coverage: they are present in the 24 municipalities of Greater Buenos Aires, they are developed in a significant number of venues in this region (between 190 and 700 depending on the program) and they have a significant number of recipients (between 10,000 and 25,000 depending on the program). The initiatives addressed are: the Envión Shared Social Responsibility Program (Envión), the Child Development Units Program (UDI) and the National Plan for Early Childhood (PNPI) and a participatory device, the Local Councils for Children and Adolescents.

Participatory programs and mechanisms for the promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents

Child Development Units Program (UDI)

¹⁰ Provincial Law 13,298 <https://normas.gba.gob.ar/documentos/BoOM3FzB.html>

This initiative has its origins in the 1990s when the “Eva Perón Family Social Program of Buenos Aires” was created¹¹, adopting its current name in 2009. Its¹² recipients are children and adolescents from 0 to 14 years old, of age, in a situation of social vulnerability and/or environmental risk, with the purpose of promoting their comprehensive development from the perspective of rights, accompanying and strengthening families to fulfill their role and exercise their responsibility and promoting their participation in the community. It comprises three modalities: 1- Community Maternal Garden, where boys and girls between 45 days and 5 years carry out stimulation activities by trained popular educators or teaching staff; 2- Children’s House with an axis in school support and the development of artistic, cultural and sports activities and 3- Comprehensive care center that covers the two modalities previously described.

This program depends on the Provincial Ministry of Community Development and is implemented in the local territory after the signing of a cooperation agreement between the Province and the municipalities - unfolding at the state headquarters or at the headquarters of social or religious organizations -, or through a direct agreement between the Province and social organizations without the intervention of the municipal government. In Greater Buenos Aires, at the beginning of 2021, 75% of the IDUs were deployed through agreements with social organizations and 25% through agreements with municipalities

(Ministry of Community Development, 2021)¹³. The municipalities or organizations with which an agreement is signed become effector institutions for the provision of goods and services and must present an institutional project that is evaluated by the Provincial Ministry for its financing. The social actors involved in the program are mainly territorial-based social organizations (promotion societies, soup kitchens, community centers, foundations) and religious institutions that intervene at the time of program execution. Likewise, the program is also based on the articulation with other institutions such as the school, the health center, the neighborhood sports club, among others, for the deployment of intervention strategies with respect to the targeted children and adolescents.

This provincial policy is articulated with the national program that we will develop below.

Early Childhood Spaces Program (EPI)

The Early Childhood Spaces (EPI) are part of the National Early Childhood Plan sanctioned in 2016, although they are not a new creation, but are based on a previous national regulation from 2007¹⁴. This plan depends on the National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and Family of the Ministry of Social Development and its purpose is to “guarantee the comprehensive de-

¹¹ Decree 1685/1992: <https://normas.gba.gob.ar/documentos/VNRk3RC6.pdf>

¹² Resolution 390/2009: <https://normas.gba.gob.ar/documentos/BE3o5kun.pdf>

¹³ Information published at <http://observatorioconurbano.ungs.edu.ar/wp-content/uploads/543-Unidades-de-Desarrollo-Infantil-Tipo-de-gestion-y-becas-2021.pdf>

¹⁴ Law No. 26,233: <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/125000-129999/127532/norma.htm>

velopment of boys and girls from birth to four years of age, including those in situations of social vulnerability in order to favor the promotion and protection of their rights” (p. 4)¹⁵.

For this, the Plan is organized mainly in two lines of intervention, the “Early Childhood We Accompany Parenting” Program and the Early Childhood Spaces (EPI). We will focus on this second line, in whose processing both the local level of government and social organizations intervene and which represents the most relevant in terms of coverage of the Plan.

The EPIs are spaces for the care and comprehensive approach of early childhood (boys and girls between 45 days and 4 years of age), both state and community, which aim to guarantee nutrition, early stimulation and health promotion, complementing the role of families and facilitating the parenting process.

In this line of intervention, the MDSN provides technical and financial assistance to care spaces through agreements established with the provinces, municipalities and/or social organizations. It grants a single initial subsidy destined to the opening of a physical space conducive to the growth and integral development of children and then a monthly contribution for each child attending. For this, the appropriate institutions must formulate an institutional project that considers the needs and demands of families and their communities.¹⁶

In the Province of Buenos Aires, this national program articulates its deployment with the previously presented provincial policy, the UDI Program. This involved the delivery of monthly subsidies to the provincial government, aimed at solving and strengthening the operation and activities of these spaces. In the Greater Buenos Aires area, at the beginning of 2019, around 60% of the EPIs were developed under the UDI-Government of the Province agreement modality, 15% through agreements with the municipalities and 25% through agreements with social organizations (Ministry of National Social Development, 2019).

As in the UDI program, the social actors participating in the program are mainly territorial-based organizations that intervene at the time of execution. These organizations interact for the development of their offer of activities with other institutions or services of the local municipal, provincial or national space (educational, health, cultural, among others) to guarantee the rights of the boys and girls participating in the spaces of watch out.

Shared Social Responsibility Program (Envion)

This program depends on the Provincial Ministry of Community Development, began to be implemented in 2009 and is aimed at adolescents and young people between 12 and 21 years of age in vulnerable situations. Within its framework, actions are developed to promote labor, education-

¹⁵ Decree 574/2016: <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/260000-264999/260280/norma.htm>

¹⁶ Decree 1202/2008: <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/140000-144999/142901/norma.htm>

nal, health and sociocultural insertion in order to guarantee their rights, as well as equal opportunities for the construction of their life projects.

It has various components -education, work, health, recreation and sports, art and culture and technology- that are deployed in different venues in the territory. The young participants receive a monthly remuneration (called a scholarship) and are accompanied by a technical team, by other leading young people from the territory (tutors) who also receive a scholarship for their work and by teachers who carry out activities in the various components indicated.

For its implementation, from the provincial level, agreements are signed with municipalities and social organizations that assume responsibility for management in their territories. In Greater Buenos Aires, 75% of the program's offices respond to agreements between the provincial government and the municipalities, while 25% are part of agreements between the province and social organizations¹⁷. The provincial government finances the program (scholarships for young people and tutors and fees for technical teams) and monitors and provides technical assistance to the municipalities and social organizations for its implementation. The latter provide the physical spaces (seats) in which the activities take place, identify and select the young recipients, are responsible for food provision and the supplies and equipment for its management, select the technical teams, define the activities to be

develop in each branch and complement provincial financing to expand coverage and scope. As can be seen, the social organizations intervene at the time of the execution of the Program and they constitute territorially based organizations: neighborhood clubs and community and cultural centers. It is necessary to indicate that originally the program was called "Shared Social Responsibility" since in the design it foresaw the articulation with private companies that officiate both as a source of financing and as potential areas of labor insertion. This link remained only at the level of the formulation of the initiative.

Likewise, within the framework of this program, actions are coordinated with other actors for the promotion of the rights of young people: institutions of the health system (municipal, provincial and national) to guarantee health controls, services linked to the care of problematic consumption (provincial and national), actors of the educational system at different levels to favor the school trajectories of young people and funding agencies for socio-productive undertakings at the headquarters.

Local Councils for Children and Adolescents

The Councils are multi-stakeholder devices created by the provincial regulations for the promotion and protection of rights, Law 13,268 of the year 2005. Once the municipalities adhere to the provincial regulations, the application authority

¹⁷ Information published at <http://observatorioconurbano.ungs.edu.ar/wp-content/uploads/542-Programa-Envion.-Sedes-y-destinatarios-2021.pdf>

delegates the call and coordination to them. If local governments do not expressly express their willingness to establish the space and participate in it, it can be formed with social institutions and territorial representatives of other sectoral social areas, minimum health and education. Also, in the absence of municipal will, the call can be made by the provincial government notifying the local executive power.

Representatives from different municipal areas, state effectors from the sectors of education, health and other provincial social policies with a presence in the municipality, actors from the judiciary, representatives of universities located in each municipality, social organizations of the territory linked with the theme, professional associations and representatives of children and adolescents.

In the Greater Buenos Aires, the Councils are present in 14 municipalities¹⁸ and a significant part was promoted from the actions of social organizations that were first grouped in territorial networks, to articulate actions and influence local politics. Community-based organizations appear in this group where situated experience prevails, but also others with more professional profiles and even some of a supra-local nature. There are also -although to a lesser extent- corporate-type social actors - trade unions and professional associations (bar associations, psychologists and social workers) based in the territory (Foglia & Rofman, 2020).

The Local Councils have the mission of carrying out a diagnosis of the situation of children and of the services and benefits at the local level; develop the action plan for the comprehensive protection of rights at the territorial level and monitor compliance with government actions¹⁹. In practice, they carry out activities of various kinds: training, mapping of resources and actors, preparation of diagnoses, campaigns, declarations or complaints about situations of violation of rights or about policy initiatives that are not framed in the perspective of rights (Foglia, 2019).

Recapitulating the programs and devices for the promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents

As can be seen in Synthetic Table No. 2, the participatory programs in the field are based on the articulation between different actors: Provincial and/or National Ministry, Municipalities and Social Organizations. These programs have a supra-local design and supervision and local governments focus their task at the time of implementation. However, within the framework of the national and provincial programmatic guidelines, local governments intervene in the elaboration of specific projects to be implemented in each territory, defining objectives, activities and operating guidelines. These projects in some cases are defined autonomously following the guidelines of the programs and in other cases re-

¹⁸ Information published at: <http://observatorioconurbano.ungs.edu.ar/wp-content/uploads/395-Consejos-Locales-NyA.pdf>

¹⁹ Decree 300/05, Regulation Law 13,298 <https://normas.gba.gob.ar/documentos/V9dPOcWB.pdf>

quire a prior agreement between provincial and local authorities, since they involve adjustments or redirections. Likewise, all these programs are developed through the articulation with social actors who are inserted now of the execution of the policy: providing spaces and facilities, disseminating proposals and/or coordinating with the state effectors strategies for the guarantee of rights.

For its part, in the case of the participatory device analyzed, the Local Councils, there is a provincial regulation that promotes its formation, but the effective realization depends on the local actors-municipality and social organizations. In these multi-stakeholder spaces, unlike the programs, citizen participation is focused on the moment of diagnosis and formulation of the local childhood policy and in instances of monitoring or control.

Tabla 2.

Trama interjurisdiccional y actores sociales de los programas y dispositivos de promoción y protección de derechos de las niñas y adolescencias.

		Programs			Device
Interjurisdictional plot		Child Development Units (UDI)	Early Childhood Spaces (EPI)	Shared responsibility Clean and jerk	Local Councils for Children and Adolescents
	Nation		Design and financing		
	Province	Design and financing	Implements	Design and financing	Design
	Municipality	Implementation + Marginal intervention in the elaboration	Implementation + Marginal intervention in the elaboration	Implementation + Marginal intervention in the elaboration	Design + Implementation
Social actors	Political stage where they participate	Implementation + Marginal intervention in the elaboration	Implementation + Marginal intervention in the elaboration	Implementation + Marginal intervention in the elaboration	Diagnosis and Formulation Monitoring + Control
	Predominant type of actor	Community-Based Organizations	Community-Based Organizations	Community-Based Organizations	Community-based organizations + professional organizations + trade union actors

Source: Own elaboration (2021).

The development presented up to this point makes it possible to capture those policies for the promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents require a combination of efforts between state actors from different levels of government, but also from the organized community. The implementation of these policies is not achieved or explained through the action of a single actor, on the contrary, the complexity of public work in this field shows various roles and functions that intersect and complement each other, resulting in a structure that we can read in governance key.

Final thoughts

The great challenge of today's societies lies in the ability to develop new ways of working collaboratively with the aim of solving complex public problems. This requires new multi-stakeholder and inter-jurisdictional approaches. These transformations are especially clearly evident in the field of social policy at the local level. In recent decades, municipal governments in Argentina have been developing new functions and responsibilities, among which two agendas of great relevance in the social issue stand out: the situation of children and the problem of social and economic inclusion of unemployed sectors. Policies with strong local involvement were developed around these two major issues: the promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents and the promotion of the social economy.

This article exposes the different initiatives - programs and devices - that embody these fields of state intervention, highlighting that their management involves the actions of various social actors and involves multiple levels of government.

Participatory design programs and devices, with broad civil society participation in policy development, are present in both fields, but show some differences between them.

Regarding the field of social economy, the approach was focused on a national socio-productive program of wide scope and coverage, which aims to improve the social inclusion of the popular sectors, mainly in the field of work, through their participation in social and territorial intervention activities. Although throughout the history of the program, which has undergone different transformations linked to the changes of government in Argentina, the forms of implementation and the role of social organizations have been reconfigured, in general the social actors have formed cooperatives to carry out these activities. The cooperatives, grouped in social movements, concentrate their participation in the execution of the activities, although they can also include intervention spaces in the planning/design of these.

For its part, in the field of promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents, we find a diversity of programs and devices, all with a long history - they were created between

the mid and late 2000s - and with a wide scope and territorial coverage. On the one hand, these are programs to promote rights that seek to guarantee their realization through socio-educational and care spaces, designed and financed by the national or provincial levels, involving local governments at the time of execution. However, as we previously explained, these show varied margins of incidence in the formulation since they must present specific projects, under the framework of supra-local programmatic lines, where they define activities, recipients and specific geographical cuts. In these programs, the participation of community social organizations is observed, with strong insertion in the territories, which are incorporated at the time of the execution of the initiatives. On the other hand, there are also devices that assume the format of councils, that is, multi-stakeholder spaces where state actors are found -representatives of various provincial, national and municipal programs in the local territory- and social actors -in this case grassroots organizations, but also others of a more professional and corporate nature. In this case, the participation is evidenced in the instance of the field affairs agenda in the local government, in the consultation, in the planning and in the monitoring.

The characteristics reconstructed for the programs and devices chosen for the two fields analyzed show a wide universe of structures for citizen participation. and a diversity of social actors throughout its cycle. As far as the first point is concerned, we mostly find mechanisms anchored in policy management - in the

two fields addressed - but also others linked to consultation, codecision and control - this only in the field of childhood and adolescence. Regarding the second point, dissimilar actors are captured between the policies, while in the field of social economy they are social organizations -linked in many cases to large movements- that are organized under the form of work cooperatives. In the field of childhood and adolescence, it is mainly about grassroots community organizations, to which other unions and professional organizations join in multi-stakeholder devices. This articulation between State and society for the development of politics is closely linked to the characteristics of social problems today. Their magnitude, complexity and density make them a challenge for government management and stress traditional modes of action, highlighting that their resolution requires a more cooperative and less unidirectional and hierarchical process.

Likewise, the initiatives addressed allow us to appreciate that, in both fields, the policies are part of a broad interjurisdictional framework. In the case of social economy, the national actor, particularly the Ministry of Social Development at the federal level, appears as the governing sphere of the policy, leaving the leading role in implementation to the local level. For its part, the field of childhood and adolescence shows the confluence of more actors: the Nation and the provincial government through different agencies designing and financing and the municipality intervening in the execution of activities and contributing its own projects in supra-local frameworks. In both fields, the relevance of the

local sphere emerges as a space of closeness and proximity that facilitates the construction of an approach to social problems as part of a collective responsibility among various actors.

In summary, the policies and mechanisms chosen show that the management of social policy in the municipal spheres of Greater Buenos Aires is organized within the framework of complex governance networks. Despite the differences in terms of the organizing principles of politics, in the two fields studied a complex framework is observed, where the different levels of government and also social actors intervene. This shows that multi-stakeholder and multi-scale approaches articulate inter-jurisdictional linkages and participatory structures already installed at the heart of the local management of social policies in this region.

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