

T09P14 / Corruption as a Public Problem: Do Policymakers Need a New Perspective?

Topic : T09 / Governance, Policy networks and Multi-level Governance

Chair : Steven Gawthorpe (Charles University)

Second Chair : sofia wickberg (University of Amsterdam)

Third Chair : Giulia Mugellini (Università della Svizzera italiana)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Corrupt practices are by no means a new phenomenon, in the past three decades however, corruption has been reframed and thus emerged as a 'policy problem'; a deviance from good governance standards. This process of (re)politicisation of corruption goes parallel to the seminal work led mainly by Rose-Ackerman and Klitgaard presenting corruption as a principal-agent dilemma. Klitgaard's 1988 corruption formula $C=M+D-A$ (corruption equals monopoly plus discretion minus accountability) has indeed been central to anti-corruption efforts with a predominant focus on cost-benefits analyses, competition most notable monitoring and control mechanisms in the form of transparency programs (Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013). The road to hell is however paved with good intentions, and the ubiquitous usage of 'best practices' in anti-corruption programs overlooks the premise that problems are ambiguous, problem criterion are volatile change and thus policy strategies might be ineffective or have even reverse effects. Corruption as a public problem is rife with standardization of problem definitions leading to error of the third type: we are attempting to solve the wrong problem.

This panel seeks to aid policymakers to craft more effective interventions and assistance programs that encourage and support good governance. We aim to harmonize varying conceptualizations to provide policymakers with new perspectives, data enrichment, and grounded recommendations directly applicable to improving anti-corruption assistance and intervention strategies. Given the challenge of corruption, this panel will be of value across the international policy community.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Facing the relative failure of many anti-corruption policies, scholars from various disciplines are reconsidering the theoretical assumptions behind the occurrence and persistence of corruption (see Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013; Marquette and Peiffer, 2014; Torsello, 2016). We invite papers emphasizing contemporary discourses and narratives of corruption with increased attention towards policy-relevant aspects of good governance, actor identification, and the ensuing power struggles contributing to the convergence or divergence of anti-corruption policies. We invite theoretical and empirical contributions that facilitate discussions on diverging theoretical explanations, the construction of corruption as a policy problem, issue framing and re-framing and policy narratives through good governance discourse.

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Session 1 Determining the Problem Boundaries in Corruption

Friday, June 30th 08:15 to 10:15 (Block B 5 - 1)

Discussants

Marlen Heide (Institute for Public Communication - Università della Svizzera italiana (USI))

Patrick Barrett (University of Waikato)

The emergence of political corruption as a public problem: a shift in political legitimacy?

sofia wickberg (University of Amsterdam)

The emergence of corruption prevention in Western Europe in the 1980s and 1990s represents a reframing of the issue of political corruption, from an inexorable evil of a few bad apples or a normal condition of the exercise of power to a social risk that can and should be prevented. This paper examines the (re)politicisation of political corruption and its emergence as a public problem within the broader context of growing distrust in political elites and changing citizen-state relationship. I propose to study this process of reframing in a comparative perspective, looking at three countries with relatively different political cultures and institutions namely France, Sweden and the UK, to understand how political corruption emerged – and stabilised - as a public problem and a public risk.

The focus of this paper is on the shift between the perspective of political corruption as a deviance to the approach that sees political corruption as a risk, and on the meaning of this definitional change for the broader citizen-state paradigm. Indeed, at a similar point in time in the late 1980s and 1990s, all three countries adopted policies regulating conflicts of interests, the financing of political life and the maintenance of public integrity, and have continued to strengthen this public integrity framework ever since. The process of politicising political corruption and its emergence as a risk goes parallel to the seminal work led by Susan Rose-Ackerman and Robert Klitgaard presenting corruption as a principal-agent problem through a rational choice theoretical lens which has been central to anti-corruption efforts with a predominant focus on cost-benefits analyses, transparency and competition (Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013). There is a paradox in the fact that, faced with a problem of growing political disaffection and multiplication of mediated political scandals across Europe, governments in all three countries adopted a discursive stand praising a new democratic paradigm, based on deepened and strengthened public participation, while adopting policies inspired by rational choice theory, positing that public officials are self-interested utility maximizers, making corruption the result of rational calculation and political distrust its natural consequence.

This paper explores the dynamics between this crisis of representative democracy and the public integrity reforms adopted by governments as a response through the seemingly paradoxical opposition between a renewed democracy discourse placing the enlightened citizen at its centre and the growing distrust towards political representatives further alienating citizens from politics. The different political cultures of my three case studies offer the possibility to analyse the influence of institutional structure and of specific contexts on the emergence of public problems, and reversely it allows for a better understanding of the influence of public policies on political cultures. Adopting a discursive neo-institutionalist approach, I use frame analysis to study the political, administrative and media discourses on political corruption in the initial period of politicisation (1980s-1990s) and in the later period of reform (2010s) in the three countries, allowing for both a spatial and a temporal comparison.

Constructing Corruption as a Policy Problem Across China's Emerging Print Media Landscape

Scott Fritzen (Evans School of Public Policy and Governance)

Corruption as a phenomenon has a paradoxical quality: it is both pervasive and elusive, both systemic in its causes and particularistic in its expressions and scandals. This makes it highly susceptible to 'framing' effects in both the public imagination and in policy narratives, which in turn can have important political and policy design consequences. This paper develops a framework for characterizing corruption frames – broadly speaking, the manner and set of associations with which corruption and anti-corruption policies are depicted, in this case in the print media. To test this framework, it applies content analysis to a carefully drawn sample of 250 articles from six newspapers in mainland China. In addition to broadly characterizing the relative frequency of different corruption frames – which have different implications in terms of being 'system-challenging' or 'system-supporting' – we use variation in this print media sample to examine hypotheses related to the effects of Chinese media ownership and of Chinese President Xi Jinping's efforts to use anti-corruption as a political brand. The findings suggest a dilemma of media control in authoritarian settings: the more anti-corruption efforts are highlighted in an attempt to build a political brand, the more systemic the portrayal of corruption must be, which risks further fueling public cynicism and anger.

An Overview of Corruption in the US Government

Yahong Zhang (Rutgers University)

The research questions are: What are the popular types of corruption that have taken place within the US government in recent years? Within each type of corruption, which group of government officials is more likely to commit the wrongdoing?

While numerous anti-corruption studies have focused on the national level (e.g., Bardhan 1997; Bowser 2001; Lim and Stern 2002; Lipset and Lenz 2000; Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Catterberg and Moreno 2006; Moreno 2002) and state level (Liu and Mikesell 2014; Glaeser and Saks 2006), very few studies have paid serious attention to corruption at the micro-level. We collect corruption cases that have taken place in the US government in recent years and take them as the analysis units. With the 400+ corruption cases, two-stage analysis approaches are used. First, through content analysis, we identify and categorize the types of corruption in US government. Second, we extract other variables (government level, amount of dollars seized, defendant's age, gender, position, etc.) for a statistical dataset and examine which group of government officials is more likely to commit which type of corruption.

Some of the findings are striking from the research. For example, at local government level, a large proportion of the corruption cases are committed by law enforcement officers, although they involve relatively small amount of dollars. At federal level, military corruption, mostly associated with large amount of bribery (millions of dollars) and kickbacks with contractors, should raise a flag for policy makers to cope with.

Re-Defining Corruption in a New Zealand Context

Patrick Barrett (University of Waikato)

Daniel Zirker (The University of Waikato)

There is evidence that New Zealand, regarded as a country with high standards of public integrity and low levels of corruption, and long regarded by Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index as one of the six perceived least corrupt countries in the world, is facing a notable rise in domestic and international challenges to its public integrity. Evident in the international media are a series of recent 'corruption' scandals, widely seen as direct threats to New Zealand's anti-corruption record, if not its valuable 'clean and green' image. Most of these incidents involve behaviour commonly, but not necessarily accurately, labelled as 'corruption', but not defined as such under New Zealand law. From 2010, led by the Director of New Zealand's Serious Fraud Office (SFO), there have been official requests to develop a clear definition of corruption in a New Zealand context, one that might allow for legal pursuit.

Against this background our paper examines some of the major works of Rose-Ackerman, Klitgaard and, especially, Johnston, in exploring a more adequate definition of corruption in the context of mature market economies like New Zealand. Such economies are usually ranked as least corrupt with little high-level bribery, and with strong and legitimate state institutions, but nevertheless have systemic corruption problems whereby wealthy interests pursue political interest. We examine three recent corruption scandals -

the Panama Papers scandal, in which New Zealand's legal foreign trust fund provisions were prominently featured: a 2014 political scandal in which a major intelligence agency cooperated with the government in issuing a misleading report regarding the leader of the political opposition, perhaps leading to his loss of a key election; and the 2014 Saudi Arabian sheep export incident which involved, what was labelled by the New Zealand Government, a significant 'facilitation payment', a legal convention that is distinguished from bribery in New Zealand law. All three of these incidents, technically legal under New Zealand law, have much potential to damage the New Zealand reputation for fair dealing and integrity.

In this paper we seek to develop our previous work, which has distinguished between corruption and corruption scandals in New Zealand (Zirker and Barrett, forthcoming in *Political Science*, 2017), by proposing a typology of public integrity violations, particularly as regards the behaviour of public officials in this heretofore grey area. We draw on Johnston who offers conceptual assistance in more precisely defining public integrity and corruption, with his category of 'influence markets' corruption, which we propose to explore in this emerging New Zealand context in relation to these three major scandals.

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Session 2Critical Anti-Corruption Perspectives

Friday, June 30th 10:30 to 12:30 (Block B 5 - 1)

Discussants

Giulia Mugellini (Università della Svizzera italiana)

Samuel Ankamah (Griffith University)

A Systematic Literature Review and Outlook of Corruption Studies

Yahong Zhang (Rutgers University)

While we see public corruption is becoming a rampant phenomenon and causing tremendous problems to social, economic, and political systems worldwide, we may not have had sufficient knowledge on how the topic of public corruption has been scholarly explored and studied in the literature. There is a need to provide a structured literature review on corruption studies and pave the way for future research in the field.

We use keywords and electronic databases to search and collect articles published in peer reviewed journals in the fields of public administration, public policy, and political science from the last 30 years. Content analysis of the articles is conducted to identify the key features of each article, such as the research question, research approach (normative, quantitative, or qualitative approach), units of analysis, measurement of corruption, data sources for analysis, and major findings. Then the research constructs a quantitative dataset by which to summary the status quo of the overall corruption studies.

Through this research, we will have a better grasp on the general growth of the research on public corruption, the emerging issues around corruption studies, the application of research methods, lines of inquiry and patterns of empirical findings, and implications for practice drawn from the publications. We will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing literature and propose future research directions at the end.

Rethinking Taxonomies of Anti-Corruption Efforts

Jean-Patrick Villeneuve (Institute for Public Communication - Università della Svizzera italiana (USI))

Giulia Mugellini (Università della Svizzera italiana)

Marlen Heide (Institute for Public Communication - Università della Svizzera italiana (USI))

This paper sets out to develop a comprehensive taxonomy of policies aimed at countering various forms of administrative corruption. Currently existing classifications of anti-corruption reforms (e.g., Huberts, 1998; Blind, 2011; McCusker, 2006) – while providing a useful logic for distinguishing different types of interventions – fail to provide a comprehensive perspective considering problem definition, response strategies, as well as the logic underlying specific types of policy interventions. A taxonomy considering such sense-making underlying anti-corruption reforms would provide a useful tool for analyzing potential failures of anti-corruption reforms as well as allowing for an ex-ante assessment for the most suitable policy approaches within a given context.

The classification will be based on six analytical vectors: (1) the specific types of administrative corruption to be addressed; (2) the conceptual problem setting underlying various types of corruption; (3) the strategic approach anti-corruption policies; (4) the types of policy intervention an anti-corruption program represents;

(5) the conceptual frameworks underlying anti-corruption policies; (6) the main target/s of the anti-corruption policies. The focus of the paper lies on reforms countering administrative corruption, defined as the abuse of public office or public role for private gain during the implementation of public policies or service delivery.

In order to fulfill the abovementioned research objective, our study will take a four-step methodological approach:

- (1) Mapping types of administrative corruption and identify the underlying problem setting;
- (2) Mapping existing strategies of tackling administrative corruption looking at best practices, toolkits, guidelines, manuals developed by relevant supra-national donor agencies and NGOs (e.g., UNODC, UNDP, the World Bank, OECD, Transparency International, USAID, etc.) and identify their features and characteristics;
- (3) Reviewing the literature on existing taxonomies of anti-corruption policies in the public sector, highlighting the main differences between them and identifying their main pitfalls in terms of what they cover.
- (4) Developing a comprehensive taxonomy of anti-corruption reforms.

In the final analysis, we will critically discuss the features of existing taxonomies identified in the literature review against the background of corrupt action and anti-corruption practices as outlined in first and second step of this research. Ultimately, we will develop a comprehensive taxonomy of anti-corruption reforms that can be adapted to the various problem setting corruption can take.

Anti-Corruption Policy Failure: The Case of Moldova's Billion Dollar Scandal

Mihail Popsoi (University of Milan)

Ever since its independence from the Soviet Union, Republic of Moldova has been struggling with both nation and state building, albeit with limited success. After a quarter century of self-rule, Moldova is best known as the poorest country in Europe. Ethnic and geopolitical cleavages are tearing the country apart. A vocal minority of the public would like to reunite with Moldova's kin state Romania; whilst about half of the country would prefer joining the European Union, rivalled by an almost equally large part, who, instead long for the Soviet Union and prefer a rapprochement with Russia. Thus, building effective state institutions and implementing sound public policy has been a challenge. Corruption has become endemic, despite commitments by the government to mitigate it. The recent 'billion dollar scandal' is a clear indication of anti-corruption policy failure. Despite the implementation of New Public Managements reforms and the pluralisation of policy making process, the country is nowhere nearer to effectively mitigating the endemic corruption that cripples the state.

The paper offers a case study into the most severe national political scandal in Moldovan history. Throughout 2012-2014, three Moldovan banks have issued loans to entities that never intended to pay the money back, forcing the state to bail the banks out before withdrawing their licences. The damage amounted to almost one billion USD, which is about 15% of Moldova's GDP ([BBC](#) 2015). The failure to enforce the law on the part of regulatory authority, mainly the National Bank and the National Financial Market Commission was manifest, as later indicated in an independent report by [Kroll Inc.](#) – an American corporate investigations and risk consulting firm commissioned to scrutinise the case (2015). Yet, law enforcement, primarily the National Anti-Corruption Commission as well as the Office of the Prosecutor General have also failed to act, even though they had all the information about the ongoing suspicious financial activity in the three banks, as confirmed by the head of the abovementioned institutions during Parliamentary hearings ([Infotag](#), 2015), raising experts' concerns about regulatory and even state capture (Tudoroiu, 2015:660).

The paper will apply the principle-agent model to this case of anti-corruption policy failure and argue that, contrary to mainstream theoretical expectations, the implementation of New Public Management and the pluralisation of policy process in Moldova, not only failed to preclude, but may have, inadvertently, contributed to regulatory capture. The key problem is the lack of agent independence (regulatory and law enforcement bodies) from the principle(s) (government, parliament and political parties) as well as constant reshuffling of prerogatives and lines of accountability. Hence, an acrimonious blame game ensues, not only between institutions, but also among political parties both within and beyond the ruling coalition, which makes both policy making and policy delivery more difficult. Reviewing the scandal's public policy implications, the paper will finally suggest a new perspective for addressing anti-corruption policy implementation in the Moldovan as well as broader post-Soviet and Eastern European contexts.

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Session 3 Extending the Determinants of Corruption

Friday, June 30th 13:45 to 15:45 (Block B 5 - 1)

Discussants

sofia wickberg (University of Amsterdam)

Leslie Holmes (University of Melbourne)

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS AND ACCOUNTABILITY RELATIONSHIPS: TYPOLOGY OF SUPPORT ROLES

Samuel Ankamah (Griffith University)

The manner in which civil society, including the media, interacts with Accountability Institutions (AIs) or Horizontal Accountability agencies e.g. Supreme Audit Institutions, Ombudsmen and Anti-Corruption Agencies (ACAs) to hold public officials accountable has received much attention in recent years (see e.g. Fox 2015; Ankamah 2016). Research into accountability relationships as a more effective means to fight corruption has proved promising. Current consensus is that 'teeth may not bite without voice' – AIs are less effective when they are unable to interact with civil society including the media. However the question of when and why AIs should interact with their social mechanism counterparts is less well-studied. Specifically, the supporting roles that civil society and media play or can play to operations of AIs is not well understood and less conceptualised in the accountability literature. I draw on empirical evidence through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders including Anti-corruption Agency personnel, Journalists, Civil Society Activists, whistleblowers/complainants and other observers in an advanced liberal democratic setting: Australia. I focus on ACAs in two Australian States: New South Wales and Queensland. I find that civil society, including the media, supports ACAs' activities in four main ways: (1) Activation of ACAs investigations into issues of corruption including the provision of evidence to support investigations; (2) Protecting and safeguarding the independence, including mandates and powers, of ACAs; (3) Playing a 'check and balance' role by running commentaries to constructively criticise ACAs when they go wrong; and (4) serving as a communication channel to disseminate and inform the public on the works and operations of ACAs. Further, I find that civil society and the media are more willing to offer these support mechanisms when ACAs are, as far as practicable, transparent and accessible in their operations. On the other hand, I also find that for these supporting roles to be fully embraced by ACAs to positively influence collaborations with their social mechanisms counterparts for enhanced accountability outcomes, civil society including the media must act professionally and not be perceived as antagonists to ACAs activities and operations

Police Corruption and Collusion: How a Good Governance Approach Can Help Combat This Problem

Leslie Holmes (University of Melbourne)

According to the most comprehensive comparative analysis of citizens' experience of corruption, Transparency International's *Global Corruption Barometer* (GCB), more citizens globally pay bribes to police officers than to any other officers of the state. Although the full results of the most recent (2015-16) GCB are not yet publicly available, the results for Europe and Central Asia show once again that, for instance, East European citizens are far more likely to have paid a bribe to a police officer in the previous twelve months than have citizens in North-Western Europe. Most of these bribes are to avoid fines for traffic infringements

(indeed, in the latest GCB, citizens were only asked about paying bribes to traffic police, not police generally as in earlier GCBs); while this is of concern, they are not as serious in their implications as other forms of police corruption. One of the most serious is police collusion with organised crime syndicates and, in a small number of cases (e.g. allegedly, the Beslan siege in Russia), even with terrorists.

Based primarily on original survey data, the research question this paper seeks to answer is ‘what leads police officers to engage in less serious forms of corruption?’. It then uses the so-called slippery slope argument to suggest the reasons why some officers engage in more serious forms, notably collusion with criminal elements (e.g. in human and drug trafficking). The surveys were conducted in four very different countries – Bulgaria, Germany, Russia and Singapore. In the cases of Germany and Singapore, the surveys were conducted among two constituencies (general public; businesspeople), while in Bulgaria and Russia, a third constituency, namely police officers themselves, also participated.

Having identified the perceived causes of police corruption, the paper concludes with practical policy proposals – methods that are likely to reduce police corruption of all types in any jurisdiction. Since Singapore and Germany appear by every measure to have far less of a problem with police corruption than either Bulgaria or Russia, the policies adopted by governments in both will be examined. What is it about the governance arrangements in the first two states that help to explain much lower corruption rates than in the latter two? But additional methods will also be proposed, particularly low cost ones that could be implemented even in poorer developing states with fragile governance arrangements, and in states with very divergent political cultures.

Spatial Proximity and a System of Corruption

Steven Gawthorpe (Charles University)

Contemporary policy strategies and prevailing literature on corruption grossly overemphasizes the role of the individual and often overlooks how social embeddedness constrain individual choices and how both formal and informal institutions can serve contrary to governmental objectives. While the individual emphasis is not without merit, a systems-oriented perspective has relatively little impact into actionable policy. But how do we underscore the differences? Is the prevailing body of literature on systemic corruption sufficient to conceptually address these differences? And can we empirically test such differences?

Using longitudinal GIS data, I empirically investigate the public procurement sector of the Czech Republic as a case to bridge seemingly dissimilar events into a unifying framework for identifying repeat patterns of access and exclusion. Such information is useful for demonstrating how spatial-temporal horizons invigorate the certainty to advance exploitative practices and resist exogenous institutional change. I argue that the schemes of criminal enterprise are many but the system is one. Although many patterns of exploitation in public procurement may appear isolated and disconnected, the instances of near-distance relationships reveal similar patterns as to how a system of corruption persists.

This research endeavor will provide rigorous longitudinal data analysis and will operationalize emerging literature on systemic corruption guiding new testable perspectives and grounded recommendations directly applicable to program assistance and policy intervention strategies.

Do women MPs care more about corruption? New data from the UK, France and Spain

Constanza Sanhueza

Amy Alexander (University of Gothenburg)

It is well-established that women’s presence in parliaments positively correlates with control of corruption (Dollar et al. 2001; Esarey and Chirillo 2013; Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2015; Goetz 2007; Sundström and Wängnerud 2014). To explain this link scholars theorize that female MPs are more likely to resist or actively fight corruption due to gender differences in socialization or a higher likelihood to be marginalized from power. However, few studies actually evaluate how female politicians behave as MPs as concerns corruption. Thus, evidence for establishing causality and sorting out the mechanisms behind the link between women’s presence and lower corruption is seriously limited.

Our paper unpacks this “individual-level black box” with new data on the extent to which female MPs differ from male MPs in their concern for corruption when posing questions to members of government during their last full mandate periods. More specifically, we examine the written parliamentary questions (WQs) on corruption asked by individual MPs to members of the Government in the national 2010 British, 2007 French and 2011 Spanish parliaments. We ask whether female MPs are more active in bringing the issue of corruption up than their male colleagues and look into the possible mechanisms behind these gender differences.

We use a dataset on WQs (Sanhueza Petrarca 2015) for the United Kingdom, France and Spain. WQs are a tool with which MPs can hold governments accountable (Wiberg 1995) and an instrument to direct policymakers' and voters' attentions to the issues that they care about (Ferree et al. 2002:14). Moreover, the content of the question shows the representation orientation and framing adopted by individual deputies. WQs thus provide an insight into individual MPs' concerns especially because they are not subject to such strict control by party leaders as compared to other activities (Martin 2011).

MPs' WQ activity is measured counting the number of written questions tabled by individual deputies on corruption issues. Hence, the number of questions captures the saliency (importance) of the issue of corruption for a given deputy.

The preliminary results show that female MPs pose more WQs on corruption than male MPs in the UK, while male MPs pose more WQs on corruption than female MPs in France and Spain. These are, however, absolute numbers. If we adjust for women's lower percentages in parliament in all countries, than in relative terms, the positive results in the UK are even stronger and female MPs are now more likely than men to engage against corruption in France and Spain. Thus, in relative numbers, female MPs are significantly more likely to show concern for corruption over male MPs across all three countries. Ongoing research (planned for completion in spring 2017) will use the data to explore and test the mechanisms behind the gender differences with multivariate analyses that take into consideration a variety of MP related factors.