

The Diversity of Corruption and the Corruption of Diversity

Over the past two or three decades corruption has become an intensively discussed issue. In 2010, BBC World Service launched the findings of a poll surveying more than 13,000 people across 26 countries identifying corruption as the 'the world's most frequently discussed global problem' (BBC 2010). How did it come about? Crucially, a conceptual understanding of the phenomenon in question precedes its discussion and recognition as a problem (problematization) in society. And although a diversity of conceptions is circulating through society, only a few phenomena have come to be discussed and recognized as a serious problem for mankind. While around 1945 the problematization of corruption nearly disappeared, within the last two or three decades a powerful discourse on anti-corruption returned into the public sphere to experience an unprecedented institutionalization. (Engels 2014; Krastev 2004; Sampson 2010; Sousa et al. 2009; Tänzler 2010)

Accordingly, the problem of corruption has come to be recognized globally as the 'abuse of entrusted power for private gain' and there is a widespread agreement among policy makers, experts and scholars that it hinders the good development of societies and especially the functioning of the free market economy. According to the leading NGO in the anti-corruption discourse, Transparency International, the notion of corruption collectively refers to a diversity of practices that enable actors to take advantage by the abuse of entrusted power.

Yet, from a historical perspective this diversity of practices that today forms the notion of corruption did not always or naturally pose a problem to mankind. While micro political practices at a given time have been 'silently accepted' at another time the very same practices were 'gathered together, characterized, analyzed, and treated as' (Foucault, Pearson 2001) corruption. Therefore, Engel's historical account of corruption documents the transformations of the way societies dealt with micro political practices. For instance, clientelism and patronage were irreplaceable for the functioning of society in the early modern period by forming the social and constituting a moral duty of citizenship (Engels 2014, p. 54) In other words, clientelism and patronage could neither be publicly discussed nor treated as a problem - the notion of corruption (how we know it today) simply did not exist in the early modern period.

Against this backdrop, the proposed article raises the question of *how and why* corruption has become 'the world's most frequently discussed problem'. Foucault's concept of problematization (Deacon Roger 2000;

Foucault, Pearson 2001) invites us to study the archeology and genealogy of corruption. Therefore Transparency International serves as an 'paradigmatic case' (Flyvbjerg 2006) for the formation of the anti-corruption discourse and the problematization of corruption. First, the *why* will be explored by investigating the organizational development of TI (Eigen 2003; Krastev 2004) that illustrates *why* corruption became a problem for secular societies and free markets. Second, the *how* will be explored by TI's Corruption Perception Index (Hansen 2011, 2012), as a moral technology that makes corruption thinkable and regulable.

The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) which is annually published by Transparency International. The CPI quantitatively measures national perception(s) of corruption (on a scale from 1-100) in order to allow a global ranking. This enables not only TI to take action against corruption but also forces nations and citizens to engage in the 'war against corruption' (Hansen 2012, 2011). The article conceptualizes the CPI as a (moral) technology of visibility that regulates the diversity of corruption and standardizes its recognition on a numeric scale. Here the conducted analysis will focus on the normative dimension that is vested in this technology. While the CPI was designed to redress social inequality by tackling corruption, the analysis shows how inequality (among countries) is constructed where the realization of a 'world free of corruption' (TI) goes unquestioned. The long version of the article will provide an in depth analysis of the CPI.

Notably, the CPI is only one technology that makes corruption thinkable and regulable in a global context. Indeed, many of the practices that are currently framed as corruption nourish unequal but always context-specific power relations. However, the CPI illustrates how the construct of corruption is globally mediated by (mere) numbers that are considered to represent the diversity and complexity of (unwelcome) practices by neglecting their context-specific character. Thereby the index operates on a logic that not only forces governments, organizations and individuals to obey the global framing of corruption but also forces them to participate in anti-corruption.

The anti-corruptions project goes unchallenged by being entrusted to a powerful anti-corruption discourse, which defines what practices make up corruption and regulates the way they are (or are not) exercised. However, while acknowledging the increasing necessity for the creation of a level playing field for a free market economy, the article aims to show that the costs of this project involve a regulatory decline of micro political practices that can be favorable for social cohesion in certain contexts.

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