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Master Applied Methods of Markets Analysis

Sociology of corruption

Course description

The elective course consists of 7 lectures and 7 seminars, 28 hours in total. The course is offered to students of the Master programme Applied Methods of Markets Analysis.

The phenomenon of corruption has attracted a surge of interest both among academics and policy-makers since the 1990s and figures prominently on research agendas as well as global strategies to fight it. The main aim of the course is to introduce students to key concepts, theories and debates in the study of corruption as well as to provide them with some first experience on how to approach the phenomenon.

The first part of the course will ask the question of *what corruption is*: how can the phenomenon be understood, what are its manifestations? Standard definitions of corruption and the distinction between various types and forms of corruption in the literature will be analysed. In a second step, the question of the definition of corruption will be discussed, in particular by examining the difficulty of distinguishing between an act of corruption and a gift. Examples of the uneasy distinction between the two phenomena will help students reflect on the importance of the cultural and socio-political context in the definition of corruption, the dimension of performance and social skills involved in these acts as well as the limits of a purely legalistic view of corruption. The causes of corruption and the question of whether it can be understood as a “third world” or “transition” phenomenon or whether

these associations reflect a tendency toward “Euro-centrism” or Orientalism will also be examined.

The second part of the course will be dedicated to the *study of corruption*. Students will reflect on the way scholarly approaches to corruption influence how certain activities are framed that seek to address the phenomenon. Methods for the collection of data on corruption and the limits of certain approaches will be analysed. Moreover, the link between the mainstream social-scientific analysis of corruption and the rise of an anti-corruption movement or “industry” since the 1990s will be discussed as well as the way in which the formation of this global anti-corruption discourse has become an object of research in itself, particularly for anthropologists. New approaches to the study of corruption that seek to go beyond a positivistic understanding of the phenomenon and the limit involved in approaching the phenomenon only through the lens of the Weberian dichotomy between a public and a private space will be discussed. Finally, invited guest lecturers, representing relevant research institutes and non-governmental organisations, will provide students with the view of practitioners on the phenomenon of corruption.

Learning outcomes

- The students will be familiar with the standard definitions of corruption and its typology
- Provide an understanding of the limits of conventional or mainstreams approaches to the phenomenon of corruption and the necessity to study corruption in a particular cultural and socio-political context and not as an isolated act
- The students will be able to reflect on the ambiguities inherent in the attempt to distinguish between gift and bribe and understand the role of culture and values in the definition of corruption
- Provide an understanding of the link between scholarship and practice in corruption, for example by studying the way in which certain definitions and assumptions on the phenomenon have allowed for the development of a certain type of anti-corruption activities and possible manifestations of Euro-centrism or Orientalism

Grading

- Attendance (10%)
- Participation (10%)
- Oral presentation with a written hand-out (40%)
- Final essay (40%)

Required reading

Blundo, Giorgio, "Hidden Acts, Open Talks. How Anthropology Can "Observe" and Describe Corruption," in Nuijten, Monique and Anders, Gerhard eds.: *Corruption and the secret of law: A legal anthropological perspective*, Ashgate, 2007

Jennifer Hasty, "The pleasures of corruption: Desire and discipline in Ghanaian political culture." *Cultural Anthropology* 20 (2): 271-301, 2005

Heidenheimer, Arnold J. and Johnston, Michael (eds.): *Political Corruption: Concepts and Contexts (Third Edition)*, New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2007

Rigi, Jacob: "The corrupt state of exception: Agamben in the light of Putin", *Social Analysis*, Volume 56, Number 3, Winter 2012 , pp. 69-88(20)

Rivkin-Fish, Michele, "Bribes, Gifts and Unofficial Payments: Rethinking Corruption in Post-Soviet Russian Health Care," in *Corruption: Anthropological Perspectives*, Haller, Dieter and Chris, Shore, eds., London: Pluto Press, 2005

Steven Sampson, The anti-corruption industry: from movement to institution, *Global Crime* 11(2):261–78, 2010

Smart, Alan and Hsu, Carolyn L.: "Corruption or social capital? Tact and the performance of *guanxi* in market socialist China", in Monique Nuijten and Gerhard Anders, eds., *Corruption and the secret of law: A legal anthropological perspective*, Ashgate, 2007

Janine R. Wedel: Rethinking corruption in an age of ambiguity, *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 2012. 8:453–98

Recommended reading

Andvig, J., Fjeldstad, O., Amundsen, I., Sissener, T. & Soreide, T.: Research on Corruption: A Policy Oriented Survey (Oslo: Chr Michelsen Institute and Norwegian Institute of International Affairs), 2000

Gupta, A. (1995) Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State. *American Ethnologist* 22(2): 375–402.

Dieter Haller and Cris Shore, eds., *Corruption: Anthropological Perspectives*: Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2005

Alena V. Ledeneva, *How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practices That Shaped Post Soviet Politics And Business (Culture and Society After Socialism)*, Cornell University Press, 2006

Nuijten, Monique and Anders, Gerhard: “Corruption and the secret of law: An introduction”, in Nuijten, Monique and Anders, Gerhard eds.: *Corruption and the secret of law: A legal anthropological perspective*, Ashgate, 2007

Nye, J.S. (1967) Corruption and Political Development: A Cost-Benefit Analysis. *American Political Science Review* 61(2):417–27

Tara Polzer, “Corruption: deconstructing the World Bank discourse”, Development Studies Institute (Destin) Working paper No. 01-18, London School of Economics, 2001

Sampson, Steven: “Diagnostics: Indicators and transparency in the anti-corruption industry”, in S. Jansen, E. Schröter and N. Stehr (eds.) *Transparenz: Multidisziplinäre Durchsichten durch Phänomene und theorien des Undurchsichtigen*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010

Structure of the course

I. What is corruption? Definitions and causes of corruption

1. What is corruption? Mainstream definitions and typologies

The most widely used definition of corruption is the abuse of public office for private gains. Mainstream definitions of corruption are thus based on the divide between the public and the private space with the violation of this separation as representing the act of corruption. Definitions of corruption are thus based on the notion of a Weberian bureaucratic rationality. Typologies of corruption have also sought to approach the phenomenon by identifying, for example, street-level corruption and high corruption.

Required reading

Janine R. Wedel: Rethinking corruption in an age of ambiguity, *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 2012. 8:453–98, read p.254-p.260, Paragraph “Scholarly approaches to corruption in a Cold War World”

Heidenheimer, Arnold J. and Johnston, Michael: “Terms, concepts and definitions: Introduction”, in Heidenheimer, Arnold J. and Johnston, Michael (eds.): *Political Corruption: Concepts and Contexts (Third Edition)*, New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2007

Gardiner, John A.: “Defining corruption”, in Heidenheimer, Arnold J. and Johnston, Michael (eds.): *Political Corruption: Concepts and Contexts (Third Edition)*, New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2007

Recommended reading

Andvig, J., Fjeldstad, O., Amundsen, I., Sissener, T. & Soreide, T.: Research on Corruption: A Policy Oriented Survey (Oslo: Chr Michelsen Institute and Norwegian Institute of International Affairs), 2000

Nye, J.S. (1967) Corruption and Political Development: A Cost-Benefit Analysis. *American Political Science Review* 61(2):417–27

U4 Anti-corruption Resource Center's corruption glossary (<http://www.u4.no/glossary/>)

2. What is corruption? Gift or bribe?

While corruption has been defined in the mainstream literature as an illegal act that violates the public-private divide, studies of non-Western societies have shown that the definition of an act as corrupt depends on the cultural context and a particular system of values. Indeed, laws may be purposefully ambiguous and what is understood as “illegal” can also be perceived as “moral behaviour”. In this light, bribe giving shall not be seen as simply an economic exchange, but as a cultural practice. The labelling of a particular act as “corrupt” or as “gift exchange” depends on the performance of the individuals involved in a transaction and the interpretations of others. Furthermore, a successful corrupt transaction requires not only the offer of a material benefit, but also a certain cultural capital from the participant and skills in performing.

Required reading

Rivkin-Fish, Michele, “Bribes, Gifts and Unofficial Payments: Rethinking Corruption in Post-Soviet Russian Health Care,” in *Corruption: Anthropological Perspectives*, Haller, Dieter and Chris, Shore, eds., London: Pluto Press, 2005

Smart, Alan and Hsu, Carolyn L.: “Corruption or social capital? Tact and the performance of *guanxi* in market socialist China”, in Monique Nuijten and Gerhard Anders, eds., *Corruption and the secret of law: A legal anthropological perspective*, Ashgate, 2007

Recommended reading

Gupta, A. (1995) Blurred Boundaries: The Discourse of Corruption, the Culture of Politics, and the Imagined State. *American Ethnologist* 22(2): 375–402.

Werner, C. (2000) “Gifts, Bribes, and Development in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan. *Human Organization* 59(1):11–22.

3. Explaining corruption: corruption as a “transitional” or “third-world” phenomenon?

Anti-corruption measures sponsored by international organisations are justified by portraying them as a response to an assumed “demand” of developing countries for assistance. The corruption problem is often located in the “third world” in the mainstream discourse on corruption. What are the causes of corruption? Can corruption be located in developing societies and be explained by the prevalence of informal ties and neo-patrimonial governance forms in non-Western societies? Informal practices such as corruption can further be linked to the ambiguities of the legal framework in a transition environment. Or is this view of corruption an expression of the Euro-centrism inherent in conventional definitions of corruption and indicative of Orientalism?

Required reading

Lovell, David W.: “Corruption as a transitional phenomenon: Understanding endemic corruption in post-communist states”, in *Corruption: Anthropological Perspectives*, Haller, Dieter and Chris, Shore, eds., London: Pluto Press, 2005

Huntington, Samuel: “Modernization and corruption”, in Heidenheimer, Arnold J. and Johnston, Michael (eds.): *Political Corruption: Concepts and Contexts (Third Edition)*, New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2007

Recommended reading

Tara Polzer, “Corruption: deconstructing the World Bank discourse”, Development Studies Institute (Destin) Working paper No. 01-18, London School of Economics, 2001

II. How to study corruption?

4. Challenges in the empirical study of corruption

Corruption is a notoriously difficult phenomenon to study due to its inherent hidden character. Corrupt acts are usually shrouded in secrecy and as such difficult to observe, record and measure. A purely legalistic understanding of corruption that would consider juridical records as indicative of the phenomenon of corruption and only concentrates on its “visible aspects” fails to adequately encompass all its manifestations that are often “invisible”.

Nonetheless, attempts have been made to measure levels of corruption such as the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, but this measurement tool is based on subjective data related to the “perception” of corruption. Indeed, descriptions of corruption are based on interpretations and moral evaluations and cannot be seen as constituting objective statements. However, these data can also enter the study of corruption if we consider the phenomenon as representing a discursive field. Narratives on corruption also help us approach the object of study.

Required reading

Blundo, Giorgio, “Hidden Acts, Open Talks. How Anthropology Can “Observe” and Describe Corruption,” in Nuijten, Monique and Anders, Gerhard eds.: *Corruption and the secret of law: A legal anthropological perspective*, Ashgate, 2007

Recommended reading

Sampson, Steven: “Diagnostics: Indicators and transparency in the anti-corruption industry”, in S. Jansen, E. Schröter and N. Stehr (eds.) *Transparenz: Multidisziplinäre Durchsichten durch Phänomene und theorien des Undurchsichtigen*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010

5. From scholarship to practice: the rise of the “anti-corruption industry”

The anti-corruption movement that has emerged in the 1990s, in particular under the impulse of organisations such as Transparency International, is being analysed through critical lenses

in the anthropological literature. Notwithstanding the fact that the impact of anti-corruption programmes on corruption remains unclear, the “anti-corruption industry” appears to be striving. The anti-corruption movement has become institutionalised, creating what may be called an “anti-corruption regime”, and continues to develop independently of the actual phenomenon of corruption. The scholarship on corruption which became mainly dominated by economists under the impulse of the World Bank has laid the ground for the development of this “industry” by establishing certain assumptions on the study of corruption.

Required reading

Steven Sampson, The anti-corruption industry: from movement to institution, *Global Crime* 11(2):261–78, 2010

Janine R. Wedel: Rethinking corruption in an age of ambiguity, *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 2012. 8:453–98, *Read pp. 460-470, Paragraphs “The advent of an anti-corruption industry” and “Economic scholarship and the anti-corruption industry”*

Recommended reading

Tara Polzer, “Corruption: deconstructing the World Bank discourse”, Development Studies Institute (Destin) Working paper No. 01-18, London School of Economics, 2001

6. How to study corruption? New approaches to the study of corruption and anti-corruption practices

The standard definition of corruption in the mainstream anti-corruption discourse is of the violation of the divide between public office and private interests. However, corruption can take on many forms in the contemporary world which is characterised by flexible networks where individuals can hold different titles and posts, formal or informal. Wedel (2012) refers to the world of “shadow elites” and uses the concept of “flex-nex” to capture these new dimensions of corruption that cannot be adequately grasped by using conventional scholarly approaches to the phenomenon. Ethnographic methods appear better suited to study contemporary forms of corruption.

Required reading

Janine R. Wedel: Rethinking corruption in an age of ambiguity, *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 2012. 8:453–98, *Read in particular from p. 476 paragraph “Contemporary forms of corruption” to the end*

Jennifer Hasty, “The pleasures of corruption: Desire and discipline in Ghanaian political culture.” *Cultural Anthropology* 20 (2): 271-301, 2005

Recommended reading

Nuijten, Monique and Anders, Gerhard: “Corruption and the secret of law: An introduction”, in Nuijten, Monique and Anders, Gerhard eds.: *Corruption and the secret of law: A legal anthropological perspective*, Ashgate, 2007

III. The view of practitioners

7. Fighting corruption: the view of practitioners

Discussion with invited guest lecturer.