

## A NEW APPROACH TOWARDS STUDYING THE CAUSES OF CORRUPTION

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**G. de Graaf, P. von Maravic, P. Wagenaar (ed.) *The good cause. Theoretical perspectives on corruption*. Opladen & Farmington Hills, MI: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2010.**

In the annual European Group for Public Administration (EGPA) conference, which took place in Toulouse in the beginning of September 2010, one presentation in the study group on “Ethics and Integrity of Governance” was very special. Gjalte de Graaf and Patrick von Maravic, who are constant participants of this conference, presented a newly published book on corruption.

It would be unfair to say that in contemporary Lithuanian academic discourse the topic of corruption has not been studied. Various social scientists, mainly sociologists and lawyers (R. Ališauskienė, K. Čilinskas, A. Dobryninas, A. Gutauskas, J. Piliponytė, L. Žilinskienė, S. Vaitiekus, etc.) have explored the topic. Books by S. Rose-Ackerman, R. Klitgaard, R. Maclean-Abaroa, H. L. Parris, and P. Eigen are translated into Lithuanian. Some literature on this important topic was published by Transparency International Lithuanian chapter.

For those who are interested in studying and researching this negative old societal phenomenon, a few questions may arise before reading *The Good Cause*. 1) Do we have more evidence and proof about the globally developing anti-corruption industry? Researchers study this ethical and legal problem, present their thoughts and findings in international conferences or symposiums, publish scientific articles, books. Practitioners who have some kind of positive experience in fighting this issue become gurus and earn money, sharing their experiences. 2) Can something new still be written on this issue? 3) Does this book create new academic knowledge?

The American researcher G. E. Caiden, who is best known for his comparative corruption studies, in the foreword of this book says, that “*Of all topics, corruption is*

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*one of the most elusive despite being around since the dawn of civilization, and is likely to persist as long as human beings are imperfect.*” Corruption is unacceptable, disgraceful, unethical, illegal behaviour which has a variety of forms. What causes corruption, why are some people more inclined to become more corrupt than others? Is this phenomenon predetermined by special institutional or organizational settings, ways of life, personal characteristics, external or internal factors? This is just few of the questions the authors of the book try to solve.

The main question of the book is: how are the causes of corruption studied? Different chapters are written by various social scientists: economist (S. Rose-Ackerman), historians (M. Hoenderboom, W. D. Rubinstein), sociologist (P. Hiller), criminologists (W. Huisman, G. Vande Walle), political scientist (B. G. Peters), specialists in governance studies (G. de Graaf, L. Huberts, P. van Maravic, P. Wagenaar, F. de Zwart). Each scholar presents their particular perspectives, but there is something conjunctive; the attempt to present the definition of corruption, the types of corrupt conduct, and the possible causes of corruption can be found in each chapter. Some scholars in addition to this give examples of empirical studies, describe their research methods, and evaluate their inherent strengths and weaknesses.

The variety of scholarly disciplines study corruption and eight academic discourses are presented in this book: 1) the Weberian-ideal typical approach, 2) the structural functionalist approach, 3) the institutional economics approach, 4) the ecological approach, 5) system theory approach, 6) the institutional design of political systems approach, 7) the post-positivist approach, 8) the criminological approach. The first four approaches were distinguished by B. Hoetjes (1977). The last ones were added and developed in this book.

W. D. Rubinstein and P. von Maravic tried to find why Max Weber never mentioned corruption, patronage and nepotism, practices which were wide-spread in the second half of the XIX century in many European countries. Some data presented in this chapter about the spread of grand corruption in Great Britain may be shocking. More primitive societies may face the problem of corruption; meanwhile Weber believed that German society was more advanced and their bureaucracy was independent and free from corruption.

F. de Zwart tries to explain why many societies are facing the same corruption problem. Reflections on F. Riggs (1964) theory of prismatic society (a society which has some features of modern and traditional ones) may help understand why together with a modern trait—requirement to public office on the bases of qualifications—obligations to kin and friends are equally valued. From the perspective of prismatic administration, corruption, patronage, clientelism, and favouritism are not flaws in the system that can be corrected since they perform a certain function.

S. Rose-Ackerman writes about corruption from the agent/principal perspective when the trust is violated. The researcher distinguishes three causes of corruption, warning that it's hard distinguishing causes from consequences. 1) A branch of the public sector may be organized as the rent extraction machine. 2). A nominal democracy may have a corrupt electoral system, with money determining the outcome. 3)

Governments engaging in large projects can transfer assets in ways that have a significant effect on domestic and foreign business.

From the system approach position P. Hiller says that corruption primarily takes place inside a network of structures. What is morally reprehensible and whether certain behaviour is considered in this way varies from time to time and from place to place. Corruption can be understood as a form of social relationship, though it may have features of selfish or unselfish conduct (on behalf of the corporation).

The idea that some attempts to enhance efficiency and democracy creates more opportunities for corruption belongs to B. G. Peters. The more complicated the decision making process is in the democracy, the more functional the practice of political corruption becomes. Though the primary goal of formalized bureaucratic rules and procedures is to prevent corruption, inflexibility of bureaucracy makes excuse for clientelism and corruption. New administrative reforms and NPP weakens the institutional and ethical control of managers, their accountability.

G. de Graaf, P. Wagenaar and M. Hoenderboom concentrate on the causes and effects of the usage of the corruption label. Corruption varies according to the sector in which they occur, the people involved, the impact they have and the degree to which they are formalized. The conclusion following from the post-positivists is that the meaning of corruption and its consequences always have to be studied in a certain social and historic context.

W. Huisman and G. Vande Walle start their chapter by stating that corruption is a form of crime. Criminological theories relate corruption with organized, occupational, or state crime. Criminologists study motivation, possibilities for corruption and use of social control on micro, mezzo and macro levels. Deviant behaviour is a learned one, so people can learn to be corrupt or not.

L. Huberts stresses that a multi-faceted approach to corruption research is more valuable. A set of social, economical, political, organizational and individual factors allows pointing necessary conditions for the appearance of corruption. He concludes that the most promising is a multi-faceted approach in examining the causes of corruption.

In the final chapter, the editors summarize the main ideas. They don't provide a universal definition of corruption as it would be too ambitious and unreachable goal, but stress that corrupt conduct is rather complicated societal conduct. This phenomenon hardly can be explained, but the understanding of the issue is based on the context of appearance. There is no one best research method for studying the phenomenon, everything depends on the level of analysis and availability of data. Though the anti-corruption industry is developing, very little is said about the most efficient measures and instruments to fight the problem. Another weak point in academic discourse, as emphasized by G. de Graaf, P. von Maravic and P. Wagenaar is a lack of attention towards the victims of corruption.

Let's return to the three questions raised. 1) This book has a much more serious goal than just taking up space on the bookshelf. 2) Though the topic itself isn't new, it still provides new approaches towards this phenomenon. 3) Those who expect to find one simple answer to the fight against corruption may be disappointed. In each

chapter the reader can find various definitions of corruption. The right or the “good” cause of corruption can hardly be found. Representatives of various social sciences may have different views on the causes of corruption. Does *The Good Cause*, without any doubt, create new academic knowledge?

How can members of the Lithuanian academic community profit from reading *The Good Cause*? Besides finding some interesting theoretical insights and empirical data, somebody may even initiate a similar idea. The topic of corruption in Lithuania is still waiting to be explored.