Chapter Seven

Measuring Transparency

Towards a new Model of Corruption Research

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1   Introduction

Transparency is the so-called opposite of corruption and a way to implement transparency is by creating efficient anti-corruption measures (Labelle, 2003). Thus, it is interesting to review attempts in improving transparency or, put differently, in combating corruption through transparent means. In academia, there is much research on the causes and consequences of corruption (Della Porta & Mény, 1997). After a decade of anti-corruption activities, it became apparent that measuring corruption is the key to achieving greater integrity, transparency and accountability in governance. The *need* to measure becomes clear, yet the *means* to measure are still hotly debated. This is due to the contested nature of the concept of corruption. There is dissension about definitional issues and the various forms corruption can take. As a result, this leads to the difficulty of how to approach the problem and to highly divergent ways of measuring the concept.

Despite the implementation of numerous anti-corruption strategies, fighting corruption is far from over. This chapter researches what elements are missing in the systematic study of corruption, and aims to improve existing corruption research strategies. It argues that (somewhat surprisingly) the current state of corruption research does not take social and cultural components sufficiently into consideration. Building upon existing research (i.e. Corruption Perception Index, World Bank's Guide) I have developed a new model that could help identify corruption. To do this, I propose a social constructivist approach, enabling me to highlight the social and cultural aspects of corruption. This study is designed for researchers on transparency and corruption and functions as a discussion tool in how to explore the concept in a new and innovative fashion. Finally, it also serves as a thought-provoking impulse for organisations and agencies committed to measuring and combating corruption.

Research Methodology:

The research methodology of this study is entirely qualitative in nature; the main method that has been employed is the reviewing of secondary literature of scholars who have proposed models of corruption research. The research approach focuses on an evaluation of i.) some of the major contributions of corruption scholars and ii.) the different ways of measuring corruption. To do this, the methodological framework of each scholarly approach has been examined by assessing whether it succeeds in grasping the concept of corruption as a whole.

The review of existing research studies constitutes the main data source for a framework to assess measurement tools and the establishment of a new model. The central aim of the newly created model is to identify recommendations and priority action points for policy and advocacy activities. The creation of the model is based on several sources, including the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) since it is one of the most prominent ways of measuring corruption. Consequently, the study also analyses primary sources such as the component indicators of the CPI, the annual CPI ranking list of various years. Moreover it investigates the various methodology notes of Transparency International (TI). Following this, the study then examines secondary literature and reviews the CPI and explores various critiques.

As a consequence of the research methodology and research question, this chapter is structured as follows. The first section presents the different approaches and indicators that are used to measure corruption. This section also addresses one of key challenges in corruption research: the consent of one all-embracing definition of the phenomenon. Next, the chapter proceeds to the core of the matter, namely that corruption can be regarded as a constructed concept in the 'social constructivist' sense – and hence differs in each region of the world. Moreover, the study highlights the difficulty that arises from these different levels of corruption in terms of how to include conceptual differences of corruption in its measurement tools. By reviewing existing approaches, the study concludes that hitherto, social and cultural components have been disregarded. Section two introduces social constructivism as its theoretical framework. This theory serves as the basis for the design of the proposed new model in corruption research.

Section three develops a new model of corruption measurement based on social constructivist theory. It is based on five pillars which themselves build upon existing research, yet they place the universal phenomenon in a more cultural and socio-political perspective. For each element, I underline the advantages of my model over existing ones. The first pillar recommends that corruption research is to be conducted by a heterogenic

group and specifies the composition of the research and the focus group. In the second pillar, an argument is put forward in favour of a localisation of research by advocating the distancing from overarching approaches to corruption measurement methodology. The third pillar, data collection, advocates a mixed qualitative and quantitative orientation – building upon the quantitative-centric methods that are currently commonplace. Moreover, this pillar also proposes that there should be increased media involvement in the publication of results. Importantly, the final two pillars discard the corruption measurement norm of formulating comparisons between countries and rankings. The main reason and argument for this is that corruption is a contextual concept and thus comparative rankings are highly misleading.

In all, this chapter argues that the intrinsic aim of corruption research should be to find solutions and improvements. Current practices such as ranking and comparing countries do not lead to any progress in anti-corruption efforts. Consequently, this study is a plea for the rethinking of the motivations behind corruption research. In order to combat corruption, research on it has to generate results for recommendations and genuine reforms. Therefore, this study encourages the introduction of country specific reports. These would entail detailed investigation of causes, consequences and would provide advice of how to tackle the problem. This is a more productive approach and lives up to the criteria of meaningful research. Finally, the last section of this chapter concludes by highlighting why corruption research has to be continued in order to meet the challenges posed by this most 'hidden' phenomenon.

2 State-of-the-Art in Corruption Literature

It is important to pay attention to the methodology of corruption measurements. It is particularly interesting to look at and analyse the sources that are used for the assessment tool. While some indicators conduct their own research using original data, other indicators are a composite. Another distinction should be made between subjective and objective indicators. Subjective indicators base their result on citizens' or experts' opinion and perceptions. They report their views on the quality of governance and the level of corruption in one country. An example for this type of indicator is Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perception Index (CPI). TI is a transnational non-governmental organisation devoted to fighting corruption. Its CPI is the most prominent tool of corruption measurements. Politicians and experts refer to it more frequently than any other index and it has a considerable influence on people's decision about foreign

direct investments (FDI) and providing development aid. There are many other subjective corruption indicators such as the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), the Ibrahim Index of African Governance, the Global Integrity Index and the Democracy Index. In general, they are criticised for their narrow focus on perception and therefore do not capture long-term trends and changes. Moreover, it is also important to consider that subjective perceptions might be biased, especially because it is mainly business people who carry out the investigation work (World Bank, 2007, p. 23).

Objective indicators, on the other hand, weigh factual information such as election turnout rates, percentage of women in parliament and the amount of legislation providing for freedom of information. An example of an objective assessment is the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom: a composite tool that uses quantitative measurements from other sources (ibid, p. 23).

Corruption – A contested Concept

Attempts to measure corruption are extremely varied and often distinguish themselves due to definitional matters. There is no single overarching definition of corruption in English, let alone various differing definitions in other languages. In the Oxford Dictionary corruption is defined as "perversion or destruction of integrity in the discharge of public duties by bribery or favour". This definition limits the phenomenon to individuals acting on behalf of the public such as government officials or civil servants. Other definitions approach the issue from distinctly different angles, for instance from a moral stance (Gould, 1991), a functional point of view (Leff, 1979; Gould, 1980) or legally (Scott, 1972). These definitions lack social contextual components and dichotomise what shall be regarded as good and bad.

The problem with having contrasting definitions is that it leads to confusion and misleading results when conducting research on corruption. Thereby, scholars investigating under the theme of corruption may in fact be researching completely different things. Hence, it is of utmost importance to use a coherent and all-embracing definition. Some argue that corruption as a single term that cannot encompass so many different forms and motivations in a one-line definition (Williams, 1999, p. 511). This study considers the definition of Gould and Kolb (1964) to be the most accurate and holistic of all the definitions that have been researched. According to these authors, corruption is the "use of power for profit, preferment, or prestige, or for the benefit of a group or class, in a way that constitutes a breach of law or of standards of high moral conduct" (Gould and Kolb, 1964, p. 142).

After having investigated and analyse definitional problems, one has to specify i.) the extent of corruption and ii.) which actions are to be considered as falling under the scope of the definition. The later aspect being a particularly difficult task since actions can be presented in various forms. In 1990, the United Nations (UN) summed up possible features of corruption. They argued that the following were the key features: "acceptance of money and other rewards for awarding contracts, violation of procedures to advance personal interests, kickbacks from developmental programs or multi-national corporations, pay-offs for legislative support, diversion of public resources for private use, overlooking illegal activities, intervening in the justice process, nepotism, common theft, overpricing, establishing non-existing projects and tax collection and tax assessment frauds" (UN, 1990). Thus, there are very different degrees and types of corruption. Because corruption is such a wide concept, it can take many forms resulting in differing consequences. Some forms might be culturally accepted in some countries while the same form may be declared as a clearly 'corrupt' activity in other countries. Therefore, the understanding of corruption in the context of action and extent is, at this point, very diverse.

Linked to the above, corruption is not a concept that is applicable in each region alike. Network obligations in some African countries for instance signify that one cannot resist from nepotism because of the danger of losing reputation within the family or peer group. Furthermore, Scheppele (1999) argues that bonds to family and friends are reinforced in economically difficult situations since the guarantee of welfare provided by the state fades away. She explains that strangers and or foreigners who arrive to such changing economies will be suffering under nepotism since they have not established family- or friendship ties yet. Therefore, they will perceive corruption to be everywhere (Scheppele, 1999, p. 520). She continues to observe that the

"impersonal universalistic norms that allow people to turn their backs on friends to give a contract to the highest bidder or to take a chance on a stranger are not in place . . . What looks like corruption are the survival skills of people who are still living in uncertain times, and who have learned to be suspicious of universalistic ideologies" (Scheppele, 1999, p. 522).

In fact, she elaborates this point with an example that in Soviet society, one was loyal and a figure within one's network, meaning that it was actually seen as corruption if one did not hire family members since this meant that a foreigner had paid to get that particular job (Scheppele, 1999, p. 530). Correspondingly, you would only need to bribe if you were an outsider since this was the substitution for networks (Scheppele, 1999, p. 531). Different existing perceptions and definitions of corruption lead to the difficulty in

measuring it. In addition, Granovetter (2004) rightly states that defining behaviour as "corrupt" inevitably entails a judgment about "what behaviour is legitimate and what is not" (p. 9). Hence, "there is an irreducible sociological component that has been given surprisingly little attention" (ibid). Attempts to measure corruption are usually determined by a Western perception and understanding of the concept itself. However, a Western-centric concept should not be maintained while applying it to different geographic regions such as Asia, Africa or Latin America. Thus, one has to pay attention to cultural relativity (Collier, 2002, p. 7). As a result, social constructivism approaches towards corruption take into consideration the social and cultural differences and posit the notion that corruption is a social construct.

3   Social Construction of Corruption

The basic idea of constructivist school of thought is the notion that reality is a socially constructive concept. Human beings interact in social relations that consist of thought and ideas. These relations shape people into what they are. Furthermore, the external world is not just out there but instead it is viewed as being constructed. Natural laws and givens differ in every context, thus they are not the same everywhere. As a result, every aspect of our world, our culture, our politics and society is made and constructed by humankind itself (Blaug, 2010).

People make society and society shapes the people. They are not just rational actors that act independent of their social environment. Instead, society and people are linked through rules and norms. These rules and norms are constructed in a particular environment and people follow them while internalising them. Rules tell us what we should do, thereby unifying people in a normative way. Pursuing these rules constitutes a feeling of common identity, which becomes known as common practice. People acting actively along these rules in a society are called 'agents'. Choices we make are socially constructed as well, meaning we exercise them according to the context within which we operate. Agents make their rules legal in order to live in a legal environment. In our case this means that some actions that some experts might consider corrupt are in fact socially constructed and therefore legal in this context (Onuf, 1998, p. 59- 69). Thus, it is essential to consider differing social norms while conducting research on people's behaviour because they can change people's perceptions. Some scholars explain that

"The meaning of any particular idea or tool depends in part on its context. General ideas like "corruption" or "transparency"—its presumed opposite—have different inflections and connotations as they are transferred and translated into local contexts" (De Sousa & Larmour, 2009, p. 272).

Conceptions of public office, governance and corruption are perceived differently across respective countries. This implies that people are determined by their moral norms and they are not necessarily corrupt per se. Thus, in some social contexts, people consider actions of politicians, businessmen and public officials as legitimate while others would judge them as being corrupt (Gebel, 2012, p. 123).

Importantly, Onuf (1998) asserts that humans are able to collect knowledge about the world, yet it will always be subjective since it is filtered through our own consciousness (p.59). As a result, the scientific domains of economic, history and political science cannot be objective since they are perceived by the scholars working within them. As Jackson (2006) explains:

"The social world is a world of human consciousness: of thoughts and beliefs, of ideas and concepts, of languages and discourses, of signs, signals and understandings among human beings, especially groups of human beings, such as states and nations. The social world is an intersubjective domain: it is meaningful to people who made it and live in it, and who understand it precisely because they made it and they are at home in it" (p. 165).

Onuf (1998) claims that outside observers can identify structures in a new society better than the people living within it since they observe with a neutral view from the outside (p. 62). People are often influenced by structures. In fact, we are often influenced by natural and social phenomena in an indirect way. Thus, we cannot describe and grasp what has happened, yet, we respond as agents while placing the event in an institutionalised context. It might be true that outside observers are more adequate in objectively judging structures of other societies. However, in our case, this implies that they judge activities with their own subjective lenses. This can lead to the situation of judging a certain act as 'corrupt' whilst it is actually seen by the people living within the society as normal and in line with their culture. Thus, it is essential to employ interpretative understanding while analysing social action (Jackson, 2006, p. 166). Another claim of the constructivist school of thought is that there can never be universal truth because there is no universal neutral ground to decide on truth. Truth is considered to be connected to differing points of view, each shaped and constructed by certain cultures (Jackson, 2006, p. 170). Following this line of argumentation, the same can be said about corruption.

Constructivists use qualitative research methodologies such as case studies, interviews, narratives, and discourse analyses to investigate the nature and effects of inter-subjective understandings (Pollack, 1998). Based on the ideas of constructivists, this chapter develops a new model on how to measure corruption.

4   Model of Corruption Research including Socio-Cultural Elements

There are many challenges and drawbacks in the discourse of corruption research. To tackle some of these difficulties, this study proposes a new model of how to conduct corruption research with the aims of i.) making the research process more transparent and ii.) corruption indicators more reliable and accountable. The model is composed of elements from a wide range of scholars in addition to original new ideas and conceptualisations of the author. Thus, it is semi-composite. It builds mainly upon a guide issued by the United Nations in 2008 and the research of Langseth (2006). This study takes these two integral ideas as a starting point for developing a new model on how to conduct proper and accurate corruption research. The main achievement and improvement of this model compared to existing ones, is that it reflects morals and socio-cultural aspects applying the social constructivist framework. Somehow, despite being an intrinsic element of the concept of corruption, these socio-cultural components have been left out until now. Therefore, the new approach that is proposed in this chapter is explicitly inspired by social constructivism theory.

4.1   Pillar 1 - Who gathers information?

The first pillar of the new model establishes who conducts the research collecting the data. Moreover, it specifies who should be the focus group for researchers. The model circumvents Western centrism and biased perceptions. This constitutes an advantage over the CPI, for instance, which gathers its data based on perceptions. As a result, the findings of data from indexes such as the CPI are likely to be biased. Not only does bias originate from cultural and social backgrounds of respondents, it also spans from people conducting the research and collecting the data (Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 86).

Experts and expatriates who are sent to countries to assess them, will obviously judge with their own perception and understanding of corruption. Since these expert groups

usually originate from Western countries, they are more likely to understand countries with a similar structure and system since they are familiar with them. Hence, they judge with preconceptions of what are 'usual' and legal activities and what should be considered corrupt. Importantly, it has been asserted that greater connection to a culture and country automatically leads to better ratings (Treisman, 2007, pp. 215). This could be an explanation for the rather poor performance of the global South and East in comparison to the North and West in current corruption indexes (Philp, 2006, p. 49). Brown and Cloke (2004) express it even more explicitly by noting the presence of a Western arrogance and hypocrisy towards countries with different cultural backgrounds. Thus, they criticise the application and consideration of Western norms and standards as universally valid. Research findings of other authors have also shown that some editors did not even speak the language of the country they were assessing and sometimes did not even possess any country experience (Galtung, 2005, p. 10).

Furthermore, looking at the components of the CPI, one observes that only two out of the seventeen different institutions that provide data are free from private sector bias (these being Freedom House and Columbia University's State Capacity Survey). The fifteen remaining institutions and indexes send business people directly to gather the data and or use a sampling frame consisting for them. Moreover, the sample is not only biased in the sense that it is only Western business people, yet also predominantly male and economically well off. Women, marginalised groups and economically poor people are left out of most of the samples, although if taken altogether, representing the majority of the population (Galtung, 2005, p. 5).

To adhere to more accurate corruption research this study proposes a mixed group assessment. The research group is constituted heterogeneously, meaning composed of various nationalities and professions. The researchers are a mix of local and foreign experts in the fields of corruption, expatriation, journalism, law and business. They are assisted by foreign and local NGOs. Moreover, everyone should have a cultural understanding of the respective country. Furthermore, women and men should ideally constitute the group in equal proportion. Finally, the people involved are to be trained to remain objective and neutral in attempt to avoid any bias from previous research or media revelations.

The focus group (the respondents) are be from various layers of society and include the most relevant occupations for corruption matters. Thus, it is not be restricted to only local lawyers, journalists and citizens, rather the respondent sample is broadened to include politicians, mayors, teachers and doctors. This allows for the potential grasping of every aspect of corruption in a country; including corruption in the educational and health care system. By also including marginalised groups, this could encourage bottom-

up pressure for reform. The main advantage of this is a more participatory type of framework for discussion, which is more likely to trigger useful results than indicators generated externally. The age of the group members is also diverse; representing a range from twenty to seventy years of age and there should also be gender neutrality.

Local NGOs and global NGOs help to gather data and aid the assessment of the findings. Consequently, there will be a direct exchange of different concepts and beliefs which leads to a more complete picture and the avoidance of misunderstandings. As a result, the establishment of a mixed research group and diversity of respondents should be a primal criterion for the initiation of corruption research.

4.2   Pillar 2 – Localisation of Research

The second pillar of this model is the localization of corruption research. The localization approach is based on elements from a guide issued by the World Bank in 2007. As mentioned above, the concept of 'corrupt activities' cannot be generally applied to each country or region. In some countries, certain behaviour is legitimate whilst in others it would be judged as illicit. Moreover, different perceptions of corruption can also be the result of differing moral standards. If a person judges an act as corrupt and another does not, one faces the difficulty of differing moral standards or the relativity of corruption.

> *"A respondent may also assign high levels by comparing corruption to other (potentially less pressing) problems facing the country, or by evaluating it according to a high ethical standard (e.g. which assumes any kind of gift-giving to a public official to be corrupt and not culturally acceptable)" (Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 86).*

In this case, a high-detected degree of corruption might rather be the result of high ethic and moral standards because the country does not encounter more severe problems. In other words, people assess corruption in comparison to other problems in their country, which influences the perception of it to a better or worse extent (Thompson & Shah, 2005, p. 15). Thus, high levels of perceived corruption do not automatically respond to high degree of misbehaviour.

Consequently, the model argues in favour of a localisation of research in order to be able to tackle corruption in a culturally related way. This is achieved by micro level studies in respective public and private sectors of a country. Micro level research generates better findings of causes and consequences of corruption (World Bank, 2007, p. 4). It provides useful evidence for policy makers on how to combat corruption. Furthermore,

the localization of corruption research has an advantage over broad international toolkits since sceptical governments are more likely to believe in research from their own academics than in foreign advocacy and criticism. Because the aim of corruption research is to formulate solutions, one has to consider ways to work with sensitive policy makers who feel accused, for instance, by Western findings, and would rather acknowledge shortcomings in their governance from local advocates. As established in the first pillar, assessments are drawn on the knowledge of local stakeholders, civil society and local NGOs in cooperation with the mixed research group. For grassroots groups this is a more useful policy tool to pressure and lobby their own governments into action. In addition, highly localised indicators at the national or even sub-national level are designed to yield actionable data (ibid, p. 39-45).

4.3   Pillar 3 - How to gather the information?

Once this mixed group is established for each country or region, one has to tackle the issue of how to gather the information. As its third pillar, the model combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Many assessment tools of corruption only base their studies on quantitative data. The author agrees that this kind of data facilitates a clear and structured presentation of the main findings. Nevertheless, a statistic does not provide for any solutions or explanations of the main challenges. Thus, the study introduces an extension of the methodology by advocating the use of qualitative methods. For the quantitative part, the model brings together various approaches on how to gather information. The qualitative extension is mainly based on Langseth's (2006) arguments and on the World Bank's guide. Thus, the notion of issuing country specific reports is the newly created element to corruption research methods.

Langseth (2006) explains that the gathering of information for corruption research should be done from myriad differing sources and methods. One may start with a desk review meaning that one reviews data from existing research by academics, interest groups, public officials, government sources, ombudsmen and media (p. 15). Next, surveys are a means to approach and gather information from every individual and groups. It has proven to be an effective method of gathering data about the scale and structure of participation in informal activities (Duncan, 2006, p. 144). Surveys can be verbal interviews or written questionnaires. While doing so, it is important to approach the group that is representative and to include different ages, gender, cultures, and nationalities while ensuring that the questions are understandable for every participant, thus tackling language and comprehension issues. This means that the questions should be clear

enough so that possible misunderstandings are avoided (Miller, 2006, p. 175). While doing so, researchers have to have a common definition on corruption in order to avoid misleading results due to different conceptions. Importantly, these surveys have to be culturally sensitive, considering differences in the perceiving of some actions.

This model argues in favour of equipping corruption research with qualitative assessments since they offer deeper insights than statistics, though at the cost of quick comparisons. Quantitative methods are advantageous because they deliver figures about levels and degrees of corruption. Yet, those numbers are based on subjective perceptions of corruption, which can lead to misleading results. Steven Sampson (2010) claims:

> *"Trust in numbers has replaced trust in judgements. The qualitative and contextual is replaced with ostensibly objective statistically indicators, scores and rankings. We would rather trust numbers and forget about the judgements which went into the process of classifying and assessing corruption in the first place" (p. 109).*

Many researchers have demanded that more qualitative data is used and have the desire for existing tools to incorporate more qualitative analysis. They explain that numerical data should be accompanied by qualitative assessments. "Corruption is such a complex phenomenon … a single metric will not be able to uniquely measure corruption," reported by an NGO officer from South Asia (World Bank, 2007, p. 40). Moreover, quantitative methods often only represent a snapshot of a country's situation while excluding minority voices, such as women, economically worse off and marginal groups (ibid, p. 45). Qualitative assessments, adapted to each context, are important since they give explanatory meanings to the quantitative figures. Hence, only when the two methods and data are combined do we get a comprehensive approach. This model views contextual information that is specific to a country's situation as very important in completing research.

In the model, focus groups for country assessments are included. Researchers sit in government meetings, hold in-depth discussions with interest groups and society. Case studies are another tool in qualitative research and can be used to gather detailed information in a specific field. They enable the researcher to investigate how corruption evolved in that case, why it happened, who was involved, what impact that occurrence had and which consequences have been drawn. In the same line are field observations where observers are sent to monitor specific events at place (Langseth, 2006, pp. 20). This is however very costly and time consuming. Moreover, many governments or companies may not allow such monitoring, meaning that field observers would have to work under cover or anonymously. Albeit being a difficult task, it is nevertheless an important and necessary step to take.

Moreover, this new model proposes that instead of only assessing activities, legal provisions of a country are to be reviewed and it is to be investigated whether legal provisions that enact anti-corruption measures exist and whether they are exercised in reality. In this line, the model also advocates the assessment of institutions and inter-institutional relationships. This includes government institutions, public agencies, interest groups, society networks and media. As a result, special attention should be paid to their ability to fight corruption (Langseth, 2006, p. 19).

In general, a balance is created between top-down and bottom-up approaches and sources of knowledge should be combined. The main result of the research is summarised in a report for every country. These reports are in the style of TI's National Integrity Systems (NIS). Unfortunately, TI only conducts them for some European countries. The reports proposed by this new model include a proper analysis of the main challenges at stake. They target specific phenomena while addressing bias and revealing data deficits in a transparent way. This means they will always provide the sources of information and reveal if there is no evidence for their claim and conclusion. The reports point out the main recommendations and function as a guide on how to tackle the problem. Thus, they will also empower citizens' ability to report abuse.

Once all data has been gathered and assessed, this new model increasingly involves the media in the publication of the findings (following the argumentation of the World Bank (2007)). This is because the media has an essential role in the publication and deciphering of results of corruption research. In this new model, the media is used to explain the approach, methodology and sources that a specific research agency has used. Therefore, researchers have to work closely together with media and are responsible for explaining their findings and how they are interpreted. This is all because the media is the organ to communicate with the public. Researchers will publish how countries have been estimated and measured and the media is responsible for communicating how governments should address shortcomings and generate anti-corruption legislation. The use of the media is also an effective way to detect misunderstandings. Once a country starts to identify corruption, it should install working groups to combat it. Due to increased investigations and more media coverage, corruption should become more apparent and identifiable. However, this could cause a problem for some countries since once they manage to expose corruption cases, the public could perceive corruption as becoming more rampant. As a result, the media has to be precise in explaining that this does not mean that corruption has increased; on the contrary that it is being addressed and combated. Lastly, through the media, outreach to rural areas should be made possible thus making these communities aware of the issue. As a result, cooperation with media is has the potential to be particularly important and helpful within corruption research.

4.4 Pillar 4 – Discarding inter-country comparisons

The fourth pillar on which this model is constructed is the abandonment of inter-country comparisons of corruption levels. As previously argued, corruption is not a comparable concept since its form and appearance differ in each country or region. Culture and social contexts are important in understanding how corruption occurs in a certain society and importantly, how it can be combated. While assessing a country, locals may have a different understanding of corruption than expatriates due to their cultural heritage and values. Meanwhile, those experts can also lack a proper understanding of the culture. Hence, as Lambsdorff (2006) had discovered, the results of measurements might be meaningless to the people living in the country since they have a different opinion and perception about the topic (p. 87).

Moreover, surveys address locals in one country but only a select few are used to assess several countries at once. As a result, respondents apply their own understanding of corruption leading to different definitions and moral standards applied. Treisman (2007) explains that

> "cross-national differences could reflect differences in the socially encouraged level of cynicism, the degree of public identification with the government, and the perceived injustice of social or economic relations" (p. 215).

With an abandonment of comparisons, it is hoped that the current practice that one country gets a better rank only because the morals of its citizens are low in comparison to others is now avoided.

Corruption varies not only contextual sense but also in the degree of corruption. Distinction should be made, for instance, between nepotism and essential money transfers or between political and administrative corruption (Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 85). Yet, the indicators measuring corruption do not differentiate between these different forms. Some measure actual bribes paid (International Crime Victim Survey, Global Competitiveness Report and World Bank Private Sector Survey), while others measure damage caused by corruption (Asian Intelligence Issue and World Bank Private Sector Survey). To illustrate this phenomenon, Thompson and Shah (2005) give an example:

> "Suppose that in city A there were 5 murders and 95 incidents of shoplifting, whereas in city B, there were 95 murders and 5 incidents of shoplifting. The size of the population is the same in both cities. Then, the total crime rate is the same in the two cities. But no one would venture to say that they are equally safe cities to live in" (p. 8).

Research observes that industrial countries experience high levels of corruption in terms of party funding, while developing countries encounter many difficulties with nepotism (ibid, p. 10). One can draw a line and call the first one high level corruption while the latter one can be considered as low-level corruption. It is hard to compare these types because they vary significantly and do not originate from the same causes. Therefore, each of them should be tackled with an accurate and specific solution and not a general, one size-fits-all recommendation. A flaw of corruption indicators is thus that they group both types of corruption under the same heading and transcribe it into numbers. As a result, high-level embezzlement is placed on the same scale as low-level corruption.

Lastly, corruption often involves monetary transactions. In fact, sometimes a monetary value is attached to corrupt transactions, making measurement of the corruption a relatively easy task. Nonetheless, this might be very misleading since one has to take into consideration that the purchasing power parity of one unit of money can differ substantially between countries. While a one dollar bribe represents a day wage in some countries and therefore can be considered as a significant level of corruption, this amount of money would only be regarded as a humorous sum elsewhere (Duncan, 2006, p. 135). This provides an argument once again against the use of country comparisons in corruption research.

4.5   Pillar 5 – Abandonment of Scaling and Ranking

Linked to the pillar above, the next step is to abandon scaling and rankings. In line with constructivists' arguments, corruption is not a universal concept and therefore cannot be applied to each country in the same way. Therefore, corruption research results should not be used to compare countries since they have different meanings and significance. Yet, many indicators such as the CPI assess countries every year and rank them on lists. The central problem with employing the use of rankings is that it sometimes gives the impression that countries are doing better even if it is not due to their improvement. Countries can also rank higher on the list because their competitor countries rank lower in comparison. If this happens, it does not mean explicitly that the level of perceived corruption has decreased, only that the level in the other country increased comparably. Approached from the opposite angle, this also means that for a country's score to improve, competing countries' scores would have to deteriorate. Thus, countries benefit from deterioration in other countries whereas an overall improvement of anti-corruption measures, despite being desirable, would be to the one country's disadvantage (Galtung, 2005, p. 14). As a result, ranking of countries is not only debatable due to the difficulty and complexity of corruption as such, but also because it has competitive and controversial effects.

The problem of ranking and scaling leads to another issue, namely misleading year-to-year comparisons. Some corruption measurements, the CPI for instance, compare levels of corruption within the same country year on year, thus resulting in a chronological comparison. Comparisons between years are based on a country's rank and not on its score. This is highly problematic because its rank can change due to several factors. It could be that new countries are measured, that the methodology was revised or that there was a change in the sample used. Hence, year-to-year differences do not necessarily result from different levels of perceived corruption. Thus, those comparisons are potentially misleading and counter productive for anti-corruption activities (Lambsdorff, 2006, p. 83). Instead, the aim of corruption research should first and foremost be the investigation of the causes and consequences of the problem and to propose solutions.

Moreover, research reveals that poverty is contributing factor to corruption (Galtung, 2005, p. 3). Ranking countries with significantly differing GDP levels leads to a comparison of countries that do not possess the same possibilities. It is debatable whether this leads to legitimate results. In conclusion, the fifth pillar of this model argues against any comparison, between countries or on year-to-year framework.

A new approach: A Social Constructivist Model for Corruption Assessment

Pillar	Components
Pillar 1: Who gathers information?	Research and focus group are heterogenic; comprising various occupations, gender and age.
Pillar 2: Localisation of research	Application of cultural sensitive approach, considering differences in form and degree of corruption.
Pillar 3: How to gather information?	Combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.
Pillar 4: Discarding inter-country comparisons	Stop relating research results; instead publish country specific reports.
Pillar 5: Abandonment of Scaling and Ranking	Cease rankings; rather formulate recommendations and solutions.

5   Conclusion

To the authors' knowledge, this article is the first application of a social constructivist framework to the construction of a new model of corruption measurement. The main goal is to initiate debate on the explicit properties that are desirable when measuring corruption. The chapter illustrates the value of using a social constructivist analytic frame in analysing corruption measurements. My analysis reveals the frame's ability to combine several tools of measurement including cultural behaviours into one interdisciplinary social model.

The model specifies the composition of the research and focus groups. It ensures heterogeneity of the individuals. Linked to this, it argues in favour of innovative projects that fit local contexts and proposes the abandonment of some general approaches. The current norm of how to gather information for corruption research is extended to include qualitative sources. The model embraces the need for multiple assessments and complementarity and argues in favour of a manifold approach. A single tool is not sufficient to effectively obtain a comprehensive understanding and identify possible points of intervention. The main aim of the research is the issuing of country specific reports presenting the main results and recommendations. As a result, there should be increased communication and cooperation with media to publish these reports. Moreover, it is crucial that the results and findings of the measurements are obtained and presented in a transparent manner. The last two pillars posit the abandonment of comparisons and rankings of corruption levels because this should not be the motivation of corruption research. The *Naming and shaming* crusade is not a technique that suitably tackles the problem.

Although these proposed amendments are of utmost importance regarding research on corruption, this new model does have limitations. The model is quite demanding and money and time consuming. It might be difficult to ensure objectivity in the assessment since it is still humans that will be conducting the research. Albeit being a challenging task, it is still an important one.

At stake, this research has contributed to a shift of conducting corruption research in a primarily descriptive way, and proposes that one does not approach it with a predominantly moral and value notion. Indicators are prone to follow the trends and policies of international financial institutions or bilateral donors who pursue their own foreign-political economic motives. Yet, current corruption measurement tools should be more creative and innovative. With the new model presented in this chapter, tools on corruption research have the potential to be more culturally sensitive. Combatting corruption in an effective way is a means to enhance transparency. Consequently, the new model helps to facilitate the implementation of transparency.

In all, this study is likely to be of keen interest for scholars and activists in the field of corruption and transparency alike. It is evident that the measurement of corruption must continue if we are to meet the challenges of this phenomenon. Refining measurement tools is an essential step, but more needs to be done than academic debate. For those suffering under the miserable effects of corruption around the globe, the onus is on us to find appropriate solutions, to cooperate globally and to do better.