

Co-Creation Session on “Gender and Corruption”, June 08, 2018, Quality of Government Institute (QoG), Sweden

Chair: Ina Kubbe; Presenters: Liljana Cvetanoska, Bart Scheffers; Invited Participants: Lena Wängnerud (QoG), Amy Alexander (QoG), Monika Bauhr (QoG), Marina Povitkina (QoG); general public (ca. 25 participants)

The 3rd Interdisciplinary Corruption Research (ICR) Forum on “Mechanisms of Corruption: Regional perspectives and potential solutions” took place at the Quality of Government Institute, University of Gothenburg, Sweden on June 07 - 09th, 2018. The yearly Forum aimed to bridge the gap between academia and the policy sphere and offered a platform for presenting research and exchanging new ideas on how corruption works in practice and how the mechanisms of corruption, e.g. norms, vary across regions and cultures.

The participants were junior scholars (PhD, Post-Docs, qualified Master students) from all disciplines (including psychology, economics, political science, sociology, law, anthropology, history) working on corruption as well as practitioners. Workshops, presentations, keynote speeches and a panel discussion debate between scholars and international investigative journalists focused on the corruption and welfare nexus through a regional and context-specific lens. These events combined theoretical and empirical efforts to identify context-specific patterns of corruption and respective anti-corruption policies. Understanding the mechanisms of corruption boils down to answering questions such as: "Why do citizens support and actively participate in corruption?", "What incentives do politicians and bureaucrats have to engage in or to fight corruption?", or "How do anti-corruption movements develop?" or "Are there any gender- and corruption links in specific regions?"

In particular, the Co-Creation Sessions (brainstorming workshops) aimed to facilitate collaborations among participants such as coming up with a collaborative research idea, teaming up for grant proposals, brainstorming on shared conference panels, laying the foundation for working groups and workshops.

During the Co-Creation on “Gender and Corruption” the “Open Society Foundations” (<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/>), in particular the “Open Society Initiative for

Europe” (OSIFE) presented its new project on the “impact of corruption and state capture on women” that links gender issues and corruption in Central and Eastern Europe and aims to promote more gender-conscious policy work in developing anti-corruption tools. The OSIFE’s portfolio “Countering State Capture” has explicitly committed itself to include a gender dimension for its 2018 work plan.

The project is in its initial stage and the program is working on a review of the existing research on the relationship between gender, corruption, and state capture. The review aims to get a better understanding of the relationship between corruption, state capture and gender; and particularly to obtain knowledge on understanding the impact that state capture has on women, as well as the mechanisms behind this relationship. The project particularly investigates how corruption limits women’s access to power, goods and services, and how it affects their human rights. It will also identify efforts made to control corruption, especially actions tailored to address the impact of corruption of women, or other marginalized groups, and their success.

The general objectives of the co-creation session on “Gender and Corruption” were, first of all, to discuss the project, the literature (including definitions and measurement) on gender, corruption and state capture and get feedback from experts such as Lena Wängnerud (QoG), Amy Alexander (QoG), Monika Bauhr (QoG) and the general audience as well as to translate the previous findings into a set of recommendations for policymakers, NGOs and donors. Second of all, it aimed to develop possible collaborative activities in the future between ICRN-members, QoG researchers and Open Society Initiative for Europe within the "gender and corruption and state capture" project. One of the examples for such collaborative activities is a joint workshop or conference that would feed expert knowledge on gender and corruption into the broader work by civil society actors and/or others.

The specific goals of the project that were discussed are as follows:

- Provide an up-to-date understanding of the relation between gender, state capture, and corruption and identify possible new interpretations from this research that could inform anti-corruption work and activities of civil societies or donors active in this field;
- Recommend additional and concrete actions that organizations (NGOs or donors) active in this field could undertake in their communities and countries;

- Develop and propose criteria to monitor and evaluate the design, relevance, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of proposals and activities that aim to improve gender equality and decrease negative effects of corruption on women and men;
- Mapping the landscape and the identification of relevant organizations active in this field (whether as implementers or donors) as potential partners for cooperation or as examples to follow or replicate;
- Reflection on how the intersection of gender with other social, cultural and economic positions affects the work of civil society actors on advancing (gender) equality;

During the Co-Creation session the preliminary findings of the literature review and scoping study were presented and discussed with an expert audience (including leading QoG scholars in the area) in order to sharpen the analysis and provide further guidance on ways forward. The discussion was centered on the terms state capture, corruption and gender in Central and Eastern Europe. Especially the concept of state capture, whilst not being defined and measured very strictly, was intensively discussed and specified. Furthermore, Liljana Cvetanoska presented the state of the art on the impact on gender with a focus on women in corruption in Romania, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia and Bulgaria. Based on interviews with representatives of civil society and policymakers in these countries, questions such as “What role do informal institutions play in gender?” “What is it in relation to captured states?” should be answered with the goal of making policy recommendations for change. The main discussion points focused on the benefits and problems of state capture issues, strategies to move forward in captured states, the role of women and marginalized groups in captured states, corruption as failures of public service provisions and non-monetary forms of corruption or access to power for women and marginalized groups.

The following recommendations were in particular raised by Lena Wängnerud, Amy Alexander and Monika Bauhr.

First of all, the definition of the term *state capture* has to be accurately defined - since the term is very blurry and different forms exist in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, the state capture’s different variations should be specified and identified to get a stronger focus of the study. For example, it would be of high interest to look specifically at two variations of state

capture, namely, elite state capture¹ as well as state capture as a form of redistribution based on corruption. Another important aspect here is also the allocation of powerful positions.

As we already know, “state capture in Central and Eastern Europe is a male business” and we have to consider this male dominance in specific areas and fields in the analysis of the complex corruption-gender link. In general, new forms of gendered discrimination have emerged in the post-communist states, in particularly the so called “patriarchal state capture”.

In thinking of how state capture effects gender equality, two conceptual lines that are unclear and need further thought and analysis are: what might we consider patriarchal state capture and male-dominant state capture? Under patriarchal state capture, one should consider the deeply rooted, normative link between patriarchy and the partial exercise of power and public goods consumption/delivery. Under male-dominant state capture, one should engage with the fact that whom captures are men and, as a result, capture is most likely to work to the detriment of women’s interests.

Therefore, the project should start with the identification and comparison of specific institutions in certain sectors, especially those that have special and great impact on women’s life such as the health sector. For example, the analysis should definitely differentiate between public administration and parliaments and use subnational data such as on grand or procurement corruption.

As the women’s interests mechanism suggests that women rely more heavily on an effective state, for instance in the areas of health, education and child care, for leading autonomous, publicly involved lives, the guiding questions and assumptions of the project should be:

- Which institutions, if captured, are most likely to affect the lives of women and their interests? Where are the opportunities for women to change and are there any sectoral differences? From the perspective of the women’s interests mechanism, we would expect gender equality among public authorities to be most influential in combatting state capture in female relevant areas such as education and health. Thus the “cleanliness” of institutional arenas could be gendered.

¹ see for example the publication of Grzymala-Buss, Anna (2008): Beyond Clientelism: Incumbent State Capture and State Formation. *Comparative Political Studies* 41 (4-5), pp. 638 - 673.

- And then, what do women actually do when they are in positions of power? Are there some facets of authority women are more likely to exercise to make a bigger impact if they are put in those positions, as legislators or executives, at the local, regional, federal level, by type of public sector, etc.? Do we find a “power marginalisation mechanism”?

- What are women’s abilities and capacities to battle corruption? What are they actually doing relative to corruption? At what level and type? Are women more likely to be held accountable when caught engaging in state capture? Where is the opportunity for women as “actors” to combat state capture? Are there any female whistleblowers?

As the gender role socialization thesis may predispose women to engage less in corruption and female/male differences, it is most likely to find evidence (or not) of gender equality as an anti-corruption tool where women have the actual opportunity to act. Thus, the project should try to find out if there are more female inclusive institutions of public authority and how often do women experience solicitation to engage in corruption. Power marginalization combined with gender stereotyping may create signals to corrupt players that women are a poor recruitment option. And, gender stereotyping may create stronger accountability mechanisms against women such that they are more likely to be accused and held accountable for state capture when they are involved compared to men.

- Additionally, the project should focus on context-specific factors: For instance, is there an awareness of corruption in CEE? Which female and /or anti-corruption movements exist in CEE? Do these women take part in? Are there collaborations among these movements? Is there any social-media data that provides information on female activities in anti-corruption movements?

One reason why in some of the preliminary research it was difficult to facilitate collaboration among anti-corruption organizations and feminist organizations could be a matter of framing. Perhaps feminist organizations are more focused on particular, concrete gender equality outcomes (more utilitarian and possibly associated by other groups with old communist ideals), while the anti-corruption groups are focused on principle frames linked to accountability and democracy.

- We also need more information on women’s social and educational background: For example, what are their qualifications? Did they study? How are they socialized? Are they married? Do they have children? What is their income? What are they actually doing in their positions? Are they aware of gender inequality in the society, institutions, their daily lives? Where do they face challenges?
- The project should also have a look at gender budgeting in CEE. It can be assumed that increased female participation might occur as a result of government programs, and does not necessarily result in a better situation for women in general; i.e. it does not mean that there has been a shift of perceptions and attitudes in societies. Yet, in the case of European states, the project should not “only” focus on the state’s budgets, it should consider the capture of EU money (e.g. funding) as well.
- Overall, it might be good to also include comparative cases, e.g. from MENA-states. Yet, regarding the limited time frame, future projects should focus on that.

Among all of these questions, there is a massive micro and subnational data deficit and evidence to get answers to these aspects. Therefore, the project offers great opportunities to finally receive empirical information to close these knowledge gaps in CEE.

In terms of a possible design for moving the project forward, a potential strategy might be to isolate and compare the gender-corruption/state capture link across cities or municipalities. Therefore, one cluster of cities should be high in female political representation (higher local council representation and/or a female mayor), high in female civil society (could look for registered NGOs, for instance, to pinpoint this) and high female involvement in a women’s interest issue area (e.g. health). Another cluster should perform poorly in those three areas. One could then conduct interviews with actors from all areas (elected politicians, civil society and health authorities) with a focus on corruption awareness, its impact on gender equality and strategies to combat this. The presumption would be that in cities/municipalities where there is

higher female empowerment, the responses are higher on awareness, more elaborate and more mutually reinforcing across areas.

Based on the workshop's discussion, the project now has a stronger focus and will be also complemented by documentary analyses and elite interviews in the case of interest. Journalists, researchers, the NGO sector and public sector employees that work on corruption and/ or gender related issues from three CEE countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania will be considered. In addition to the interviews and the reviewed literature, relevant documents, such as national strategies for fighting corruption will be examined, together with strategies for improving gender equality and various reports conducted by national and international organizations, including the NGO sector. Such examination will help in identifying criteria for analyzing the impact that state captures has on gender in CEE. Furthermore, the relevant corruption scholarship will be combined with arguments from the feminist institutionalist literature which was also discussed during the co-creation.

All the involved participants were grateful for the support and for the very fruitful, constructive discussion and are looking forward to future collaborations.