

## The elusiveness of corruption

Corruption is an elusive phenomenon that is difficult to define as a discrete, meaning a self-contained, concept. Corruption can be a manifestation of a specific type, such as a conflict of interests, or a condition, such as a social pathology or a disease like cancer, an impact, such as having an effect on poverty, or an obstruction to development, such as discrimination on the basis of fundamental human rights, and a co-producer, meaning a contributor that changes its environment. A culture of corruption generates further corruption.

This explanation about corruption, is from a holistic or systemic perspective. That is the reason why the word co-producer is used, to gain a better understanding of corruption.

No single reason or factor contributes to corruption, but a range of unlimited contributors. No single universally accepted definition or unit of measurement of corruption exists. However, corruption can at best be understood as a systemic concept.

### The context of corruption

Corruption is also context based. For example, corruption in France and Germany could be different from corruption in England.

In Germany, public servants are allo-



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wed to be elected as parliamentarians, taking leave from their public service duties and resuming their duties as public servants afterwards.

In France, public servants may be elected as parliamentarians, and even serve in most local government councils, while still employed as public servants.

In England, both examples would be perceived as conflicts of interest, and therefore a form of corruption.

Corruption is context based, or to use a metaphor, a chameleon of different environments. Corruption can also change its own environment, for example organised criminal groups intimidating and taking over legal businesses and increasing the risk for investment.

Corruption is a dynamic and elusive concept to define, describe and understand.

• Reference  
Gildenhuys, J.S.H. & Knipe, A. 2000. *The Organisation of Government: An Introduction.*

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