

Marcin Brol: EKONOMICZNE, INSTYTUCJONALNE I KULTUROWE UWARUNKOWANIA KORUPCJI [ECONOMIC, INSTITUTIONAL AND CULTURAL DETERMINANTS OF CORRUPTION]. WUE 2015, 176 pp.

1. The subject of the book, research area, context of the domain and discipline

The book under review deals with the problems of corruption that are important, recent, basically timeless and universal. The choice is appropriate. The author credibly justified the reason he embarked upon research in this area. He underlined that papers attempting a deeper insight into the issue are relatively sparse in spite of many dissertations dealing with it. Corruption is an undesirable, economically harmful phenomenon that affects all countries, and has been around as long as an exchange-based economy. In our geographic region (Central and Eastern Europe) corruption has got its determinants, aspects and mechanisms, and is considered as one of the impediments to economic development.

The book belongs to the research area that is a part of economic sciences, in the discipline of economics. At the same time, its key value is the interdisciplinary character. In addition to its strictly economic elements, the book also embraces some elements of sociology, law, political science, psychology etc. This allows us to conduct an analysis that is close to reality, the latter naturally being multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary.

The selection of issues under study is a definite asset of the book.

2. The title of the book

The title is understandable, simple and communicative. Basically, it reflects well the contents of the book and corresponds properly with the three research questions, the main hypothesis and the three intermediary hypotheses. It should be noted that the definitive version of the book's title is just a slightly modified title of Chapter 3 (Determinants of corruption), whose contents included the three groups of determinants (economic, institutional and cultural), while the latter did not emerge in the book's title. The current version is free from this flaw. Nevertheless, one could still suggest a thorough or more comprehensive consistency between the title and the contents of the book, e.g. "The fundamental nature of corruption and its economic, institutional and cultural determinants" would be more adequate. This remark reflects the fact that the author deals proficiently with the notion of corruption and its forms in the two beginning chapters of the book, in addition he presents an outline of the mechanism of corruption.

3. Goal, research questions, hypotheses

The author's exposition as regards the goal, key hypothesis, research questions and intermediary hypotheses is mostly characterized by a conventional approach, but it seems that even here precision and explicitness as high as possible are needed. First, concerning the goal. It is always at the very beginning that one sets up the

entire book by the mindful and clever defining of the primary goal. This was considered when discussing the elements of the book's introduction. Second, concerning the proposition and the hypothesis is that typically, one assumes that a hypothesis is a supposition concerning the existence of a relationship between the variables under study (including its type and strength). Scientific research aims at detecting relationships between variables (preferably cause-and-effect relationships), and hypotheses are suppositions (guesses) defining such relationships as well as their type and strength. An example of a hypothesis is given in the following sentence: an increase of A contributes to an increase of B (both quantities vary in the same direction). A better solution is when in addition to giving the direction of the relationship, its strength is quantified. An ideal research process reveals the above relationships both as regards numbers (functions) and a mechanism of relationships. In contrast to hypotheses, research questions are expressions such as: does A impact on B? Does B depend on A?

Usually, research questions are considered a less ambitious way to express the researcher's curiosity than hypotheses, as questions ask whether a relationship merely exists, without guessing its type and strength. There are also research dissertations where both hypotheses as well as research questions are included – the book under review belongs to this group – the elements of their contents should be especially carefully coordinated. Research questions can be considered a weaker version of the so-called intermediary hypotheses, however significant difficulties can emerge. This is because asking questions is rather a preliminary stage prior to when hypotheses are proposed that often require a lot of effort with regard to studying theoretical elaborations and findings of empirical studies of the other researchers. In other words, one has to emphasize that any hypothesis emerging in the book should be justified in some way, derived from existing elaborations or earlier premise that preliminarily indicate its validity. For the sake of space I do not include the author's "mix" at full length, as it consists of the goal, primary hypothesis, three research questions and three intermediary hypotheses (in this sequence). I am convinced that these aspects of the book are correctly encompassed.

4. The method

The author does not elaborate on the method, but orientation in this field is possible. The remarks are given in the introduction. The author persuasively justifies his choice of a deductive approach, saying that "a conceptual model is needed that will explain this phenomenon [corruption – MG]" (page 8).

The author is capable and fluent in employing microeconomic concepts and tools. Microeconomics is the source of the methodology and methods applied in the book.

The following statement raises some doubts: "Case study allows the identification and explanation of the factors that determine corruption better than a single model with heterogeneous data due to cultural and institutional variations" (page 8). Is this an avowal of case studies or a hint that this method is better than modelling?

5. The structure and contents of the book

The book comprises the introduction, five chapters, conclusion and bibliography. The number and sequence of chapters, as well as their sizes, are appropriate.

The structure of the book in my opinion is very persuasive, logical and predictable. Its values are simplicity and transparency. No chapter comes as a surprise, each one is necessary to accomplish the goal and relate to hypotheses. The sequence of the author's thinking can be represented by the chain of interlinked concepts: the concept and definitions of corruption, mechanism of corruption, determinants of corruptions, examples of corruption and prevention of corruption.

The structure of the book raises no objections.

6. The results obtained

In my assessment, the author reached the defined goal and also related to the proposed hypotheses. However, the contents of the book, especially its conclusion, should include a more extensive elaboration on those hypotheses. I would even recommend that the conclusion should indicate where individual hypotheses were discussed and where the goal of the book was reached.

The conclusion contains several final implications connected with the mechanism of corruption, but it should more explicitly refer to the announcements made in the introduction of the book.

The author's contribution consists of many elements:

- building a model of the corruption process (reconstruction of the corruption process);
- proficiently employing the tools of microeconomics to develop an original approach explaining the phenomenon of corruption (e.g. concepts from the theory of agency, prisoner's dilemma, etc.);
- well selected and convincing exemplifications of corruption in case studies.

7. Bibliography

In my opinion, the author knows the domestic and world literature very well. He was also proficient in selecting the papers and employing them in his research.

8. The formal aspects of the book

The formatting and editing of the book can be approved.

Conclusion

As a result of the above-mentioned remarks, I recommend the reviewed book to students of economics, international relations, sociology, political science, and the like. Business practice should also be interested in the book, especially because it is up to date and presents the recent views of the most important representatives of economic sciences as regards corruption. It will certainly provoke the reflections of business insiders who will apply them in their business activities, especially

transnational ones. Another group of the book's recipients should also be university circles – the values of the book, its clarity and straightforwardness are especially commendable in the case of academic teaching.

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