Corruption and Comparative Analyses across Europe: Developing New Research Traditions

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- How and what do we know about 'corruption', domestically and transnationally, across Europe?

EUROPEAN WHITE-COLLAR CRIME

EXPLORING THE NATURE OF EUROPEAN REALITIES

EDITED BY
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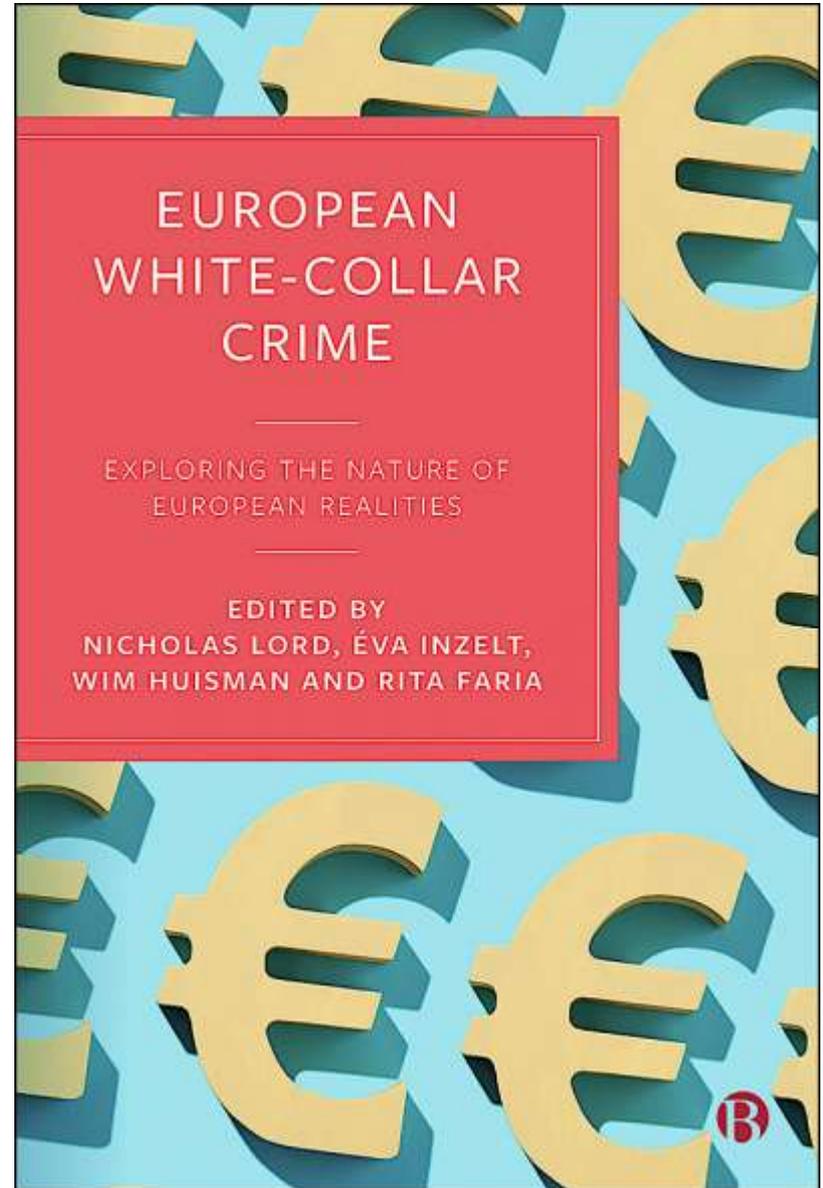
Overview

- What we know about corruption in Europe
  - conceptualising corruption in Europe
  - mapping the main research traditions

- What can we learn from these main traditions of corruption research in Europe?

- Promising Lines of Inquiry
  - A European dialogue on corruption?

What we know about corruption in Europe

Search criteria for the literature review	
Time Period	Last ten years (June 2009-May 2019)
Geographical Scope	Global (English speaking)
Primary Concept	'corruption' (in the abstract)
Secondary Concepts	'Europe', 'European' (document text)
Tertiary Concepts	'white collar crime', 'corporate crime', 'organisational crime', 'occupational crime' (document text)
Databases	ProQuest, Scopus and Web of Science

422 search hits > inclusion/exclusion criteria > 157 articles based on empirical research

Conceptualising corruption in Europe

- Two main approaches to focus of inquiry:

  – <u>Content definitions</u>: conceptualisation informed by normative policy/enforcement agendas and categorisations of specific offences that constitute corruption.

  – <u>Analytical definitions</u>: conceptualisation informed by key features, processes and behaviours considered 'corrupt'; often empirically derived and/or operationalised for (usually, but not exclusively, quantitative) empirical research.

- In brief, corruption is a contested concept, used to denote a diverse array of behaviours, human characteristics, states of being and conditions, across varied social contexts, and sometimes is employed without sufficient care or reflection.

Mapping the main research traditions

- Research into corruption in Europe can be understood in terms of four broad methodological traditions*:
  - quantitative surveys and experiments (and modelling evaluations);
  - qualitative studies;
  - national case studies; and
  - analysis of specific cases of corruption (but not limited to the nation state).

*Of course, there may be overlap between these traditions in practice.

Surveys and experiments

- Two main types of methodologies:
  - Experiments (rare) and **large-scale quantitative surveys**.
    - e.g., self-reports about past or potential offending behaviour or perceptions about corruption.

- Often analyse individual characteristics of offenders or motives for engaging in corruption.

- Vulnerable to 'false universalism' (Edwards and Hughes, 2005) and absence of contextualised and 'deep' data.

Qualitative studies

- Involves in-depth, 'thick' analyses of particular cases, people, institutions, or organisations and their everyday settings.
    - e.g., interviews/focus groups and content analysis of media or secondary sources, such as criminal case files as the main methodologies.

- Risk of creating 'falsely particular' accounts (see Edwards and Hughes, 2005: 349) as insights gained can be entirely idiographic with a tendency towards relativism, or no desire to inform or learn from debate and insights in other localities.

National case studies

- The nation-state as the primary unit of analysis.
  - Provides key information about national circumstances or developments that explain how and why corruption may vary over time.

- Can inhibit comparative, cross-cultural research as researchers remain embedded in their particular socio-legal environments

Analysis of specific cases of corruption

- Include local case studies and ethnographies (rare) of specific cases
  - rich detailed insights into specific contexts or practices in which corruption takes place and the antecedent factors that contributed to the unfolding of the corrupt behaviours.
  - e.g., combination of qualitative methods, including observational fieldwork, interviews, and documentary analysis of texts.

What can we learn from these main traditions of corruption research in Europe?

- Notable inadequacies in existing research traditions to understanding corruption:
  - the focus on experiments and large surveys loses specificity in preference to false universality (i.e., one model fits all).
  - the preponderance of national and local case studies (both qualitative and quantitative), do little to talk to a cross-cultural audience and debate and are lost in specificity.

Concluding thoughts:
Promising lines of inquiry

- Two core questions that interest us relate to:
  - i. how (or indeed whether) we can establish consensus amongst key stakeholders on the nature, extent and scope of corruption within and across Europe, and
  - ii. how the diverse European region can be used to generate cross-cultural theory and concepts on corruption

- Deliberative, iterative methods as a means of establishing cross-cultural / supra-national consensus over time?