

IPSA/RC20 Virtual Roundtable – World Science Day for Peace and Development

Corruption Research at a Crossroads: Conceptual, Data, and Measurement Challenges and Solutions

Date: Monday, 10 November 2025

Time: 15:00 – 17:00 (UTC+0)

Occasion: World Science Day for Peace and Development

Event Type: Political Science Day Roundtable

Format: Keynote impulses & open debate

Duration: 2h

Organizer: IPSA Research Committee on Political Finance and Political Corruption (RC 20)

Participation link (Zoom):

<https://rider.zoom.us/j/98046502880?pwd=c0tiUGxWZFE4Tkdpai8vMkNBUHNDdz09>

Meeting ID: 980 4650 2880

Passcode: 762438

Abstract

Corruption research has expanded significantly across disciplines and regions, yet methodological and data challenges remain persistent. Researchers face issues of conceptual ambiguity, missing or biased data, cross-country comparability, and difficulty in evaluating policy interventions.

This round table seeks to move beyond the presentation of individual research papers and instead foster a high-level, interdisciplinary discussion among scholars, data scientists, and practitioners. It aims to explore how corruption research can borrow and adapt methods from other disciplines—including statistics, environmental modelling, epidemiology, and computer science—to improve robustness, transparency, and impact.

Topics

- **Corruption research is inherently data-challenged:** Data are often scarce, biased, fragmented, and politically sensitive, while institutional and organisational dynamics remain difficult to capture.
- **Existing approaches show limits:** perception indices and econometric analyses may oversimplify complexity, while purely legal or case-based studies may struggle with comparability and scale.
- **Cross-disciplinary learning offers new opportunities:** insights from regulation, organisational studies, business ethics, and data science can help address issues of bias, missingness, and contextual interpretation
- **A quanti–quali dialogue is needed:** bridging big-data analytics with institutional, legal, and organisational insights can make corruption research more grounded, contextual, and policy-relevant.

Format

- **Open debate / thematic panel:** Short provocations and interactive discussion around methodological borrowing and emerging tools for improving corruption research.

Draft Agenda

1. Welcome & Framing Luís de Sousa (10 min)

- Opening remarks and contextualization.
- Overview of corruption research's current methodological crossroads.
- Objectives: identify key challenges, learn from other fields, and co-create a roadmap for methodological innovation.

2. Part I: Panel Presentations: Methodological Challenges & Solutions (circa 50 min) Framing themes for discussion (5–6 core challenges):

- Conceptual ambiguities (what counts as corruption, whose definition?).
- Data availability, accessibility, and reliability.
- Measurement problems (bias, validity, reliability).
- Comparability challenges (across countries, sectors, and datasets).
- Impact challenges (evaluating interventions in complex, confounded contexts).
- Ethical considerations (confidentiality, participant risk, algorithmic misuse).

Speaker 1: Paulina Alvarado Goldman is founder of *Capacity Building and Policy Experts*, Paulina Alvarado Goldman works to strengthen ethical and resilient institutions by bridging strategy, governance, and data-driven insights. She holds advanced degrees in Policy Studies (Johns Hopkins) and Data Science (UC Berkeley) and advises organizations navigating complexity and reform.

Speaker 2: Agnes Batory is Pro-Rector for Research and Faculty and Professor at CEU's Department of Public Policy. She holds a PhD from Cambridge University. Her research interests include corruption and corruption control, party politics, and policy implementation and compliance problems in EU governance. She serves on the editorial boards of *Governance*; *East European Politics*; and the *Journal of Common Market Studies* as well as the international advisory board of *TI EU*.

Speaker 3: Markus Pohlmann is professor of Organizational Sociology at the Max-Weber-Institute, University of Heidelberg. Markus Pohlmann's research focuses on white-collar crime, transnational elites, and the organizational foundations of corruption and compliance. He leads the Heidelberg Research Group for Organization Studies.

Speaker 4: Joseph Pozsgai-Alvarez is a Peruvian political scientist specialized in anti-corruption and public integrity, founder of the Japan Network of Anti-Corruption Researchers (JANAR), and Steering Committee member of the Standing Group on (Anti-)Corruption and Integrity of the European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR). His core research interest has pushed him to become familiar with fields of science beyond politics, such as social psychology, organizational studies, and machine learning, and he often participates in research projects that combine them.

Moderator: Giovanna Rodríguez Garcia is a Research Fellow at the Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga, where she teaches measurement and data analysis. Her work focuses on measuring corruption and institutional integrity in Latin America, including the development of corruption-risk indices for political parties and SDG 16.5 monitoring tools.

Part II: Discussions and Q&A:

Guiding Questions for Discussion

- What are the most pressing methodological and data challenges in your corruption research?
- How can we responsibly handle structured missingness in court, survey, or procurement datasets?
- Should corruption research adopt standardized frameworks (e.g., Open Contracting Data Standard), or remain context-sensitive and flexible?
- How can we reduce bias in perception surveys and self-reported data?
- Can methods such as capture–recapture or symmetry-aware clustering better estimate the “dark figure” of unobserved corruption?
- Are perception surveys, judicial records, and procurement datasets complementary or contradictory sources of insight?
- How can AI and machine learning be applied responsibly and transparently in corruption studies?
- What lessons can be borrowed from environmental science, epidemiology, and misinformation research to enhance consistency and credibility?
- How can we measure the impact of anti-corruption reforms in fragmented, confounded data environments?
- What could a “best practices” framework for corruption research look like, and how might it enhance the field’s policy relevance and methodological rigor?

Expected Outcomes

- Shared understanding of key methodological bottlenecks.
- Cross-disciplinary inspiration and potential methodological partnerships.
- Draft roadmap for advancing corruption research through improved data practices, measurement standards, and ethical frameworks.