

Opening the black box of political will: Local public authorities and anti-corruption efforts in Ukraine

1. Abstract

Pervasive corruption presents a challenge to scholars, practitioners and activists. The importance of political will for the success of anti-corruption reforms is widely recognized, but our understanding of why political will arises (or not) is lacking. This research aims to dissect the concept of political will with regards to anti-corruption policies among local public authorities (LPAs). This project addresses the question: Why, in a context where corruption is widespread, do some local public authorities engage in meaningful anti-corruption efforts while others do not? Ukraine presents an advantageous setting, with considerable subnational variation and widespread ongoing anti-corruption efforts. We will interview local public authorities in eight strategically selected regions, which all based on previously collected data show some evidence of political intent to combat corruption. The project will investigate how environmental conditions (institutions, relevant actors) and individual level attributes of LPAs (personal background, perceptions, capacity) influence whether this minimal anti-corruption intent builds into the collective momentum defined as political will.

2. Purpose and Aim

The purpose of the project is to explain why, in a context where corruption is widespread, do some local public authorities engage in meaningful anti-corruption efforts while others do not? In order to answer this question, we will examine five assumptions, which are also mirrored in our research questions:

- 1) We assume that political will develops in the interaction with relevant stakeholders, including economic elites, civil society and international donors. Accordingly, we will explore the importance of participatory efforts to enhance political will.
- 2) Disagreement on assessments of corruption and approaches to anti-corruption can interfere with communication among relevant actors. We will assess the overlaps in the conceptualisation of, and solutions to, corruption in the local setting.
- 3) Political will stems in part from political necessity, which in turn derives from the demands of relevant actors as well as from the institutional framework. We will examine demands by local reform – as well as anti-reform – actors.
- 4) Political will requires political capacity in terms of financial and human resources, which we will include in the analysis.
- 5) Personal attributes of the public officers play an important role. We will examine how their professional background, gender and position in the hierarchy influence anti-corruption efforts.

3. Problem statement

Corruption is “one of the most high-profile issues in the contemporary world” (Heywood 2015, 1) with detrimental implications for democracy, welfare and development (Rothstein and Tannenbergh 2015, 44 ff.). Although corruption is a relevant issue for every society worldwide, its scale and forms differ. Where prevalent, political leaders can become trapped in a collective action dilemma; the switch from a norm of corruption to a norm of honest behaviour presents a large scale coordination problem (Persson, Rothstein, and Teorell 2013). Decentralization of central authority is often hypothesized as a macro-institutional measure to counteract corruption (Fisman and Gatti 2002). However, shifting authority and financial resources to the local level may simply move the dilemma to a different level as well, and even increase the risk of corruption (Bardhan and Mookherjee 2006; Mansuri and Rao 2013).

“Political will” is often cited as a crucial factor for success of anti-corruption reform efforts, and is almost always treated as endogenous to the leader – something she has, or does not. This project proposes instead that political will – a collective commitment on the part of relevant government officials – can be a function of various and complex aspects of the context. This project will analyse the positions and policymaking involvement of national and local economic and political elites, higher order government institutions, civil society, international partners as well as voters, as well as attributes of individual authorities themselves.

4. Proposal

4.1. Background

The literature on policy making and institutional reform defines two broad sets of incentives for public officials: One strand specifies the crucial influence of environmental factors related to both the institutions and to society at large, i.e. political opportunity structures (Kitschelt 1986; North et al. 2009); here, not much credit is given to actors’ agency and room to manoeuvre. Another strand of literature examines both actor-level as well as environmental factors as components of political will (Brinkerhoff 2000; Malena 2009; Persson & Sjöstedt 2012; Spehar 2016; Woocher 2001). The latter approach has been insightful in *describing* the complex components of political will, but only few contributions attempted to *explain* how political will is produced (most notably, Abazović & Mujkić 2015). While, the literature points to a list of relevant factors, there is little empirical investigation into *necessary and sufficient conditions* to produce political will. Similarly, we know little about the *mechanisms* through which individual factors interact with environmental factors, leading to emergence (or not) of political will for (anti-corruption) reform.

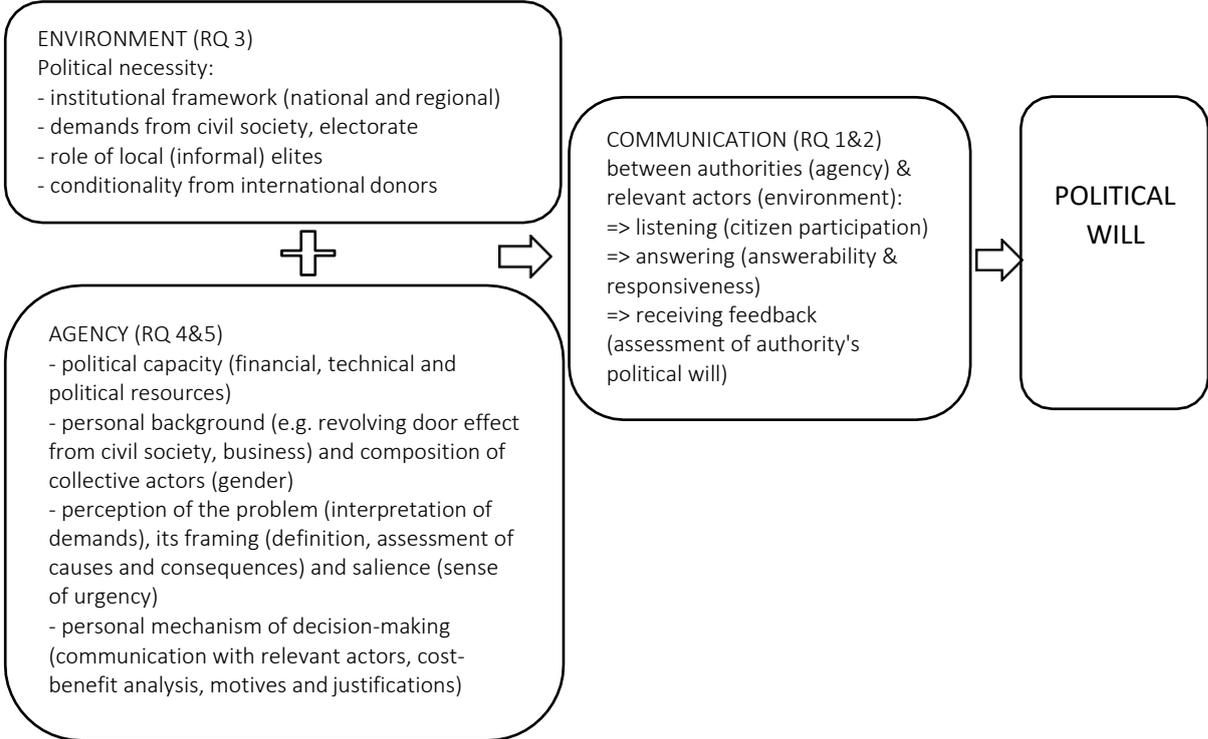
The proposed study draws on this literature, focusing on how public officials and local politicians navigate and respond to the political opportunity structure when they make choices about policy priorities and implementation. The analysis will focus on the agency of public officials and politicians while acknowledging their embeddedness into larger political setting (Grimes 2013). From a political psychological point of view, we are interested both in key factors in the local setting, but also how officials and politicians perceive and assess these factors.

Accordingly, we define political will as a momentum that comes not from an individual level intent but from a broader commitment to change among individuals in a range of government leadership positions. While most of the literature on political will focuses on the individual level, it ignores what Barbara Geddes calls “politicians’ dilemma” (Geddes 1996). In a political context where corruption is a norm, personal conviction of the use of anti-corruption is not sufficient. A reform-minded coalition is

necessary to overcome the problem of collective action (Bauhr and Grimes 2014). As many anti-corruption activists have noted, if you fight corruption it will fight you back, and without the commitment of a broad set of political leaders, individual politicians who seek to bring about change may severely compromise their own careers while doing little to disrupt the self-reinforcing corrupt networks.

Against this background, we conceptualise political will as a force for change at a collective level. We assume that political will consists of a shared commitment to bring about change, a common conceptualization of the problem, and agreement regarding effective policy solutions (Post, Raile, and Raile 2010, 660). Political will may be a function of numerous factors. First, decision-makers’ own beliefs and convictions matter, since they provide personal cognitive and normative basis for the interpretation of the environment (Raschke and Tils 2008, 15). Second, the perceptions and decisions are influenced by the environment, relevant actors and institutions, and available resources. Third, political decisions are the result of internal calculation (assessment of the external opportunities and internal possibilities) during the interaction with the environment. Finally, communication and interaction between authorities and their environment is crucial to build political will. Communication includes both directions: listening to the preferences and positions of the relevant stakeholders and responding to them in order to demonstrate intentions and actions. Figure 1 brings these factors together in our analytical framework, adapted from Spehar (2018).

Figure 1: Political will as an interaction between individual agency and environment



The project builds on previous policy-related research by one of the authors of this proposal “Civil society against corruption in Ukraine: political rules, advocacy strategies and impact”.¹The research

¹The research project “Civil society against corruption in Ukraine: political rules, advocacy strategies and impact” has been funded by the Dutch Research Council (NWO) and conducted in 2017-2019 in the partnership between Leiden University, Netherlands and Anti-Corruption Research and Education Centre at National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy, Ukraine. For the purposes of the study, we have conducted 242 semi-structured interviews with representatives of anti-corruption civic initiatives in 57 cities and towns in all regions of Ukraine that are under control of the Ukrainian government.

project examined the variation in the effectiveness of civil society's anti-corruption initiatives across Ukraine. Many civil society actors addressed the lack of political will as a crucial factor for the failure of anti-corruption reforms. This project seeks to open the black box of political will specifically among local public authorities. The research proposed here builds on and complements this previous work.

4.2. The hypothesis and research questions

The project thus aims to answer the question: Why, in a context where corruption is widespread, do some local public authorities engage in meaningful anti-corruption efforts while others do not?

It does this by answering five sub-questions, the first two on the participatory processes and communication among stakeholders, and the remaining questions on relevant local and international actors, and on leaders' personal backgrounds and resources.

RQ 1. What is the mechanism of decision-making and the role of communication/ interaction with relevant stakeholders with regards to anti-corruption?

Which groups and local actors are consulted, how is the communication structured, and consequently, how might participatory efforts enhance political will?

We assume that inclusive decision-making in the field of anti-corruption is necessary to overcome key challenges. Reform-minded politicians have to overcome the problem of collective action. If corruption is a norm in politics, it can be rational for politicians to be engaged in corruption, and politically risky to push for reform. Impactful anti-corruption reform requires deep institutional change of how politics work. For this purpose, building strong reform-minded coalition, consisting of relevant stakeholders, which include business associations and civil society, is crucial.

That said, little is known about how LPAs can effectively structure inclusion and communication to build the trust among actors, and particularly trust that others, both government officials and business elites in interaction with government, will honour commitments to abstain from engaging in corruption.

RQ 2. How do the LPAs conceptualise corruption and whether their understanding of the problem corresponds with attitudes in local society?

We propose that an major obstacle in anti-corruption efforts is often the mismatch of conceptions of corruption among three relevant groups: local politicians, local officials, and local civil society. Our own previous research uncovered differences in characterizations of the issue between these three stakeholder groups. We expect that in the cities where civil society and LPAs have fundamentally different conceptions of what constitutes corruption, overall political will be lower (Berner et al. 2011). The policy implication of this hypothesis – if it is confirmed – is that better communication about the characterization and assessment of corruption is needed between civil society, local politicians and officials even before the discussion on anti-corruption measures takes place.

RQ 3. What external factors create a sense of political necessity to counteract corruption among authorities?

Political necessity is an important contextual component of political will (Spehar 2016). As political necessity we understand demands and pressures from the key local-level stakeholders relevant for policymaking: 1) civil society, which includes analysis of the density and demands of local anti-corruption CSOs, 2) incentivized demands from international donors, and 3) national legal frameworks with credible enforcement mechanisms. At the same time, previous research shows that 4) the structure of local

(informal) business-political networks can be either supportive or hindering condition for anti-corruption reforms (Hale 2015; Stefes 2006).

RQ 4. How do the authorities' political capacity affect political will with regards to anti-corruption?

Political capacity refers to the resources available for AC initiatives. Here, we will address availability of financial and human resources for implementation, and technical capacity and know-how among the implementing officials. Although political capacity is a necessary incentive, it is not sufficient for reform without full commitment among implementers – as the findings on “pseudo-actions” have demonstrated (Spehar 2018). Thus, the availability of resources may be secondary to authorities abilities to detect and direct available resources to anti-corruption efforts.²

RQ 5. What aspects of authorities' personal background and/or their composition influence perception of (anti-)corruption and the sense of urgency for political action?

In our exploration of the agency, we follow the literature on public governance, which suggests that “for reforms to have a significant impact, they should focus on who is at the table, not only on what they do once they are there” (Baumgartner et al. 2014, p. 164). Therefore, we will explore the following aspects of LPAs' personal background:

- The “revolving door” effect: Similar to how officials become advisors to businesses or governments, civil society activists and entrepreneurs have joined Ukrainian government and local authorities after the Euromaidan (Prystayko and Kryshchak 2017). If they worked on anti-corruption issues as activists, they are likely to keep the sense of urgency and responsibility for corruption issue even when in public office.
- Gender aspect: More women in decision-making positions is robustly associated with less corruption in government (Swamy et al. 2001). The mechanisms behind this association are, however, unclear and disputed (Alexander, forthcoming). One explanation suggests that while women are not less corrupt than men, their experiences of corruption differ, with especially poor women being severely affected (Hossain, Nyamu Musembi, and Hughes 2010). Being more exposed to adverse effects of corruption may make women more likely to engage in anti-corruption efforts. By ensuring that female council members and career bureaucrats are represented in our study (with the exception of mayors as no *oblast* center has a female mayor), we will be able to both systematically assess gender differences in anti-corruption approach and outcome (if any), and specify the mechanisms that may explain these differences.
- Position in the politically relevant environment: we will explore, in which levels of LPA hierarchy the proponents or opponents of anti-corruption initiatives are located. We will differentiate between three stakeholder groups within the LPA: local politicians (members of local councils), local officials (managers), and mayors.

4.3. Significance and scientific novelty

The study will complement available theories of change with regards to anti-corruption at the local level. In particular, the project will identify conditions and modes through which LPAs can operate in order to develop political will. The uniqueness of this study is the combination of the two different research approaches: empirical-analytical and social constructivist. The empirical-analytical approach is crucial for the assessment of the external factors that create political necessity to counteract corruption. This includes analysis of actors involved (e.g. civil society, international donors, local elites), their

²The secondary importance of resources has already been suggested (but not adequately developed) by (Ankamah & Manzoor E Khoda, 2017). The secondary importance of external pressures (especially donor programs for civil society support and sanctions decoupled from internal supports for reform) has been addressed in development aid literature and literature on AC (Harasymiw 2019)

constellation, as well as the analysis of institutional factors (e.g. legal framework for transparency and enforcement mechanisms).

Although empirical analysis of anti-corruption is important, it has reached its explanatory limits. It is unable to explain for instance, why the topic of corruption is often a very popular or even central theme in electoral campaigns of political forces that might be in practice deeply involved in corruption? Therefore, in addition to the empirical-analytical perspective, the social constructivist perspective will be applied to the analysis of anti-corruption, in order to explore how authorities' perceptions and beliefs about corruption, their resources, and about other actors, and how this shapes their communicative strategies.

This project will enrich corruption research, which remains dominated by quantitative methods, by the application of ethnographic methods of field research and in-depth interviews. Qualitative analysis will allow us to explore how contextual factors interrelate to one another and unpack causal mechanisms necessary for change.

4.4. Relevance to Local Democracy

Local public authorities in a country with widespread corruption face conflicting pressures with regards to anti-corruption: On the one hand, there are (local) actors interested in maintaining status quo with regards to corruption. On the other hand, there are increasing societal demands for change and reform. With progressing decentralization these demands become even more intense as increased autonomy of LPAs provides them with more room and resources for action. This study takes as a point of departure the assumption that many local authorities are not solidly aligned with either of these camps but rather are interested in bringing about change if they can do so in ways that do not damage, and perhaps even advance, their political career.

The research will explore both successful and less successful examples and generate insights relevant for the local governments in two areas. First, the study will provide recommendations for the LPAs on their communications strategies in order to create a reform-minded coalition. The research will lead to lessons on how to structure participation and communication, and with what kind of groups, to develop a shared definition of the problem of corruption. Second, the study will identify opportunities and challenges in terms of political necessity and political capacity, and map successful strategies for navigating challenges.

This project will lead to strengthening local democracy. Where corruption decreases, democracy itself is strengthened. Corruption is an inherently exclusionary practice that grants influence and advantages to those who already are in positions of privilege. Reducing corruption creates new openings and levels the playing field. In addition, the analysis of the communication component between the authorities and relevant stakeholders will contribute knowledge on how to structure communication and participation so that democracy itself contributes to reducing corruption. In sum, insights on how participation can build political will against corruption may strengthen local democracy in the short to medium term, and progress in reducing corruption will also enhance local democracy more broadly and in the longer term.

4.5. Integrating gender dimensions

Gender dimensions are incorporated in both the analytical framework and in the research design. We include gender dimension as part of the analytical framework into the personal background (RQ5) of LPA actors. In terms of research design, we will examine the mechanisms at work in the gender-corruption link. While women do engage in corruption when the opportunities for corruption arise

(Alhassan-Alolo 2007), the correlation between the proportion of women in government and lower levels of corruption is highly robust. That said, the research is still not clear on why greater female representation is linked to lower levels of corruption. Do women promote anti-corruption reforms once in power? Or are they simply perceived as less corrupt, and does this in turn help to shift norms from corrupt to more honest behaviours? Corruption as a system interferes strongly with the government's capacity to engage in redistributive policy and welfare programs, and women may, once in office, work to combat corruption in order to develop programs that help women and other disadvantaged groups. While these arguments are often assumed in quantitative studies, they have rarely been investigated empirically (Alexander, forthcoming). With the introduction of gender quotas in local councils since 2015 at 30%, and a significant variation in their implementation between 8% and 33% (Aivazovska et al. 2016, p. 139), Ukraine represents an opportune case to examine these mechanisms at close range.

5. Case study description and justification

We propose a qualitative comparative case study of the political will for anti-corruption at the sub-national level in Ukraine in eight cities – the *oblast* (regional capitals).

Ukraine is a setting where corruption is prevalent despite large-scale anti-corruption reforms. After the Euromaidan in 2014, top-down anti-corruption institutions have been created, while bottom-up civil society organizations became active in anti-corruption efforts (Nitsova, Pop-Eleches, and Robertson 2018). In parallel, since 2015, the decentralization reform took place. Municipalities have gained more resources from the central state administration, control up to 60% of tax revenue spending, and have now financial and administrative responsibility over local services delivery (Dudley 2019). However, corruption schemes have also travelled from the center to the local government (INEKO 2015). Thus, despite ambitious reform agenda and some progress in its implementation (TI 2019; Burakovsky et al. 2018), 87% of citizens at the national level do not think that the government is doing enough to curb corruption (Pring 2017). At the local level, between 2015 and 2018, citizens' perceptions of the seriousness of corruption problem in their cities have improved considerably. In 2015, oblasts ranged from 32% to 89% of respondents stating local corruption a serious problem (IRI 2016). Interestingly, a 2018 survey detected considerable change in recent years (IRI 2018). This project exploits this local level variation to understand progress, and lack thereof, at the local level, insights that will be relevant to local democracy and anti-corruption more generally.

6. Methods

Methodological approach. The focus on the sub-national level is advantageous both analytically and empirically (Snyder 2001). First, within-nation approach reduces omitted variable bias that is a risk in a cross-country national-level analysis (Broms, Dahlström, and Fazekas 2019, 1266), because it offers a series of "natural controls" for hypothesized relationships (Charron and Rothstein 2018, 222). Second, it allows capturing subnational variation, relate it to contexts and actors and thus produce city-level recommendations that will be useful for further implementation of anti-corruption policy.

We will examine 8 cases where there is evidence of minimal levels of commitments to anti-corruption among LPAs based on the existence of an anti-corruption strategy or action plan, and our own previous data on civil society assessments. A minimal anti-corruption commitment is a necessary, but far from sufficient, condition for political will to emerge. The small-N design allows for uncovering mechanisms and potential multiple paths that lead to the same outcomes (Sieberer 2011).

Mapping cases. The cases will be selected after mapping the minimal willingness of LPAs to conduct anti-corruption reforms. The minimal willingness seems to vary extremely across the country as the data from civil society assessments within the previous project "Civil society against corruption in Ukraine:

political rules, advocacy strategies and impact” indicates (Huss et al. 2019). Desk research of the regulatory initiatives from the city council websites will help to identify availability of anti-corruption actions plans or strategies. This mapping will help us identify four types of cases: (1) cities, where LPAs take lead in anti-corruption and their efforts are deemed by civil society as successful; (2) cities, where LPAs take lead in anti-corruption, but their actions are perceived as not sufficient; and (3) cities, where neither actions nor perceptions of civil society point to anti-corruption reforms; (4) we will also record cities, which do not have a coherent strategy, yet their willingness to curb corruption is recorded by civil society as high, if any. For this study, we will select type (1) and type (2) cities – those, where there is an impulse from LPAs, since we are interested in explaining their political will. We will also investigate a type (4) case (if any) as an outlier, which may point to other, less traditional, ways of anti-corruption engagement.

Data collection. Two types of data will be collected about the selected cases. First, using mainly secondary sources, we will collect the data on actual political necessity (donor pressures, regulations of central authorities, legal framework, and local elites, including economic and political diversification in a city) and political capacity (external funding, information on donor grants). Second, we will seek LPA conceptions of anti-corruption (RQ2) and perceptions of LPA stakeholders related to political necessity, capacity, and their agency in anti-corruption policy. This data will be obtained from semi-structured in-depth interviews with local public authorities in all twenty-four *oblast* centres in Ukraine.

Interviews will be conducted among three main groups of LPS stakeholders: city council members (elected politicians), public officials in the executive of city councils (appointed bureaucrats), and the mayors (both elected politicians and heads of the executive in LPA). Interview partners, except mayors, will be purposefully selected according to their involvement in the anti-corruption policy at the city level: for example, city council members who produced local regulatory initiatives on anti-corruption and heads of corruption preventions departments, and procurement agencies will be interviewed. To identify these stakeholders, desk research of documents and announcements on the city council websites will be conducted prior to the field work, and relevant contact database will be created.

To ensure higher rates of consent for interviews, we will liaise with the Association of Ukrainian Cities, which unites all mayors, and a Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research, which has implemented a USAID-funded project “Citizens in action” to establish local regulatory framework for citizen participation. Both organisations have long-lasting working relations with LPAs in *oblast* centres.

Data analysis. The interview data will be analysed using content-analysis software MAX QDA12. A team of coders will code the interviews according to a deductively developed coding system (based on the analytical framework). Coder reliability checks will be performed to ensure accuracy of the coding exercise. Using process tracing approach (Bennet and Checkel 2015), we will attempt at reconstructing the mechanisms behind LPAs’ decisions that lead civil society to assess them as having political will to combat corruption.

Complementary online survey. To be able to match the perceptions of corruption and that of the quality of communication between LPAs and society-based anti-corruption organisations and activists, we will conduct an online survey of CSOs, which participated in the research project “Civil society against corruption in Ukraine: political rules, advocacy strategies and impact” (cooperation of Leiden University and ACREC). Affiliation with this project allows using the contact database with around 270 anti-corruption activists and CSOs on the regional level.

Ethical considerations. Using interviews as data source is often more accurate, when interviews are recorded. Corruption and anti-corruption are sensitive topics, so to make it safer for our counterparts in LPAs, they will be offered three opportunities: 1) recording with full name; 2) recording anonymously,

and 3) not recording. Either of the three options will be used only upon an *explicit* consent of the interviewee. If they choose recording anonymously, the recording will be identified only by the city and stakeholder group (for example, Kyiv, public official). If a mayor decides to give an interview anonymously, we will not mark the city.

We envisage several challenges to the project. First, it is an issue of access to and rapport with the interviewees at the LPAs. Will they be open to discuss sensitive issues? We will tackle this issue at several levels: a) we aim to liaise the Association of Cities of Ukraine and civil society organisations that work with LPAs; b) the interviews will be held at the location, preferred by an interviewee (or via telephone if they would wish so), and they will be given options for (not) being recorded - in this way we will create a comfortable environment for an interviewee; c) our interviewees will be invited to participate in the debriefing workshop, which will indicate our ambition contribute to the capacity building of the LPAs. Second, the issue of accuracy of collected data is often a challenge in interview-based research, because people tend to forget or mix up events and may have own agenda. To improve data accuracy, we will triangulate the data by a) interviewing LPA members in three groups that have varying incentives (council members, mayors, and career bureaucrats) and b) interviewing career bureaucrats of at least two groups - managers and street-level bureaucrats - because they may provide different opinions about actual implementation of anti-corruption efforts. Finally, every effort will be made to triangulate their answers to documentary sources and statistics.

7. Workplan

Work packages. The project will consist of three work packages: First, the literature review and desk-research will collect, analyze, and synthesize existing findings from academic research on the political will in anti-corruption efforts, with a focus on local public authorities. The review will generate a set of insights that will inform our empirical research and that will help us answer our main research question: Why, in a context where corruption is widespread, do some local public authorities engage in anti-corruption efforts while others do not? Marcia Grimes (PI), Oksana Huss and Oleksandra Keudel will take the lead in drafting the literature review, but with considerable input from the researchers at the Kyiv School of Economics in Ukraine (KSE).

The second work package is an empirical study, which contains data collection and data analysis. In order to collect interviews with LPAs, field research in the eight regions of Ukraine will be organized. This activity will be coordinated by Oksana Huss and Dmytro Iarovy, under the scientific supervision and advice of Marcia Grimes (PI). Post-Doc researchers will be also involved in the field work, collecting interviews, while two research assistants from Ukraine will accompany them. The content analysis of the interviews will be conducted through coding by the senior researchers and research assistants.

Third work package includes communication component, which consist of debriefing workshop for the LPAs, development of the teaching module as well as publication of the working papers and policy papers. This activity will be coordinated by Oleksandra Keudel in consultation with Marcia Grimes and involvement of the rest of the team.

Experience of the project team. The project is a collaborative effort of the Quality of Government Institute (QoG) of Gothenburg University, Sweden³ and Kyiv School of Economics (KSE), Ukraine⁴. The

³The Quality of Government Institute (QoG) is a renowned and highly productive research group of 30 researchers and the world leading research institute on corruption. The project will be fully integrated into the QoG environment and its activities, such as the annual policy outreach event, which will facilitate the dissemination of the results from this project to practitioners.

⁴KSE is the top field graduate school and policy research institution in Ukraine. It is a member of the Forum for Research on Eastern Europe and Emerging Economies (FREE), a research initiative that forms an extensive network of leading academic experts on economic issues in Central and Eastern Europe, where Stockholm School of Economics has a prominent role. On 4-5 July 2019, KSE and EBRD held a conference in Kyiv on corruption and anti-corruption policies, which was a forum for academics and policymakers to discuss recent developments in this area. KSE also has experience of work in the regions while teaching policy analysis for civil servants in local decentralized communities, which will be useful for network development.

project team brings all necessary expertise for conducting a high-quality research and for practically applying to advance local policies.

Marcia Grimes (PI) is a senior researcher at the Quality of Government Institute. Her research interests include the implications of transparency for civic activism and corruption, as well as the role of civil society in combatting corruption, both in terms of contributing to societal accountability, as well as advocacy efforts to bring about legal and institutional change.

Oksana Huss is post-doctoral research at Leiden University, working on the project “Civil society against corruption in Ukraine: political rules, advocacy strategies and impact”. She defended her PhD on political corruption in Ukraine at the University of Duisburg-Essen Germany. She provides trainings and has co-authored the Handbook transparency and citizen participation for the LPAs in Ukraine with Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

Oleksandra Keudel is a PhD researcher at the Free university of Berlin. Focusing on the municipal level in Ukraine, she investigates the interconnections between the decisions of local authorities to implement participatory innovation and the pressures from their environments – civil society and local business elites. She also provides trainings on policy analysis for local authorities and brings in experience in organizing knowledge-sharing workshops from her project work in Ukraine, Germany and Sweden.

Dmytro Iaroyvi is a program manager of the Public Policy and Governance Department of the KSE. He obtained his PhD on Political Psychology at Institute of Social and Political Psychology in Kyiv (thesis on the civic confrontation in social media). The area of his academic interests covers Public Administration Reform in Ukraine, social media and policy analysis. He will coordinate the project in Ukraine, and contribute with his experience in the education for public authorities in Ukraine.

The table below shows a timeline with activities.

Themes	Activities	Months					
		1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-18
Research activities	Literature review and desk research	█					
	Empirical research		█	█	█	█	
	Fieldwork (interviews in 8 regions)			█	█		
	Complementary online survey (CSOs)				█	█	
Project meetings	Pre-fieldwork workshop + briefing			█			
	Progress workshop (data evaluation)					█	
Knowledge sharing	Workshop 1 for public officials (ICLD)						█
	Workshop 2 for PA professors (ICLD) and development of modules						█
	Learning module for HEI						█
Publications	Literature review + desk research	█	█				
	Research report					█	
	Working paper 1 (political will of LPAs)						█
	Working paper 2 (strategic communication)						█
	Policy brief (policy recommendations)						█

8. Communication plan

One debriefing workshop with LPAs in Ukraine and one workshop for the development of the training modules are planned at the end of the project at the premises of KSE. The first workshop targets public officials and politicians who engage in corruption prevention at the local level from 8 regions under investigation. The second workshop aims at lecturers and professors of the universities in Ukraine, who educate public officials (most notably, the Academy of Public Administration at the President of Ukraine). There, in a participatory fashion we will jointly elaborate a training module based on the findings from this study and the expertise of the participants. In such way, we will cover two groups crucial for the quality of government: the officials and politicians themselves, and the knowledge agents who prepare next generations of public officials.

Two working papers and a policy brief is envisaged, with policy paper translated into Ukrainian. The first working paper will focus on the role of political capacity and political necessity for the political will of LPAs, while the second working paper will be dedicated to the topic of strategic communication for development of reform-minded networks (incl. participatory policy-making and conceptualisation of corruption). The working papers will be published on the QoG Institute website and will be submitted for the peer review publication after the project. The policy brief will summarize the research outcomes and provide recommendations for the LPAs in the field of anti-corruption. The policy brief will be published in ICLD's publication series. The policy brief and both working papers will be translated into Ukrainian in order to make it accessible for the LPAs.

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