

BACHELOR'S THESIS EXAMINER REPORT
PPE – Bachelor's in Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Thesis title:	Network Corruption, Social Capital, and the Social Hydra: Analysis of the State Government of Veracruz 2010-2016
Student's name:	Mauricio Samuel Isrrade Huicochea
Referee's name:	Jakub Tesař, Ph.D.

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Contribution and argument (quality of research and analysis, originality)	50	30
	Research question (definition of objectives, plausibility of hypotheses)	15	8
	Theoretical framework (methods relevant to the research question)	15	5
<i>Total</i>		80	43
Minor Criteria			
	Sources, literature	10	9
	Presentation (language, style, cohesion)	5	2
	Manuscript form (structure, logical coherence, layout, tables, figures)	5	1
<i>Total</i>		20	12
TOTAL		100	55

Plagiarism-check (URKUND) match score:

The plagiarism check has not revealed substantive overlap with existing sources. The sources are correctly cited.

Reviewer's commentary according to the above criteria:

The thesis focuses on a serious issue of many political systems, the issue of corruption, and the government "kidnapped" to enable personal gains. The author reviews a large-scale corruption case in Veracruz, Mexico, between 2010 and 2016. He focused on the mechanisms that allowed the then-governor and his corruption network to divert public money into private hands. The thesis discusses relevant aspects of the selected case and draws relevant conclusions regarding corruption's institutionalization. However, the thesis has many weaknesses in the design, conducted analysis, and execution, which are elaborated on below.

Research aim/question. The thesis clearly outlines the aim. The author wants to understand 1) how public institutions can become a machinery of corruption, 2) what causal mechanisms make corruption resilient, and 3) how the concept of Network Corruption advances the understanding of corruption in contrast to the "bad apple" thesis. Sections 2.1-2.3 further develop hypotheses for each of the questions. But, the key

concepts are not operationalized, and the hypotheses cannot be tested against the empirical data. The author partly answers the first question with the description of the institutionalization of corruption in Veracruz, but the account is too sketchy to explore the mechanism in necessary detail. I believe the other two aims are not achieved and not achievable with the proposed methodology. Especially when a single case is discussed without elaborating on the limits of possible generalization. It is also worth noting that the author substantially deviated from a design agreed in the proposal, and this change is not addressed in the submitted text.

Literature review. Chapter 1, instead of reviewing the existing debate on the topic (as the title suggests), presents the conceptual framework of the thesis. The thesis is unclear on how the authors build on and advance the existing scholarship. Notably missing is any discussion of sources using the "classical bad apple thesis," which the author wants to compare with the other approach. What does this tradition say, and what are the flaws of such an approach compared to the Network Corruption thesis? I wonder how Fukuyama's work on social capital is relevant to the thesis since his focus is on development, and never mentions corruption in the article. To what extent does Fukuyama's analysis apply if his insights are used in an entirely different context?

Theoretical framework. The framework builds on concepts of social networks, social capital, radius of trust (and distrust), normalization of corruption, and network corruption. These are highly relevant to the studied case, but different frames are never synthesized and do not make a coherent analytical framework.

Analytical method: The thesis utilizes process tracing, a valid method for a similar research task. However, the text is unclear regarding what is exactly reviewed, what parts of the phenomena are studied, and how reviewing the process helps to address the three research questions. The thesis is rather descriptive, as revealed in the following quote: "Understanding and exploring the descriptive aspect of corruption in more depth ... offers a more holistic way of understanding corruption" (p. 16). There are also substantial flaws regarding the second and third (potentially non-descriptive) questions. Resilience is never defined, so it cannot be studied. The third question would require a proper definition of the "bad apple" thesis and how it differs from the "corruption network" thesis to compare the analytical value of the two in the studied case. The deviation from the proposed design negatively impacted the method – insights provided by a single book (instead of legal documents on the case) probably do not provide enough material to trace the process.

Case selection. The thesis explores the general problem of corruption using the case of the state of Veracruz. However, this case selection is never justified – the author does not explain how the case is relevant for exploring the more general phenomenon – can we expect that corruption is the same everywhere?

Findings: Those limitations aside, the thesis offers insightful details about the case studied. However, the analytical section is shallow, primarily because it is not guided by a proper analytical method. The graphical representation of the network (figure 2) does not contribute much since the author is not specific on how it has been constructed. It seems that the conclusions "drawn" from the figure are the same as the insights used to create the figure in the first place. Also, it is unclear who is represented by individual letters. Some conclusions regarding the institutionalization of corruption are exciting but are not directly supported by the analysis. My suspicion is they closely reflect the insights provided in the original book. Regarding the novel approach of "network corruption", the author illustrated using such a concept but has not tested its analytical value compared to its predecessors (as suggested in the third RQ).

Minor criteria. As regards formal criteria, the thesis simply does not meet the requirements of the bachelor thesis. It is written in bad English, with many sentences incomplete/not fully comprehensive. Moreover, the punctuation and capital letters are missing in places. I understand the author is not a native English speaker, but with the language editing tools available at the university, the submitted text should be of higher quality. The thesis is uploaded in a shady format – with visible comments, wrong page formatting, and two lists of references. The title in the SIS is different from the submitted thesis, which should be corrected. The document's structure works well, but the "scandal" should not be discussed before introducing the case. The thesis meets academic standards concerning citing sources.

Overall, the author wrote a thesis on the topic he is passionate about, but it fails to deliver high-quality text. Even though some aspects of the thesis are below the expected minimum (analytical method, format), the proposed grade is in the E range, reflecting good work with the literature and relevant insights into the studied case.

Proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F): E

Suggested questions for the defense are:

What are some unique insights into the studied case, something that you found thanks to your analytical framework, that are not already featured in the book describing the case?

I recommend the thesis for final defence.

Referee Signature