

# Governance by Indicators: Opportunities for Democracy?

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## Abstract

Over recent decades, demands for improving the quality of democracy and for monitoring democratic processes have stimulated the sophistication of data collection, management and evaluation. Yet, and presumably exactly because this production and use of indicators is characterised by a strong air of technicality and technocracy, the act of measuring itself is rarely understood as a democratic innovation that brought forward innate means for political and democratic change. Taking up this underexplored link, this paper claims that indicators could aspire to improve democratic governance, if they embraced a non-hierarchical, integrative vision of governance (both in their production process and in their own conceptual matrices). To explore this argument, the paper elaborates on the relationship between numbers and civil society participation in framing and measuring governance.

The paper proceeds as follows: In the first part we argue that contemporary measures of governance, as relatively new post-regulatory policy tools, still encompass a series of methodological and conceptual constraints that potentially limit their capacity to impact on the quality of democracy. In response to these constraints, and departing from the dichotomy between output and input indicators, the paper analyses, under what conditions governance indicators might become instruments to stimulate further democratic change. Then we analyse the relationship between indicators and citizens, across the two generations of governance indicators. The second part of the paper explores the conceptual and instrumental function played by the Corruption Perception Index as a key example of governance indicators in encouraging knowledge creation; the emergence of epistemic communities; and the dissemination of the anti-corruption normative quests, model, and practices. The third part of the paper analyses the evolution of the relationship between indicator practices and civil society across the second generation of governance indicators in order to scrutinise the democratic innovation potential of indicator-based processes themselves.

## Introduction

This paper focuses on the relationship between indicators of governance and democratic innovations. Compelling demands for improving the quality of democracy and for monitoring democratic processes have increasingly stimulated the sophistication of data collection and the creation of new measures of state capacity and governance. Although the relationship between democracy and good governance is not univocal, over the past three decades, ‘governance’, and above all ‘good governance’, forms a central point of reference for responsible state performance and successful public affairs management (Benz & Papadopoulos, 2006; Bohman, 2004; Hoff, Horrocks, & Tops, 2003). In this context, governance refers to the performance and organisation of the state that roots within high state capacity levels, accountability (Papadopoulos, 2003), as well as well-structured and transparent administrative practices (Bohman, 2004). Moreover, the concept is used to enhance participatory processes in decision-making (Roecke, 2009; Seward, 2003; Swyngedouw, 2005) and to support a sense of ‘common well-being’ anchored within a model of development coined by advanced liberal democracies in developed countries. Most recently, the concept is even brought into play as a remedy against terrorism and conflict as it is asserted that “[m]issiles may kill terrorists. But good governance kills terrorism.” (Kimmoom, 2014).

The twofold conceptual focus on institutional quality (Smith, 2009) and participatory processes (Michels, 2011) on the one hand, and the dichotomy between *competition and participation* (Diamond, Morlino, Association, & others, 2005) on the other, is supported by the need of formulating measures that allow policy-makers to monitor political progress and/or setback. Linked to this necessity, the constant need of generating data represents one of the most compelling challenges in regulating the relationship between politics and the increasing technical and scientific complexity through which information is gathered and organised. Moreover, measuring governance is so embedded in policy-making that it should be almost impossible to separate the analysis of governance metrics from the overall study of their impact on the quality of governance and democracy.

Striving for a clearer conceptualisation in this regard, recently, important attempts have been made to contextualise numbers into a broader political or normative matrix (K. Davis, Fisher, Kingsbury, & Merry, 2012; Kelley & Simmons, 2014; Merry, Davis, & Kingsburg, 2015; Rottenburg, Merry, Mugler, & Park, 2015). Yet, also here scholars have not sufficiently explored the act of measuring as a dynamic means of political change itself and therefore, so far, the reality of the democratic innovation of measuring governance remains difficult and still contested: When dealing with measures of governance and democracy, practitioners, policy-makers and researchers alike are confronted with assessing most different aspects and parts of over-conceptualised and incoherently defined phenomena. Adding to these problems, the production of indicators has been gradually characterised by a strong air of technicality and technocracy and an extensive body of literature has hence been absorbed with the analysis of methodological incongruences (Bovaird & Löffler, 2003; Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2011; Neumayer, 2000; Singh, Murty, Gupta, & Dikshit, 2009). So, the question to what extent indicators indeed constitute a potential means of democratic innovation remains high on the research agenda.

This paper takes up this question and claims that measuring governance is not merely a passive form of representing and assessing reality. It holds that it is also a means of political innovation that found its way into the post-regulatory policy armoury of contemporary governance. As such it also represents a *potential* instrument of democratic innovation itself: Indicators, as main quantifying, qualifying and measuring devices, help to evaluate many

aspects of reality; be they political, legal, societal, or cultural. Beyond their diagnostic functions, indicators impact on actors' behaviour, potentially bypassing traditional, public authority-based forms of governance (Kelley & Simmons, 2014). Therefore, they not only measure and describe reality. They also frame ideas within policy interaction and decision-making and set the institutional context for monitoring implementation and enforcement and steer as well as direct political, administrative, and institutional behaviour in the areas in which they are applied. In this way, they clearly also have the potential to promote a participatory vision of governance.

To approach governance indicators as potential means of democratic innovation, the paper elaborates on the relationship between numbers and citizens' participation within the context of measuring corruption. It develops its line of argumentation as follows: in the first part we argue that contemporary measures of governance, as relatively new post-regulatory policy tools, encompass a series of methodological and conceptual constraints that limit their capacity to impact on the quality of democracy. In response to these constraints, and departing from the dichotomy between output and input indicators, the paper analyses the conditions under which governance indicators might become instruments to stimulate further democratic change. The paper claims that indicators could aspire to improve democratic governance, if they embraced a non-hierarchical, integrative vision of governance (both in their production process and in their own conceptual matrices). To support this assumption, we analyse the relationship between indicators and citizens participation in framing and measuring governance, across the two generations of governance indicators. The second part of the paper explores the conceptual and instrumental function played by the Corruption Perception Index as a key example of metric in encouraging knowledge creation; the emergence of epistemic communities; and the and dissemination of the anti-corruption normative quests, model and practices. In the view of the instrumental deficit highlighted, the third part of the paper analyses the evolution of the relationship between indicators of governance and civil society across the second generation of governance indicators.

### **A Brief 'Genealogy' of Measuring Governance**

Metrics of governance and state capacity have become increasingly sophisticated over the past decades. During the 1990s, the measurement of governance acquired a sort of rationalising function, aiming to free the concept from both theoretical and conceptual uncertainties. As a result of the exponential increase in proxies (corruption, rule of law), attributes ('good' governance) and correlated variables (democracy, development) within this rationalisation process, the term governance has assembled a strong connotative capacity. Table 1 below presents some of the most important metrics of governance to exemplify this trend.

**Table 1: Most Important Governance Metrics**

| Name   | Producer                        | Input/ Output  | Mono/ Multi-dimensional | Focus   | AIM   | Coverage | No. of variables |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|---|---|----------|------------------|
| <b>Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)</b>          | Bertelsmann Foundation          | Input/ process | Mono-                   | Quality of institutions                                   | 'The BTI is directed at the normative goal of a market-based democracy... The BTI emphasizes the same values that underlie the European Union's integration process: a representative democracy under the rule of law combined with a socially responsible and sustainable market economy (Stiftung, 2005, p. 4)'.  | 129      | 2                |
| <b>Corruption Perception Index</b>                     | Transparency International      | Output         | Mono-                   | Administrative capacity                                   | 'Raising public awareness of corruption' (Lambsdorff, 2007).  | 176      | 13               |
| <b>Freedom in the World</b>                            | Freedom House                   | Input          | Mono-                   | Quality of institutions                                   | 'Analyse the challenges to freedom; advocate for greater political and civil liberties; and support frontline activists to defend human rights and promote democratic change' (Freedom House, 2014).  | 2        | 195              |
| <b>Global Integrity Index</b>                          | Worldwide Governance Indicators | Output         | Multi-                  | Quality of institutions                                   | 'To assess the existence and effectiveness of mechanisms that prevent abuses of power and promote public integrity, as well as the access that citizens have to their government' (Global Integrity, 2014).   | 43       | 300              |
| <b>Legatum Prosperity Index</b>                        | Legatum Institute               | Output         | Mono-                   | Global wealth and wellbeing                               | 'Assessment of global wealth and wellbeing' that attempt 'to understand how we move 'beyond GDP' ("The 2013 Legatum Prosperity Index," 2014).   | 142      | 89               |
| <b>Sustainable Governance Indicators</b>               | Bertelsmann Foundation          | Output         | Multi-                  | Sustainability  | 'SGI thus targets the spectrum of those individuals who formulate, shape and implement policies, from political decision-makers in centres of government and the democratic institutions of the OECD and EU states, to representatives of civil society and international organizations, to scholars and interested citizen'(Schraad-Tischler, & Seelkopf, 2014, p. 2). | 41       | 67               |
| <b>The Country Policy and Institutional Assessment</b> | World Bank                      | Output         | Multi-                  | State fragility   | 'The quality of a country's present policy and institutional framework. 'Quality' refers to how conducive that framework is to fostering poverty reduction, sustainable growth and the effective use of development assistance'(The World Bank Group, 2011, p. 1).  | 78       | 16               |
| <b>The Rule of Law</b>                                 | World Justice Project           | Output         | Mono-                   | Administrative capacity (effective exercise of authority) | 'The WJP Rule of Law Index is intended for a broad audience of policy-makers, civil society, practitioners and academics, and aims at identifying strengths and weaknesses in each country under review and at encouraging policy choices that advance the rule of law'(World Justice Project, 2014, p. 188).   | 99       | 43               |
| <b>Worldwide Governance Indicators</b>                 | World Bank                      | Output         | Multi-                  | Quality of national governance                            | 'Assessing a measure of governance originally devoted to create cross-country indicators of governance and to establish more effective instruments of government assistance' (The World Bank, 2007).  | 215      | 340              |

Source: Malito, 2015.

So-called mono-dimensional metrics of governance include three typologies of measures focusing on: The administrative capacity (i.e. the World Justice Project's Rule of Law), the quality of political institutions (i.e. the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index), and the relationship between state and society (i.e. Freedom House's Freedom in the World). Compared to these, so-called multi-dimensional indices integrate different representations of the same phenomena in the same measure. Among the most widely used multi-dimensional composite governance measures are: the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), the Nations in Transit (NIT) Index, the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA), the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG), the Legatum Prosperity Index, and the Sustainability Governance Indicators (SGI).

These measures encompass a series of methodological and conceptual constraints that limit their capacity to influence the quality of democracy and democratic innovation. Before analysing the transformative power of governance indicators as means of democratic innovation, the overall validity of such measures should hence be scrutinised by focusing on what governance indicators actually measure. In this context, the current academic literature on indicators challenges the overall quality of measurement activities (Friederick Galtung, 2006; Giebler, 2012); the selection of variables and indicators; the capacity of the selected indicators to capture the core concepts; and, in some cases, even the reliability of the aggregation methods employed (Knack, Kugler, & Manning, 2003). Key difficulties in measuring governance arise from a number of methodological flaws and many of these methodological issues root in the conceptual challenge of operationalising these concepts within a valid, representative, and reliable way. Therefore, based on these reservations, it seems necessary to analyse, whether current measures of governance indeed really measure governance.

The first generation of governance measures (WGI, ICRG, CPIA, CPI) faced the conceptual problem of measuring intrinsically 'immeasurable' phenomena (Bell & Morse, 2008). As a consequence, indicator providers created a set of methodological shortcuts to get to the 'measurable' core of governance, measuring rather 'what is measurable' (Fukuyama, 2013, p. 350) than the 'underlying quality' (Fukuyama, 2013, p. 350) of governance itself. Yet, this way of proceeding was accompanied by two fundamental flaws: First, the use of proxies itself questioned the measures' capacity to fully capture the different dimensions of governance. Many existing measures tried to synthesise the multi-dimensionality of the concept into one single 'best metric'. Yet, by doing so, they fell short of paying tribute to the concept's inherent heterogeneity and the theoretical shaky grounds on which the concept is based. Given this lack of definitional clarity, the concept seems indeed to have become a grab bag, containing nearly everything and nothing.

Second, also the frequent use of subjective (i.e. perception) data raised criticism (Sequeira, 2012). Governance emerged as an intangible concept. Considering the difficulty of attributing a concrete and countable denotation to this concept, indicators based on subjective data (such as perception-based surveys) were extensively used to better frame the governance discourse, and to solve existing cognitive-conceptual deficits, such as in the case of corruption. Many governance indicators and indices of the first generation were hence based on the perceptions of local practitioners, experts or businessmen. Given the influential impact of these experts-

based assessments, the use of subjective indicators also tended to ‘contaminate’ the perception of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Sequeira, 2012).

Resulting from these flaws and the production environment from which they stemmed, the entire first generation of governance measures has been affected by a huge ‘endogeneity’ problem: Measures have often been criticised to be biased towards subjective, particularistic, elite or Western ideas about governance (Koelble & Lipuma, 2008), presumably limiting their impact on democratic innovation in diverse cultural and /or systemic settings. Moreover, survey respondents were likely to confuse outcomes of governance with institutional quality and merge both within their (subjective) assessments of governance. Scholars therefore seriously doubted the capacity of perception-based indicators to correctly represent the phenomena under observation (Friederick Galtung, 1998) without being themselves biased by the judgment of business elites or experts (Andvig, Amundsen, Søreide, & Sissener, 2000). Additionally, perception-based indicators have been criticised for their failure to generate replicable data that cross-country comparisons indispensably requires.

In response to these constraints, scholars, practitioners and policy-makers embarked on re-considering key methodological and theoretical aspects. They revisited important normative and constructivist discourses that were partially neglected in the first place. As a result, different, partially even antipodal solutions were advanced to bypass or balance the acknowledged flaws. Within this review process, the World Bank was one of the first international organisations to deliver such a second generation governance indicator capable of creating more nuanced and contextualised solutions to measure governance. According to Knack (2003), this second generation was also foreseen to fill the gap between measures and policy-making, and to make indicators more politically acceptable and replicable, increasing also their diagnostic purposes (The Hertie School of Governance, 2014). The methodological and ontological choices of the second generation hence emphasised the need to use hard data; the preference for dashboard approaches (OECD, 2009); and the combination of multiple data sources and the development of multi-dimensional indices.

In this context, also new approaches emerged that integrated more specific and disaggregated indicators of corruption (as one of the key proxies for the quality of ‘good’ governance): this so-called second generation of ‘good’ governance indicators<sup>1</sup>, includes also new measures of corruption that—departing from a different conceptualisation of corruption as a ‘state of default equilibrium’—are able to bring forward better diagnostic instruments. Another improvement was the complementation of broader measures by specific in-depth country studies that capture corruption within a particular territorial context in order to come up with specific, ‘evidence-based’ intervention requests (Heidenheimer, Johnston, & LeVine, 2009). Being composed of single case studies and country analyses, this new set of studies might at the same time however be considered to not form a fully-fledged supplement to existing corruption indicators or indices. It yet must be considered to represent an important methodological

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<sup>1</sup> This new generation of quantitative studies includes: The Corruption Notebook issued by Global Integrity since 2007; the Global Corruption Report (GCR) launched by Transparency International in 2001; national and transnational reports inaugurated by national and transnational institutions, such as the EU Anti-Corruption Report by the European Commission.

reorientation of the use (and the potential abuse) of governance indicators (Arndt & Oman, 2006).

### **What Impairs Governance Indicators' Potential To Be Means of Democratic Innovation?**

Governance indicators might be instrument of democratic innovations themselves if they embraced a non-hierarchical, multi-actor, integrative vision of governance. Apart from the general flaws accompanying the genealogy of governance indicators described within the previous part, contemporary measures encompass methodological and conceptual constraints that potentially limit this capacity to impact on the quality of democracy. To explain this argument we first analyse these constraints.

Following the conceptual issues brought forward within the governance debate, the difficulty of collecting adequate data has generated a sort of dualism within the methodological debate, based on which scholars and practitioners have formulated opposite methodological solutions to a set of conceptual ambiguities. Measures have operationalised governance as diversely as processes (governance as a tool); structures (governance as a form); inputs (governance as both structure and process, bureaucratic and administrative capacity); and as outputs/outcomes (governance as policies, consequences and results). Among these different operationalisations, this paper focuses on the distinction between input- and output-/outcome-related indicators to analyse whether governance indicators can provide for a functional means for democratic innovation.

Considering that metrics of governance are often used synonymously to measures of different attributes/capacities of the state; qualities of democracy; and levels of development, it remains an ongoing debate among scholars whether governance indicators should measure institutional frameworks (i.e. the input side of governance) or the performance of governance (hence the output/outcome side). While input indicators refer to both structure and process, i.e. how governance is implemented, output/outcome indicators take into consideration the consequences of governance in a broad range of sectors. Among the existing measures of governance, most refer to inputs and to the 'capacity' of governments and 'quality' of democracy, grasping the functioning or bureaucratic organisation of the state (i.e. in the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index, or Freedom House's Freedom in the World). However, in the last decades criticism has been raised about the potential of measuring this input side (Rotberg, 2014), i.e. the quality of governance or its systemic functioning. In the course of this debate, critics emphasised the need to operationalise governance in terms of the tangible results of government performances. Many practitioners tried to define governance from the structural or process-oriented perspective, using 'performance' instead of 'quality' indicators to operationalise their understanding of governance<sup>2</sup>.

Scholars hence suggested moving from a quality-based approach to a results-based method (assessing what has been delivered in terms of security, Rule of Law, democratic political

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<sup>2</sup> This is the case of the World Bank that conceptually emphasises the administrative and structural infrastructure of governance, but in practice, use performance indicators, to operationalise the *Worldwide Governance Indicators*.

process, etc.). Here, however, the academic debate has advanced different interpretations of what ‘outputs’ or ‘outcomes’ are: For many, government performance may be equated with the political goods delivered. According to Fukuyama, “governance is about the performance of agents in carrying out the wishes of principals [...] the execution of what has traditionally fallen within the domain of public administration, as opposed to politics” (Fukuyama, 2013, p. 4). Rotberg brought forward the idea of equating citizens’ demands with the results of government action, that is to government performance in providing five political goods that people demand (safety and security; rule of law and transparency; participation and respect for human rights; sustainable economic opportunity; and human development) (Rotberg, 2014; Rotberg & West, 2004). This output-/outcome-oriented perspective claims that ‘what citizens want’ is what governance should be, hence measuring the results of government in providing goods should be sufficient to nurture the voice of people (Rotberg, 2014) and the quality of governance.

This position, however, fuels twofold doubts about the meaningfulness of unduly narrowing the focus of governance to either inputs or outputs/outcomes. While it raises doubts about the representativeness of state functions (such as providing health or education services) for governance as a whole, it also poses the question of whether outputs/outcomes should be considered as one of the dimensions of governance or rather as a representation of it.

In view of the quality of governance, the division between input and output/outcome indicators holds important implications. First, in terms of policy steering, over the past two decades, the measurement of governance has become highly significant for aid allocation to developing countries (Zanger, 2000). Governance indicators of the first generation yet rarely captured processes of democratic governance and their results themselves. Many concentrated on operationalising institutional and structural inputs, but very few on political outcomes and democratic processes. Therefore, scholars criticised the use of input indicators in this context as a way to universalise one (institutional-structural) model of governance through the bureaucratic setting of resources invested (*ibidem*). Second, both input and output/outcome indicators have been subject to particularly post-colonial criticism, according to which conventional paradigms of quality of governance, operationalised in input or output variables, are largely inadequate for the study of postcolonial democracies (Berg-Schlosser, 2004; Koelble & Lipuma, 2008). In this context, Koelble and Lipuma stated that “[c]onventional measuring paradigms are insufficient to adequately measure progress towards democracy in postcolonial setting” once “the administrative capacities and economic preconditions of the modern Euro-America state differ fundamentally from those of the postcolonial states” (Koelble & Lipuma, 2008, pp. 1-5). In this line of argumentation, input indicators have been criticised for being normatively biased towards the universalisation of the institutional framework of an ideal type of liberal democracy (Bollen, 1993). In the same vein, output/outcome indicators were viewed to not be immune from only capturing the level of development achieved by a given country, and not its general level of governance (Andrews, 2008) or democracy.

## The Conceptual and Normative Functions of Corruption Indicators

Governance indicators play an important political, conceptual and symbolic role (Bhuta, Malito, & Umbach, 2014; Hezri, 2004) in promoting the democratic image of governance and framing the general discourse about governance. However, the relationship between measuring and the object of measurement remains contested. This part of the paper explores the capacity of governance indicators to improve democratic governance through the participation of civil society actors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the creation, diffusion, use and contestation of such measures.

Indicators play a pivotal conceptual role, encouraging the creation of knowledge; the evolution of epistemic communities; and the dissemination of interpretations, norms, and practices. As post-regulatory policy instruments, they include elements of flexibility; subsidiarity; multi-level policy integration and evaluation; inclusion and broad participation; direct deliberation; best practices; target setting; benchmarks and common guidelines into policy discourses, knowledge-sharing and multilateral examination (Borrás & Jacobsson, 2004, p. 188ff.; De la Porte & Pochet, 2002a, p. 13, 2002b, p. 27; Hérítier, 2005, p. 4; Jacobsson & Vifell, 2002, p. 7; Trubek & Trubek, 2005, p. 10). They represent flexible, de-centralised policy instruments that impact through guidance, assessment and the provision of best practices. Moreover, they leave the formulation of policies and the implementation of potential reforms to those measured or measuring (i.e. to nation states, civil society or institutional actors). In this way, indicators inspire action at the different state and societal levels at which actors are involved in developing and applying them, often outside the ‘shadow of hierarchy’ of central state steering. As such, indicators represent policy tools that impact beyond “the existence of alternative and stronger instruments of policy action” (Borrás & Jacobsson, 2004, p. 195) and that exert their influence sometimes even beyond the “shadow of institutionalisation” (Laffan & Shaw, 2005, p. 18). Within multi-actor and sometimes multi-level evaluation and assessment processes they inspire deliberation on normative concepts embedded in them; mutual learning in view of potential reform paths; informal exchange among experts; and strategic goal-setting. They are hence open to both conceptual and normative use within different institutional and civil society environments which indeed increases their overall potential to inspire democratic innovation through knowledge sharing and assessment. Actors engaged in indicators-based processes are thus likely to form epistemic and knowledge communities that contribute to the application, use, but also to the further development of the assessment processes they are engaged in.

In the given context of governance indicators, an interesting although controversial example of such conceptual and normative potential is provided by the Corruption Perception Index (CPI). The CPI is one of the most important, well-known and consolidated measures of corruption calculated since 1995 by Transparency International. CPI data includes both the perception of resident and non-resident experts drawn from NGOs<sup>3</sup> and business executives,

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<sup>3</sup> Bertelsmann Foundation Sustainable Governance Indicators; Bertelsmann Foundation Transformation Index; Freedom House Nations in Transit; Global Insight Country Risk Ratings; Transparency International Bribe Payers Survey.

related to the performance of foreign and home countries<sup>4</sup>. The CPI was created to raise public awareness on corruption. It was not only meant to impact on governments to promote anti-corruption mechanisms, but also to help civil society to “demand accountability from their leaders” (Transparency International, 2012). So, both the conceptual and the normative potential for democratic innovation are clearly visible in this metric. Transparency International’s demand for indicators was focused on developing ‘participatory’ ‘good’ governance policies. So, even if in close collaboration with governments and international organisations, such as the WB and IMF, Transparency International strongly supports the participation of civil society actors, giving them a well-recognised tool at hand to assess and combat corruption within their respective systemic settings.

Notwithstanding criticism and scepticism about the validity of this measurement tool (Sequeira, 2012; Søreide, 2006; Van Dijk & Van Mierlo, 2011), the CPI is widely used: Policy-makers as well as public media have been attracted by this instrument especially because of its capacity to visualise a large amount of information in an intuitive way. With this instrumental governance innovation, Transparency International has played a key role in shaping anti-corruption debates and agendas worldwide resulting in common efforts to combat corruption and international coalition-building against corruption (Fredrik Galtung & Pope, 1999). In this way, it contributed to the establishment of a normative anti-corruption regime, that, according to Bukovansky can be defined as “the extension of efforts to expand and solidify the preconditions for a global, liberal market economy” (Bukovansky, 2002, p. 3) through the permeating evocation of moral requirements (Bukovansky, 2002, p. 3). Within this normative context, the anti-corruption debate has witnessed a major intensification and encouraged democratic innovation in the form of new instruments to fight corruption. As positive as this development is generally assessed, this key democratic innovation is also seen to be strongly embedded within the Western liberal model of democracy (Koelble & Lipuma, 2008). That means that is assessed to root in the rationalist and liberal ideal of the separation between public and private spheres (Duelund, 2010) as well as within the independence, accountability and transparency of institutions. It, moreover, is viewed to take for granted the participation of private actors within decentralised and/or voluntary coordination processes in which they actively engage in policy formulation with public actors. As valid as these normative assumptions may be for (inspiring democratic innovation within) classical Western democracies, it might be more than problematic if not unfeasible for any other sort of emerging democracy or developing political system.

Yet, above all these arguments, the CPI has played an important conceptual role in constructing the normative anti-corruption framework of the (Western democratic) model of state integrity by creating a culture of transparency (Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes, 2010); ‘internationalising moral codes’ (Bukovansky, 2002); disseminating knowledge and informing the public debate; interlinking institutions and stakeholders; as well as by informing and influencing the agenda of the anti-corruption campaign (Schedler, Diamond, & Plattner, 1999). The CPI conceptually framed (Wang & Rosenau, 2001a) corruption as a dangerous threat to democracy

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<sup>4</sup> African Development Bank Governance Ratings; IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook; Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Asian Intelligence; Political Risk Services International Country Risk Guide; World Bank - Country Performance and Institutional Assessment; Economist Intelligence Unit Country Risk Ratings.

and the support of ‘good’ governance has been an essential argument to foster the political use of the CPI as a platform of anti-corruption movements and activities.

To properly assess this conceptual role, it is essential to remember that the CPI and the entire anti-corruption debate came to the fore at the beginning of post-bipolar era, when Western states, international institutions, and development agencies elaborated a new governance agenda in relation to the many states transitioning from socialist economies to capitalist ones. Within this debate, the CPI was also meant to stimulate an ‘anti-corruption common sense’ within the transition process undertaken by developing and Eastern European countries (Schedler et al., 1999). So, as claimed by Wang and Rosenau:

“The changes in international political structure may also have contributed to the newly gained salience of corruption on the global agenda. In the first place, the collapse of the Soviet Union has meant there is no longer any strategic rationale for the United States and other Western nations to back corrupt governments. Governments in the North are more willing to challenge former allies in the developing world on grounds ranging from human rights to corruption” (Wang & Rosenau, 2001b, p. 30).

While their strong normative and conceptual influence cannot be denied, their instrumental function (Hezri, 2004) of stimulating anti-corruption policies by raising awareness within the public discourse and by helping policy-makers to identify sectors in which corruption may be an issue, is more difficult to track. This especially at national level, where it seems particularly tricky to establish direct causal links between corruption indicators and national policy formulation (Hawthorne, 2013). As a consequence, empirical research (also on the CPI) keeps asking for such causal evidence for corruption indicators to promote democratic change and to influence reform decisions on national policies; judicial effectiveness; or reforms (M Akech, 2011; Migai Akech, 2011; Merry et al., 2015), especially in non-consolidated democracies. In contrast to this analytical difficulty related to national level anti-corruption policy-making, empirical evidence (M Akech, 2011; Kuran, Fearon, Saideman, & Halperin, 1998; Musuraji, 2015; Raghunandan, 2013) shows that civil society initiatives have been able to successfully integrate measures of corruption and create anti-corruption campaigns in an effective and flexible, and more ad hoc way than within formalised state-society relations.

As a case in point, Akech analysed the relationship between the Kenyan government’s anti-corruption policy and the two regional and country-specific corruption indices provided by Transparency International (the Kenya Bribery Index (KBI) and the East African Bribery Index (EABI)). The study shows that TI-Kenya’s approach to measuring corruption has had little impact on governmental decision-making on corruption or related governance aspects at national level (Migai Akech, 2011). It has yet exerted micro-level incentives to improve the accountability of some sectors in Kenya. The lack of macro impact was assessed to partially derive from the above mentioned conceptual gap affecting especially developing societies. Here an accurate analysis of corruption depends on the attention given to contextual factors and systemic particularities, such as poor administrative standards and inefficient governance performance; the distribution of power within the institutions; or the general level of state capacity and institutionalisation. Factoring in this contextualisation, Akech’s study on Kenya reveals how corruption indicators developed at international level fail in a particular national

context, while local actors and agencies have been able to provide more adequate and useful measures of corruption. So, as demonstrated by the Kenyan Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC), local and ad hoc qualitative efforts to contextualise and identify corruption have delivered a more comprehensive understanding of corruption. Bottom-up informed a performance-based contracting approach in public administration that filled much of the gap between the global approach to corruption and national systemic particularities (Migai Akech, 2011).

Another example of successful translation and contextualisation is provided by Musuraji's study on the use of corruption indicators in Albania. Musuraji shows that locally produced metrics of corruption ('Corruption in Albania: Perceptions and Experience Survey') influenced the national discourse about corruption and became an additional source of evidence in a case of suspected corruption allegation in Albania (Musuraji, 2015). While the local corruption measure was initially meant to support a better perception and understanding of corruption and to exert micro-level incentives to improve accountability, the related survey data was used to reinforce anti-corruption prosecutions also bottom-up at national level.

In the absence of a robust and consolidated instrument to measure corruption at national level, the role of civil society organisations has been pivotal also for the implementation of effective measures of corruption in India (Raghunandan, 2013). TI reports about corruption have been important reference points in this case to examine perceptions of and experiences with corruption in view of delivery of public services<sup>5</sup>. At the same time, they were yet insufficient to promote concrete actions or reforms. Even if the Indian national government had undertaken concrete steps to strengthen the accountability of service providers through rights-based laws, no clear regulatory efforts were made towards the measurement of corruption at national level. Emerging from this gap, civil society organisations initiated an important debate about corruption at local levels that formed the fundament for alternative assessments of corruption. One interesting example of such alternative measures is the *ipaidabribe.com* website, which aims at sensitising citizens for the 'market price' of corruption. The moderated website is presenting citizens' reports on the nature, number, pattern, types, locations and frequency of corruption, and collects feedback on the quality and adequacy of public services at local level. The *ipaidapribe* initiative helped to build a rich database of information on real life corruption incidences. It offers empirical evidence to help pressure regional governments to take effective action to reduce corruption. Although the methodological background of the initiative might be rather tailor-made for its systemic setting, its capacity to effectively encourage local actors to engage in fighting corruption is to be underlined. As such, it is a valid example for the symbolic, normative and conceptual role, but also for the direct instrumental function of anti-corruption ratio that support reporting the abuse of power regularly to gather information on real life experiences with corruption.

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<sup>5</sup> The following aspects were investigated: interaction with the service concerned; purpose of interaction; difficulties faced during interaction; perception about the service concerned; measures taken to improve service; experience of corruption; reason for paying bribe; route of bribe payment; estimation of bribe amount; service providers' perspective and suggestions to improve the service concerned.

## **The Integration of Citizens' Perspectives Into Metrics**

The analysis of the first generation of governance indicators reveals that civil society organisations used indicators to inform or strengthen their activities; to enforce campaigns; or to lobby governments. With the second generation of governance indicators indeed, citizens' perspectives have been incorporated in the production of indicators, and sometimes the production of indicators has been even delegated upon them. Measuring citizens' perceptions and demands has become an emergent priority for many institutions and practitioners (Bergh, Takeuchi Rodriguez, & Rocha Menochal, 2014). While experts' perceptions of governance have dominated the production of first generation indicators, scholars and indicator providers yet still appreciate subjective data to inform governance measurement activities, especially if used to capture the citizens' perception of governance. So, within the second generation of indicators, scholars and providers attributed growing attention to formulating alternative visions and assessments of governance and democracy. They focused on effectiveness and 'empowering socioeconomic conditions that make people capable of practicing democracy' (Welzel & Alexander, 2008) as well as on the role of local agencies and civil society organisations in collecting and assembling data (Archibugi, 2008; Norris, 1999).

Embedding these challenges into the Post-2015 Development Agenda debate, the United Nations (UN) launched the so-called My World Survey in order to inform this reform process. The My World Survey represents one of the most recent initiatives to capture the citizens views and priorities about their own well-being ("My World Survey", 2015). Among this sort of citizen-centred initiatives is also the Civil Society Index (CSI), created by civil society organisations (CSOs) and the World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS) that represents a 'participatory action-research project' aiming to measure the state of civil society and the level of democratic participation in decision-making (CIVICUS, 2011).

Following these prominent examples, many other composite indices of governance have included citizen perspectives as a democratic innovation within their assessment of the quality of governance. Among these new tools, rank very prominently the Rule of Law Index and the Global Integrity Report.

The Rule of Law Index (RoLI), launched in 2010 by the World Justice Project (WJP), is an aggregate measure of the effective exercise of state authority. It analyses a nation's adherence to the rule of law from a societal perspective and maps the understanding and perception-based judgments of the exercise of authority. At the same time, it also follows a normative purpose of making 'rule of law advancement as fundamental to the *thinking* and work of other professionals as it is to lawyers and judges' (The World Justice Project, 2012). The key aim of the RoLI is to provide a transparent and accessible diagnostic tool, capable of strengthening the rule of law worldwide and within states. It is not limited to use within the legal professional field, meaning that it does not exclusively target lawyers and judges. Due to its envisaged wider application approach, the WJP has tried to neutralise the influence of experts' perception within the construction of the RoLI by balancing two kinds of data: the perceptions of local practitioners or experts (the Qualified Respondent's Questionnaire) that answer to a 'qualified respondent survey', and a sample of the 'general public' (The General Pollution Poll) for each country, in which information is provided by ordinary citizens. These

two surveys collect a number of different information concerning experiences and perceptions of citizens and legal experts with the rule of law. By doing so it neutralises the bias towards business and experts' perceptions that prevails in many measures of first generation (see above).

Another of these more citizen-centred measures is provided by Global Integrity that launched the Global Integrity Report (GIR) to monitor and map the existence, effectiveness and citizens' access to national anti-corruption mechanisms (Global Integrity, 2014). The collection of information is based on a clear division between *de jure* and the *de facto* reality. On the basis of this division indicators are operationalised. To neutralise the above mentioned bias of the first generation of governance metrics on experts' views, Global Integrity does not rely on experts' experiences at all (Feigenblatt, 2014). On the contrary, data is collected by researchers and country-peers from a variety of sources (legal review, interviews with experts, review of media stories, statistics, and review of academic studies) and numerically coded into one single figure on the basis of a set of scoring criteria in order to limit possible subjective biases.

In sum, these new, more citizen-centred approaches represent democratic innovations on two levels: First, they create multi-level and multi-actor indicator production processes. In this way, the democratic innovation of governance indicators impacts on further democratisation of decision-making processes through public participation bringing civil society in. Second, they also democratise the sources of assessment as they add citizens' perception to the list of relevant aspects to be analysed when it comes to measuring governance. Thus, indicators are post-regulatory policy instruments inspiring further the revision of perception assessment and the evaluation of governance through civil society collaboration in the construction of new political process, and increased participation.

## **Conclusions**

Quantifying, qualifying, and measuring social phenomena are among the most pervasive political-administrative activities of our times, and yet also among the least critically analysed. To explore the potential of governance indicators to be tools of democratic innovation, we analysed the evolution and development of corruption indicators. First, we focussed on their conceptual use by civil society organisations to enforce the normative frame of the anti-corruption regime of the mid '90s. Second, we analysed the integration of citizens' perspectives into the second generation of governance indicators. Based on our analysis, we come to the conclusion that governance indicators indeed play an important conceptual, symbolic and political role in framing the general discourse about governance, and in promoting pragmatic and participatory patterns of decision-making. With the establishment of targets, benchmarks, and rankings, governance indicators clearly define the phenomena they are about to measure. They expert normative pressures on the entities and actors measured, as well as on the worldviews and *leitbilder* of their target communities. They also provided citizens with opportunities to participate in the design, construction, and use of such instruments.

Resulting from our analysis, at least two key democratic innovation patterns of governance indicators can be distinguished: The first generation of indicators served to assess the subjective understanding of a smaller group of (potentially also politically) influential actors. Results of this first generation were yet not easily reproducible or generalizable and strongly rooted in the need of enforcing the emerging normative quests for ‘good’ governance (Malito, 2015). The empirical cases analysed show that the first generation of indicators elaborated at international level strengthened the normative quests for fighting corruption. They exerted a normative pressure on the key democratic innovation of measuring corruption as a fundamental malfunction of governance. In this context, the CPI has played a hegemonic conceptual role; while local measures and civil society initiatives have proven to be successful in elaborating comprehensive and contextualised assessment tools for corruption on the ground.

The second generation of governance indicators acknowledged the democratic flaws of the first generation and innovated in so far as it developed more participatory, citizen-centred approaches in both developing and applying measures. Such new measures served the multiple purposes of assessing governance, shaping and controlling more democratic decision-making structures and providing input into the development of more practical, actionable policy solutions. As result, the relationship between numbers and citizens has changed from a pure instrumental rationale to a reflexive one, since the integration of citizens’ perspectives into the measurement of governance directly impacts on the attempt of increasing the participatory component of democracy.

This evolution from ‘indicators for the society’ to ‘societal-based, citizen-centred indicators’ confirms that measuring is not an immanent process. Establishing units of measurement or calibrating the use of measuring devices has always varied according to historical and geographical conventions. As a consequence, these new policy technologies have proven to have become functional new instruments for democratic politics, turning numbers from passive tools of mere representation of reality into active instruments of governance themselves.

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