A failure of governmentality: Why Transparency International underestimated corruption in Ben Ali's Tunisia

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The article critiques the Foucauldian approach to governance indicators. Transparency International's (TI) corruption perception index (CPI) underestimated Tunisian corruption levels under President Ben Ali. His regime was highly corrupt but foreign investors were less affected. CPI methodology meant it reflected primarily the needs of foreign investors. The Foucauldian approach specifically excludes analysis of governance indicators' methodologies. It thus fails to demonstrate the effectiveness of governance indicators as a technology of government, and it fails to show how the production of the CPI is embedded in a wider global political economy.

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Writing in the pages of *Third World Quarterly*, Oded Lowenheim makes the powerful claim that international governance indicators change states' behaviour, not for fear of being disciplined but by governing themselves.[1] Such is the power of Foucauldian governmentality that the examined state internalises the rationality of the governance indicator and acts accordingly. Loewenheim's article is part of a wider literature which argues that governance indicators are an effective technology of Foucauldian government, which "normalises" neoliberalism. He uses the example of the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), compiled by the anti-corruption organisation Transparency International (TI).

The first section of this article sets out the claims of the theory Foucauldian governmentality regarding governance indicators. I then use the case study of Tunisia to critically examine the claim that the CPI is an effective technology of government. The fall of the regime of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali in 2011 showed that the CPI had consistently underestimated corruption levels in Ben Ali's Tunisia. Faced with the discipline of the governance indicator, Tunisia did not "govern itself" – i.e. reduce its corruption levels. The next section this article examines the forms of corruption prevalent under Ben Ali and the fourth section explains the reasons why TI's methodology did not capture these particular types of corruption: Bias in favour of the needs of foreign investors, feedback loops among out-of-country experts, and possible regime manipulation. The fifth section uses the findings on Tunisia and TI methodology to critique Foucauldian governmentality. The approach works well to explain how TI translates neoliberal rationality into a programme to fight corruption. However, Foucauldian governmentality does not pay enough attention to the methodology of how the CPI is compiled – how it works as a technology of government – and it fails to tackle the wider political economy into which the production of the CPI is embedded. The final section concludes.

The puzzle: Transparency International underestimated corruption in Tunisia

Prior to the fall of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali in 2011, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank praised his economic management.[2] This is because Ben Ali followed donor prescriptions for macro-economic stabilisation and opening the country up to foreign investment. European governments also considered him an important ally in the fight against Islamism, leading to a largely favourable judgement of the regime. A significant section of academia, policy makers, and journalists were arguing that Ben Ali's non-corrupt leadership was the cause of his success. Eva Bellin wrote that cronyism between bureaucracy and business was not driven by corruption or bribery but cut "red tape" and solved "information problems". [3] The developmentalist ethos of Ben Ali and his predecessor Habib Bourguiba and the decent remuneration and specialised training of Tunisia's higher civil service provided the "esprit de corps" crucial for the development of an incorruptible state bureaucracy. In 2010, just a few months prior to Ben Ali's departure, the World Economic Forum (WEF) identified the absence of corruption and favouritism as a major competitive advantage of Tunisia. The "Ibrahim index of African governance" ranked Tunisia 8th in Africa in 2010, ahead of all other North African states. Tunisia outperformed most Arab countries in Transparency International's (TI) corruption perception index (CPI).[4] The Tunisian uprising that evicted Ben Ali in January 2011 shattered the leader's clean image. The president and the Trabelsi clan of his wife Leila had enriched themselves on the back of the country's business success. Pictures of looted luxury villas went around the world and the international press publicised lurid tales of greed and self-enrichment.

How could the reality of corruption – as revealed by the uprising – and the perception of corruption – as measured by global corruption rankings – diverge so drastically?

This article focuses on Transparency International because its corruption perception index is the most influential and the most widely used measure of corruption. Why did Transparency International underestimate corruption in Ben Ali's Tunisia? The CPI is the index which is most commonly used as an example to illustrate how governance indicators work as technologies of Foucauldian government.[5] The CPI scores countries and territories from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (very clean) based on perceived levels of public sector corruption. A score below 5 is taken as a cut-off point for particularly egregious corruption. Tunisia scored 5 or above for five of the 13 years under Ben Ali, in which Tunisia was included in the CPI (1998-2010) and came close in another three years (see table 1). The score always put Tunisia in the middle of TI's worldwide country ranking. In 2003 TI commended Ben Ali's Tunisia for being among the countries that had improved most compared to the previous year and Tunisia was never singled out for criticism in CPI press releases.[6] Compared to other African and Middle Eastern countries, the scores that Ben Ali's Tunisia received in the CPI were highly respectable and bolstered the country's "clean" image. Once Ben Ali was removed Tunisia's score plunged to 3.8 in 2011, leaving it at 73rd place in the global ranking, down from 4.3 at 59th place in 2010.

[Include table 1 around here]

There was coalition of American and European governments, investors, and international financial institutions which were supporting Ben Ali for reasons of "security" and economic interest. I am not suggesting that Transparency International was an important pillar of the regime or that it consciously backed Ben Ali. The CPI did, however, contribute to a “mood music” of economic reports and press coverage which was favourable to the Tunisian regime and to which Ben Ali’s international supporters could point to justify their stance. The CPI influences outside perceptions of a country. European and North American policy makers, businesspeople, and journalists regularly turn to the CPI for a swift authoritative assessment of corruption levels. Outsiders would not have thought highly of the Ben Ali regime solely because of the CPI, but they would also not have found much material in the CPI to contradict regime propaganda claims of clean and efficient government. The CPI influences European Union and United States assessments of other countries.[7] Tunisia’s high score in the CPI meant that the country’s democracy activists lost a potential instrument in their struggle, namely independent verification of regime corruption.

Theorising governance indicators: Foucauldian governmentality

For Foucault, governmentality is a form of power, where “government is the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end.”[8] Government is exercised over abstracted “things” such as the economy or a population. The “things” are constructed in the process of government, which involves technologies such as measuring to make them visible. When TI measures corruption, it makes the phenomenon visible. Foucault criticised the “excessive value” attached to the state in social science research. For Foucault, the state is a relevant object of study through its role in “government”, not as the sole centre of power.[9] Similarly, civil society is not subordinate to the state but is implicated in the process of government.[10] This stands in contrast to liberal theory, where global civil society organisations such as TI check the power of the overbearing state.[11] Foucauldian theory thus makes a novel claim compared to the liberal account. States are not just "disciplined" by governance indicators because they "hold states to account" – in liberal parlance – but the indeces induce "self-government" as states internalise the rationality of government.[12] Rather than surveillance and punishment, governmentality "focuses on self-optimisation of subjects through individual liberty and freedom of choice."[13] This occurs through benchmarking and "responsibilisation", which produces "the examined state as an ethical subject responsible for what occurs within its borders."[14] Governance indicators bring about the "normalisation" of neoliberal government.[15]Yet if a governance indicator underestimates corruption, does the examined state still "govern itself"?

Rose and Miller break down Foucault's governmentality into three levels of analysis.[16] The "rationality of government" is the level of political discourse as "a domain for the formulation and justification of idealised schemata for representing reality, analysing it, and rectifying it."[17] Liberalism and neoliberalism are examples of such discourses. At the next level are "programmes of government", where experts identify problems and put forward designs to tackle them. Programmes are informed by specific rationalities. Putting forward a programme involves claims to knowledge, for instance about the economy, nature, health – or indeed corruption. The third level of analysis looks at the technologies of government, the "humble and mundane mechanisms" by which programmes are translated into social reality.[18] They include surveys, techniques of notation and computation, statistics, standardization, specialist vocabularies, building designs etc. "Techniques" of government are ways of making a problem visible and then governing it.

And it is here that we find a puzzling omission: Writers using the governmentality approach explicitly exclude methodological concerns from their analysis because "the theoretical or methodological quality of the reports and their indices is secondary to the governmental work that they do."[19] As I will argue below, the methodology of the CPI is the reason why TI underestimated corruption in Tunisia.

In the following section of the paper I will use secondary literature and US diplomatic cables published by wikileaks to establish the forms of corruption prevalent in Ben Ali's Tunisia. I will then have a close look at the methodologies of the CPI and of the World Economic Forum's "World Competitiveness Report". The latter had an important influence on Tunisia's ranking. TI's methodology of compiling the CPI was the reason why it underestimated the forms of corruption prevalent in Tunisia. The discussion is based on methodological briefs issued by TI with the CPI each year, the methodology of WEF's "World Competitiveness Report", wikileaks cables, and two interviews with researchers from TI and the WEF respectively. These interviews were conducted to obtain additional data from TI – which they were unable to provide – and to be able to reflect their views on the way that the CPI and World Competeiveness Report have ranked Tunisia in their respective indices.[20] The next section then uses these findings to critique the claims of Foucauldian governmentality with regard to good governance indices. A final section concludes.

Forms of corruption in Ben Ali's Tunisia

Tunisia's first post-independence president Habib Bourguiba had constructed a corporatist regime similar to those in other Arab republics in the 1960s.[21] Nationalisation, land reform, import substitution industrialisation and bureaucratic expansion bound bureaucrats, workers, and peasants to the corporatist regime. Opposition by influential landowners prompted Bourguiba to roll back the collectivisation of land and to encourage export-oriented private manufacturing in 1969.

The expanding industrial bourgeoisie was mainly drawn from former state managers and was not restricted to presidential cronies.[22] Tunisia developed an onshore sector in textiles, protected from the world market, and an offshore sector of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in clothing production, with few linkages between the two. Despite limited liberalisation in the 1970s the system of corporatist management remained in place. Falling receipts from phosphates, remittances, tourism as well as a drought caused an economic crisis in 1986. Tunisia had to swallow an IMF "structural adjustment programme" which put corporatism under strain. Between the late 1970s and mid-1980s, trade unions and the Islamist movement emerged as the most organised opposition to the regime.[23] Meanwhile, President Bourguiba was growing senile. Prime Minister Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali exploited the economic, social, and political crisis to conduct a bloodless coup in 1987 and assumed power.

Ben Ali's regime remained remarkably stable between 1987 and 2010. This was partly due to strong support from Europe and the United States for a regime which was seen fighting Islamic terrorism and open to European investment. Some authors stress Ben Ali's deft transformation of the corporatist regime, which became more authoritarian but also kept business and the trade unions in line.[24] Hibou points out that regime maintenance was not simply due to decisions "at the top" but also to decentralised and society-wide surveillance through everday economic operations.[25] She also questioned the reality of the "economic miracle". Both approaches agree that the economy was at the heart of regime maintenance.Many of the economic surveillance mechanisms which Hibou examines originated from the president.[26]

Ben Ali selectively adopted the rules of neoliberal globalisation to further the contradictory goals of regime maintenance and the enrichment of his extended family. He encouraged textile exports, tourism, and foreign investment through the 1993 investment code and the 1995 Association Agreement with the European Union. The basis of Tunisia's economic success were manufacturing exports due to a boom in FDI, which came mostly from Europe and flowed into textile, clothing and leather production for re-export to Europe.[27] Tunisia saw spurts of strong economic growth in the 1990s and then again in the middle of the 2000s. In 2010 Tunisia was the Arab state with the second-highest GDP per capita outside of the oil-rich Gulf Cooperation Council. Between Ben Ali's coup of 1987 and the last year of his rule in 2010, per capita GDP almost doubled in real terms. Human development indicators on education and health were good. Yet this solid economic and social performance did not amount to the "economic miracle" of regime propaganda. The country's peripheral rural regions remained underdeveloped and Tunisia failed to move up the value chain to high tech manufacturing.[28]

Ben Ali used the economy to co-opt or control potential challengers. He cracked down on Islamists in 1990, imprisoning several and excluding ex-prisoners from the labour market.[29] The regime maintained its alliance with tamed trade unions. A system of social security kept the rural and urban poor in line. The Fonds de Solidarité Nationale (FSN) paid for development projects in the Tunisian periphery. The distribution of funds was entirely at the discretion of Ben Ali and a well-oiled PR machine publicised the president's grandeur.[30] The state threatened tax audits to collect the supposedly voluntary contributions from businesses. The audits would inevitably unearth a break of the country's deliberately arcane tax rules.[31] The Banque Tunisienne de Solidarité (BTS) operated on a similar model of forced contributions from employees and businesses as well as opaque and discretionary distribution of benefits. The bank provided micro-loans, with debt acting as a means of political control.[32] State aid was used selectively to benefit cronies.[33]

Regulation kept competitors out of markets dominated by companies of the Ben Ali and Trabelsi clan which accounted for an estimated 21 per cent of all net private sector profits in 2010.[34] The clans extracted monopoly rents from services such as real estate, retail, telecommunications and media, tourism, and finance but largely sidestepped the SME-dominated clothing and textile sector.[35] The Ben Ali and Trabelsi clans had already started to enrich themselves in the 1990s but became more predatory from 1996 onwards.[36] In 2002 Ben Ali reportedly exhorted his family members to use straw men and front companies to prevent bad publicity.[37] At this time, Transparency International's ranking was still not indicating the high levels of corruption represented by the family.

Foreign investment in the offshore manufacturing sector seems to have been off-limits for extortion. According to a United States embassy cable from 2008, Leila's son Belhassen Trabelsi "was explicitly cautioned to avoid offshore companies".[38] The "family" did target foreign companies in the energy and services sector,[39] but a 2008 United States embassy cable concluded that "[f]oreign investors more rarely report encountering the type of extortion faced by Tunisians, perhaps reflecting that foreign investors have recourse to their own embassies and governments."[40] The Ben Ali regime consciously fostered the appearance of a rule-based bureaucracy for international consumption. It signed an association agreement with the EU in 1995 and acceded to the World Trade Organisation (WTO). One foreign diplomat argued that this was deceptive:

> "Tunisia is a country filled with laws and appears to be complying with all demands of international lenders. It appears to be on track to building a real market economy. The reality, however, differs a lot. Even though many laws exist, they are not necessarily enforced and certainly not applied equally to all.

> […] Application of procedures and imposing obstacles is arbitrary and very clearly depends on ‘who you are’.”[41]

The Ben Ali regime stayed open to European outsourcing. Corruption was widely known and discussed. Beau and Tuqoui recount a widely-read 1990s pamphlet called “the families who pillage Tunisia”.[42] Cammett recounts hearing frequent complaints by export-oriented manufacturing businesses about cronyism and corruption during her interviews conducted in the late 1990s.[43] United States embassy cables published on Wikileaks include numerous accounts of regime corruption. The widespread knowledge about Tunisian corruption was not reflected in the corruption perception index, although the Tunisian score did deteriorate from 2004 onwards. It still remained respectable and the decline in the TI ranking did not do justice to the depth of regime corruption.

Why the CPI underestimated corruption in Tunisia

Transparency International’s methodology caused it to underestimate corruption levels in Tunisia. There is an extensive academic debate of the TI methodology.[44] The CPI is a composite index. Transparency International collects reports “from independent institutions specialising in governance and business climate analysis”.[45] TI does not conduct its own in-country research but relies entirely on secondary sources in compiling the CPI. TI’s underestimation of Tunisian corruption is therefore not due to the inherent difficulties of conducting field research in non-democratic regimes. I am not suggesting that TI maliciously or purposely ignored signs of corruption in Ben Ali’s Tunisia. Of the secondary sources that TI uses to compile the CPI, only the WEF’s World Competitiveness Report was based on an in-country survey. The difficulties and pitfalls of this particular survey are discussed below. TI checks the quality of the sources and whether the questions that they ask about corruption fit within their own remit of what corruption entails. Until 2011 – the period we are interested in – TI then converted the ranks of countries in the individual sources into a score from 0 to 10.[46] TI then averaged these “transformed data” for the individual sources, yielding a country’s CPI score. TI has not published the “transformed data” for each individual source, except for the years 2010 and 2011.[47] Let us then look at the scores for 2010, the last year that Ben Ali was in power. Several scores stand out (see table 1). The World Economic Forum (WEF) scores Tunisia a lot higher than the other sources, giving the country 6.6 for both its 2009 and 2010 surveys, higher than IHS Global Insight Risk Rating (4.7), the Economist Intelligence Unit (3.3), African Development Bank (2.5) and Bertelsmann Foundation (2.3). I therefore had a closer look at the WEF data.***Possible manipulation: World Economic Forum***

The WEF polls thousands of business executives globally in its “executive opinion survey”. The polls are then used to compile the World Competitiveness Report. In a list of the greatest problems businesspeople faced in Tunisia in 2010, corruption came only on 11th place.[48] The WEF poll considered the absence of favouritism in decisions of government officials as a competitive advantage of Tunisia. This is astonishing, considering the staggering degree of nepotism revealed after the fall of Ben Ali. WEF researchers themselves noticed the rather positive responses prior to 2011.[49] The WEF researchers say they undertook due diligence on the data for Tunisia but they did not find any proof of influence or manipulation by the government or by the Tunisian partner institute which conducted the survey. There are several possible causes for the incongruent results of the WEF. The survey may have captured many firms who benefited from favouritism. In 2010, 61 per cent of businesses in the sample of 100 had more than 100 employees but 98.4 per cent of all formal sector firms in Tunisia have fewer than 100 employees.[50] Larger firms were more likely to be close to the regime.

The WEF relies on 150 partner institutes worldwide to administer the survey, with one partner per country. The WEF requires at least 80 responses from a country and asks their partner institute to use a random sample in line with good statistical practice.[51] It should therefore not be possible for partner institutes to just send the questionnaire to “family and friends”. The WEF’s statistical method was formally correct but the political context in which the survey was administered in Tunisia may have bumped up the Tunisian result. The survey was conducted by the Institut Arabe des Chefs d’Entreprises (IACE). Cammett characterises IACE as “an association grouping together big business interests” and writes that it was “taken over” by the government in 1994, when Chakib Nouira became its president.[52] He is the son of Hedi Nouira, prime minister from 1970 to 1980 and architect of Tunisia’s economic opening. The previous head of IACE, Mansour Moalla, had fallen foul of the regime in 1993, when he criticised the Tunisian government for being too obedient to the World Bank and IMF. In retaliation, state officials arranged for the withdrawal of funds from BIAT Bank, presided over by Moalla. He had to step down to save the bank and also resigned from IACE. Moalla’s departure meant that IACE “necessarily functions as a less independent and dynamic force than was the case under its founding leadership.”[53] The WEF researchers reject the suggestion that IACE may have been an inappropriate partner to conduct the survey.[54] While they had difficulties identifying an institute in Tunisia that was independent of the government, it was not their impression that IACE was close to the regime. They point out that the leadership of the institute did not change after the fall of Ben Ali but the results plummeted anyhow and remained low despite all the political changes the country went through.[55]

Tunisian businessmen at the time were wary of IACE. A United States embassy cable records Tunisians' suspicious response to the 2006 World Competitiveness Report:

> "A number of the interlocutors stated that the Institut Arabe Des Chefs d'Entreprises (IACE) conducted the survey of Tunisian business executives that was used as a basis for this WEF report. This organization is said to be linked with the extended family of President Ben Ali and thus, in the average Tunisian business leader's mind, the results are suspect."[56]

The embassy concludes: "It could very well be that the critics are right and that IACE only surveyed and provided input from business leaders who would provide politically-correct, positive impressions." Overt manipulation is only one possible explanation for the highly positive survey results. Another aspect to bear in mind is that Tunisia was a police state full of informers. When businesses received a questionnaire from an association they considered close to the regime, they must have assumed – rightly or wrongly – that their responses would be monitored by the state. An honest response to the survey could have put them in danger of retaliation by the regime. Had the WEF survey been excluded from the CPI, Tunisia would have scored 3.2 in 2010, rather than 4.3. This would have put Tunisia in rank 91 of 178, rather than 59, and behind its notoriously corrupt neighbour Morocco, which scored 3.4. The problem was compounded by a methodological quirk by which the CPI counted both the 2009 and 2010 WEF reports. Transparency International relies on two types of sources: business executive opinion surveys such as the WEF report, and scores by country, risk, or expert analysts such as those provided by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), Bertelsmann Foundation, and IHS Global Insight. When multiple years of the same business opinion survey are available, TI includes data for the last two years to smooth abrupt changes and make the index more stable.[57] The impact of the WEF on Tunisia's score was thus doubled.

Private sector bias

TI has been criticised for its extensive reliance on sources written for large transnational corporations.[58] These clients care about the risk of having to pay a bribe but are less concerned about other forms of corruption. This is evident in the definitions of corruption used by CPI sources. All the five sources TI used for Tunisia in 2010 took bribery into account but only the EIU looked at the abuse of public office for regime maintenance.[59] Table 1 shows the preponderance of private sector-oriented sources in the CPI between 2001 and 2011. Each year TI was using at least twice as many private sector-oriented reports than policy maker-oriented ones, with the exception of 2002. The years 2010 and 2011, for which the scores are publicly available, show that private sector-oriented sources provided much higher scores for Tunisia than policy maker-oriented ones.[60] In Ben Ali's Tunisia, international investors were less affected by regime extortion. The risk of having to bribe public officials is of course a legitimate concern of foreign investors, but it is not clear why this should be given overwhelming weight in constructing the CPI. TI argues that the range of different sources it uses means that it captures corruption very comprehensively.[61] However, the choice of sources is not driven by the need to balance different perspectives – and who knows what the "correct" balance would be anyhow – but the availability of sources for a given country. Compiling corruption rankings from surveys or experts is expensive. Hence, most are compiled for-profit and aimed at corporate clients. TI then relies on these overwhelmingly commercial sources.

Feedback loops

Knack warns of the “interdependence of sources” in the CPI.[62] The authors of different surveys may rely on other corruption surveys used to compile the CPI (or the CPI itself). Alternatively, they may all rely on similar sources such as media outlets, academic research, or reports from NGOs or international organisations for their corruption assessment. This creates a feedback loop among country experts, which reproduces received wisdom. Received wisdom on Ben Ali’s Tunisia was that there was little corruption. Out-of-country desk research is particularly prone to such feedback loops. Of the Tunisia sources in 2010 the African Development Bank (AfDB), Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), and IHS Global Insight all relied on out-of-country experts.[63] The respondents tend to be members of a global elite, whether Tunisian business executives or country experts inside and outside of the country yet the experience of corruption at the bottom of the social hierarchy and at the top is very different. Transparency International’s methodology excluded the voices of Tunisians such as Mohammed Bouazizi whose self-immolation started the “Jasmin revolution” in 2010.

Theorising Transparency International’s Failure

TI’s underestimation of corruption in Tunisia allows us to critically assess the claims that Foucauldian governmentality makes about governance indicators. As discussed above, Rose and Miller break governmentality down to three levels: An overarching rationality, for instance neoliberalism, is translated into programmes to govern specific problems, such as poverty, disease, or corruption. Finally, technologies of government are deployed to tackle the problem and make it visible, for instance statistics, surveys, laws. With regard to the Transparency International, Foucauldian theory provides a convincing account of the translation of neoliberal rationality into a programme to tackle corruption. The document which provided the analytical basis for TI's fight against corruption was the "Sourcebook", written by then-managing director of TI Jeremy Pope in 1996 and updated in 2000.[64] Pope subscribes to the neoliberal consensus of a "clean" capitalism which is more efficient and equitable if purged of bribery. Pope writes that "much of government-led development efforts in the past have been mishandled, and have generated waste rather than development" and that the state "should not attempt to compete with the private sector."[65] Corruption "strikes at the heart of the market economy, distorting decision-making, and rewarding the corrupt and manipulative rather than the efficient and productive".[66] Corruption undermines private sector development and deters foreign direct investment (FDI).[67] Pope remains silent about power relations in contemporary global capitalism. He excludes questions of labour relations, the privatisation of public services, or global inequalities. His analytical framework is unsuitable for understanding political economy dynamics such as the Ben Ali's post-corporatist authoritarianism. Pope identifies a problem – corruption – and renders it in the language of neoclassical political economy: corruption undermines the functioning of free markets, functioning free markets are a prerequisite for sustained economic growth, hence corrupt countries cannot achieve sustained economic growth and, in turn, countries that achieve sustained economic growth cannot be corrupt. This claim is contradicted by highly corrupt high-growth economies such as South Korea, China, or Malaysia. There are forms of corruption which enhance or at least do not hold back economic growth. Capitalist development involves the reassignment of property rights. Since this process can never be entirely legitimate, corruption is an integral part of capitalist development.[68]

The governmentality approach can give a convincing account of the way in which TI converts neoliberal rationality into an anti-corruption programme but it fails to seriously engage with the third level of analysis, namely corruption measurement as a technology of government. Garland suggested the need for an analysis of the "pragmatics of use" because "governmental programmes are never perfectly realised in practice".[69] Tosa maintains that "governmentality studies have to go beyond the tendency to totalise and they must instead look at specific ways in which the actual powers operate."[70] Porter laments "the pre-eminence of large-scale mentalities relative to material and micro-practices" and criticises that in governmentality analyses "the effects of indices rest heavily on the mentality of ordering, or on the way they express a larger rationality, and less attention is paid to how indices interact with the material aspects of the networks in which they operate."[71] This is precisely where analysis of Tunisia comes in: TI underestimated corruption in Tunisia, which meant there was no "self-government" by the Tunisian regime. The CPI would not have induced a change in behaviour because it did not contradict regime propaganda of clean and efficient government.

The main point in Loewenheim's article on governance indicators and the CPI is that they "responsibilise" the examined state and thus "they also obscure (even if unintentionally) the responsibility of other actors for a host of social, economic and political problems".[72] Who are these other actors? How are they responsible for the problems of the examined states? And how do these power constellations shape the process of compiling governance indicators? Loewenheim hints at a hierarchically organised global economy, in which powerful actors – states, transnational corporations – bear responsibility for corruption in countries such as Tunisia. This is the wider political economy context within which the CPI is being produced and within which TI underestimated corruption in Ben Ali's Tunisia.

By not linking the technology of government to the wider global political economy, the governmentality approach is missing a trick. It is also applying a very selective approach to the analysis of governmentality, in which it is a smooth and undisrupted flow of power from the experts who formulate programmes and technologies within the neoliberal rationality to the examined state. However, something intervenes in this flow from TI's Berlin headquarter to Ben Ali's palace in Tunis, and it is the structure of the market for business information. The majority of corruption rankings is produced as a commercial service to large transnational corporations. They are primarily worried about the need to bribe top officials but less concerned about political corruption of the kind that Ben Ali practiced, which affected local small and medium-sized businesses. These private sector-oriented sources account for the bulk of sources which TI relies on to compile the CPI. The inherent bias towards measuring bribery – rather than a more comprehensive definition of corruption – reduced Tunisia's CPI score.

TI is also on the market for media attention. The CPI is the primary way for Transparency International to achieve press coverage. Around the date that the CPI is published, the number of google searches for the term "corruption" shoots up.[73] Wide media coverage is necessary to keep corruption – and Transparency's anti-corruption work – on the agenda. This puts TI under pressure to maximise the number of countries covered and to take a laissez faire attitude towards the use of their data by journalists. Prior to 2011, the press releases accompanying the CPI always included a warning that comparison of score or rank over time is not possible because different sources may have been used in different years.[74] However, media sources still did frequently compare ranks and scores over time. An assessment of CPI 2012 methodology invited by Transparency International recommended that TI include only countries for which it can utilise at least six sources, rather than the current threshold of three.[75] This would exclude 58 countries in the 2012 ranking. The CPI would be less attractive to media, NGOs, policy makers and academics. TI must constantly balance methodological rigour and its attractiveness to the media.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper has been to use TI's underestimation of Tunisian corruption to critique the claims of Foucauldian governmentality about governance indicators. Foucauldian governmentality explains how TI translated neoliberal rationality into a programme to govern corruption but displays a curious disinterest in the details in which the CPI actually works as a technology of government. The CPI underestimated Tunisian corruption due to an over-reliance on private sector-oriented sources, feedback loops of "received wisdom" among out-of-country experts, and possibly regime manipulation. TI lacks critical distance towards its sources. A more critical stance would have reduced the number of available sources and would therefore also have reduced the number of countries covered in the CPI. This, in turn, would make the index less newsworthy. The NGO needs to constantly balance methodological "rigour" and the need to produce an index that is "marketable" to the world's media. The bias towards private sector-sources and attention to bribery over other types of corruption took the sting out of the potentially disruptive corruption issue.

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Table 1: Data sources and corruption perception index scores for Tunisia: 2001-2011

	Private sector-oriented							**Policy maker-oriented**				
Year	**WEF Global[a]**	**WEF Global[a]**	**WEF Africa[b]**	**IHS[c]**	**EIU[d]**	**MIG[e]**	**PRS – ICRG[f]**	**AfDB[g]**	**BTI[h]**	**CU[i]**	**WB[j]**	**Total score**
2001			#		#						#	**5.3**
2002	#		#		#					#	#	**4.8**
2003	#	#		#	#					#	#	**4.9**
2004	#	#		#	#	#				#		**5.0**
2005	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	**4.9**
2006	#	#		#	#	#						**4.6**
2007	#			#	#	#		#	#			**4.2**
2008	#			#	#	#		#	#			**4.4**
2009	#	#		#	#			#	#			**4.2**
2010	*6.6*	*6.6*		*4.7*	*3.3*			*2.5*	*2.3*			**4.3**
2011	*8.0*	*3.6*		*3.3*	*3.2*		*3.7*	*2.4*	*2.2*			**3.8**

Source: Transparency International

Note: TI converted the ranks of countries in the individual sources into a score from 0 to 10. TI then averaged these “transformed data” for the individual sources, yielding a country’s CPI score. Sources for 2005 are not available. Numerical scores for the “transformed data” are only available for 2010 and 2011. In previous years (2001-2009), the pound sign (#) signifies that a source has been used in compiling the CPI, a blank cell signifies that a source was not used for that year.

Transparency International relies on two types of sources: business executive opinion surveys (e.g. WEF Global), and secondly scores by country, risk, or expert analysts (e.g. IHS, EIU, MIG, PRS-ICRG, AfDB, BTI, CU, WB). When multiple years of the same survey are available for business opinion surveys such as WEF, TI includes data for the last two years to smooth abrupt changes and make the index more stable.

a) World Economic Forum, *Global Competitiveness Report*. b) World Economic Forum, *Africa Competitiveness Report*. c) IHS Global Insight, *Global Risk Service* (Until 2006 called WMRC: World Markets Research Centre). d) Economist Intelligence Unit, *Country Risk Service and Country Forecast*. e) Merchant International Group. f) Political Risk Services, *International Country Risk Guide*. g) African Development Bank, *Country Policy and Institutional Assessment*. h) Bertelsmann Foundation, *Transformation Index*. i) Columbia University, *State Capacity Survey*. j) World Bank, *World Business Environment Survey*.

[1] Loewenheim, “Examining the state”

[2] Pfeifer, “How Tunisia, Morocco, and Jordan”

[3] Bellin, *Stalled Democracy*, 73-79. Bellin conducted her interviews in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the cronyism of the Ben Ali and Trabelsi clans had not yet reached the heights of later years. However, the book was published in 2002, when their corruption had become a lot clearer. Other academics did mention corruption, for instance Cammett, *Globalisation and business*, or even put it at the heart of their analysis, such as Hibou, *The Force of Obedience*. As explained later in this article, the knowledge of Ben Ali and Trabelsi’s corruption makes TI’s underestimation of Tunisian corruption levels even more puzzling.

[4] Until 2002, Tunisia was ranked as the least corrupt Arab country by TI. The subsequent inclusion of the Gulf Arab countries pushed Tunisia to fifth place behind Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. In later years, Jordan and Saudi Arabia would also occasionally outrank Tunisia.

[5] Krause Hansen, “The power of performance indices”; Loewenheim, “Examining the state”.

[6] Transparency International, “Nine out of ten developing countries”

[7] Andersson and Heywood, “Politics of perception”, 759; Ballard, “Tunisia outranks U.S.”

[8] Quoting La Perriere. Foucault, “Governmentality”, 94.

[9] Foucault, “Governmentality”, 103.

[10] Sending and Neuman, “Governance to governmentality”.

[11] Global civil society puts issues (e.g. human rights, poverty, women’s rights) on the global agenda, help institute norms, and then provide accountability by exposing breaches of these norms. Bohman, “International regimes”; Kaldor, “Global civil society”, 590-591.

[12] Fougner, “Neoliberal governance”, 318.

[13] Loewenheim, “Examining the state”, 258.

[14] Larner and Le Heron, “Global benchmarking”; Fougner, “Neoliberal governance”; Loewenheim, “Examining the state”, 259.

[15] Fougner, “Neoliberal governance”.

[16] Rose and Miller, “Political power”

[17] Rose and Miller, “Political power”, 178.

[18] Rose and Miller, “Political power”, 183.

[19] Fougner, “Neoliberal governance”, 314; Larner and Le Heron, “Global benchmarking”, 219; Krause Hansen, “Power of performance indices”, 509.

[20] Telephone interviews with: Margareta Drzeniek-Hanouz, Director, Head of Competitiveness Research and Ciara Browne, Associate Director with the Centre for Global Competitiveness and Performance at the World Economic Forum, 18 March 2014; and Santhosh Srinivasan, Research Coordinator, Transparency International, 12 February 2014. See also footnote 46.

[21] Murphy, “Economic Reform”; Ehteshami and Murphy, “Transformation of the Corporatist State”; Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State*.

[22] Cammett, *Globalisation and Business*, 136

[23] Zemni, “From socio-economic protest”, 136.

[24] Murphy, “Economic Reform”; Bellin, *Stalled Democracy*.

[25] Hibou, *Force of Obedience*, 1-13.

[26] For instance the notorious Fonds de Solidarité Nationale (FSN), described below. Hibou, “Domination and control”.

[27] UNCTAD, *Investment Country Profiles*, 3

[28] Ayeb, “Social and political geography”.

[29] Hibou, “Domination and control”, 189

[30] Beau and Tuqoui, *Notre ami*, 149; Tsourapas, “The other side”, 8.

[31] Hibou, “Domination and control”, 191, 201.

[32] Cammett, *Globalisation and business*, 117-118; Tsourapas, “The other side”, 8.

[33] For instance EU funds for industrial upgrading: Cassarino, “Participatory development”; Godec, “Corruption in Tunisia”; Godec, “Show me the money”.

[34] Cammett, *Globalisation and business*, 120; Rijkers, Freund and Nucifora, *All in the family*, 6-9, 28)

[35] Rijkers, Freund and Nucifora, *All in the family*, 13

[36] Rijkers, Freund and Nucifora, *All in the family*, 19

[37] Beau and Graciet, *La Regente*, 44-45.

[38] Godec, “Corruption in Tunisia”

[39] Companies which complained of regime harassment include Elf Aquitaine, the Tunisian subsidiary to United States wind energy company UPC Wind Partners, and McDonalds. Beau and Tuqoui, *Notre ami*, 156; Godec, “Corruption in Tunisia”.

[40] Godec, “Corruption in Tunisia”. A United States government “investment climate statement” came to a similarly benign conclusion as late as 2010. US Embassy Tunis, “Investment Climate Report”.

[41] Cammett, *Globalisation and Business*, 120

[42] Beau and Tuqoui, *Notre ami*, 153

[43] Cammett, *Globalisation and Business*.

[44] Andersson and Heywood, “Politics of perception”; Campbell, “Perception is not reality”; Galtung, “Measuring the immeasurable”; Kenny, “Measuring corruption”; Knack, “Measuring Corruption”; Ko and Samajdar, “Evaluation of international corruption”; Saisana and Saltelli, *Corruption perceptions index*.

[45] Transparency International, *FAQs 2013*

[46] Transparency International, *Long methodological brief*, 5

[47] The author requested the ‘transformed data’ for individual data sources for the period 1995 to 2011 in personal communication (e-mail) with Santhosh Srinivasan, Research Coordinator at Transparency International, on 3 February 2014, 12 February 2014, and 18 July 2014. Mr Srinivasan responded to all these requests and agreed to a telephone interview about the TI methodology on 12 February 2014 but was unable to provide the data, citing time constraints.

[48] World Economic Forum, *Global competitiveness report*, 329

[49] Interview with Margareta Drzeniek-Hanouz, Director, Head of Competitiveness Research and Ciara Browne, Associate Director with the Centre for Global Competitiveness and Performance at the World Economic Forum, 18 March 2014.

[50] These data are from 2000 but the picture is unlikely to have changed dramatically by the time the WEF survey was conducted in 2010. World Bank, *Republic of Tunisia*, 2. In their efforts to understand the overly positive assessment of the survey, WEF researchers approached the question from the opposite end: They argued that the 39 per cent of SME businesses with less than 100 employees in the 2010 survey may not have been aware of the cronyism of larger players. Interview with Drzeniek-Hanouz and Browne, 18 March 2014. Yet this is unlikely. Cammett's interviews in the late 1990s showed that SMEs were painfully aware of top-level cronyism. Cammett, *Globalisation and business*, 139.

[51] Browne and Geiger, "Executive opinion survey", 51.

[52] Cammett, (2007, 114, 125 FN 15)

[53] Bellin, *Stalled democracy*, 69.

[54] Interview with Drzeniek-Hanouz and Browne, 18 March 2014.

[55] Interview with Drzeniek-Hanouz and Browne, 18 March 2014.

[56] Ballard, "Tunisia outranks U.S."

[57] Transparency International, *Methodological brief 2010*, 2.

[58] Galtung, "Measuring the immeasurable"; Knack, "Measuring corruption" 10-11.

[59] Transparency International, *Methodological brief 2010*.

[60] It is impossible to check whether this trend holds for the previous years because Transparency International was unable to provide the earlier data. See note 46.

[61] Telephone interview, Santhosh Srinivasan, Research Coordinator, Transparency International, 12 February 2014. Several studies that assess the usefulness of the CPI concur. Knack, "Measuring corruption", 15; Saisana and Saltelli, "Corruption perceptions index", 5.

[62] Knack, "Measuring corruption", 21-23

[63] Transparency International, *Methodological brief 2010*

[64] Pope, *Sourcebook*. Much of the following analysis followsHindess, “Investigating anti-corruption”.

[65] Pope, *Sourcebook*, 4.

[66] Pope, *Sourcebook*, 2.

[67] Pope, *Sourcebook*, 5.

[68] Khan, “Patron-client networks”, 16.

[69] Garland, “Governmentality”, 199.

[70] Tosa, “Anarchical governance”, 417.

[71] Porter, “Making serious measures”, 536, 540.

[72] Loewenheim, “Examining the state”, 259.

[73] Ko and Samajdar, “Evaluation of international corruption”, 509.

[74] Transparency International, “Press kit 2010”.

[75] Saisana and Saltelli, “Corruption perceptions index”, 15.