

Citizen Responsibility for Structural Corruption

Responsabilidad ciudadana frente a la corrupción estructural

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this essay is to explain what kind of responsibility citizens should assume for structural corruption. To delve into this topic, we analyze the components of a concept of structure as applied to the features of corruption, as well as the notions of guilt, responsibility and political responsibility. Thus, we argue that citizens who do not participate directly in acts of bribery are politically responsible for systemic corruption. Assuming political responsibility implies taking actions in the public sphere to combat the structure of corruption in conjunction with other citizens.

Keywords: Structural Corruption, Citizen Responsibility, Political Responsibility.

RESUMEN: El propósito de este ensayo es explicar qué tipo de responsabilidad deben asumir los ciudadanos frente a la corrupción estructural. Para profundizar en este tema, analizamos los componentes de un concepto de estructura aplicados a las características de la corrupción, así como las nociones de culpa, responsabilidad y responsabilidad política. De este modo, argumentamos que los ciudadanos que no participan de forma directa en actos de cohecho son políticamente responsables de la corrupción sistémica. Asumir la responsabilidad política implica realizar acciones en el ámbito público para combatir la estructura de la corrupción en conjunto con otros ciudadanos.

Palabras clave: Corrupción estructural, responsabilidad ciudadana, responsabilidad política.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The analysis of structural corruption presented here is based on a conceptual approach for which corruption is a practice of domination. Corruption is conceived as

...a wide difference in power between the State and society —a way of accumulation of privileges through illegal or illegitimate means...—, which corresponds to institutional and social inertia, rather than to “personal volition of the actors involved”. In the dynamics of this difference in power, coming from a domination bond, the dominant agent is able to interfere immediately, and intentionally, “to worsen the situation of the dominated”. This interference is arbitrary since it depends on the will and personal desires of the dominant agent, who does not consider citizens’ objectives or goals. (Fragoso, 2019, pp. 6 and 7)

Based on the idea of freedom as non-domination, neo-republicanism argues that political power interference in citizen affairs is licit as long as it remains within legal framework and can be challenged; under these conditions, coercion ceases to be arbitrary. The core of corruption, therefore, is a domination system that “prevents citizens from analyzing the reasons supporting norms and policies and, thus, define their interests and achieve their goals with allocated public resources” (Fragoso, 2019, pp. 11, 30).

The purpose of this essay is to provide an explanation of the kind of responsibility citizens have for structural corruption, identified as repeated practices of domination. From a neo-republican perspective, fighting against corruption is not only a civic virtue, but a useful tool to preserve political freedom, that is, freedom that allows citizens to act and decide independently of arbitrary power will, whims or opinions (Lovett, 2018).

The premise supporting our argument is that in repeated practices of domination, such as structural corruption, citizens who are not involved in corrupt transactions do have a political responsibility that their role as beneficiaries of their society impels them to assume. Political responsibility implies necessarily taking substantive actions against corruption and a public stance about the issue; it also entails coordination with others aimed at dismantling the very structure of corruption, that is, a process of self-inclusion of individuals in common life.

In the first section, we identify the components of a concept of structure to be applied to the features of corruption. In the second, we analyze the notion of guilt, the degrees of simple responsibility for an act of corruption, and why structural corruption involves political responsibility for those who have not committed any fault. Lastly, in a third section,

we outline some ideas to undermine, from citizenship, the structure of corruption: identifying the agents with better capacities to combat the problem, activating the mechanism of receptive trust (a person's desire for the good opinion of the others about him or her) and challenge the ideology sustaining the social system of corruption through institutional changes.

II. A STRUCTURAL PROBLEM

The literature about the causes of corruption points out two major trends. First, those considering corruption as an individual decision in which the social or political environment matters only to calculate the cost-benefit of such determination (Laporta, 1997, pp. 28-32; Nye, 1967 & Rose-Ackerman, 1978). Secondly, those arguing that corruption is the product of imperfect/insufficient laws or instruments to punish bribery and promote a sense of ethics (Klitgaard, 1988; Johnston, 2005; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Gong & Ma, 2009).

What we intend to demonstrate throughout this chapter, however, is the operation of a general background structure which is closely related to the link between the State and citizens, and to the practices, meanings, and appreciations that this link detonates. According to this vision, an ethical adjustment of individual attitudes and legal or administrative reforms make sense if they are aimed at transforming the structure allowing corruption and, in a second phase, if they outcome of the aforementioned structural change. At the same time, some aspects of the government-society relationship, at first glance, do not fit in corruption —such as mistrust and inequality—, but they trigger a political coexistence favoring ideologies and behaviors that exalt bribery and cheating; they are implicit factors in social interaction that have acquired solidity and become institutionalized, even informally —however contradictory it may seem (Giddens, 1984, pp. 23 and 24). Considering from this broader perspective, corruption is a structural phenomenon not restricted to individual behavior and actions, which includes laws and institutions but goes beyond them —which does not imply that institutions do not have a preponderant role redefining structures.

Every social system¹ —corruption is one of them— is made up of activities that “human agents” reproduce in a certain time and place, and contains a structure, in a tacit way (Giddens, p. 25). Corruption is a social system with its own structure. In this analysis, we use the concept of struc-

¹ Giddens points out that a social system refers to “reproduced relations between actors or collectivities, organized as regular social practices” (1984, p. 25).

ture proposed by Sally Haslanger. For her, the structures are “networks of social relations” that assume different forms according to the cultural and historical context; social relations, in turn, are shaped by practices and are not always intentional or conscious. Practices, in their simplest conception, are “interaction patterns” or behavior regularities; but only explanatory patterns of interaction, which Haslanger calls “robust”, can form a structure. In addition to the “robust” interaction patterns, there are two other types of regular practices: the “thin” ones and the “thick” ones. The “thin” regularities encompass a set of simultaneous and coordinated behaviors towards some end, such as obeying traffic signals. In the “thick” practices, in a subset of them, the participants know the “normative responsibility” of their behavior. The “robust” regularities are half-way between the “thin” and the “thick”: here, participants do not always not completely or not all of them, know or control the quality of their actions and their results. These kinds of regularities have in themselves material to be explained; as people build them collectively and unconsciously, some aspects of them that are not revealed *a priori* deserve to be discovered (Haslanger, 2014, pp. 21-23, 25). However, “thick” practices of people in places of power support, encourage and justify “robust” practices of structural corruption. For this reason, the “thick” side, related to those who are fully aware of their corrupt behavior and act voluntarily, is also useful to understand the structure of this phenomenon.

Thus, a social structure consists of a set of relationships, in turn made up of repeated and rooted practices, understanding “practice” as a behavior depending on certain “cultural schemes in response to resources”. A structure, then, is made up of schemes and resources (Haslanger, 2015, pp. 3-4).

Schemes refer to blocks of “culturally shared” concepts and norms through which “information is organized and interpreted, and action, thought and affection are coordinated”. A central feature of cultural schemes is that they take on the social meanings of a given context, that is, ‘the semiotic content of various actions, inactions, or status’. The meanings embedded in cultural schemes impact on the way individuals interact with each other, and on how aspects such as power, authority or opportunities are valued and awarded. Schemes can evolve over time and in accordance with contexts but are, in general, highly resistant to change (Haslanger, 2015, pp. 4-6).

A case illustrating the function of cultural schemes in society—whose influence can be even stronger than that of the legal system in the behavior of citizens and state authorities—is the political scandal in Guatemala at the beginning of 2015. Media and judicial officials denounced

a network of corruption in customs, in which businessmen bribed public servants in exchange of paying a much lower tax rate than the officially established. This case was called *La Línea* (The Line) because public servants communicated with businessmen through a special telephone line, by which an alternative payment of taxes was administered. These events became enormously relevant because the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG, by its acronym in Spanish) —instituted by the UN— made public thousands of telephone recordings that involved Vice President Roxanna Baldeti and President Otto Pérez Morales; both resigned from their posts under public opinion pressure and citizen demonstrations. In interviews for the media, president and vice president frequently pointed out that their actions had not been illegal, since the laws of their country had “loopholes” and were not clear enough about what was allowed or not. According to the statements of these officials, abuse of power stems from a certain ambiguity in the rules that regulate the conduct of public servants, so that, as long as this set of laws is not entirely explicit, those who hold public office will be pushed by an irresistible force to a fraudulent proceeding. In the words of the former president himself:

Here we could put a monsignor and the poor monsignor would not be able to control all the corruption that exists due to the system itself... The only thing the system is doing is dragging us along and no matter how much we do, for the government that arrives [*sic*] it will not be able to, really, it will not be able to... (Ángel, 2016, pp. 311, 319)

According to these Guatemalan authorities, corruption is neither a violation of the law nor a matter of ethical values. For Baldeti and Pérez Morales, the system itself induces corruption and makes it inevitable, and nothing can change until the system is transformed. Both public servants are right by pointing out a structure beyond personal ethics that works almost “automatically” and seems to be inescapable; however, for them, this structure or “system” is nothing more than the weakened and poorly assembled legal framework. There might be gaps in legislation allowing abuse of power not labelled as a crime, which in any case constitutes an act undermining the legitimacy of political power, which fits the category of corruption; but the normalization of bribery also implies shared social meanings like the idea that politicians or public servants might obtain additional resources to their salary at the expense of the public treasury and, if they do not do so (if they do not take advantage of the legal loopholes), they would be acting stupidly. This belief is not only behind the actions of the president and the vice president, but also behind the movements of lesser or very low rank officials: in the case of “La

Línea”, the customs staff who did the “dirty” work, those who benefit from extra income, although in a much smaller amount than their bosses.

Resources, on the other hand, the second component of the structure, are things of any kind —human or non-human, animate or inanimate— with some value also of any kind —positive or negative. Resources are the material portion of structures, how structures are manifested in the world, or rather, their “putting into action” by means properly physical. In short, structures are not only mental constructions or meanings, but they also have a material side —which includes people’s skills, knowledge, or physical strength— given by resources. Resources, then, embody and justify schemes’ interactions in a social environment (Haslanger, 2012, pp. 415 and 416).

In “La Línea”, for example, the “set of tools... material, [and human] goods... to perceive and respond in certain ways” is composed by devices and telephone lines, conversations on the phone, messages alluding to illegal transactions and encrypted communication codes behind them, “alternative” government paperwork endorsing the payment of taxes on certain products and the work of customs officials. In cases of corruption and other social injustices, resources also justify and reproduce the schemes at the level of material inequality. Following our example, the small customs officer of “La Línea” receives a very low wage and needs more money to provide his family with a decent way of life; he is not conscious that the ethical integrity of his political community is more relevant than covering up bribes to obtain financial compensation. Several public servants might have become involved in “La Línea” under threat of dismissal or other types of coercion, without any means or protection to denounce. In addition, these people’s professional training may be so basic that they may have little chances to find a job with a similar or higher salary than the one they receive in the customs sector. In this sense, their decision, far from being completely free, is constrained by a series of conditions related to one of the components of the structure, resources, which reinforce certain meanings, ideas, and ways of thinking (schemes).

In this way, collective cultural schemes and the organization of resources are interdependent, in a causal and constitutive sense, and create a structure only when mutually nourished and implicated. A structure, that is, a series of behaviors (practices) subject to schemes (meanings) responding to resources, holds up the social system where corruption has become endemic. In this context, citizens internalize social meanings allowing them to use public resources to fill in their economic or status needs; in this process, they barely question their sense of ethics or moral probity, and their respect for the law.

The structure of the social system of corruption is also based on a practice called particularism. Particularism is defined as “the regular distribution of public goods on a non-universalistic basis that reflects the vicious sharing of power within those societies”. In particularism, the State’s relationship with individuals depends on their social status. Citizens do not expect to be treated with justice and equality by public authorities: a similar treatment is only expected between people of the same layer of society. When bribery is the norm and not the exception, particularism establishes “the culture of privilege”, leaving out universalist principles, namely, equality of treatment and access to resources regardless of the group or class to which people belong. In particularist orders, citizens are better or worse treated, or have more or less access to public goods, depending on how close or how far they are from power. Therefore, individuals fight each other to approach and be welcomed by privileged groups, in what has been called “competitive particularism” (an intermediate phase between patrimonial and universalist political organization). Due to collective internalization of the idea of unequal treatment, participation in “competitive particularism” is more plausible than striving to transform state-citizenship bonds. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi asserts that in developing countries corruption is an eminently political problem related to distribution of power—instead, in developed countries, corruption refers to individual cases of violation of law. In some states regarded as democracies for periodic elections, modernity—a clear border between public and private spheres, and fair distribution of public goods among equal citizens—has not been firmly established, hence public administration is still considered a source of rent extraction (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006, pp. 86, 87, 91 and 92).

Once explained the practices, schemes, and resources of structural corruption, we shall make some clarifications. First, corrupt behaviors largely guided by shared social meanings (cultural schemes) do not place the causes of corruption in cultural traits of a given society—not in cultural traits as permanent values determining collective destiny.

Although structure affects people coexisting and acting, social practices shape structure and rebuild it in turn (Haslanger, 2011, p. 19). Due to its dual nature, structure is not opposed to human agency, on the contrary, encompasses it. Thus, structure’s cultural features do not refer to petrified “ultimate values”, but to cognitive patterns, skills, semiotic content to interpret reality; all these aspects can be subverted by institutions and rules that claim different practices for, over time, inducing new value guidelines (Rabotnikof, 2003, p. 54).

Before concluding this section, we would like to mention the concept of corruption of Enrique Camacho Beltrán and Francisco García González,

a rule-based concept through which it is argued that corruption is not a cultural phenomenon. These authors argue that “corruption establishes parallel rules or conventions to the ones dictated by the law... which undermines the law’s authority by making them, at least in practice, optional”. From this point of view, in countries where rules are clear, pertinent, and acts of corruption effectively punished, people are much less likely to think of bribery as a way of protecting their rights (2019, pp. 1342, 1356 and 1357). Nevertheless, this valuable concept is not completely disconnected from a cultural mechanism, it works instead as a complement in the case of structural corruption. In systemic or pervasive corruption, the set of rules parallel to formal legislation—the schemes—, as well as governmental influence and power pacts allowing impunity—schemes in which resources are also involved—, make corruption a political issue, one of beliefs and rooted behaviors, and not a matter exclusively legal.

III. RESPONSIBILITY, CITIZENSHIP, AND STRUCTURAL CORRUPTION

The purpose of this section focuses on a possible answer to the question of citizens’ responsibility for structural corruption, whether they are direct participants or not. It should be noted that the concept of citizenship is limited here to the individual who belongs to a political community associated with a national state, holder of rights and subject to a legal framework; this notion includes citizens residing outside the national territory, since their actions or omissions could also affect simple or structural corruption. It is also important to stress that, in its most classical political meaning, citizenship aims at individuals’ participation in public life through deliberation (Cortina, pp. 30, 39), nevertheless, meddling in political affairs is typically not allowed for non-citizens. According to neo-republican notion of corruption, freedom as non-domination, the basis for combating structural corruption, entails citizen’s definition of the reasons behind the laws and the questioning of the content and quality of norms. Therefore, embroidering on the responsibility of migrant or non-national population exceeds the scope of this research.

Schemes, an essential part of structure, are deep, difficult to identify and extirpate; people could find themselves trapped in a network of meanings, not being able to modify contents, even if they do not share the beliefs sustaining an ideology and a set of practices. We have pointed out that structures shape individual practices—that structures are social practices themselves—, however, people’s practices also make up structures, reproduce them and could even modify them. Structures are both:

the vehicle of the practices that builds social systems, and their effect. Therefore, agents and structures are interdependent, however, their link does not imply dualism (two separated principles), but rather a duality (two characters in the same entity) —what Giddens calls “duality of structure” (1979, p. 69; Haslanger, 2012, p. 404). According to this notion, in contexts of strong social constraint, in which individuals seem to “have no choice”, actions are not completely diluted, namely, individuals continue to be agents, do not stop exercising some kind of power (Giddens, 1984, p. 15). In other words, structure is not an impulse of nature or a mechanical traction that impels people to act in a certain way, as alleged by the heads of the Executive in the Guatemalan case to justify their conduct.

This concept of duality confirms that there is really no dichotomy between personal responsibility and structural causes of a phenomenon, since understanding a social system functioning requires the analysis of both elements: structure configuring practices and citizens who shape the structure with their practices. In her proposal about the kind of responsibility members of a society should assume for issues of social injustice, Iris Marion Young argues that in theoretical debates, personal responsibility is usually linked to work and family. Citizens are considered responsible just for keeping a paid work to support themselves and their dependents, without being helped by other people or by State institutions. This individualistic and self-sufficient approach excludes responsibility for people with whom one shares different social processes. From Young’s point of view, individuals should be held responsible not only for the sequels of their decisions and actions, but also for the effects of the social processes in which they take part (2011, pp. 10, 11 and 39). This approach to responsibility was intended for social justice issues: poverty, discrimination, well-being. Young’s approach to studying responsibility for structural corruption is useful and relevant because it underlines individual’s role for power relations in society, in particular, the significant difference of power between the State and citizens, which is the result of a domination practice such as corruption. Then, the question to be answered is how agents who are not directly involved in corrupt transactions could be responsible for corruption in a structural sense; in this regard, the responsibility for permanent and extended corruption for those not directly involved in a causal and direct way must be explained only in terms of political responsibility.

Before fully addressing political responsibility, we shall make some clarifications about the difference between guilt and responsibility. Young recovers Hannah Arendt’s concern for this conceptual distinction in her careful reading and analysis of *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, a work examining the problem of guilt for massive extermi-

nation of Jews in Nazi Germany. In social and political events, orchestrated by a huge and complex bureaucratic machinery – such as the Jewish holocaust –, causing serious damage to large numbers of people, the blame of specific actors is diluted amidst a mass of individuals who collaborated actively or passively. For this reason, Arendt affirms that the guilt many young Germans claimed to have in the second half of the 20th century for the Third Reich's politics is superfluous —“a «cheap sentimentality» rather than the more difficult and dangerous work of politics”. Blame extended to the population in general ends up acquitting the true perpetrators, those who planned and/or executed the offense (Young, 2011, p. 85). Likewise, in an environment of endemic corruption, specific culprits should be identified and judged for each act of bribery, even if all members of society contribute, in their own way, to preserving that situation. Blame, according to Young, must be attributed to personal and individual actions of the agents: they should be condemned for their specific conduct; here, guilt is not linked with any kind of responsibility.

Before outlining the nature of political responsibility, it will be explained the meaning of simple responsibility, and then indicate why, from our perspective, a direct act of corruption —which implies guilt— entails responsibility in a broad sense, but with certain nuances depending on an individual's tasks according to their social position. Philip Pettit was chosen to delineate the different sorts of responsibility because his civic republicanism allows to analyze corruption more as a form of relationship between society and the State, as a way of coexisting in the public sphere, and less as an absolutely personal decision or as unconnected individual acts.

But why do these two theoretical approaches, Pettit's and Young's, work together to explain responsibility for structural corruption? Both, theory of oppression and republicanism, frame citizens' actions in their relationship with political power, with the State. Both emphasize the role of individuals, but always in their nexus with people in the collective and with power. In this sense, structural corruption, from Young and Pettit, is conditionally related to a context shaped by hierarchical relationships to which individuals should respond considering the effect of their actions on other people, beyond their personal and immediate interests. This implies, in the case of Young, assuming responsibility for the system of oppression and, in the case of Pettit, combatting domination.

According to Philip Pettit, ascribing responsibility, “in a relevant sense”, means that an agent “is a candidate for blame” if what he did is “something bad” and “a candidate for approval and praise” if what he did is “something good”. In this sense, assigning responsibility is not

limited to identifying someone's role as the causal agent of a result (Pettit, 2007, pp. 173 and 174).

Simple responsibility must be ascribed for a specific act —not for a state of affairs— and, rather than pointing out who provoked an effect, it is aimed at developing a brief analysis to resolve whether a citizen had the required conditions to be blamed or praised for such an effect (Pettit, 2007, p. 174). Although simple responsibility in its negative aspect always involves guilt, Pettit insists that responsibility chiefly seeks to set aside blame for a moment and to grasp the underlying motives, circumstances, institutional failures, among other factors, related to the environment (or to the subject in connection with his environment) that led to a certain action and its results. Through such analysis, we can understand how, despite an adverse context, a citizen acted commendably; here, responsibility is assigned in a positive sense, for having avoided damage or circumvented guilt. From this angle, the notion of responsibility fulfills an evaluative function: denoting whether a conduct was good or bad after a study of the context, alluding thus to a “historical” responsibility (Cane, 2002, p. 57). The analysis to determine if an individual is candidate to be responsible must consider the three following factors (Pettit, 2011, p. 155):

- 1) Normative significance: the agent is faced with a moral or “normatively significant choice” which involves “the possibility of doing something good or bad, right or wrong”.
- 2) Judgmental capacity: from his or her social place, the agent is able to understand a given situation and can access the evidence to make “normative judgments about the options” presented to him or her. At this point and having satisfactorily covered the normative meaning, a citizen who grasped the scenario and evaluated evidence, should decide not to get involved in corruption.
- 3) Relevant control: the agent's choice is truly the result of his or her will and his or her sphere of control, or rather, the individual “has the control required for choosing between the options” based on normative judgements.

Both guilt and simple responsibility gravitates around the “self”; for this reason, both correspond to moral and legal spheres, and both are assigned by specific acts (Young, 2011, p. 78); we insist, however, while guilt is inclined to causality and punishment, simple responsibility entails an evaluative task of the context which led the individual to a certain action.

On the other hand, political responsibility refers to an individual or a group's (a nation, a corporation) ability to publicly acknowledge or declare before others about their actions or omissions for the world's state of affairs. As opposed to guilt or responsibility *tout court*, to be politically responsible does not require to take part directly in any action, it is only needed that agents actively or passively "support governments, institutions, and practices [that drive] to commit crimes and wrongs" (Young, 2011, pp. 91 and 92).

According to Iris Marion Young, exercising political responsibility means associating, with other individuals, in public actions to intervene and transform a social order as citizens,²² far from adhering to "the interests or wishes of State officials in their bureaucratic functions" (Young, 2011, p. 89). In ideal terms, political responsibility should be a constant principle from which the members of a society must not abdicate; however, treating political responsibility as a duty implies very high standards of action and normative demands that few individuals can meet. It is frequently argued that in many scenarios, political responsibility simply cannot be assumed, such as cases of structural corruption. Here, people feel trapped by a phenomenon that exceeds them because they alone cannot change the relation between the State and citizenship. Nevertheless, the concept of political responsibility—as Young emphasizes—is not oriented to isolated actions; on the contrary, it specifies that institutional change and power transformation will only take place through the joint and organized action of citizens. Even so, there are those who have greater resources and tools to lead or participate in collective action.

In the box below, the reader will find a synthesis of the concepts of guilt, simple responsibility and political responsibility that may be useful to discuss the role of these three ideas in the study of corruption and structural corruption.

²² This also includes encouraging, at a collective level, criticism and transformation of apparently harmless daily individual activities that cause the suffering of others (Schiff, 2008, p. 113).

	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Sphere of ascription</i>	<i>Field of operation</i>
<i>Guilt</i>	Condemnation for a specific reprehensible conduct.	A specific conduct	Moral and legal ³
<i>Simple responsibility</i>	Analysis evaluating whether an agent meets the conditions to be considered worthy of blame or approval (responsible in a negative or positive sense).	A specific conduct	Moral and legal
<i>Political responsibility</i>	Ability to publicly recognize individual actions or omissions in ordinary injustices and to take part with others to transform a certain social order.	A state of affairs	Political and social

To end this section, based on Young’s typology on the forms of relation between individuals and a crime carried out by the State (2011, p. 81), we show how the notions of guilt, simple responsibility and political responsibility of agents are applied to corruption in four areas:

- 1) Those who are guilty of a corrupt transaction (morally and legally).
- 2) Those who avoid being guilty (at the legal level) through moral acts.
- 3) Those who are not guilty but do have political responsibility.
- 4) Those who take charge of their political responsibility.

1. Those who are Guilty of a Corrupt Transaction (Morally and Legally)

Individuals directly involved in an act of bribery and often part of a corruption network. Here, the ethical assessment behind the subject’s intentions does not matter—it does not matter an evil intent or the purpose of causing some harm—but rather the “objective consequence of his deeds” (Young, 2011, p. 82). Those committing this crime or contributing directly to this offense must be judged by the corresponding justice instances and sanctioned, if appropriate.

³ Moral guilt is attributed when acts are not based on citizens or State authorities equal respect and consideration for others. Legal guilt, on the other hand, is attributed to transgressions of principles codified in the law.

While anyone involved in an act of corruption is guilty, not all participants can be held to the same degree of responsibility. Each person's level of responsibility depends on his or her position in society and in the hierarchy of charges; this factor defines to what extent a citizen, when faced with a moral choice (normative meaning), has sufficient information to evaluate the options (judgment capacity) and, finally, can decide without being coerced by any authority or by their own context (relevant control). Once made this analysis, it will be possible to determine an agent's simple responsibility (in this case, in a negative sense). Some people directly involved in corruption may not be held responsible, but even so, they are guilty and deserve a sanction, albeit a significantly reduced sentence due to an adverse context to exercise their capacity for judgment and relevant control. Based on these considerations, we distinguish three types of culpability in structural corruption, linked to the actors' degree of responsibility: 1.1) the grand corruption, 1.2) the average bureaucrat or "family man", and 1.3) the petty corruption.

Grand corruption refers to very high-level officials who devise complex strategies to take advantage of public resources, even if the life or integrity of other people is at stake. Those who hold power and must make a morally significant decision (normative meaning) are in the best position to have access to the elements that allow them to understand and appreciate the scenario (judgment capacity), therefore, they have the control to choose (relevant control) because they are the ones who ultimately define the policies, the rules, and the meaning of their conduct and that of their subordinates.

Powerful individuals are not only fortunate for their wide access to knowledge, but also for a kind of "privileged ignorance" resulting from a set of "cognitive vices" developed by elites to protect themselves. According to José Medina, those who manage to fine-tune an epistemic attitude called "active ignorant subject" have eagerly participated in the creation of defense mechanisms to maintain blocks of ignorance that help them uphold their privileges. The high-ranking officials of corruption cultivate what Medina calls "first-order ignorance", at the object level, that is, the lack of recognition of their relationship with other people (who become irrelevant), except their close circles; subsequently, they develop a "second order ignorance", at a meta-level, by which they fail to register their own insensitivity towards others (Medina, 2013, pp. 33, 39, 127-129, 131, 134 and 149).

The second type of culpability for structural corruption, that of the average bureaucrat or "family man", involves middle or lower middle level officials who are involved in this practice to keep their jobs and maintain

a certain status. The *ethos* that guides this behavior is similar to what Edward C. Banfield called “amoral familism”, which reads as follows: “maximize the short-term material advantage of the nuclear family; assume that everyone else will do the same” (1958, pp. 33, 34, 85, 87 and 111).

In the third case, that of guilt for petty corruption, simple responsibility becomes even more blurred since those implicated, officials with precarious and complex life circumstances or citizens who cannot do without a service, do not know or do not have access to the data that allows them to evaluate their action (judgment capacity), and neither do they find alternatives to survive or obtain the necessary public assistance (relevant control). For this reason, although they are guilty, they do not fully meet the requirements to be considered responsible *tout court or*, at least, a large part of their responsibility ends up diluted.

2. *Those who Avoid being Guilty (at the Legal Level) through Moral Acts*

These people recognize their ability to distinguish right from wrong, act accordingly, and are consistent. Consequently, they quit their jobs if asked to be part of a corrupt transaction (even if they will be unemployed for a while and supporting their family will not be easy) or refuse to do so even if they suffer job isolation; in this way, they conjure up guilt and their involvement in a crime. By choosing this alternative to avoid harm and blame, these individuals challenge the prevailing structure and deviate from practices considered normal; in a society devoid of containment and support mechanisms, the costs are usually high. Nevertheless, such praiseworthy acts remain in the moral sphere as their authors do not make them public: their rebellion against structure is passive, silent and private. These reactions do not reach the political sphere because people do not publicly oppose corruption in which they refused to participate and do not formally denounce it, they only —although not a small feat— disapprove of the orders of their superiors and decide to get rid of them.

These individuals confronted a morally significant choice (normative meaning), could access to the required elements to evaluate it (judgment capacity), and were able to apply their evaluation with a certain mastery —some in greater proportion than others—, willing not to get involved in corrupt acts (relevant control). They were simply responsible but deserving of approval and praise for their actions (they avoided blame and negative adjudication of simple responsibility).

3. *Those who are not Guilty but do have Political Responsibility*

These people are not implicated in the direct causal chain of corruption but are politically responsible since they support with others —albeit passively— the performance of institutions acting on their behalf. These citizens dogmatically and indifferently accept popular sayings such as the Mexican saying “*el que no transa, no avanza*” (“one who does not cheat does not advance”), do not feel impelled to think over the functioning of the institutions or on the conduct of their officials, and prefer to ignore acts of corruption or consider them normal and acceptable. These individuals do not report bribery they observe and contribute to a “political vacuum”: oriented to private sphere or lacking the means or spaces for collective action, they do not organize themselves to present reasoned judgments about public incidents or develop mechanisms attaining transformations.

In the ideal model described here, people have not faced the dilemma of getting involved or not in situations of bribery or extortion (normative meaning), therefore, they have not been able to appraise such a situation (judgment capacity) or choose how to act accordingly (relevant control). For these reasons, simple responsibility cannot be assigned. Nonetheless, they do have a political responsibility that are not assuming: ensuring that the effects of institutional tasks do not harm citizens; observe, with others, public officials’ conduct and their interaction with private actors, and with society in general; to advance control mechanisms against authority abuse; and manifest their opinion publicly.

4. *Those who Take Charge of their Political Responsibility*

This category includes those who did not commit faults (they are not guilty) but wonder about their responsibility for structural corruption. Being public officials, private officials, or citizens in general, people deploy viable actions, in coordination with others —or, in fact, encouraging others to collective action—, aimed at changing schemes behind corrupt practices and using resources fairly. Assuming political responsibility differs from praiseworthy individual moral acts because of its public character and for calling other subjects to mobilization.

Finally, it is worth making a brief mention of the possible conflict between citizens’ duty to combat corruption in the public arena and the obligations and expectations that weigh on individuals as members of other groups such as family, workplace, neighborhood (competing social expectations). In the first case, civic republicanism stresses that individual life

is successful if the life of political community is also successful, therefore, the life of those who decide not to be part of an act of bribery is better in a critical sense (what “we should do to get the right kind of life”) (Dworkin, 1993, pp. 100, 179). In the second case, it is relevant to point out that, unlike the notion of structure applied to questions of social justice, as Iris Marion Young very rightly does, in the case of corruption one cannot speak, at least not completely, of a background of “involuntary structural disadvantage”, because corrupt acts can be detected and punished. Nor can corruption be treated as the lack of coordination of well-intentioned acts of a large number of people—as the concept of oppression does—since many of the actors involved in corruption have the tools to know, and in fact do know, the harmful consequences of their behavior (in addition to being organized in networks). In this sense, we reiterate our adaptation of the idea of structure to the specific features of the phenomenon of corruption. In our approach, as it has been stated, republicanism and the theory of oppression converge on citizens’ capability of agency when confronting corruption in the midst of structure and social hierarchy. According to neo-republicanism, analytical decision and individual volition would be constantly challenging structure. According to theory of oppression, citizens recognize themselves as politically responsible and take joint actions to change the state of affairs.

IV. GNAWING THE STRUCTURE OF CORRUPTION

The concept of simple responsibility fulfills an evaluative function since it allows us to classify past conduct as good or bad and understand context’s anomalies behind it. The notion of political responsibility, on the other hand, has a normative and future-oriented function, indicating how people should behave to curb structural corruption (Cane, 2002, p. 57). This section outlines ideas that could guide some strategies to attack the structure of corruption. These ideas are grouped into three themes: degrees and types of political responsibility, a mechanism of trust responsiveness, and critique of ideology.

1. *Degrees and Types of Political Responsibility*

Agents have different levels and types of political responsibility for endemic corruption and this understanding is essential to figure actions that truly target the structure of the problem. The different degrees of political responsibility for pervasive corruption depend on the agents’ social posi-

tion, which provides them with different tools and capacities—and in different intensity—to collectively attack this problem.⁴⁴

We find, then, four “parameters of reasoning” that allow us to identify the agents’ political responsibility of and what they can do to undermine structural corruption. These parameters are the same as those proposed by Iris Marion Young to analyze the different degrees of responsibility for justice and are employed here to examine responsibility for structural corruption (2011, pp. 144-151; 2006, pp. 126-130).

The first parameter is *power*; there are people with a high degree of power, potential or real, to influence social processes. Citizens with the greatest power to cast down corruption are the heads of public institutions, leaders of political parties, very high-level state officials—in any of the three powers: executive, legislative or judicial—and the owners or chief executive officers of large private companies.

The second “parameter of reasoning” is *privilege*, namely, prerogatives of structural corruption for agents in positions of power or relative power who regularly participate, even silently, in bribery—for reasons of tacit agreement between elites, institutional habit or coercion. These actors might not directly participate in corruption but passively condone or accept it. For example, legislators who obtain resources for their party from a powerful lobby in exchange for a few votes in favor of a law, or a traffic police officer who accept bribes as a common feature of his job (in part because this behavior is encouraged and approved by his bosses). But unlike the legislator, the traffic police officer has very little power in his institutional position, so the popular representative—as well as the local police chief—should be given greater political responsibility to go against structural corruption.

A third parameter is *interest*. Those who are visibly affected by corruption have a particular interest in reducing it and, therefore, should assume responsibility and organize collectively. This category includes, for example, residents of a neighborhood with poorly paved streets because part of the money to repair the asphalt was diverted to political campaigns. Other agents may coincide with victims in the fight against structural corruption. In the case of the paving in poor condition, some companies could formally protest for not having won the public bidding to pave when

⁴⁴ Other authors confront the model of responsibility based on guilt (blame responsibility), oriented towards punishment for past acts, with a model based on tasks (task responsibility), which focuses on the responsibility of people according to the duties of their charge and how the work assigned to each other contributes to producing or avoiding certain results (Goodin, 1987, pp. 179 and 180).

their services exceeded the cost-quality ratio of the selected company, whose work was spoiled very quickly.

Finally, the fourth parameter is *collective capacity* or the agents' position from which they can employ the resources of instances already organized to promote change and convene others to action. These citizens, who possess or have access to the tools, spaces and capacity for collective organization, must highlight the interests of the agents at the top of power using the structures of corruption for their own ends.

2. A Mechanism of Trust-Responsiveness

Trust-responsiveness is based on "the desire for the good opinion of others" or the willingness to appear trustworthy to others; it does not matter if this is a "basic" desire of human nature or a tactic to achieve some objective or material goods, as long as this individual strategic feature is not opposed to general interest. This need for esteem belongs to a class of goods that human beings seek, called "attitude dependent";⁵⁵ this type of goods can only be enjoyed if individuals find positive attitudes in others and in themselves, and if they can trust these dispositions in others and in themselves (Pettit, 1995, p. 212).

3. Critique of Ideology

Pieces of ideology reinforcing schemes of a corrupt structure appear in public officials signals to citizens that become part of popular thinking and sayings remaining in collective memory —such as, once again, the phrase "*el que no transa, no avanza*" ("one who does not cheat does not advance"). This kind of meanings produces a harmful impact on the construction of trust and feeds cynicism, eroding the desire to be the object of a good opinion of others. Those assuming their political responsibility for structural corruption recognize that the idea "corrupt people progress" has become a social truth —in an epistemic sense—, but they resist invoking this scheme to avoid its reinforcement.

⁵ There is also another type of goods, those called "dependent on action", which are achieved through the efforts of the interested persons, or through the efforts of others, without the intervention of attitudes or dispositions based on such efforts.

V. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Structural corruption consists of a series of practices of domination—based on a considerable difference in power between the State and citizens—that are deeply embedded in the behavioral habits of people and institutions. These practices are reproduced on a daily and repeated basis by virtue of the two components that operate in their structure and that sustain each other: schemes and resources.

People directly involved in an act of corruption are guilty in the causal sense and have different degrees of simple responsibility according to their position in the government scale of charges, according to the information available to them to evaluate the context, and their degree of autonomy to make decisions. For structural corruption, political responsibility can only be attributed to individuals who are not involved in corrupt transactions but who passively accept the shared meanings (schemas and ideology) that strengthen the social system of corruption, as well as the materialization of its schemes. Political responsibility lies with citizens making up a society as “conscious moral agents” who should care about unjust actions implemented by state institutions harming their fellow citizens, and themselves tangentially.

Assuming political responsibility for structural corruption requires speaking out publicly against acts of bribery and organizing with others to act for the transformation of institutional practices. Political responsibility points to elicit changes in schemes and in distribution of public goods, promote public trust and the social importance of individual prestige, namely, the good opinion of others for our praiseworthy actions. It is important to note that not everyone is politically responsible in the same way or to the same degree.

And, although all citizens have a duty to combat structural corruption, not everyone can do so in the same way and to the same extent.

Finally, it should be noted that the Guatemalan social movement of 2015 against “*La Línea*”, although successful, focused on an isolated case within a system of organic corruption. This social movement, some scholars assert, was supported by the US embassy and by a fraction of the Guatemalan business community tired of opportunism and the excessive ambition of the political class of military origin that made of power a business. Social demonstrations also appealed to citizen interest to battle widespread corruption in society.⁶⁶ Notwithstanding that the president’s

⁶⁶ Cuevas Molina, Rafael. (septiembre-diciembre de 2015). Guatemala: la trama de intereses en torno a la movilización ciudadana del 2015. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Latinoamericanos*, 5(3), pp. 443 and 444.

and vice-president's crimes were penalized, punishment was consumed more by circumstantial factors than by a strategy to combat the very structure of the problem that included a profound criticism of particularist schemes, based on substantive adjustments to public policies —greater legal, economic and rights equality.

Why then is “La Línea” a normatively powerful example? First, because “La Línea” illustrates arbitrary interference, in accordance with neo-republicanism, of very high-level public officials to the detriment of citizens, affecting their rights and options. Second, because it exemplifies how particularist meanings and codes —proper to the structure, according to our adaptation of Young’s term— operate in high spheres of power, and how they are transmitted to public servants of lesser rank and to population. And third, because it shows that it is possible to reduce the difference in power between the State and citizens through agency and joint action —in the case of “La Línea”, urban population called for public demonstrations, to which other sectors of society gradually joined, under the motto “#RenunciaYa”, based on inquiries made by the CICIG (Torres, 2015, p. 5).

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