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**VOLUME 1**

**THE GLOBAL ENCYCLOPAEDIA  
OF INFORMALITY**

**EDITED BY ALENA LEDENEVA**

**UCLPRESS**



# The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality

## FRINGE

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The FRINGE series explores the roles that complexity, ambivalence and immeasurability play in social and cultural phenomena. A cross-disciplinary initiative bringing together researchers from the humanities, social sciences and area studies, the series examines how seemingly opposed notions such as centrality and marginality, clarity and ambiguity, can shift and converge when embedded in everyday practices.

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Pert Zusi is Lecturer at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies of UCL.



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Fredrik Galtung, Chairman, Integrity Action



# The Global Encyclopaedia of Informality

*Understanding Social and Cultural Complexity*

## **Volume 1**

Edited by Alena Ledeneva

with

Anna Bailey, Sheelagh Barron,  
Costanza Curro and Elizabeth Teague

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# Preface

Alena Ledeneva

This book invites you on a voyage of discovery, to explore society's open secrets, to comprehend unwritten rules and to uncover informal practices. Broadly defined as 'ways of getting things done', these informal yet powerful practices tend to escape articulation in official discourse. We have identified unique research into such practices across area and across discipline, which charts the grey zones and blurred boundaries, and distinguished types of ambivalence and contexts of complexity. Our Global Informality Project database is searchable by region, keyword or type of practice. Do explore what works and how, where and why!

The informal practices revealed in this book include emotion-driven exchanges (from gifts or favours to tribute for services), values-based practices of solidarity and belonging enacting multiple identities, interest-driven know-how (from informal welfare to informal employment and entrepreneurship, often not seen or appreciated as expertise), and power-driven forms of co-optation and control. The paradox – or not – of the invisibility of these informal practices is their ubiquity. Expertly practised by insiders but often hidden from outsiders, informal practices are, as this book shows, deeply rooted all over the world.

Fostering informal ties with 'godfathers' in Montenegro, 'dear brothers' in Finland and 'little cousins' in Switzerland – known locally as *kumstvo*, *Hyvä veli*, and *Vetterliwirtschaft* – as well as *Klungel* (solidarity) in Cologne, Germany, *compadrazgo* (reciprocity) in Chile, or *blat* (networks of favours) in Russia, can make a world of difference to your well-being. Yet just like family relations, social ties not only enable but also limit individual decisions, behaviour and rights, as is revealed in the entries on *janteloven* (aversion to individuality) in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, or *krugovaia poruka* (joint responsibility) in Russia and Europe.

The Global Informality Project (GIP) assembles pioneering research into the grey areas of informality, known yet unarticulated, enabling yet constraining, moral to 'us' yet immoral to 'them', divisive and hard to measure or integrate into policy. While typically unmentioned in official

discourse, these practices are deeply woven into the fabric of society and are as pervasive as the usage of the terms, or language games, associated with them: *pulling strings* in the UK, *red envelopes* in China, *pot du vin* in France, *l'argent du carburant* paid to customs officials in sub-Saharan Africa, coffee money (*duit kopi*) paid to traffic policemen in Malaysia, and many others (Blundo, Olivier de Sardan, 2007: 132). While they may be taken for granted and familiar, such practices can also be uncomfortable to discuss and difficult to study.

Entries from all five continents presented in these volumes are samples of the truly global and ever-growing collection online ([www.informality.com](http://www.informality.com)). Practices are captured in the language of participants, local jargons that we interpret as 'language games', shared, understood and played, to follow Ludwig Wittgenstein's take on practices. Based on vernacular knowledge and assembled locally, our global collection of case studies allows us to view practices in a comparative context, without diminishing their diversity.

A unique feature of this book is that it includes material that previously has not been seen together. Each entry in this collection, describing the nitty-gritty of getting things done in a specific context, is fascinating in its own right. However, when these practices are clustered into a wider 'family' and looked at as constellations, new patterns of regularity emerge. Such patterns, shared by some entries but lacking in others, tie entries together in a way that is best grasped by the notion of 'family likeness' or 'family resemblance' originally enunciated by Wittgenstein (1969: 75, 118). Hereby we discover a complicated network of similarities and relationships, overlapping and criss-crossing (Wittgenstein 1969: 75, 118, sections 66–7). In such conceptualisation of family resemblance, its ambivalent nature – being similar and yet different, whereby similarities 'crop up and disappear' – is central (Wittgenstein 1953). Our dataset of practices, in all its richness and complexity, enables us to identify such 'differing similarities' in the four modes of human interaction – re-distribution, solidarity, market and domination – and to establish patterns of ambivalence in the workings of doublethink, double standards, double deed and double incentives.

This encyclopaedia is a path-breaking collection of informal practices that reveals a number of discoveries:

- The bottom-up comparative analysis of practices from all over the world questions common assumptions on informality and reframes its links to corruption, poverty and development, morality and oppressive regimes.

- The book highlights the role of ambivalence and complexity in the workings of human societies. Neither hidden nor fully articulated, neither particular nor universal, the patterns of ambivalence – substantive, normative, functional or motivational – prove essential for our understanding of fringes, grey zones and blurred boundaries, which are themselves central for the world to go round.
- It opens up new policy dimensions regarding such issues as corruption, social capital, trust, risk, mobility and migration, consumption, shortages, barter, survival strategies, resistance capacity, alternative currencies, informal economies, remittance economies, labour markets, entrepreneurship and democracy.
- It illustrates the potential of ‘network expertise’, that is, cross-disciplinary and cross-area inquiry enabled by the network of researchers. Where the disciplinary methods tend to focus selectively on political, economic, or social aspects, the ‘networked’ perspective provides insights into the complexity of the forces at play.
- Although informal patterns, identified in these volumes, do not admit to quantitative analysis as readily as other phenomena, they have potential to become an explanatory tool for understanding social and cultural complexity and a basis for crowdsourcing in further data collection.

Pavel Filonov’s *Formula of Spring* (on the cover) is an inspiration for these volumes. It tackles the paradox of the abstract and the natural, it formularises what is impossible to formalise, and it visualises the invisible, hidden or taken-for-granted. Filonov’s personal story points to the importance of formal constraints for generating unintended consequence: his ‘anatomic’ artistic style was driven by his repeated failure to pass anatomy at art school and his unique, after years of study, knowledge of the subject. Filonov’s canvas is the best proxy to the social and cultural complexity we aim to capture.

What is achieved in these volumes has been possible thanks to a remarkable collaboration of scholars across disciplines and area studies: sociologists, anthropologists, economists, historians and political scientists. Without their combined scholarly commitment, the ambition to portray at least a fragment of the world’s social and cultural complexity would never have materialised. The majority of entries are based on original ethnographic research and materials collected through fieldwork conducted worldwide, as well as secondary data analysis, investigative

journalism and media research through computer-aided technologies and human-assisted analysis. Collectively, it has taken the authors of these volumes more than a thousand years of research to build up this ‘informal view of the world’, itself only a beginning to our understanding of the ambivalent patterns of social and cultural complexity, and only a dot on the canvas by Pavel Filonov.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we wish to express our gratitude to our authors and contributors who left their established comfort zones and worked as a team in this complex project. Without them, the Global Informality Project would not have been possible. They have shared the findings of their research from 5 continents and 66 countries with enthusiasm and commitment that crossed the traditional borders of area studies and the customary disciplinary divide. This global network has exceeded all our initial expectations. We are grateful to colleagues who shared their networks with us: Harley Balzer, Abel Polese, Sven Horak, Nicolas Hayoz, Heiko Pleines, Elena Denisova-Schmidt, Lucia Michelutti, Fredrik Galtung and colleagues at the Institute of Advanced Studies, Paris. We are grateful to Colin Marx, Nikhilesh Sinha and Bartlett Doctoral Network of Informality for their input to our project. Andrew Stahl at The Slade School of Fine Arts has advised on the visualisation of our project.

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We also wish to acknowledge the critical importance of the anonymous reviews commissioned by UCL Press and the peer reviewers within our network of authors. At various stages of the project, whether at book proposal stage, reading and commenting on entries, conceptualisation, or at the stage of the final submission, their suggestions have guided, influenced and corrected our course of action. Earlier critique of the

*Russia's Economy of Favours* by anonymous reviewers has pointed us in the direction of comparative, historical and global perspectives undertaken in this project.

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We have mostly relied on researchers who volunteered entries and managed to get by with minimal funding for editing and dissemination, but without funding this project would not have been possible. In chronological order, our start-up small research grant was given by the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies (5K). Our cooperation with Digital Humanities was funded by the UCL Centre for Humanities Interdisciplinary Research Projects (CHIRP) in 2014–16 (5K). This book benefitted from Alena Ledeneva's fellowship at the Paris Institute for Advanced Studies, with the financial support of the French State managed by the Agence Nationale de la Recherche, programme 'Investissements d'avenir' (ANR-11-LABX-0027-01 Labex RFIEA+). Our website and editorial activities were mainly supported by the dissemination funding of the European Union Seventh Framework Research Project, 'Anti-corruption Policies Revisited: Global Trends and European Responses to the Challenge of Corruption' (ANTICORRP, 2012–17, Grant agreement No: 290529). We have benefitted from cooperation with Dr Peter Berta, UCL Marie-Curie fellow in 2015–17 (IEF, Grant agreement No. 628331), working on politics of difference and post-socialist transformation. We are grateful to our partners in the European Union's

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Our UCL Press Editor, Chris Penfold, could not have been more patient and supportive of the project, which has grown exponentially and exceeded both contractual length and printing capacity. It was a pleasure to work with the production team led by Jaimee Biggins and Sarah Rendell (Out of House Publishing), copy-editor Kelly Derrick and the design team.

Our special thanks go to our families, who have endured our obsessive efforts.

Alena Ledeneva  
Anna Bailey  
Sheelagh Barron  
Costanza Curro  
Elizabeth Teague

## How to use this book

The collection is organised in two volumes, four parts and eight chapters. You can start reading this book anywhere, but we suggest starting from the end – the glossary – where you will find brief descriptions of the practices included in the volumes in alphabetical order.

The table of contents guides you through over 200 authored entries from 5 continents and 66 countries and indicates the way in which they are clustered together. If you recognise the name of the practice or are interested in a particular country, you can go straight to the relevant entry and follow the cross-references from there.

Outsiders rarely know or recognise a local practice by its colloquial name. To overcome this problem, we have clustered practices by ‘family resemblance’, supplied illustrations where possible, and briefly explained practices in the glossary. To ensure the flow of argument from one entry to another in each cluster, we have placed similar entries next to each other so that they feed into each other, add specific detail, but also develop the general themes of ambivalence and complexity. We intentionally have not organised material by historical periods, geographical locations or analytical concepts, in order to follow the ‘practical sense’ of informality in clustering the entries (Bourdieu 1980/1990). Where possible, entries flow in the bottom-up logic in the chapters, thereby tracing the blurred boundaries and grey zones:

- from more socially acceptable practices to more questionable;
- from practices driven by survival to practices driven by self-expression;
- from daily or regular to once-in-a-lifetime needs and the needs of others (brokerage);
- from more visible practices to less visible (or deliberately made visible or invisible);
- from more traditional/universal to more modern/temporal practices, responding to a particular constraint and disappearing when that constraint is gone.



Finally, each cluster of entries is introduced and concluded by a piece with comparative or conceptual entries, indicated as 'general'. For example, Chapter 6 on gaming the system benefits from an introduction to the strategies of camouflage (by Philip Hanson); general entries identifying patterns common for the cluster such as cash-in-hand (by Colin Williams), brokerage (by David Jancsics), window dressing (by David Leung), and pyramid schemes (by Leonie Schiffauer); as well as a conclusion with methodological implications for the study of part-time crime and 'camouflaged' activities (by Gerald Mars). The authors of conceptual or reflective pieces offer possible perspectives, thematic links and further research questions in order to help the reader with the uneasy tasks of comparing the incomparable and theorising the practice. Such entries themselves constitute a 'network expertise' – a coordinated conceptual framework – aimed at tackling complexity through mastering paradoxes; articulating the unspoken and visualising the invisible; finding patterns in the amorphous and formalising the informal; finding similarities in differences and differences in similarities; comparing the incomparable and doing the undoable.

Please note, we do not claim the absolute ubiquity of practices in respective societies. Following Olivier de Sardan's take on culture, we understand social and cultural complexity as 'a set of practices and representations that investigation has shown to be shared to a significant degree by a given group (or sub-group), in given fields and in given contexts' (Olivier de Sardan 2015: 84).

Individual entries in this Encyclopaedia present empirical material that:

- makes the 'informal order' more visible through ethnography and examples;
- refers to the key themes of ambivalence and complexity explored in the volume;
- weaves into a critical discussion of concepts devised for tackling such practices (such as clan, patronage, nepotism, informal networks or informal institutions);
- illustrates the strengths and weaknesses of discipline-based analysis;
- points to existing research and new research questions;
- suggests cross-references to parallel practices in other parts of the world.

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# Introduction: the informal view of the world – key challenges and main findings of the Global Informality Project

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## Defining informality

Informality, to paraphrase Friedrich Nietzsche, is a term that has history rather than a definition. Given the cross-discipline and cross-area nature of the Global Informality Project, it would probably be difficult to agree on a definition of informality acceptable to all. Therefore, we use the word as an umbrella term for a variety of social and cultural phenomena that are too complex to be grasped in a single definition. In broad terms, we refer to the world's open secrets, unwritten rules and hidden practices assembled in this project as 'ways of getting things done'. Informal practices may escape articulation in official discourse, but they capture the 'know-how' of what works in their vernacular representations.

Intuitively, there are several connotations of informality. It can mean relationships that are not formalised or that take place outside formal contexts; it can mean relaxed or casual manners in the absence of protocol; it can also stand for natural, or local, ways of getting things done that precede formalisation or resist articulation in dominant discourses. In the academic literature, 'informality' can be associated with pre-modern societies or local knowledge, but most commonly the term is used to describe practices that emerge unofficially (such as favelas, slums and other unplanned settlements) or underground, constitute grey areas and form a variety of shadow, second or covert economies. Pioneered by Keith Hart (1973), the typology of informal activities in Africa has reframed informality as a sector in urban labour markets. As Colin Marx explains

in his introduction to Part III, a 1972 International Labour Organisation report opened half a century of debates on the informal sector and set a number of tendencies in motion. Conceptualisation of self- and multiple-employment and casual labour in the so-called Third World cities opened up ‘informality’ for measurement and aid, and so ‘informal economy studies’ were born. Studies of the informal sector in the ‘Third World’ have created interest in the informal sector in ‘First World’ countries such as Britain: cheats at work, dock pilferage, fiddling and other forms of part-time crime and occupational deviance (Mars 1974, 1982; Ditton 1977). The concept of the informal sector has also been explored in the context of the ‘Second World’: second economy in Soviet Georgia (Mars and Altman 1983), varying degrees of legality of ‘coloured markets’ in the Soviet Union (Katsenelinboigen 1977), the ‘informal sector’ in Eastern Europe (Sampson 1985). These and many more were included in an impressive bibliography on the ‘second economy’ of the USSR and Eastern Europe (Grossman 1985/1992). Since then, the view of the informal sector in developing countries has evolved. On the basis of recent evidence – economic, sociological and anthropological – from Latin American countries, one can see it as an unregulated micro-entrepreneurial sector and not as a disadvantaged residual of the formal sector (Maloney 2004).

In the 1990s, the informal economy became a theme of transition and reform of transitioning societies. Subversive but also supportive roles of informal practices in post-communist transformations are well documented. Informality became associated with practices that not only coexist but also penetrate, divert and exploit formal institutions, conceptualised as types of interaction between formal and informal institutions in economics (Greif 1994; Ensminger 1997; Williamson 2000; Teubner 2001; Nee 2003; Roland 2004; Aligicia 2006; Boettke et al. 2008; Easterly 2008; North 2008; Nye 2008; Pejovich 2008; Williamson 2009; Tabellini 2010) and political science (Lauth 2000; Helmke and Levitsky 2004).

More recently, the claim of the unregulated nature of the informal sector has been contested by scholars of urban informality (Roy and AlSayyad 2004; Roy 2009, 2011). They emphasise the complexity of the formal/informal interaction, the role of the state in creating constraints that shape informal activities, and the grey zones associated with property formalisation, gender and the connivance of states in reproducing informality (Varley 2007, 2010). The notion of ‘grey zones’ becomes increasingly influential within post-colonial and post-socialist studies, and is associated with in-betweenness, liminality, marginality and ambiguity (Thomassen 2014, 2015; Knudsen and Frederiksen 2015). For example, in the context of the disappearing dichotomy between

Palestinian refugee camps and urban surroundings, Lorenzo Navone and Federico Rahola point to the emergence of the continuum, whereby camps and cities overlap with one another: ‘while the camps are incorporated into irregular urban growth, the cities are affected by the informality of the camps’ (see *mukhayyam*, 5.7 Volume 2). Given the scale, visibility and materiality of urban informality, the field of urban development and planning is, perhaps, in the lead as regards ideas for policy (Dupont et al. 2017; Sigha and Amoros forthcoming).

In sociological literature, informality is conceptualised as the opposite of formality, following Erving Goffman’s conception of ‘role distance’ and frontstage/backstage dichotomy. In the frontstage, actors ought to perform according to their scripts; in the backstage, they can relax and use backstage language. Barbara Misztal distinguishes formal modes of interaction from the informal as ideal types depicted in [Table 0.1](#), whereas a particular balance between formality and informality is contextual and defined by the three styles (realms) of social interaction: civility (encounters), sociability (exchange) and intimacy (pure relationship) (2000: 71).

Historians are likely to view informality as preceding formality, whereby the processes of modernisation are associated with formalisation and order, and with the development of formal institutions. Social and political theorists consider formal institutions as bodies determining the life of modern societies (Coleman 1988) and colonising the everyday worlds (life-worlds) of individuals (Habermas 1981 cited in Thompson 1983).

In their 2012 volume, Thomas Christiansen and Christine Neuhold have assembled a global collection of work on informal governance, understood in the vein of Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky’s conception of informal institutions as ‘socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels’ (2004: 727). They note that various authors attach the adjective ‘informal’ to politics, arrangements, networks, institutions, organisations, norms, rules, activity or influence. Christiansen and Neuhold identify at least three separate usages of informality by the

*Table 0.1* Ideal types of (in)formality and their associations

<i>Informality</i>	<i>Formality</i>
Face-to-face, intimate relationship	Impersonal, transparent and explicit
Personal modes of social control	Social distance and structures of power
Reliant on tacit knowledge	Reliant on official and legal roles
Private	Public
Communal	Contractual

contributors (Christiansen and Neuhold 2012). First, the designation of the framework within which decisions are taken as being informal (institutions, organisations, networks); second, the identification of the process or procedure through which policies are made as being informal (politics, arrangements, activity); and, third, the classification of the outcome of any such process as being informal (rules, norms, influence). The organisation of this global collection is by world region. In fact, most empirical research into informality is area-specific and reproduces the existing geographical divides: volumes on Central and Eastern Europe or Russia (Gold et al. 2002; Morris and Polese 2013); comparative studies of informal economies and social capital (Pichler and Wallace 2007); low/high trust societies (Fukuyama 1995) and low/high context cultures (Gudykunst 1983).

This book follows a different logic. Rather than reaffirming area-studies divisions, we shift focus to local practices from all over the globe and bring them together. Finding similarities in differences and differences in similarities challenges our assumptions of the centrality of formal institutions for shaping informal practices and highlights the embeddedness of informal practices in grey zones and blurred boundaries, associated with a universally human capacity for doublethink, double standard, double deed and double incentive. The focus on understanding social and cultural complexity, rather than downplaying it for the purposes of comparison, brings many reductionist assumptions on informality into question: its residual status vis-à-vis formality and legal norms, its association with periphery rather than centre, underdevelopment, poverty and inequality. As many entries in this encyclopaedia emphasise, informality is central to local culture and community life in the form of giving and sharing, which is not necessarily related to poverty and inequality. The Italian practice *caffè sospeso* eliminates the identity of the donor of a free cup, left for a local recipient, thus creating a long reciprocity cycle, whereby coffee falls down ‘from the clouds’, not from the donor’s hands (see *caffè sospeso*, 5.11 Volume 2).

One might strive to arrive at an orderly view of informality. But informality is disorderly in nature, and its practical role in resolving tensions between authorised and unauthorised, regulated and unregulated activities suggests multiple hypotheses to test. To collect data and to understand evidence, one has to embrace the idea of complexity. Consider, for example, the principle of equal representation of Tanzania’s 120 ethnicities in the context of rotating government appointments – where the legal norm does not allow for a practical solution, informal ways of getting things done have to be found.

Formal constraints limit but also enable informal ways of circumventing them. For example, an economy of shortage generated an economy of favours, whereby *blat* represented an indispensable set of practices that enabled the Soviet system to function, made it tolerable, yet also subverted it. *Blat* was intrinsically ambivalent: it both served the regime and the people, while simultaneously undermining the regime and corrupting the people. According to this ambivalent logic, formal constraints are crucial for the workings of informality. But the reverse is also true. The formal order is enacted and exercised on the basis of meta-rules of applying formal rules, the non-codified 'know-how' of how to follow, implement, enforce or bend a rule. Thus, formal institutions would not work without informal relationships supporting them and making things happen by the book or by the declared principles. This is not to say that formality is a myth, or the biggest case of camouflage, but to suggest that formality can only be enacted in practice in conjunction with informality, both played as appropriate in a given context, seeming opposite but interconnected and interdependent. Like *yin* and *yang* in the natural world, the ways of getting things done in practice are shaped by both formal and informal constraints. Informality is central for maintaining order. Jan Kubik and Scott Radnitz in their conceptual entries point out that informality is not only a 'weapon of the weak' but is also central to the workings of political and economic systems by creating incentives to conform and comply with the existing rules (see [Chapters 4](#) and [5](#)). Informal ties are precious and conducive to both fluidity and resistance. Formalising everything is a mistaken antidote. In other words, formality does not always play the hand of those it is meant to defend or represent, whereas informality is not always subversive. One can thus think of *blat* as a factor of the collapse of the Soviet Union, but also as a factor of supporting the Soviet experiment that would not have lasted so long without the back-up of *blat* and *tolkachi*. Our purpose here is to question the relevance of this dichotomy, and of our assumptions, on both formality and informality, from the bottom-up perspective. So we will present our dataset and let the reader conclude on the role and place of informality in contemporary societies.

## Finding patterns in the amorphous

Creating a catalogue of informal practices around the globe raised the question of how to organise this fascinating material. In the preface to *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault (1966/2002: xv) wrote:

This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, [which] quotes a ‘certain Chinese encyclopaedia’ in which it is written that ‘animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off ‘look like flies’.

Organising material turned out to be no laughing matter in this project. Assembled on the basis of an open-call, bottom-up approach, the dataset of entries was originally planned to be organised alphabetically. But once a critical mass of entries had arrived, it became possible to cluster them and identify some underlying patterns. Some clusters emerged from similarities – a lot can be learnt from the comparative analysis of similar practices that have different names in different cultures, such as *blat*, *guanxi*, *jeitinho*, *sociolismo*, *compadrazgo*, *pituto*, *štela*, *vrzki* and *vrzki* standing for exchanges of favours in Chapter 1, or a variety of terms for facilitating gifts or payments in Chapter 2. This material may come across as repetitive, but the repetition is essential to preserve the encyclopaedic style, whereas each entry is independent from another.

What does the repetition reveal and conceal? It highlights similarities and points out common patterns of human interaction, regardless of geographical or historical specifics. In an open call, authors were invited to suggest references to analogous practices elsewhere, and editors were keen to introduce cross-references where possible. Highlighting similarities, however, may also serve as *faux amis* in analysis, especially where the cross-cultural expertise required for highlighting differences is missing. The comparative assessment of differences implies fluency in multiple contexts and a certain degree of marginality to relate to the compared cases without bias. It may be that similar exchanges of favours operate differently in different contexts: some practices seem to be grounded more in sociability and openness in the use of personal contacts, others in belonging to a closed network, brokerage or instrumental exchange. Thus, similar entries might be found in the cluster of economies of favours, but also in the cluster of practices of solidarity or gaming the system (Chapters 1, 3 and 6).

Some patterns seem more universal than others, say, strategies of survival related to basic needs such as dwelling or welfare (Chapter 5), more so than strategies of gaming the system (Chapter 6). Other

practices seem more associated with particular historical periods or specific contexts (Chapters 4, 7 and 8).

As editors, we have clustered practices by asking ‘What is this practice a case of?’ and run student workshops to determine the order of entries within each cluster. This way of ordering, and re-ordering every time a new entry arrived, has taken time. There are remarkable differences within the clusters, but clustering similar cases from different contexts has allowed us to capture the blurring of boundaries between sociability and instrumentality, inclusion and exclusion, us and them, dependence and autonomy, cultural customs and market rationality, materiality and immateriality, private and public.

The main achievement of this project – apart from its unique constellation of ethnographies of informal ways of getting things done – is to highlight the centrality of ambivalence for understanding social and cultural complexity and for the future policy agenda. We did not specifically ask researchers to reflect on the ambivalence of informal practices and yet, almost without exception, they pointed out its importance.

## Handling the ambivalence of informality

Why is it so difficult to work with informality? Informal practices are not only omnipresent and amorphous. They are often invisible, resist articulation and measurement, and hide behind paradoxes, unwritten rules and open secrets. They are context-bound and complex, but the greatest challenge for researchers is their ambivalence. Like a quantum particle, we find them in two modalities at once: informal practices are one thing for participants and another for observers. For example, patron–client relations can be seen as a means of levelling the playing field and giving an underdog a chance (see *kula*, 7.2 Volume 2). On the other hand, the same practices can be easily bound up with chains of illicit exchanges for votes and other resources (see *raccomandazione*, 6.15 Volume 2). The moral complexities surrounding connections and recommendations in Italy embrace the reliance on family, friendship, solidarity and reciprocity. At the same time they are denounced as illegality, associated with slyness, and slighted as a poor man’s making do (*l’arte dell’arrangiarsi*).

Informality is grounded in the human ability to justify subverting constraints. Such subversion, however, may also support those constraints, just as an exception supports the rule. Multiple survival strategies in Chapter 5 indicate that informal practices providing access to housing, income or welfare present both a problem and a solution –

they enable individuals to game the system but also allow the system to exploit individuals. The system justifies certain practices by legalising them. For example, the Russian state has formalised the principle of joint accountability (see *krugovaia poruka*, 3.10 in this volume) for governing remote communities, collecting taxes and army conscription. In the UK, practices of ‘old corruption’ were parasitical but entirely legal (see 7.3 Volume 2). ‘Old corruption’ entailed the appointment of an aristocrat, his relative or a political ally to an official position with an income manifestly in excess of what a non-aristocratic holder of the position would earn. Such legalised privileges reproduce certain patterns of inclusion and exclusion in societies, seen as legal but not necessarily legitimate. The impossibility of clear categorisation results in a fluid navigation of double standards, whereby people seamlessly allow themselves what they deny to others.

In its sociological sense, ambivalence, as defined by Robert Merton, refers to incompatible normative expectations of attitudes, beliefs and behaviour. The incompatibility derives from a certain status and the constraints that social structures generate for the holder of that status (Merton 1976: 6–7). Merton’s analysis of sociological ambivalence stems from Pitirim Sorokin’s statement that actual social relations are predominantly of one type or another, rather than comprising pure types, and he points out that ‘it is precisely the matter of not confining our attention to the dominant attributes of a role or social relation that directs us to the function and structure of sociological ambivalence’ (Merton 1976: 16). It differs from the psychological term *Ambivalenz*, coined by Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler and defined as ‘the co-existence in one person of contradictory emotions or attitudes (such as love and hate) towards a person or thing’ in the Oxford English Dictionary (see *Ambivalenz* 1911 online).

The core type of sociological ambivalence puts contradictory demands upon the occupants of a status in a particular social relationship. Since these norms cannot be simultaneously expressed in behaviour, they come to be expressed in an oscillation of behaviours: ‘of detachment and compassion, of discipline and permissiveness, of personal and impersonal treatment’ (Merton 1976: 8). Merton provides examples of professions, such as doctors, managers and academics, characterised by the oscillating occurrence of compassion, permissiveness and preferential treatment on the one hand, and of detachment, discipline and impersonal treatment on the other. Merton’s principles of ambivalence, operationalised as clashing attitudes or oscillating behaviours, are in my view essential to the understanding of informal patterns in a more general way.



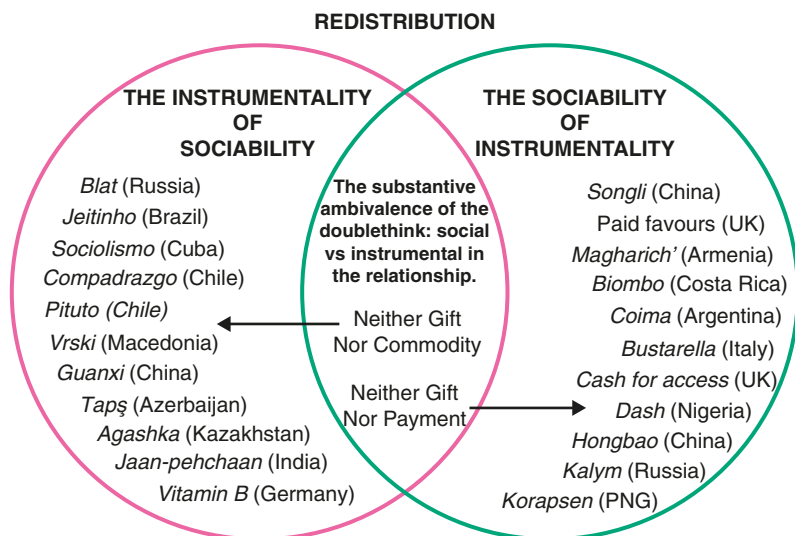
In the context of modernity, ambivalence is associated with fragmentation and failure of manageability. Zygmunt Bauman defines ambivalence as the possibility of assigning an object or an event to more than one category and views it as a language-specific disorder. The main symptom of disorder is the acute discomfort we feel when we are unable to read the situation properly and to choose between alternative actions (Bauman 1990, 1991: 1, 12). Bauman lists ambivalence among ‘the tropes of the “other” of order: ambiguity, uncertainty, unpredictability, illogicality, irrationality, ambivalence, brought about by modernity with its desire to organise and to design’ (1990, 1991: 7). It is a social counterpart of emotional ambivalence in psychology (love–hate) or materials with ambivalent qualities in physics (semiconductors). In other words, it is a situation of coexisting thesis and antithesis, without certainty of their synthesis, yet without uncertainty as to what coexisting categories, attitudes and beliefs are.

Informal practices collected here represent both fluidity and resistance. If defined by what it is not, informality is opposed to the rigidity of formal constraints and to the possibility of instantaneous top-down change. Such ambivalence is essential for the workings of informal practices and is enacted in doublethink (sociability vs instrumentality), double standards (us vs them), double deed (supportive vs subversive), and double purpose (publicly declared vs self-serving). The ambivalence is best understood through the paradoxes it produces, and illustrated by such examples as the role of hackers in advancing cyber-security, or the contribution of non-conformity to innovation.

## **Types of ambivalence and the structure of the book**

The collection of entries is organised in two volumes, four parts and eight chapters.

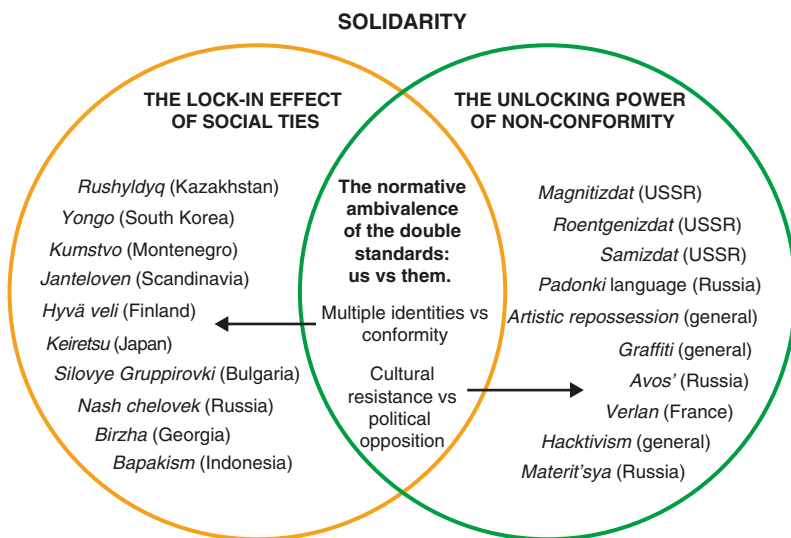
Part I explores the substantive ambivalence and interplay between sociable and instrumental in relationships – the ‘instrumentality of sociability’ and the ‘sociability of instrumentality’. The relationships tend to be seen as social (or based on sociability) by participants but as instrumental (or based on interest) by observers. The substantive ambivalence of informal exchanges – where one cannot agree or disagree with either participants or observers – means that a single categorisation of the way in which gifts, favours, transfers and transactions are given, taken or exchanged is impossible. The difficulties of categorisation or tensions of substantive ambivalence are discussed in more detail in the preface to Part I. Here they are illustrated (see [Figure 0.1](#)) as a crossover between



**Figure 0.1** Substantive ambivalence.

predominantly sociable and predominantly instrumental exchanges: neither gift nor commodity; neither gift nor payment. One can observe from the case studies in [Chapters 1](#) and [2](#) that some relationships are more sociable than others (and the entries have been organised in order of decreasing sociability), while others are more instrumental than others (so the entries are organised in order of increasing instrumentality). For example, social networks are used to obtain something that one is entitled to, but with greater ease and in less time than would be the case without them and in a spirit of friendship (see *compadrazgo*, 1.4 in this volume), whereas the custom of informal payments in Nigeria seems to be a euphemism for a bribe or a levy (see *dash*, 2.21 in this volume).

Part II explores practices linked to identity, belonging and solidarity. The double standards grounded in the fundamental divide into ‘us’ and ‘them’, or normative ambivalence, account for divisive identities and the associated performance of inclusion and exclusion. Focus on normative ambivalence enables us to reveal the open secrets of identities, moulded by lineage, community or consumption (whether religion, music or art) as well as to explain multiple identities emerging in complex societies with their constellations of coexisting rural, urban, local and global mindsets. The entries in this part are organised according to strength of obligation within social circles, termed the ‘lock-in effect’: from the traditional grip of kin ties and the obligation of customary laws to the more fluid norms of

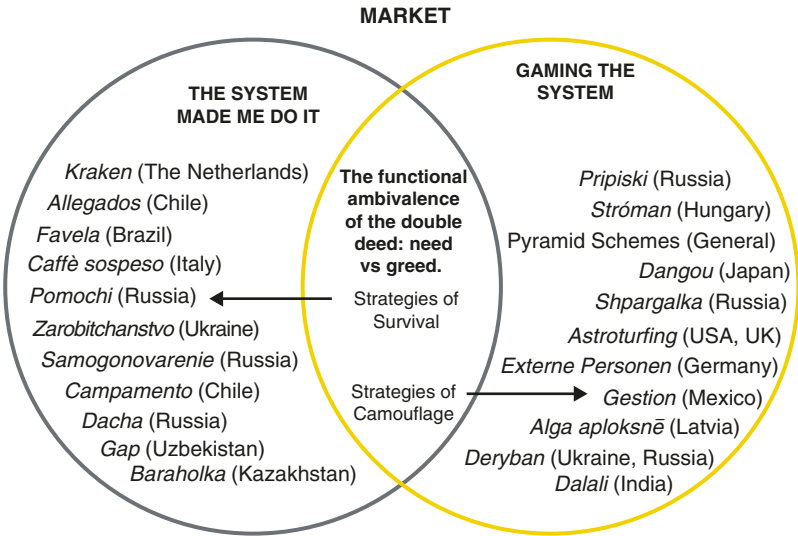


**Figure 0.2** Normative ambivalence.

reciprocity and voluntary belonging; from traditional values to forms of self-expression; from norms generating conformity (Chapter 3) to those that generate non-conformity and protest (Chapter 4). As presented on Figure 0.2, on the left there are strong institutions of the customary law in the Caucasus (see *adat*, 3.1 in this volume) and godparents in the Balkans (see *kumstvo*, 3.6 in this volume). These practices are the most venerated and significant for sustaining conformity and informal order in societies. Just like blood relatives, *kumovi* are supposed to help each other and in most cases they do so in spite of formal roles, just as *adat* may come in direct contradiction with the law. The norms of conformity are equally powerful in Scandinavia: one should never try to be better or different, or consider oneself more valuable than others (see *janteloven*, 3.11 in this volume). These norms are embodied in informal practices that confer negative attitudes towards individuality, self-expression and measures of success. In contrast, practices of non-conformity, associated with subcultural languages (see *mat* 4.5, *padonki* 4.6 and *verlan* 4.7 in this volume) or cross-cultural forms of rebellion (see graffiti, 4.9 in this volume), are aimed at the power of mass media, authorities and political regimes (as in the cases of self-production practices of *Roentgenizdat* and *samizdat* in the Soviet Union, see 4.3 and 4.4 in this volume).

The entries in Part III illustrate the functional ambivalence of informality – supportive of participants yet viewed as subversive by observers;

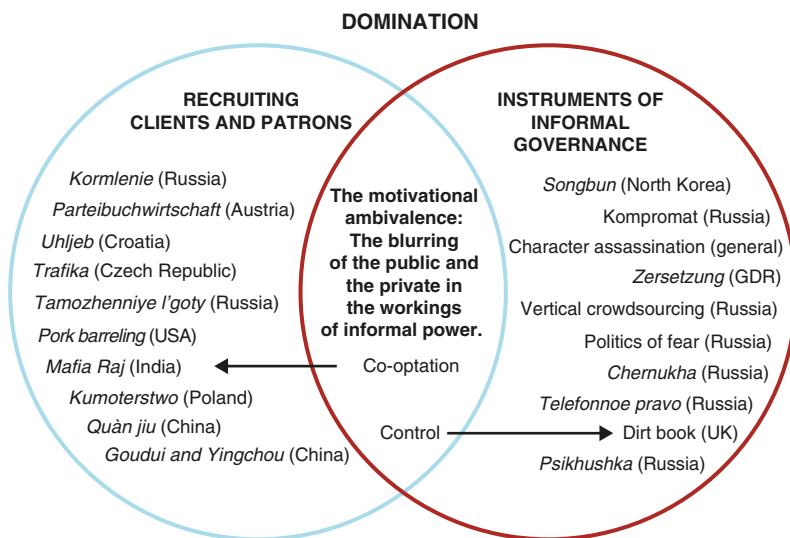
subversive of formal constraints (such as geographical borders, shortages, all kinds of regulations) yet also supportive of them; bending the rules yet also complying with and reinforcing them (see Figure 0.3). The gleaning practices (known as *pabirčenje* in Serbia, see 5.9, Volume 2) enable the community to benefit from the crops remaining in the fields (need but also greed) and build the landowner's reputation for generosity, while at the same time sustaining and supporting a clientelist network that could potentially serve to support his political ambitions. By allowing the poor to glean on his field in the short run, the landowner prevents potential social unrest and acquires stable political support among the local population in the long run, thus ultimately reinforcing the hierarchy and inequality. The blurred boundary between need and greed is the key theme and an underlying principle by which the material is organised in Part III: from practices fuelled by the need for access to bare necessities in the beginning of Chapter 5 to those driven by greed, ambition and passion to challenge the constraints by the end of Chapter 6. For example, UK regulations regarding expenses incurred by Members of Parliament (MPs) exempt second-home sales from capital-gains tax and create an incentive for gaming the system. An MP can choose which home is registered as his or her official 'second home' with the apparent aim of maximising financial gain. A number of MPs were alleged to have made substantial profits by selling taxpayer-funded second homes at the market rate and



**Figure 0.3** Functional ambivalence.

excluding any profit from capital-gains tax (see *flipping*, 6.35 Volume 2). Other key themes in Part III include the role of the state, the enabling power of constraints, and the sources of effectiveness of informal systems emerging in response to an over-controlling centre.

Motivational ambivalence is a central theme in Part IV: whatever the declared motivation in a legal case or anti-corruption campaign, some hidden interests may also be served in the process. In most cases, it is impossible to establish with certainty whether the public motive takes precedence over the private, or the private over the public. Similar to the order of entries in the other parts – from more social to more instrumental in redistribution, from more binding forms of solidarity to non-conformist practices, from more of a need to more of a greed in market behaviour – the entries in Part IV are arranged according to the incentives used for domination: from ‘more of a carrot’ to ‘more of a stick’ (see Figure 0.4). ‘Carrots’ (albeit with strings attached) are aimed at co-opting various groups into compliance by satisfying their needs whatever they might be: from a financial loan to a certain degree of impunity. Thus in India, beside the profits involved in adopting a political career path and the impunity that such careers grant, there is also a particular aura of prestige and status that goes hand in hand with political public positions in South Asia (see *Mafia Raj*, 7.11 Volume 2). ‘Sticks’ illustrate how the system can punish people informally by using formal institutions



**Figure 0.4** Motivational ambivalence.

*Table 0.2* Types of ambivalence and their implications for social and cultural complexity

<i>Types of ambivalence of informal practices</i>	<i>Modus operandi</i>	<i>Implications for analysing complexity</i>	<i>The continuum that proved useful in understanding grey zones and blurred boundaries</i>	<i>Associated concepts</i>
<i>Substantive ambivalence</i>	Doublethink: relationship vs use of relationship	Multiple categorisation Impossibility of 'either-or' oppositions	From sociability to instrumentality in social relationships	Gift, Favour Transfer Transaction Tribute
<i>Normative ambivalence</i>	Double standards: What we allow ourselves vs what we accept from another Denying but also practising	Multiple identities Multiple moralities Norms are contextual Us and them are context-bound	From strong ties to weaker forms of solidarity	Identity Solidarity Particularism Resistance capacity
<i>Functional ambivalence</i>	Double deed: Supportive vs subversive in dealing with constraints that shape practices	Ambivalent functionality relativises 'good'/'bad' qualifiers	From need to greed in personal consumption	Survival strategies Gaming the system Part-time crime Parallel societies
<i>Motivational ambivalence</i>	Double purpose: declared vs hidden agendas in co-optation and control	The public/private borderline is porous and contextual Motive is camouflaged as its opposite Co-optation and control are co-dependent	From co-optation by carrots to control by sticks From material to non-material From codified norms to oral commands	Patron–client relations Power networks Informal governance

selectively as ammunition (*telefonnoe pravo* in courts, *kompromat* in the media, *psikhushka* for the opposition), or by using informal leverage in formal contexts and resorting to the instruments of informal power.

The ambivalence of informal practices, multiple moralities, inconsistent legitimacies and blurred boundaries makes it possible to solve private problems on a daily basis. At the same time, however, this ambivalence also creates obstacles, or filters, that in the longer term impede the efficient implementation of public policy and may accordingly be harmful to society in general. Societies do differ, as argued in the concluding remarks to the second volume, but the question of whether some countries are more informal than others should be answered with reference not only to modernity but also to ambivalence.

Let us sum up the four types of ambivalence and outline their implications for social and cultural complexity (see Table 0.2).

## Tackling complexity

The informal patterns, identified in this collection, are not simply an outcome of organising material or advancing comparative agendas. What the evidence highlights is that, despite their banal nature, marginal significance and under-the-radar scale, informal practices are central to the workings of human societies, their resilience and stability. Moreover, informal patterns, emerging from the comparative look at informal practices occurring in different contexts, point to the novel dimensions of our understanding of social and cultural complexity. I argue that ambivalence – one of the key determinants of social and cultural complexity – allows informal practices to remain overlooked in research and policy, while also being the key know-how and a widely shared open secret in society. Ambivalence enables one to master multiple identities, to navigate multiple moralities, and to make a smooth crossing between sociability and instrumentality (enacting friendship that observers would categorise as a use of friendship – see *amici*, *amigos*, 1.21 in this volume).

The ambivalence of informal practices is reflected in the majority of individual entries to the encyclopaedia, so it is fitting that ambivalence – substantive, normative, functional and motivational – should also be reflected in the structuring of the encyclopaedia. Structuring complexity is a challenging task: entries cannot be organised consecutively, the structure must reflect the co-present, overlapping and intertwined patterns of informality.

The inspiration comes from Slavoj Žižek's thesis of the 'return to the economy of gift' and his discussion of the structures of world history, theorised by Kojin Karatani (2014), whose basic premise is the use of modes of exchange (rather than modes of production, as in Marxism) as the tool with which to analyse the history of humanity (Žižek 2014: 149). Karatani distinguishes four progressive modes of exchange: (a) gift exchange, which predominates in pre-state societies (clans and tribes exchanging gifts); (b) domination and protection, which predominate in slavery and feudal societies (here the exploitation is based on direct domination, but the dominating class has to offer something in exchange, such as protecting its subjects from danger); (c) commodity exchange of objects, which predominates in capitalism (free individuals exchange not only their products but also their own labour power); and (X) a further stage to come, a return to the gift exchange at the higher level. This X is a Kantian regulative idea, a vision that has assumed different guises in the history of humanity, from egalitarian religious communities reliant on communal solidarity to anarchist cooperatives and communist projects, Žižek argues. The relevance of this vision of history lies, however, in the complexity of the architecture that Karatani introduces to his categorisation (quoted in Žižek 2014: 149):

At the level of exchange, the 'pure' gift co-exists with the complex web of gift and counter-gift. In the passage from stage to stage, the previous stage does not disappear; although it is 'repressed', the repressed returns in a new form. With the passage from A to B, gift-exchange survives as part of B, with the passage of B to C, A survives as nation/community and B (domination) survives as the state power. In this model, capitalism is not a 'pure' reign of B, but a triad (or, rather, a Borromean knot) of Nation-State-Capital: nation as the form of communal solidarity, state as a form of direct domination, capital as a form of economic exchange. All three of them are necessary for the reproduction of capitalist society.

An important aspect of Karatani's iterative, unfolding structure of world history is his depiction of the increasing complexity of human societies in history. The complexity is expressed in coexisting, multi-layer, multi-stage, multi-mode assemblages of solidarity, domination and economic exchange. In other words, the modes of community, power and market – of giving, protecting and transacting – are all co-present, intertwined and resisting clear categorisations. Žižek postulates the return of the gift economy and other 'repressed modes' in the form of the radicalisation of religion.



In that vein, I propose the fourth dimension to Karatani's triad – redistribution – that stems from the work of Karl Polanyi, Pierre Bourdieu, Janos Kornai, Jeremy Rifkin and others. Volume 1 starts with the discussion of the much under-researched subject of economies of favours and a wider range of practices of redistribution, and follows up with human dependence on identities/solidarity, transacting/markets and power/domination. The structure, emerging bottom-up rather than imposed top-down, devoid of chronological or geographical borders, has been an outcome but also a tool in organising the complex and ever-growing database of the Global Informality Project.

## The method of knowing smiles

If Foucault's *Order of Things* started from laughter, this encyclopaedia has grown out of a knowing smile – the smile of acknowledgement of an open secret about how things work. Informal practices escape regular attention by being the most routine aspect of societies' social and cultural lives (Ledeneva 2011). Similar to Hannah Arendt's formula of the 'banality of evil', it is the banality of informality that causes informal practices to be taken for granted by insiders and to remain unnoticed by outsiders. These are everyday practices associated with patronage, nepotism, favouritism and clientelism as well as the use of social connections to find employment and secure promotions, to influence official decisions, or to bypass formal procedures. Yet these practices stay in close proximity to some of the key challenges of the contemporary world – corruption, terrorism, illegal immigration, trafficking and cyber-crime. In other words, micro-practices and patterns of human interdependence often remain under the radar, while shaping large-scale phenomena (Granovetter 1982; Tilly 2005). Informal practices channel personal interest but also facilitate the resilience capacity in the world – its default *modus operandi*.

It is often assumed that the hidden nature of informal practices makes them difficult and even dangerous to research. Yet where there is a will, there is a way: in studying sensitive subjects associated with informal institutions, networks and practices, researchers encounter not only unwelcoming attitudes from respondents, but also methodological challenges associated with measurability and comparability, as well as pressures to move beyond disciplinary borders. And yet, research into informal practices is a growing field (Polese and Rodgers 2011; Giordano and Hayoz 2013; Kubik and Lynch 2013; Zigon 2013; Morris and Polese 2015; Henig and Makovsky 2017).

Every entry in this collection has its own methodology and disciplinary grounding. The conceptual entries – introductions and conclusions to the clusters – offer methodological insights and generalisation, but the Global Informality Project overall addresses the following methodological puzzles: how to trace practices that are elusive, how to overcome the limitations of disciplinary perspectives and border-bound area studies. As Gerald Mars notes in his conclusion to Chapter 6, practising fiddlers tend to act covertly, thereby creating an area of research most of which is not open to direct enquiry. Before any research on part-time crime can proceed, it is vital to suspend (without necessarily abandoning) one’s own moral standpoint: impartial understandings can be achieved only if, like anthropologists, one lays one’s own values aside. Only then can the field be assessed from the standpoint of the actors involved.

My own ethnographic work started with the puzzle of distinguishing friendship from *blat* (use of friendship). I tried to draw a line between the relationship and the use of the relationship, but stumbled instead upon grey zones, varying significantly depending on whether the relationship was best defined by regime of affection, regime of status, or regime of equivalence, on what kind of favours were involved, at whose expense and in which context (Ledeneva 1998: Chapter 5). With time, it became possible to identify, articulate, measure and compare *blat* practices in Russia (Ledeneva 2008), and to explore sensitive subjects and open secrets by the method of knowing smiles in other societies (Ledeneva 2011).

Knowing smiles are partly about smiling, partly about knowing. Knowing open secrets is partly about knowing, partly also about not knowing and not questioning. It is a sign of awareness of transgression but also of recognition that it does not need to be spelt out. Masked hostility – expressed through ribbing – towards the researcher ‘daring’ to articulate this is indicative of these tensions. The semi-taboo against knowing, the complicity to leave things unarticulated, the ambiguities hidden behind open secrets are all pointers to sensitive subjects that invite innovative research.

The Global Informality Project open call included an invitation to participate in such an innovative endeavour and to contribute a short authored entry to the first *Global Encyclopaedia of Informality* (1,500 words including bibliography). Each entry focuses on a single practice (under its colloquial name) and includes at least some of the following:

- Name, definition, etymology and its translation into other languages.
- How widely is it used?
- In which countries/regions/sectors is it found?

- Identify analogous practices, named differently in different countries (if possible).
- How does it relate to other informal practices (discuss similarities and differences if possible)?
- What are the implications of the chosen practice for politics/economy/ society?
- Which method was or can be used for researching this practice?
- Give examples of the practice.
- How can the practice be measured?
- How does it develop and migrate?
- Which channels are currently available to policy makers to integrate expertise on informality?
- Cross-reference and recommend reading.

The open secret about informality is the gap between colonial, hegemonic or global official discourses (top-down) and the ways in which things are done or viewed in practice (bottom-up). Exploring that gap between the declared principles (say, the principles of accountability, equality, fairness, zero tolerance) and the pragmatic shifts taking place while exercising them, is to emphasise the ways this gap is bridged in specific domains (see Potemkin villages, 6.30 Volume 2). Highlighting grey zones and blurred boundaries between top-down and bottom-up perspectives points to the key challenges for both researchers and policy makers. Commonplaces and micro-practices can sometimes reveal profound features of societies that elude us when tackled directly.

The method of knowing smiles can be illustrated by Sigmund Freud's celebrated example of art forgery. To discover whether a painting is a forgery, the most effective way is to focus on minor details, such as how the painter depicts fingernails or the slope of a thumb. Most forgers can fake the major aspects of what is portrayed – it is the tiny details that give them away. Freud argued that the same is true of 'trivial' aspects of day-to-day life, such as slips of the tongue. The apparently trivial elements are key to understanding core dispositions of the personality, and I am making the same argument about the 'disclosure' of open secrets that the knowing smile represents – in Freud's words, 'secrets that we all know and the knowledge of which we always try to conceal from one another' (Freud 1892–3: 123).

In developing this point, our authors draw upon a variety of 'masters of suspicion' – Freud, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Erving Goffman, Georg Simmel, Marcel Mauss, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu – and seek to bring their insights together in revealing daily routines that can

be branded as societies' open secrets, commonly smiled at knowingly when brought up in a conversation. So far, neither knowing smiles nor open secrets have been analysed in a comparative way, so this encyclopaedia provides a unique opportunity to 'compare the incomparable', or at least see them in various contexts.

## **Main (ambivalent) findings**

Informality is fringy but central

The evidence assembled in the project shows that informality matters in the workings of modern societies. We emphasise the key importance (if not predominance) of informality in the world, its variety and complexity, as well as the possibility to identify key patterns used in informal interactions. We have created the first world map of informality, where the entries are shown in their local habitat and identified in their language of origin. In the encyclopaedia, however, they are clustered with similar practices from all over the world, and thus are explained in both local and global contexts.

Informality is universal but can be invisible

Poverty and development correlate with the scale of informality, and certainly make informal practices more visible. The more developed societies are, the less visible (and hidden behind the façades of formal institutions) are their informal norms. It is not that informality does not exist in developed societies, rather that the norms developing in these societies have pushed it out of sight. Such invisibility stems partially from legal norms – informal practices tend to go either under or above the radar of the law – and partially from practical norms – the banality of informality that enables people to engage in behaviour that they do not necessarily find acceptable.

Informality works but it is elusive

It is common for people living under the pressure of systemic corruption to point out the effectiveness of peer pressure, solidarities and informal shortcuts, both to legitimise the informal ways of getting things done and to euphemise the terms. For the outsiders, their behaviour is an exercise in double standards: they criticise corruption, but also engage in corrupt practices routinely. This is the ambivalence that Giorgio Blundo

and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan have termed ‘an incessant alternation between condemnation and tolerance’ while researching the ‘semantic fields of corruption’ (Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2006: 11, 110).

Informal practices are ambivalent but not necessarily hybrid

Forms of ambivalence include: substantive (when transactions are seen as substantially different by participants and observers); normative (i.e. when others do it – it is wrong, when I do it – it is right); functional (informal shortcuts are both a problem (subversive) and a solution (supportive of actors and systems)); and motivational (whereby public or private motives are camouflaged as the opposite). For example, if a gift is seen as a bribe, it does not necessarily become a hybrid entity (a ‘brift’, if we use Abel Polese’s term), but it remains ambivalent: a gift for one and a bribe for another, enabled by the tension it produces. The ambivalent nature of informal practices makes the borders between relationships and the use of relationships, between need and greed, between us and them, between public and private easy to cross. In this collection, the ambivalent nature of informal practices becomes articulated in each entry, but also emerges from the clusters of entries that highlight the tensions outlined above.

Constraints are disabling but also enabling

The variety and complexity of informal practices around the world illustrate not only the creativeness of human beings, but also the enabling power of constraints. In other words, just as informal practices can be viewed as both a problem and a solution, constraints can be seen as both a restriction and a resource. The multiple examples of cross-border activities and non-conformist behaviour included in this encyclopaedia substantiate this point. The perspectives on informality that focus on the subversive impact it has on formal institutions and political or economic regimes often lead to predictions of the dissipation of informality and the rise of effective formal institutions (Rothstein and Teorell 2008; Kaufmann et al. 2011).

Informality is context-bound, but the contexts are not necessarily country- or culture-specific

The literature on informality is grounded in geographical, socio-cultural and political-economic areas (Lomnitz 1988; Mandel and Humphrey 2002; Pardo 2004; Olivier de Sardan 2015), with its most recent peak

in post-socialist societies (Ledeneva 1998, 2006, 2013; Perry et al. 2007; Packard et al. 2012; Morris and Polese 2013; Williams et al. 2013; Gatti et al. 2014; Polese et al. 2014, 2016; Knudsen and Frederiksen 2015; Polese 2015). As the concluding remarks to the second volume show, the question of whether some countries are more informal than others is not as simple as it seems. A cross-discipline analysis and a 'network' perspective are essential to answer it. We took the case of Russia to illustrate this point. On the one hand, Russia has a reputation for informality, complexity and unpredictability and, after all, has been the area of origin for the Global Informality Project. Russia offers a comprehensive range of practices that can be examined both in historical perspective and in contemporary contexts, which can only be represented by the multi-disciplinary network of researchers. It would not be possible to achieve a similar coverage for each country in equal measure in one publication, but a detailed coverage of one country points to where open secrets might be found in others. On the other hand, our take on whether some countries are more informal than others is that one should downplay geographical borders when dealing with informal patterns (the bottom-up structure of the volumes seeks to convey this point). Understanding such patterns, practices and paradoxes might be more important for grasping particular contexts than national stereotypes.

The dichotomies present both a problem and a solution for categorisation

'Neither–nor' or 'both–and' patterns of ambivalence dwell on dichotomies but also aim at circumventing them. For example, normative ambivalence, associated with the double standards embedded in identities, solidarities and the fundamental divide into 'us' and 'them', makes it possible to turn constraints into opportunities. In his concluding remarks to the first volume, Zygmunt Bauman identifies the implications of the organising forces of modernity and argues that the divisive nature of dichotomies must give way to a cosmopolitan mindset in order to confront tendencies towards radicalisation and fragmentation, driven by divisive identity politics and religious beliefs. It is the potential of ambivalence that can be integrated into such policy thinking.

Visualising the invisible has proved very difficult

How does one visualise something that is supposed to go unseen, unnoticed and undetectable? Most practices in this encyclopaedia are

hidden from the public eye, shared as an open secret and left unarticulated or unacknowledged in official discourse. And yet this volume contains pictures. Even if a photograph can hardly portray a practice or convey the ‘practical sense’ or ‘feel for the game’ associated with informal

*Table 0.3 Assumptions and counterintuitive implications for policy*

<i>Assumptions</i>	<i>Counterintuitive implications for policy</i>
Poverty and survival strategies	Entrepreneurship and innovation
Underdevelopment of institutions	Informality dwells in grey zones and helps reproduce ambivalent patterns, but underdevelopment of institutions is only part of the story. The strength of social networks for building trust (back-up), survival kits (redistribution), safety-nets (solidarity, cohesion) and connectivity should be factored in
Socialism and post-socialism	Informality is present in all societies under certain constraints and in particular contexts
Oppressive states and ‘weapons of the weak’	Gaming the system and ‘weapons of the wealthy’ are common in mature democracies
Formal is good, informality is bad	Formal is an enabler of the informal, including the conniving state. Informal is an enabler for the formal and should be used for channeling policies
There is good informality and there is bad informality (informal governance, informal networks, informal institutions can all be good and bad)	Informality can help produce measurable indicators for assessing models of governance
Social capital can be positive and negative	Social capital is ambivalent
Informality is about freedom	Informality is an enabler but it also imposes limitations; informality is the basis of resistance capacity
Policies tend to rely on laws, written rules and norms	Policies can also rely on oral commands, tacit agreements and in-group relationships
Informality is about conformity	Informality is also about non-conformity

practices, it nevertheless depicts a particular context and negotiates the boundary between what can be made visible and what will remain as imagined, inferred or implied. As with the punch-line in a joke, some things are articulated while others are left to the imagination; it is perhaps no accident that a few images come from satirical sources. The kalidoscope of images assembled in the volumes depicts at least some of the daily circumstances in which such practices occur and illustrates the often mundane nature of their context. One could attribute some value to the regularity and frequency of images throughout the volumes, had their number not been limited and had it been easier to secure permission to reproduce copyright material. As things stand, we had to select images according to criteria that do not allow the reader to speculate on any correlation between the visibility of informal practices and their visualisation.

Stigmatisation of informality is counterproductive in policy – integrating complexity into policy will work

Let us outline assumptions about informality in [Table 0.3](#) (on the left) and counterintuitive ways (on the right) in which informality can be taken into account in policy-making.

Overall, we claim novelty of this collection of practices that has never been seen together, yet also includes an impressive cross-discipline and cross-area bibliography on informality around the globe – a brilliant find in itself.

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# **VOLUME 1**



## Part I

# Redistribution

*The substantive ambivalence: relationships vs use of relationships*

### Preface

Alena Ledeneva

Part I maps the blurred boundaries between sociable and instrumental in relationships – the ‘instrumentality of sociability’ in [Chapter 1](#) and the ‘sociability of instrumentality’ in [Chapter 2](#). In exploring whether it is possible to separate a relationship from the use of that relationship, these two chapters highlight the ambivalent nature of relationships – seen by participants as social, but by observers as instrumental, but indeed neither, or both. The substantive ambivalence of informal exchanges – where one cannot agree or disagree with either participants or observers – means that any single categorisation of the way in which gifts, favours, transfers and transactions are given, taken or exchanged would be reductionist.

The entries are organised in descending order from those seen by readers in a pilot study as being more social informal exchanges to those perceived as more instrumental. The entries focus on open secrets in societies related to the redistribution of resources. From economies of favours to the exchange of gifts and informal payments, the ‘elephant in the room’ here is the banality of informality, invisible because it is, on the one hand, everyday, routine, taken for granted, common and small, and yet, on the other hand, omnipresent and therefore voluminous and influential outside its narrower context. The social contexts of gifts, favours and payments that defy clear borders between materiality and non-materiality, between pure gift and reciprocity, make such social exchanges particularly elusive and hard to pin down.

[Chapter 1](#), ‘Neither gift nor commodity: The instrumentality of sociability’, explores the myths about informal exchanges of favours. First, they are often seen as instrumental exchanges, while their social side is underestimated. Sociability and instrumentality are two sides of one

coin, quite literally the ambivalent currency serving the ‘economies of favours’ embedded in human emotions, while also fulfilling the important function of redistributing resources. Second, as Nicolette Makovicky and David Henig emphasise in their introduction, economies of favours play an essential role in times of societal change such as post-communist transitions. Makovicky and Henig stress the intrinsic link between economies of favours and the socialist idea with its emphasis on comradeship, fraternity, collectivity and, under late socialism, opposition to the state. Third, Sheila Puffer and Daniel McCarthy dissect the assumption that economies of favours are grounded exclusively in shortages and red tape, making them operational mainly in transitional societies. Puffer and McCarthy argue rather for the instrumentality of favours in all societies, including those with individualistic values, competitive markets and strong institutions. The question of how the substantive ambivalence of favours unfolds in different political and socio-economic contexts leads us to contemplate what is post-socialist and what is global in economies of favours, and to reflect more generally on the context-bound nature of informal exchanges: regimes of equivalence, regimes of affection and regimes of status (Ledeneva 1998: 144–55).

[Chapter 2](#), ‘Neither gift nor payment: The sociability of instrumentality’, focuses on practices perceived as more instrumental, less voluntary and more reciprocal than exchanges of favours. Again, instrumental payments tend also to be social. Euphemisms for instrumental exchanges, or the multitude of the ‘language games’ used in such exchanges, are of particular interest since they not only serve the purpose of polite conversation but also highlight the necessity to ‘socialise’ and ‘normalise’ instrumentality. Vernaculars of informality, as Makovicky and Henig argue, are essential for deception and self-deception, for adhering to the norms while playing them to one’s own advantage, and for talking about morally reprehensible exchanges in terms of morally acceptable patterns of sharing, tipping, or even charity. The fundamental principles of giving, and the issues around its interested or disinterested nature, are theorised by Florence Weber in her conclusion to [Chapter 2](#). Weber highlights the importance of timing, obligation of the recipient, domination of the donor, logic of antagonism or alliance, personalisation or anonymity, as well as the interconnectedness of public and private contexts in navigating the complexity of social exchanges.

The substantive ambivalence of currencies serving such social exchanges and residing in grey zones – neither gift nor commodity, neither gift nor payment, neither material nor non-material, neither public nor private, neither payment nor a bribe – is the common theme of Part I,



as illustrated by the tensions between sociability and instrumentality revealed in different contexts. Bringing the blurring of the boundaries between sociability and instrumentality into focus sheds new light on how the ambivalence of informal exchange constructs and enables redistribution processes in complex societies.



1

# Neither gift nor commodity: the instrumentality of sociability

## Introduction: economies of favours

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One of the most pervasive features of ‘actually existing socialism’ across Eurasia and the Eastern Bloc was the use of personalised connections in order to get access to goods, services and information. Known as *blat* in Russian, *znajomości* in Polish, and *guanxi* in Mandarin, this rich and multifaceted practice combined horizontal and vertical exchange relations to create ‘a distinctive form of social relationship or social exchange articulating private interests and human needs against the rigid control of the state’ (Ledeneva 1998: 7). Sociologist Alena Ledeneva (1998) has coined the overarching term ‘economies of favour’ to describe these social relationships and exchanges. Facilitating the flow of goods and information between private individuals, state enterprises, and the bureaucratic structures of government, such relations of exchange formed part of a ‘huge repertoire of strategies for obtaining consumer goods and services’, including working ‘off the books’, pilfering materials and tools from the workplace, and using enterprise resources for petty commodity production and trade (Verdery 1996: 27). Beyond the straightforward exchange of scarce goods, economies of favour often consisted of individuals granting ‘favours of access’ (Ledeneva 1998: 35) by making professional connections, skills, education, medical care, and resources available to others. Working to mitigate the shortages and distribution problems of

the command economy, economies of favour thus existed in a symbiotic relationship with official economic institutions as a ‘grey’, ‘informal’ or ‘second’ economy, which fed off the deficiencies of official economic and bureaucratic structures (Wedel 1992; Seabright 2000). While describing such practices as diversion of ‘public resources for private’ aims, Ledeneva notes that socialist-era economies of favour ‘resulted from the particular combination of shortages and, even if repressed, consumerism; from a paradox of equality and the practice of differentiation through privileges and closed distribution systems’ (1998: 36). Regarding the ‘second’ or ‘informal’ economy as a structural outcome of the political economy of actually existing socialism, scholars and policy makers expected economies of favour to disappear together with their dysfunctional economic hosts soon after the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc. Perceiving informal economic activities as corrupt, they confidently asserted that economies of favours would disappear as political and regulatory obstacles to free enterprise and globalisation were removed (Åslund 2004: 40). A number of economists even identified the socialist ‘second economy’ as containing the kernel of free market exchange, observing a tendency for networking practices to be employed in the service of budding entrepreneurial activities (Grabher and Stark 1997; Kornai 2000). Yet, a quarter century after the end of communist rule, there is ample evidence that ‘economies of favour’ remain firmly embedded in the contemporary social fabric, practices, and moral values of populations across the region. Informal exchange and personal networks continue to be a major source of foodstuffs, consumer goods, credit, property and access to employment, education, and medical care across the region (e.g. Bridger and Pine 1998; Day et al. 1999; Stenning et al. 2010; Morris and Polese 2013). Scholars are still grappling with how to theorise instances of nepotism, low-level corruption, and pilfering of public resources (e.g. Giordano and Hayoz 2013; Morris and Polese 2015). And most worryingly, research shows that attempts to consolidate liberal, democratic market society across the former Eastern Bloc have been accompanied by the formation of corrupt elite networks and a breakdown of the rule of law (e.g. Ledeneva and Kurkchian 2000; Wedel 2001, 2009; Ledeneva 2006, 2013). In short, rather than removing informality from economic and political practices, post-socialist economic and political liberalisation appears to have provided fertile ground for its proliferation.

This persistence and flourishing of everyday economies of favour, as well as large-scale political and economic fraud, has confounded the expectations of academics and policy makers alike. As Gerald Creed (2011) has pointed out, Cold War observers viewed socialist-era

economies of favour not primarily as a type of economic practice, but rather as a type of civic action: assuming that socialist society suffered from a 'social vacuum' created by the lack of civil society, the mistrust of state institutions, and concentration of power in the hands of the communist parties, scholars saw economies of favours as an alternative political arena enabling the general population to compete for resources. Yet, while they regarded the informal sector as a 'source of autonomy from the state' before 1989, they subsequently condemned the same practices as 'negative social capital' preventing the establishment of adequate connections between formal institutions of governance and the population (Creed 2011: 113). Re-labelled as 'corruption', 'clientelism' or 'nepotism', practices of circumventing official procedures and a preference for face-to-face dealings were now seen as opposition not to an illegitimate state, but rather to the ostensibly democratic and open sphere of public civic culture and the rule of law. Indeed, by recasting ubiquitous practices of making a living and navigating the state bureaucracy in terms of 'social capital', development agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and global financial institutions inserted the terms 'informality' and 'economies of favour' into a highly normative, globally circulating, deterritorialised language of audit and accountability, together with terms such as 'corruption', 'transparency', 'trust' and 'legality' (Haller and Shore 2005). This analytical terminology employed by policy makers imbued the concept of economies of favour with a moral burden not dissimilar from the use of debt rhetoric as a moral issue and a moral failure (see Graeber 2011).

This branding of economies of favour as a toxic legacy of socialism, in short, reflected ideal-type notions of social contract, civil society and community shared by policy makers, rather than the nature of informal practices on the ground. In response, scholars from across the social sciences have sought novel ways to rehabilitate the term and to develop grassroots understandings of the conditions of 'actually living post-socialism'. Anthropologists in particular have seized on the concept of morality as an analytical device for problematising the dominance of the normative, global language of audit described above (Humphrey 2002; Mandel and Humphrey 2002). One strand of this literature advocates taking local definitions and terminologies of corruption into account, suggesting that people may subscribe to an alternative moral order (Werner 2002; Wanner 2005) or operate with a 'contextual morality', which legitimises socially and legally questionable actions in given situations (Polese 2008). Another growing body of work considers ostensibly 'corrupt' actions within their wider context of local practices of exchange, obligations of care, and rights

to welfare (e.g. Rivkin-Fish 2005; Sneath 2006; Stan 2007, 2012). Drawing on the classical anthropological juxtaposition of gift and commodity exchange, they document how moralities of exchange (Parry and Bloch 1989) shift with changing state and class configurations, as well as currency regimes. Beyond anthropology, recent research in the region has sought to recognise the heterogeneity of contemporary informal economic practices by employing ethnographic methods to uncover their role in the everyday, lived experience of citizens across the former Eastern Bloc (e.g. Morris and Polese 2013; Williams et al. 2013). Some scholars have furthermore argued for the development of a new typology of informal economic practices in the region, which include not only self-employment, small-scale enterprise, and paid work undertaken outside the formal economy, but also practices of self-provisioning, unpaid formal and informal employment, and the phenomena of 'paid favours' between kin and acquaintances (Williams et al. 2013).

Alongside efforts to throw light on the full gamut of practices which make up contemporary economies of favour in Eastern Europe, Russia and Eurasia, there are increasing efforts to rehabilitate the negative image of informal economic practices in the region. Countering the prevailing discourse of 'informality' as corrosive to economic and political development, scholars have recently taken a greater interest in examining how such practices might form the 'seedbed for enterprise development and principal mechanism for delivering community self-help' (Williams and Round 2007: 2321; Kideckel 2008). Rather than subscribing to conventional perceptions of informal employment as exploitative, low-paid labour undertaken by those marginalised by the formal economy, scholars are beginning to acknowledge that informal economic activities are often culturally meaningful to those who undertake them. Whether subsistence farming or unregulated employment, such practices not only support livelihoods under the precarious circumstance of post-socialist restructuring, but carry a certain moral value by virtue of allowing individuals to make ends meet in the face of an increasingly uncaring state. As often as they are part of a 'survival strategy' developed by an impoverished population, practices of self-provisioning, domestic production, and petty trade may enact long-standing norms of household reproduction and domesticity (e.g. Makovicky 2009; Ries 2009). As Morris (2012; Morris and Polese 2013) has shown in the case of Russian workers, some may choose the precariousness of self- or informal employment over the lack of autonomy and benefits of waged employment. With the reality of the post-socialist work environment not enabling the reproduction of a

“normal” working class existence’, workers’ ‘self-esteem ... increasingly comes to be associated with non-dependence on the derisory returns of formal work’ (Morris 2012: 230).

Morris’ observation has recently been echoed by Caroline Humphrey (2012), who has questioned the very assumption that informal economic practices are primarily driven by the structural constraints of socio-economic inequality. Querying the degree to which post-socialist economies of favour should be understood in transactional terms of costs and benefits (and should therefore be analysed solely as a matter of political economy), Humphrey argues instead that acts of doing favours form a ‘moral aesthetic of action that endows the actors with standing and a sense of self-worth’ (2012: 23). Her observation signals the fact that the study of these phenomena requires more than the re-contextualisation of socialist-era informal economic practices into the market-capitalist present. Rather, it requires a critical re-interrogation of the conceptual relation between the categories of ‘favour’ and ‘economies’ themselves. A new collection of studies has recently been published with the goal of addressing this issue (Henig and Makovicky 2016). The contributors to this collection start by questioning what a favour is, rather than employing it as a euphemism for corruption or informality. As such, they move away from asking functional questions of exchange and reciprocity, towards interrogating the ethical and expressive aspects of human life. Examining favours, they posit, is a way of studying the moments of ‘ethical reflection, reasoning, dilemma, doubt, conflict, judgement, and decision’ that punctuate everyday life and experience (Laidlaw 2014: 23). Shifting the theoretical emphasis from studying *economies of favour* to studying *favours sui generis* does not, however, mean that the contributors regard gratuitous behaviour as uniformly benign or altruistic in nature. Neither do they see favours as operating ‘outside’ or ‘beyond’ the economic sphere. Rather, both Humphrey (2012) and Henig and Makovicky (2016) suggest that favours constitute a distinct mode of action that has economic consequences, yet without being fully explicable in terms of transactional cost-benefit analysis. Favours – and, by extension, economies of favour – have existential (as well as social and material) significance. They are constitutive of – rather than external to – the persons and relations of those who give and receive (Englund 2008: 36), being part and parcel of what the Enlightenment economist Adam Smith (1759) called the ‘sympathy’ that underpins social relations. These recent contributions to the debate surrounding contemporary economies of favours thus show how favours are a natural part of social life that can

arise in a range of situations, and how they are central to the social production of value, as well as pride, respectability and self-worth.

### 1.1 **Blat** (Russia)

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In Russia, *blat* is a colloquial term to denote ways of getting things done through personal contacts, associated with using connections, *pulling strings* and exchanging favours. Just like other economies of favours – *guanxi*, *jeitinho*, *kombinacija*, *pituto*, *vruzki*, *wasta* and *torpil*, presented in this volume – *blat* practices are associated with sociability, i.e. maintaining social contacts or networks, but also serve an instrumental purpose of gaining influence or accessing limited resources. The blurred lines between sociability and instrumentality – the two sides of the coin in an exchange of favours – highlight the ambivalence of ‘favour’. In each particular case, the puzzle of distinguishing friendship from the use of friendship (*blat*) can be solved on the basis of frequency or context: people who regularly draw on exchanges of this kind are seen as brokers (*blatmeisters*) rather than friends. More generally, drawing a line between the relationship and the use of relationship is indeed difficult. The complexity stems from the fluid nature of the context – regime of affection, regime of status, or regime of equivalence; the elusive nature of favours, as well as the wider set of political, economic and cultural constraints (Ledeneva 1998: 144–55, Ledeneva 2016).

In the Soviet Union *blat* contacts were commonly used to obtain goods and services in short supply or to circumvent formal procedures. A school friend working in a food store saved the best cuts of meat for you; an acquaintance at the Bolshoy Theatre box office whose daughter you had helped to enter university put aside tickets for your parents. The term referred to routine, mostly non-monetary, give-and-take practices, often associated with mutual help, mutual understanding or cooperation of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. The term itself originated in criminal jargon – perhaps in emphasising the conflict between insiders of the underworld (*blatnye*), and the authorities, legal order or political regime – and has carried negative connotations ever since. *Blat* is associated with anti-Soviet images in the satirical periodical *Krokodil* in the 1920s and 1930s. In Russian language dictionaries, entries on *blat* also appeared in the 1930s. The word acquired a ‘new common vulgar’ usage in early Soviet times (Ushakov 1935), but its meaning – ‘illicitly, by protection, by patronage’ – is registered much later (*Dictionary of Russian Literary Language* 1950). The



idiom *'po blatu'* ('through acquaintances') was colloquially widely used but banned from official discourse. It certainly does not feature in any of the editions of the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia*. As Joseph Berliner, the pioneer of the Harvard Interviewing Project, rightly observed: 'If we were totally reliant on the written sources of the Soviet society, we might hardly have guessed the importance of *blat*' (Berliner 1957: 184).

In the Soviet vernacular, the term embraced (1) vertical, or hierarchical, patterns such as protection and patronage; (2) horizontal, or reciprocal, deals of the 'I scratch your back, you scratch mine' type; (3) go-between practices (asking on behalf of someone rather than for oneself) and self-serving brokerage; (4) exchange of favours and access to resources associated with family, friendship and other binding relationships; (5) patterns of sociability such as mutual help, mutual understanding and exchange of information (Ledeneva 1998). By the 1980s, *blat* favours became so ubiquitous that it was difficult for people to separate friendship from the use of friendship: friends were meant to help out.

Three features of the Soviet system can account for the pervasive nature of *blat*. First, central planning and the resultant economy of shortage made *favours of access* to food, goods or services essential for personal consumption. Double standards emerged: although the routine re-distribution of resources through personal channels was not illegal, it was not fully legitimate either, leaving it to circumstantial factors (the need, purpose and scale) to define the legitimacy of each particular transaction. *Blat* favours were 'regulated' by a specific social circle and by a broader consensus on what should be tolerated in view of consumerism.

Second, the monopoly of state property, whereby everything and nothing belonged to everyone, ensured that the blurred boundaries between the public and private were routinely crossed. Every gatekeeper with a discretionary power made a decision in favour of 'us', and thus redefined the public-private boundary into the more negotiable dichotomy of 'us vs them'. Third, the centralised, future-oriented and closed nature of the economy enhanced the 'us and them' mentality at all levels, normalised the double standards, and enabled the so-called 'misrecognition game', whereby a *blat* transaction was viewed as friendship by its insiders, but as *blat* (re-channelling of public resources into a private network) by outsiders. Such ambivalence in perception was essential for sustaining an altruistic self-image while engaging in a self-serving economy of favours.

*Blat* practices were intrinsically ambivalent in their functions: they both served the regime and the people, while simultaneously undermining the regime and corrupting the people. In authoritarian regimes, the outcome of such ambivalence is 'corruption with a human face' – the

underside that lubricated the rigidity of political and economic constraints. As people used to say, 'the severity of our laws is compensated for by their non-observance'. Soviet *blat* effectively became the reverse side of the over-controlling centre, thus enabling both people and the regime to survive under formally pronounced but ultimately unenforceable rules. It was an indispensable set of practices that enabled the Soviet system to function, made it tolerable, yet also subverted it. The Soviet system was best encapsulated by an anecdote on the 'six paradoxes of socialism': 'No unemployment but nobody works. Nobody works but productivity increases. Productivity increases but shops are empty. Shops are empty but fridges are full. Fridges are full but nobody is satisfied. Nobody is satisfied but all vote unanimously'. Practices of absenteeism, misreporting, accessing goods in short supply, unofficial redistribution of official privileges, and widespread cynicism, were the open secrets of socialism, commonly known but officially unacknowledged and rarely registered in written sources inside the country. They eventually led to the seventh paradox of the Soviet system: 'All voted unanimously but the system has collapsed anyway!'

It is only since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 that people have been able to reflect on such practices (just as in the 1950s, those who left the Soviet Union were able to describe their *blat* experience in the Harvard Interviewing Project (Fitzpatrick 2000)). *Blat* developed together with the regime and reflected its changes. At first it addressed basic necessities such as food, jobs and living space, helping *kulaks* to escape exile or making it possible for Bolsheviks to christen their babies despite the party ban on religious rituals. Then came the more sophisticated needs of late socialism associated with education, mobility, consumerism and self-expression. But although there may seem to be a parallel between the way contacts were used for competitive advantage in Bolshevik Russia (e.g., in order to conceal class origins given the constraints of the Bolshevik demand for a proletarian background) and in post-Soviet Russia (where contacts could allow one to be 'appointed' a millionaire), the nature of the regime must be taken into consideration.

The post-Soviet reforms have undermined three basic parameters of the Soviet system that constituted *blat*. First, functioning markets for goods and capital have replaced the economy of shortage in which everything, whether foodstuffs, goods, services, or places in hospitals and cemeteries, was bartered in the economy of favours. Second, state property was increasingly privatised, putting a price tag on the 'favour of access'. Third, the sense of security and long-term horizon associated with socialism – 'everything was forever' – ceased to exist, thus making

the misrecognition of the instrumental side of sociability more difficult. The cumulative outcome of all these changes was that a new shortage emerged in post-socialist Russia – money – and the *blat* know-how had to adjust to it. Not only have networks reoriented themselves to serve this new type of shortage (to make money, to safeguard, to invest and to export), the use of contacts has become monetised in the sense that money is now not excluded from personalised exchanges. The monetisation of favours is particularly pronounced in the private sector that emerged in post-Soviet Russia and significantly transformed the ‘non-monetary’ feel of the good old Soviet *blat*. Although the expression ‘by *blat*’ is still known and understood in present-day Russia and countries of the former Soviet Union, the assumption of continuity of *blat* practices is misleading (for ‘economies of favours’ associated with the term *blat* in other Soviet and post-Soviet republics, see Mars and Altman 1983; Schatz 2004; Babajanian 2008; Aliyev 2013; Onoshchenko and Williams 2013).

Yet it is also misleading to assume a complete change. It was believed that once the centralised system ceased to exist, there would not be a need for alternative currencies or an extensive use of informal networks. Markets would take care of functions that used to be performed by informal networks. However, research shows that not only does the use of networks not diminish – it actually increases, especially in newly emerging sectors (Miller et al. 2001; Rose, 2001). The legacy of socialism is often blamed, and the Soviet grip is indeed part of the story. But one must not dismiss the functionality of informal practices for political regimes and their effectiveness for individual problem solving. In transitional economies, the defects of markets are compensated for by informal networks; low levels of impersonal trust in state institutions shift the burden onto interpersonal trust. The reasons for the emergence of informal practices (survival, shortage, cornered behaviour) may not be the same as the reasons for their reproduction (vested interests, proactive manipulation). Both sets of reasons need to be considered to account for the fundamental changes in the use of networks in the post-Soviet period in Russia and for the purposes of comparison.

## 1.2 *Jeitinho* (Brazil)

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The word *jeitinho* literally means ‘a little way’, and denotes a Brazilian cultural practice that involves seeking personal favours by cajoling or

sweet-talking. DaMatta (1991: 189) describes *jeitinho* as ‘a clever dodge to bend the rules’, and it can also be viewed as a tactic to deal with unexpected events or inconvenient situations. As well as denoting the practice in general, the word *jeitinho* can be used to request help in a specific instance. Just as in English one can explicitly ask, ‘Can you do me a favour?’, in Brazil one can ask for a *jeitinho* by saying ‘*Da um jeitinho pra mim*’ (literally ‘Give me a *jeitinho*’). Hence, one might ask for a *jeitinho* when one needs an extension of time to pay an overdue bill; when one needs a cash advance from the boss before pay day; or when told at the garage that one’s car will not be fixed before the weekend. This explicitness reflects the fact that *jeitinho* is generally regarded by Brazilians as a legitimate social practice. It is considered a core element of Brazilian cultural identity (DaMatta 1984, 1991; Barbosa 1992). It is also pervasive: ‘there are no dimensions in Brazilian life that are not encompassed by *jeitinho*’ (Rega 2000: 60).

In terms of its defining features, *jeitinho* can be characterised as follows. It is a *personalised* practice used to deal with extraordinary or unforeseen situations, and typically takes the form of a *cordial approach* (it is perceived to be more effective when accompanied by a smile or a gentle tone of voice). It involves a *conscious act of bending or breaking the rules*, and typically seeks *short-term rather than long-term benefits*. It is normally a *self-serving tactic*, although can also be used altruistically to help others. With regard to ethical judgement, *jeitinho* can be valued both positively as a harmless problem-solving strategy, and negatively as ruthless manipulation for personal advantage.

A particular feature that distinguishes *jeitinho* from an ordinary favour is the fact that *jeitinho* engenders *diffuse reciprocity* (Barbosa 1992). While a favour normally involves direct reciprocity between two people, *jeitinho* transactions entail a broader type of reciprocity based on the assumption that anyone can receive the benefits of an instance of *jeitinho*. As stated in a popular Brazilian adage, ‘*Hoje é a vez dele; amanhã será a minha*’ (‘Today it’s his turn, tomorrow it could be my turn’).

Writers such as DaMatta (1984), Levine (1997), Ramos (1966) and Rosenn (1971) conceptualise *jeitinho* more specifically as a strategy to deal with the constraints of bureaucratic rules, which make it hard for people to solve administrative problems that emerge in their day-to-day life. In the words of Levine (1997: 81), *jeitinho* is ‘the “way” to grease the wheels of government or bureaucracy, so as to obtain a favor or to bypass rules and regulations’. For DaMatta (1984: 99), *jeitinho* is a Brazilian style of ‘social navigation’ that enables citizens to deal with impersonal norms. It is a peaceful and affable way to

‘connect the personal with the impersonal’, allowing the harmonisation of opposing interests through the creation of temporary ‘relationships’ between the person requesting the favour, and the person who can potentially grant the favour. Referring more specifically to work contexts, organisational theorists conceptualise *jeitinho* as an informal problem-solving mechanism used by employees to circumvent bureaucratic rules (see, for example, Amado and Brasil 1991; Freitas 1997; Prates and Barros 1997; Duarte 2006b). The personal versus impersonal dichotomy is also assumed in this particular interpretation of *jeitinho*.

In Brazilian society *jeitinho* involves a social choice, and there is thus a ‘social weight’ attributed to it. In other words, Brazilians explicitly recognise *jeitinho* and value it as a means of solving problems, perceived as ‘essentially Brazilian’. It is taken for granted that *jeitinho* is utilised by *everyone* from the poorest to the richest (Barbosa 1992: 32) – and that the people involved in a *jeitinho* transaction are clearly aware that it is taking place. There is also an expectation in Brazilian society that a *jeitinho* will always be granted, considering that generosity, cordiality, warmth and empathy are regarded as core Brazilian attributes (Da Matta 1984, 1991; Barbosa 1992; Buarque de Hollanda 1936/1995; Duarte 2011). These characteristics are consistent with those underpinning the notion of *simpatia*, or a person’s ability to make others perceive them as charming, likeable and easy going. Establishing *simpatia* is fundamental to ensure that a *jeitinho* will be granted, considering that this practice involves coaxing a person to obtain the desired favour (Duarte 2011).

The assumption that Brazilian *jeitinho* is a benign social practice is not nevertheless universally shared. Levine (1997: 81) warns about the dark side of *jeitinho*, expressing the view that it ‘falls between legitimate favors and out-and-out corruption’. He draws attention to the fact that in Brazilian society *jeitinhos* are not always granted by someone who is a personal acquaintance. There are instances where favours are granted in exchange for ‘a tip or a larger pay-off’, which renders the practice of *jeitinho* similar to bribery. Indeed, Cavalcanti (1991) compares *jeitinho* to *bustarella* in Italy, *speed money* in India and *baksheesh* in Egypt – which are all forms of bribes or facilitation payments.

A number of similar practices to *jeitinho* exist in other Latin American countries. These include *palanca* in Colombia and *pituto* in Chile, both of which refer to useful connections used to obtain, for example, employment. *Sociolismo* in Cuba refers to the practice of using connections to access scarce resources, and is derived from the word *socio*, which means ‘pal’ or ‘buddy’. The prevalence of these terms suggests that the use of

personal contacts to obtain preferential treatment is a common feature across Latin American cultures.

In conclusion, *jeitinho* can be conceptualised as a multi-layered cultural practice, which exists in an ethical continuum that extends from a ‘positive’ pole where it possesses benign, friendly characteristics, to a ‘negative’ pole highlighting exploitative and even corrupt characteristics (Barbosa 1992; Duarte 2006a). It reflects the complexities of a society that oscillates between a personalist worldview emphasising family and friendship, and a modern, individualistic ideology that emphasises survival-of-the-fittest (Barbosa 1992).

### 1.3 **Sociolismo** (Cuba)

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*Sociolismo* means the use of social networks (family, friendship, or other network connections) in Cuban society to obtain goods and services that are in short supply due to state rationing and the inefficiencies of the command economy (Lomnitz and Sheinbaum 2004: 4; Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López 2006: 135).

The name of the concept is derived from the root word *socio*, which in Spanish means ‘partner’, ‘member’ or ‘buddy’. The best simple translation for the word is roughly ‘buddy-ism’. Furthermore, the word *sociolismo* is a pun on the commonly known Spanish word *socialismo*, which in English means ‘socialism’ (Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López 2006: 135). *Sociolismo* is based on three important concepts within Cuban society: *simpatía* (likability), *confianza* (trust from familiarity) and *ser buena gente* (being a good person) (Díaz-Briquets and Pérez-López 2006: 135; Fernández 2000: 29). Damién Fernández views *sociolismo* as developing from the concept of *lo informal* (‘that which is informal’). He states that: ‘*Lo informal* is composed of groups of individuals who know and like each other [...] These groups bring together peers, superiors, and subordinates [...] Informality depends on the possibility of bending rules and bypassing legal norms because I/you am/are special and real’ (Fernández 2000: 29–30).

Cubans do not tend to use the word *sociolismo* explicitly when describing their own behaviour, but rather utilise normal words that carry an alternative, loaded meaning. Many of the words took on their second meanings during the ‘Special Period’ of the 1990s, a time of economic crisis in Cuba following the dissolution of its old economic

partner, the Soviet Union (Weinreb 2009: 65). First, the verb *luchar* ('to struggle') changed from its original, communist meaning of 'struggling' against imperialism and capitalism, to 'struggling' to survive everyday life. Nowadays, the word implies the ability to use connections in order to adjust to shortages in daily life. Sometimes this word can mean taking a little extra from the government warehouse for a friend or selling such goods for a higher price to people that need them (Weinreb 2009: 67–8).

The second word within the lexicon of *sociolismo* is the verb *resolver*, which literally means 'to resolve' or 'to settle'. However, within the context of *sociolismo* it means something more akin to finding some type of good and taking possession of it (Weinreb 2009: 69). It can also be described as a mechanism of 'getting things done' and 'to make ends meet' (Azel 2010: 69–70).

*Conseguir* in the context of the language of informality means 'to obtain' or 'to get'. It is comparable with the use of the Russian verb *dostat'* in the context of the practice of *blat* in the USSR, which literally means 'to reach', but within the context of informality took on the meaning 'to obtain through the use of contacts or connections' (Ledeneva 1998: 12). Interestingly, in everyday Cuban-Spanish, the word *conseguir* often takes the place of the word *comprar* (to buy), because obtaining a good in the shortage economy often requires some other means than simply going into a shop and buying it. Weinreb gives the following example:

People say, 'Voy a *conseguir* oregano' ['I'm going to find some oregano'], instead of 'Voy a *comprar* oregano', ['I'm going to buy some oregano'] because in practice this undertaking means checking the availability of oregano in the aisles of dollar shops; asking about the availability of a secret stash kept behind the counter; finding out which neighbour has some available to borrow, barter, or sell; finding it growing wild on a bush, or giving up until word arrives that some has become available.

(Weinreb 2009: 72–3)

Finally, the meaning of the verb *inventor* ('to invent') is stretched when used as part of the lexicon of *sociolismo*. The main connotation the term carries is the ability to make anything from nothing in order to survive (Weinreb 2009: 76–8). Often it implies the 'invention' of a new way around a stifling law or restriction by the government. For example, as the Cuban economy tried to transition through the 1990s, the government experimented with some forms of market reform and capitalism. However, what came about was a situation where the government

would allow privatisation and then decide to go back on its reform (Smith 1999: 49). This created an environment of ever-changing bureaucratic regulations, which in turn resulted in an ever-changing amount of 'invented' loopholes to the system (Smith 1999: 58).

Even today, Cuba's economy is still about 80 per cent controlled by the state (*Bloomberg Businessweek* 2012). Furthermore, the rationing of goods is still in effect, which creates country-wide shortages. This, in effect, creates the need for systems of informality and *sociolismo*. Cuba's system of *sociolismo* is a product of the fall of European socialism. In the 1960s and 1970s, Cuba's economy was growing at a rate of 5 per cent per year (DeFronzo 2007: 220). However, by the 1980s the Cuban economy was beginning to stagnate, along with the economies of European socialist states. This is largely because Cuba was economically tied to the Soviet Union, being close trade partners and relying on cheap goods and financial help (Valdéz Paz 2005: 105). By the 1980s, Cuba was no longer able to fulfil its trade requirements and by the 1990s the Cuban economy was in complete freefall (DeFronzo 2007: 220). Under these conditions, Cuba's second economy developed and is where the practice of *sociolismo* thrives. According to George Lambie, 'the state that supplied virtually everything to the population was suddenly disconnected from its main sources of provisions, and had to let people try to resolve their own shortages' (2010: 173). In this context, the collectivist ideological slogans (e.g. see [Figure 1.3.1](#)) have developed individualistic connotations.

Another political issue in Cuba that creates a safe haven for *sociolismo* practices is the extensive abuse of power by the leadership in Cuba, as well as high levels of state capture by politicians who influence government policies for their own private gain. Because of the elite's abuse of their power in the Communist Party and the ever-increasing tax levels on the few privatised businesses on the island, everyday Cubans are frozen out of the system (Erikson 2007: 227). The general population faces shortages and cannot afford to shop at dollar stores; they are left to survive for themselves, thus leading to the expansion of *sociolismo*. The introduction of the US dollar as a legal currency in Cuba in 1993 exacerbated this situation, leading to the greater stratification of society, and *sociolismo* practices expanded exponentially (Erikson 2007: 226). When societies become stratified, those in every stratum begin to stick with their own group, thus tightening their social connections. In addition, with the introduction of the US dollar *sociolismo* became international. With remittances coming into Cuba, the trust networks that many Cubans had with their families in the United States became





**Figure 1.3.1** Murals in Santa Clara, Cuba. Translation: ‘To victory, always’.

Source: [https://flickr.com/photos/rvm\\_71/3213435069/in/album-72157675663161820/](https://flickr.com/photos/rvm_71/3213435069/in/album-72157675663161820/) © Ramon Rosati, 2008. Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

even more deeply rooted. These trust networks, which are a vital base for *sociolismo*, transform social structures by making society more stratified from bottom to top (Tilly 2007: 10). Because remittances play such a major role in the Cuban economy (and act as a vital source of income to individual Cubans), the trust networks in place to transfer these sums were strengthened, further entrenching the practice of *sociolismo* in Cuban society.

#### 1.4 **Compadrazgo** (Chile)

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*Compadrazgo* is a system of reciprocity in Chilean society, which involves ongoing exchanges of complimentary services (*favores* – favours), performed and motivated within an ideology of friendship. Such favours are often of a bureaucratic nature and usually involve giving someone preferential treatment and thus compromising the rights and priorities of third parties, or of the community as a whole.

The popular term *compadrazgo* is a euphemism for this institution, which should not be confused with the ritualistic Catholic institution of God-parenthood that shares the same name. *Compadrazgo* is typically used to obtain something with greater ease and in less time than it would otherwise take. The desired end is usually legal, though the means may be less so. Such favours are given and received in a spirit of friendship and without apparent guilty feelings. It is important to note that the initial favour is bestowed without any overt thought of a specific reciprocal return. Nevertheless, both parties understand that the beneficiary of the favour is 'indebted' to the person conferring the favour, meaning the latter can draw on a favour in return when the need arises. An unwritten principle of *compadrazgo* is contained in the Spanish saying: 'Hoy por tí, mañana por mí' ('For you today, for me tomorrow').

Bureaucratic favours are the most common use of *compadrazgo*: acquiring certificates, licences, permits, transcripts, passports, identity cards, tax clearances and countless other 'red tape' items that would otherwise require many mornings spent queuing and chasing paperwork from one office to another. *Compadrazgo* may also be used in obtaining special facilities at customs, waiver of military service, granting of import licences and other such bureaucratic awards. Pushing a friend or acquaintance to the top of a waiting list for scarce items or services that have long waiting lists is also common: telephone service, buying a car at wholesale price, scholarships and grants, service commissions abroad and so on.

Job placement is another common use of *compadrazgo*. President Ibáñez (1956–62) is popularly credited with saying in relation to filling a job position, 'Between a relative and a friend I prefer the relative; between a friend and a stranger I prefer the friend'. Lower echelon jobs in the administrative bureaucracy, which are in great demand among a large and relatively unskilled segment of the middle class, are frequently awarded through *compadrazgo*. The actual process of job hunting consists in mentally reviewing all one's personal connections in order to locate someone who is close to the source of appointments in a given agency. Conversely, finding a person for a job opening involves going over the list of one's relatives and friends in the hope of discovering someone suitable. Personal recommendations are vital and represent an important favour to the applicant. *Compadrazgo* may be regarded as the basic mechanism of job allocation in the irresistible growth of the low-level bureaucracy in Chile. Even highly qualified people do not apply unless they are assured of strong backing through *compadrazgo* connections.

Credit in Chile is often beyond the reach of the middle class because of the high collateral required, but a well-placed friend in a bank or credit association can facilitate matters. A *Caja* is a credit union operated under the social security system; it is supposed to provide loans, but is chronically short of funds. With the help of *compadrazgo*, as soon as fresh funds for loans become available the *compadre* (friend) can be notified ahead of the general public and his application guided to the top of the pile so as to get it processed before the funds are exhausted. The provision of confidential 'tip-offs' based on inside information is a typical use of *compadrazgo*. None of this appears to the practitioner as strictly illegal since (as one respondent told the author), 'no harm is done except to the people waiting in line, every one of whom would have done the same if he'd had the right connection'.

Lawyer informants claim there is no end to the use of *compadrazgo* in legal matters. Files get conveniently 'lost', charges are suspended or sidetracked, witnesses are coached, fines or bail are set at minimal levels. The case of marriage annulments is typical because the legal case hinges on a technicality, e.g. proving that the clerk who performed the wedding had no jurisdiction over the place of residence of the couple. Proof may be furnished by 'witnesses' who could be easily discredited unless the judge was willing to go along for the sake of friendship or *compadrazgo*. Characteristically, the spirit of the law counts for less than the spirit of friendship, as long as the letter of the law has been formally complied with.

What cannot be obtained through *compadrazgo*? According to informants, anything that goes against the ideology of friendship and 'decency'. Sexual advances made by a man as the result of granting a favour to a woman would be regarded as extremely gross behaviour. Any behaviour that infringes middle-class standards: theft, murder, taking advantage of women or vulnerable people, and in general acts against dignity and 'chivalry'. Such acts would destroy the rationale of friendship by degrading it into downright complicity. *Compadrazgo* has a moral code that sets boundaries on permissible favours and return payments. However, cheating the Treasury (*hacerleso al Fisco*) is not regarded as a morally contemptible crime.

In general a feeling of friendship or common liking (*simpatia*) is considered essential for any *compadrazgo* relationship. *Compadrazgo* is essentially a personal relationship between individuals who regard themselves as social equals. They are people who are regarded as peers within the middle-class ideology of friendship. *Compadrazgo* is largely confined to the middle class because its members are best placed to offer favours, i.e. services of a bureaucratic, business, and professional nature. Lower-class

individuals could not reciprocate in kind, having only their manual labour to offer, while the superior status of an upper-class member would be forfeited through the exchange of such favours, which would amount to a tacit admission of social equality with the middle class. Exchange may still exist between individuals of different social levels, but it lacks the reciprocal elements of favour plus friendship characteristic of *compadrazgo*.

Fieldwork by the author has revealed that informants are quite ambivalent about their *compadrazgo* relationships. They tend to feel uncomfortable discussing personal benefits obtained, particularly financial, political or legal benefits. Favours that cut red tape are acknowledged freely, but more important benefits are mentioned sheepishly and accompanied by apologetic explanations. Most informants agree that *compadrazgo* should not exist in an ideal society, but important individual differences were observed in the degree of rejection. Some rationalised the use of *compadrazgo* as a response to scarcity and pointed out that it develops positive traits of friendship and mutual assistance. On the one hand, the ideology of friendship and unselfish assistance is viewed as positive and worth preserving at any cost. On the other hand, it is recognised that *compadrazgo* is unfair to others, and perhaps to society as a whole. Thus the ambivalence of attitudes appears to be grounded in conflict between the ideology of class solidarity grounded in friendship and reciprocity, and the liberal ideology of free enterprise and advancement on merit.

### 1.5 **Pituto** (Chile)

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In Chile, *pituto* relates to a common practice based on an influential relationship with someone, used to gain some advantage (commonly a job), regardless of merit. *Pituto* describes a comparative advantage that someone has, based only on their network's connections or those of their inner circle. According to Bazoret (2006), social capital is of utmost importance in the practice of *pituto*, as it helps to generate access to a large, informal network of services. This allows someone to activate different connections according to the obstacles they face, such as bureaucratic red tape and the inefficiency of the labour market. In consequence, in Chile there is a collective consciousness of the importance of cultivating friendships since childhood, especially those that represent a comparative advantage to one's real social and economic position. Thus one enters adulthood with a wide and diverse network to appeal to in times of need. Consequently, *pituto* is a common, well-established informal practice within Chilean

society. We can observe that *pituto* is closely related to, but not limited by, the concepts of nepotism and cronyism. Bazoret suggests that *pituto* can be understood as: ‘a form of social regulation that entails a constant and systematic exchange of assistance, help and support between relatives, friends and acquaintances. It is capitalised as a symbolic debt, which generates a significant and mandatory reciprocity’ (Bazoret 2006).

Examples of the practice of *pituto* include obtaining an exemption from any kind of payment, getting a job without having competed for it, an enrolment in any setting without having applied for it, and superior or priority treatment in a public service of any kind, clearly differentiated from that received by ‘ordinary’ people. This meaning of the word *pituto* has not yet been incorporated into the *Real Dictionary of the Spanish Language* (RAE), although a related verb, *apitutar* (which effectively means providing a job by influence) is included. There is a second meaning of the noun *pituto*, which is included in the RAE, a similar concept to the English term ‘moonlighting’: ‘casual work, economically convenient, that is carried out simultaneously with a stable job and that has no official contract’ (*Real Diccionario de la Lengua Española* 2014).

There is another Chilean colloquial phrase that describes a similar phenomenon to *pituto*: *tener santos en la corte* (literally ‘to have saints in court’). Rivano Fischer (2010) explains the concept as having influences, resources or contacts in positions of power in order to make a profit or obtain a favour. While the meanings of *tener santos en la corte* and *pituto* are closely related, the main difference between them is that *santos en la corte* refers to having contacts of the highest hierarchical importance. *Pituto*, however, does not necessarily involve someone in a position of power, but simply a contact that a person is able to appeal to for help if necessary. *Pituto* is therefore a broader concept than *tener santos en la corte*.

Moreover, from the word *pituto* derives the concept of *apitutado* (adj/n). Chile Transparente (2009), the Chilean chapter of Transparency International, describes an *apitutado* as:

a Chilean character who is the son, parent, cousin or friend of a person who holds a position of power in any public or private institution, who typically has no education, merit or sufficient preparation to do some work, but remains in that position with benefits that others usually do not have because of his kinship or friendship with the person in power.

Other derivatives of *apitutado* can be found in traditional Chilean slang: (1) *apitutar* (verb), which gives the idea of ‘providing someone

with a job or other benefit by influence'; and (2) *apitutarse* or in other words 'to get a job through the influence of a third party with whom there is a close link' (Academia Chilena de la Lengua 2010).

It has been argued that Chile still suffers dysfunction in terms of its development, its modern, strong capitalist economy coexisting with a social organisation belonging to the rural economy that favours some kinds of patronage and more widely *pituto* (Cleary 2009). The institutionalised practice of *pituto* conflicts with meritocracy or the selection process based on the merits that a person may have. This situation clearly represents a threat to open and clean public and private procedures. While the levels of corruption in Chile are lower than those found in its Latin American counterparts (Transparency International 2014), it is still possible to observe such deeply rooted practices throughout Chilean society. Practices like *pituto* have a negative impact on the levels of transparency and integrity in the country, affecting not only the quality of democracy but also society's confidence in its public institutions. As a logical consequence of this situation, there is a general distrust of recruitment processes – which are often thought to be based on *pituto* despite the efforts of the Chilean state to make them more transparent. The state has introduced a number of measures to prevent and disincentivise *pituto* in the public sphere. These include the creation of the *Consejo de la Alta Dirección Pública* (Council of High Public Administration) in 2003; the enactment of the *Ley de Transparencia y Acceso a la Información Pública* (Law of Transparency and Access to Public Information) in 2008; and the creation of the *Consejo de Auditoría Interna General de Gobierno* (Council of General Internal Audit of Government) in 1997 (amended in 2005). Nevertheless, the practice of *pituto* remains deeply institutionalised in the behaviour of the Chilean population.

## 1.6 **Štela** (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

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*Štela* is a term used in Bosnia and Herzegovina to refer to people, relations and practices implicated in obtaining public or private resources through a personalised connection. *Štela* implies either that the official procedure was circumvented, or that there was no official procedure for obtaining the resource in the first place.

The word *štela* can refer to a person (*‘on je bio njena štela’*, meaning ‘he was her *štela*’); a particular act of exchange (*‘dobila je posao preko štete’*, meaning ‘she got a job through a *štela*’); or a pervading system of exchange (*‘tamo ide sve preko štete’*, meaning ‘there, everything runs on *štela*’). Given the historical legacy of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy which governed Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878–1918, the word *štela* may be related to the German verb *stellen*, meaning ‘to put, place or provide’, as well as to the German noun *Stelle*, meaning ‘a position or a place’. *Veza*, meaning ‘a relation’ as well as ‘a connection’, is another term used to refer to the same practice across former Yugoslav countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Some 95 per cent of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina considered *štela* to be ‘always’ or ‘occasionally’ necessary for accessing basic services such as employment, education, or health care, according to a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on social capital and ties (Nixon 2009). The report provides quantitative and qualitative data on the overwhelming importance of *štela* in Bosnia and Herzegovina and suggests that most of the country’s residents understand its implicit ‘terms and conditions’ in contemporary everyday life. Table 1.6.1 shows the responses of 1,600 citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the question ‘When is *štela* useful?’ – for accessing employment, education, health care, public authorities, and services such as obtaining a visa and other official documents. Quantitative analysis of the data set shows little variance in terms of gender, ethnicity, age or education background of the respondents.

#### *Perceived importance of informal networks in BiH in percentages*

Ethnographic research reveals a pattern similar to that presented by the UNDP report (see Bougarel et al. 2007; Grandits 2007; Veters 2014).

Table 1.6.1 Usefulness of *štela* for getting ...

How useful is <i>štela</i> in getting...?	A job	Into school or university	Health care	Access to authorities	Access to services	A visa
Always useful	85.7	80.1	79.4	76.9	75.1	74.6
Sometimes useful	8	10.7	12.8	14.1	14.4	13.4
Occasionally useful	1.2	2.2	2.8	3.1	4.6	4
Never useful	1.5	2	1.3	1.4	1.5	2.1
Don’t know/No answer	3.5	4.9	3.7	4.5	4.4	5.8

Source: UNDP National Human Development Report 2009. [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/bosnia\\_nhdr\\_2009\\_en\\_0.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/bosnia_nhdr_2009_en_0.pdf)

Namely, residents of Bosnia and Herzegovina of different generations, ethno-national groups, genders or income have used *štele* to access public and private resources throughout the 2000s and 2010s. This does not mean that identity differences were not important for redistributing access via any given *štela*, or that anyone could have asked anyone else to be their *štela*. On the contrary, people usually relied on those they already knew – friends and relatives, acquaintances, former classmates, or work colleagues – to access resources via a *štela*. Thus, although *štele* are widely used by all citizens across Bosnia and Herzegovina, they are firmly rooted in people’s existing social worlds, groups and experiences, reproducing existing social differences.

The term *štela* can refer to a wide spectrum of social relations. Obtaining a resource via a *štela* may involve a dyadic relationship in which there is one beneficiary and one intermediary, but it may also extend into a chain of connections among unequally positioned persons. It is not unusual for people not to know all the others temporarily connected by the same chain. In a similar manner, *štela* may refer to obtaining a resource through close relatives and friends, thereby reflecting meanings of kinship, friendship and love. However, it can also refer to temporary connections, forged on the spot among acquaintances, co-workers, or people who got to know one another through a third party.

The exact form each *štela* takes depends on the person who needs a resource, the contacts available to them, and the kind of resource that is needed. For instance, when people need to obtain an official document or gain access to a certain medical practitioner, they often look for a *štela* among colleagues, co-workers or friends of friends. However, when they search for employment, especially for permanent positions, the stakes are higher and it is more likely that a *štela* will be found among close relatives and friends. Therefore, when people look for a *štela*, they do not follow a culturally well-established set of steps or rules. As with other forms of sociality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as *komšiluk* (meaning ‘neighbourhood’, see Sorabji 2007; Henig 2012) or *raja* (Šavija-Valha 2013), there is no set number of drinks that has to be shared, or verbal formulas that should be exchanged, in order to obtain something via a *štela*. Rather, people engage in a calibration of possibilities – they use their existing social connections and relations and adapt their strategies along the way to a resource they need.

The 1992–5 war and the subsequent post-conflict state-building processes brought an influx of foreign humanitarian relief and development aid workers to Bosnia and Herzegovina, including *inter alia* the



UNHCR, UNDP, IOM, UNICEF, OSCE, and EU Delegation (see Pugh 2005; Helms 2013; Hromadžić 2015). The social dynamics within these organisations brought to the fore the similarities between what the domestic employees understood as *štela* and what the foreign staff framed as ‘networking’ (Baker 2014). For the ‘internationals’, there seemed to be a clear difference between these two practices, whereby they considered *štela* to be backward and corrupt. For the local employees, however, the difference between these two practices was marginal. Some of them found ‘networking’ to be a way to reframe and translate the practice of *štela* into the language of the Westerners. Bosnia-Herzegovinian staff considered some of the practices in the world of the ‘internationals’ to be equivalent to *štela*, such as the allocation of internships through personal networks as gateways to future employment, or holding *ko fol* (literally ‘as if’ or ‘fake’) recruitment procedures.

*Štela* largely provokes dissatisfaction, criticism and a certain sense of shame among people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although seemingly everybody uses *štela*, people often blame others for obtaining resources in this way and express their own powerlessness about it. Using a *štela* is perceived more as something to be ‘confessed’ than ‘bragged about’. The dominant perception is that there would be no need to obtain resources via a *štela* if Bosnia and Herzegovina were a ‘normal’ country (see Jansen 2015). That is, if it resembled a state in which jobs, health care, education, and social support were accessible to everybody. Similarly, the 2009 UNDP report indicates that its respondents shared a sense of hopelessness and resignation with the status quo: ‘(*Štela*) is considered normal ... It is as widespread as if it were given by God (...) we cannot do anything about it (female, employed, two children, Sarajevo)’ (Nixon 2009).

When attempts to obtain a resource via a *štela* turn out to be unsuccessful, people sometimes try to get what they need by offering monetary payments. Most of the respondents to the UNDP report outlined rough financial amounts to be paid should one not find *štela* brokers among people one knew well. Thus, a monetary payment for a resource easily takes place when it is not possible to obtain the resource through personal relations. Since *štela* is used to circumvent an official procedure (or compensate for the lack of such a procedure), monetary exchange – despite being conceptually different from *štela* exchange – is in practice never located too far away from it.

*Štela* does not usually involve monetary transactions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but it does create a sense of gratefulness and indebtedness to the people who help. Often, people give a token of gratitude

in return, such as a piece of jewellery, perfume, a painting or flowers. The financial value of such gifts depends on a range of factors, such as income level and whether there was a previously existing relationship with the person who helped. For instance, when family members help one to access a resource, their favour does not necessarily need to be reciprocated in the foreseeable future, because it is already embedded in a long-term relationship of give and take. However, when a *štela* is established through a third party, there is more of an expectation to reciprocate immediately by ‘rewarding’ the favour giver with a material (or sometimes even financial) gift upon obtaining the desired resource.

As in almost any other form of giving, helping people to obtain a resource via a *štela* reinforces mutual social obligations. *Štela* is not just a form of material exchange, but a practice that reproduces existing and creates new social connections between people. When people connected via a *štela* occupy similar positions of power (and therefore could provide access to similar kinds of resources), this could turn into a long-term cycle of reciprocal exchange. However, *štela* also often links people in unequal power positions. In such situations, *štela* usually reproduces existing power arrangements, by confirming that the person in a more powerful position (such as a doctor, a politician, a director of a company or a teacher) is the one who can help others via a *štela*. The sense of indebtedness and gratefulness for a *štela* to the more powerful person reconfirms existing inequalities and differences.

In addition to reproducing existing social arrangements, *štela* can also make new things happen. For instance, *štela* can contribute to increasing one’s own influence and power (Brković 2017). Some people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, over time, have learnt how to serve as a *štela* for an ever-increasing number of people, doing so across multiple public and private arenas (see Stubbs 2013). In being able to skilfully help others to access various resources by circumventing the official procedure, they augment their own influence and power.

## 1.7 **Veza** (Serbia)

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The term *veza* (plural *veze*) literally means ‘connection’, and refers to the use of informal contacts in order to obtain access to opportunities that are not available through formal channels. These opportunities may

include information, services or goods for the benefit of an individual, group or organisation.

Where an individual is concerned, *veze* may be used instrumentally to serve the purpose of personal consumption, interests or goals; this may include access to services such as medical care, or obtaining formal documents such as a certificate, licence or permit. *Veze* ties may also be used by public or private organisations in order to secure privileged results. Connections in political, economic and everyday life may serve as a substitute mechanism enabling such organisations to influence other organisations' decision-making procedures in ways that would not be possible using formal means alone.

A survey of young people (aged 19–35) found that 25 per cent of recent graduates had used their parents' *veze* to find a job (Tomanovic, et al 2012). According to the same survey, 24.6 per cent of all those in employment found their jobs by means of their parents' *veze*. While graduates are linked to their parents by strong ties, it is weak ties – parents' contacts to whom the graduates themselves are unlikely to be bound – that are most likely to help them get jobs (Granovetter 1973, 1995).

Etymologically, the word *veza* derives from cohesion and binding exchange. The term may also refer to regular telephone communication (*na vezi sa ...*) or to an emotional relationship between two people (*u vezi sa ...*). The *Dictionary of Serbian Language* (Nikolić 2007: 134) gives several meanings, but the closest to this informal practice is 'mutual relations between people, something that connects them, brings them together: marital ties, friendship, love, cultural affinity, trade connections'. *Veza* may also mean 'a close acquaintance, friendship with an influential person'. The term's connotations may also include intense relations that imply reciprocity and trust between actors based on mutually binding ties or the existence of a guarantor or mediator.

The term *veze* is often used as a euphemism for using contacts in order to get things done. The expressions used in this context are as follows: 'I know the man' (*Znam čoveka*), 'See what can be done!' (*Vidi šta može da se uradi*), 'It will be taken care of' (*Biće sređeno*) (Stanojevic and Stokanic 2014). Connections may facilitate both legal and illegal activities. In the vernacular, the term is used to embrace a wide spectrum of practices, from such trivial legal activities as passing on information about job vacancies (since for important jobs it is necessary to know the right people) or getting advice on the best doctor, through semi-legal activities such as exercising discretion and favouring a certain candidate at a job interview, to illegal practices such as fixed or unfairly awarded tenders. Connections in Serbia are viewed as personal, family or social capital that

is operationalised and used instrumentally (Tomanović and Ignjatović 2004; Tomanović 2008; Cveticanin 2012). Other researchers have focused on the use of connections in the economy (Cvejić 2006; Babović 2009; Stokanić 2009) and politics (Goati 2006; Pavlović 2007; Antonić 2011; Vuletic and Stanojevic 2014; Stanojevic and Stokanic 2014).

In the political sphere, one speaks of *političke veze* (political connections). Informal political connections have been especially important in the whole period of modern Serbian statehood (nineteenth century onwards), in particular during the monarchy (until 1945). All political parties had *kafanas*, traditional restaurants or bars, where political strategies and tactics were organised and negotiated (Stojanovic 2012). Although the term *političke veze* predates the socialist period, its use took on a new importance during that era. The Communist Party controlled the entire social system, and *političke veze* provided competitive advantages through access to information and state orders requiring party authorisation. *Političke veze* also reinforced certain individuals' dependency on and loyalty to the Communist Party system by guaranteed privileges and personal promotion – something that also benefitted their family, friends and associates.

The years following the collapse of socialism, and especially following the overthrow of Slobodan Milošević in 2000, saw the introduction of privatisation and market reforms, and the move to a multi-party political system. Today, *veze* denotes not only connections to the ruling party, but also enhanced access to public resources through appointments, or the 'assisted' winning of state tenders by private firms. The current situation, characterised by a shortage of resources and weak institutions, ensures that the state is a significant player in the field of opportunities. For this reason, political parties fight to secure a monopoly over state resources in order to secure their own political survival. The downside of such monopolisation is a major redistribution of resources by means of informal channels. These channels include promising jobs to (potential) voters whose support could influence a large number of people to vote for the party in question, and guaranteeing private enterprises that they will receive concessions and state orders, even when the latter are supposedly awarded on a competitive basis.

Serbian opinion polls indicate that political engagement is perceived as a social lift. This in turn leads to a high level of membership in political parties. The percentage of party membership in Serbia is among the highest in Europe – 12.2 per cent (*World Values Survey Data 2005–8*), and it has been at this level since the period of late socialism. Furthermore, there is a high degree of fluctuating membership, whereby

membership rates of individual parties vary significantly according to whether that party is in power (Goati 2006: 134–6). This demonstrates that individuals have instrumental reasons for becoming party members.

A survey of young people in Serbia (Mojčić 2012: 103) suggests that informal channels are seen as the most effective routes for social mobility. More than two-thirds of those surveyed said that knowing the right people was crucial, while about half saw political affiliation as key, and only one-third of young people saw education as important.

In the economic sphere, informal contacts are used to avoid state regulation and circumvent the constraints of formal institutions. Likewise, personal connections are used to circumvent formal procedures. Entrepreneurs create safety nets of social networks to secure predictability in the economic sphere. Risks associated with illegal informal activities are avoided by creating personal relations with business partners and consumers. Circles of trust are based on already existing social ties – close neighbours, friends and relatives. Ethnic communities use family and other connections to establish ‘ethnic niches’ in certain sectors. For example, Bosniaks in Sandžak, south-western Serbia, used social networks to organise small firms to produce jeans (Stokanić 2009). By exploiting informal connections, entrepreneurs can secure reliable workers, raw materials, machinery, partners, distributors and consumers. Meanwhile, consumers use informal networks to obtain goods and services in short supply.

Administrative connections are used not only to secure legal rights (obtaining information or administrative permits), but also to bypass legal procedures. Research indicates that administrative access plays a significant role in enabling businesses to function (Cvejić 2016). Serbian families use social networks in order to access vital resources such as health care or the police. In 2008, nearly half of those surveyed said they could rely on the support of at least three people in the case of an emergency (Tomanović 2008). Some 40 per cent could rely on one or two such persons, while only 13 per cent had no individual on whom they could rely. As regards young people, 13 per cent of those surveyed said they used their parents’ contacts to solve administrative problems (Stanojević 2012).

Serbia’s economic and political elites are tightly intertwined. Informal ties provide members of the elite with financial support, contracts and valuable information. Patron–client relationships connecting political and economic elites facilitate but also impede Serbia’s institutional development, leading to non-transparent and divisive levels of distrust and uncertainty.

## 1.8 *Vrski* (Macedonia)

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*Vrski* means the use of personal networks, connections and informal contacts to obtain goods and services in Macedonia. *Vrski* in Macedonian can be translated as ‘connections’, and is related to the words *vrška* (connection) and *povrzan* (connected). The term therefore has various meanings and is used in several mostly benign contexts, from the ties between people or things to the government’s Ministry of Transportation (*Ministerstvo za Transport i Vrski*, with ‘*vrski*’ referring to the logistics relevant to transportation).

As a form of social capital, however, the term is scarcely written about within the country (such as in media) and there is in fact little academic literature on *vrski* in Macedonia. Rather, the term is used colloquially such as when discussing an individual of means, and its informal meaning is widely understood. If asked ‘How does s/he have ...?’ the reply will often simply be ‘*vrski*’ or an explanation of someone’s connections. For *vrski* are the connections one’s family has and as anthropologist Ilká Thiessen (2007) observed, they help individuals not only get a job but ensure that one will not be easily laid off. In fact, Thiessen noted that through *vrski* work may be given to someone who is not only unqualified, but may never perform the expected duties. ‘Who you know’ rather than expertise may thus often be the most important factor in acquiring work. Indeed, Keith Brown wrote of *vrski*: ‘the reported prevalence and importance of *vrski* is at the heart of many Macedonian critiques of how their society operates: *vrski* underpin corruption, nepotism, the black market, and every other obstacle citizens face in negotiating everyday life’ (2006: 74). Use of *vrski* can be both legal and illegal, and beneficial to an individual when successfully transacted, but a hindrance when formal mechanisms for a procedure are disregarded due to a lack of such connections.

While the practice of *vrski* is seen as corrupting, the use of such informal connections is common and many Macedonians will instinctively call upon the contacts of friends and family in order to assure a beneficial outcome. Such situations typically include acquiring work, accessing a public service (such as getting their child into the best school or completing a bureaucratic procedure), or obtaining a particular good. Shared origins are very important in a small nation such as Macedonia and in the capital Skopje, where many inhabitants are only one or two generations removed from their ancestral villages and towns. Therefore, it is common for such regional ties to be discussed and utilised.

Once a connection is made, enacting the use of *vrski* often includes meeting the connection outside in public or just outside of their office (so as to be escorted in and better assisted). The individual soliciting the favour may bring a small gift (e.g. a package of Turkish coffee, chocolates or a bottle of brandy) as a token of appreciation. Occasionally, a bribe (*mito*) is necessary in the transaction, though this is not common for most Macedonians engaged in such informal transactions. Conversation about their connection is important as well, because the closer the connection the greater the likelihood of the service or favour being successfully obtained. In fact, the individual providing the service may feel particularly obliged to lend their assistance if the individual seeking such help has been sent by a particularly important acquaintance (e.g. a mayor, godfather, or someone to whom they are indebted). The practice is thus cyclical, and helps maintain a social fabric and ‘economy of favours’ (Ledeneva 1998) comprised of cooperative, overlapping structured behaviour.

The use of *vrski* has had a negative effect on the provision of state services under the post-socialist restructuring of government and the economy. The state has intentionally exited from providing a number of formerly state-run services by implementing privatisation programmes. Privatisation has taken place due to the pursuit of free market principles, but also, arguably, in order for politicians and their *vrski* to profit privately. Through transferring responsibility to the private sector and ceasing to provide services, the state has opened up opportunities to the owners of private enterprises, who are made aware of these opportunities through their network and connections. Consequently, politicians and their acquaintances have appropriated state capital through the privatisation of its services, from utilities to higher education to agriculture. As an example, when the state’s largest winery was privatised and taken over by an investment holding firm, political figures including the (state-appointed) director of the winery as well as local and national political figures personally profited from the transaction. In particular, the former winery director acquired enough income to build a villa and small winery of his own (Otten 2013).

Another form of corruption induced by *vrski* between the public and private sectors is closely linked to the English-language concept of ‘kickbacks’. If a government agency is looking to contract out a particular service, a bureaucrat may use *vrski* networks to commission a private business that provides such services. However, both the bureaucrat and the business owner will expect personal gain from the engagement and transaction. This seeming corruption is in fact the norm; the value of

*vrski* combined with self-gain are lamented but expected, and should be factored into budgeting for a public–private partnership. *Vrski* thus combines with the interaction between public and private sectors to facilitate such kickbacks.

‘Informal’ economic practices have been defined by Hart (2009) as those falling outside of or that are invisible to bureaucratic form. He therefore states that ‘the task is not only to find practical ways of harnessing the complementary potential of bureaucracy and informality, but also to advance thinking about their dialectical movement’. Further, Hart asserts that neoliberal globalisation has expanded the scope of informal activities, so that there must be an examination of the social forms that organise them and their relation to governments, corporations and international agencies. *Vrski* should therefore provoke concern about the development of what Saskia Sassen (2014) calls ‘predatory formations’: mixes of elites, global networks, laws and government policies, all of which help constitute a ‘brutality’ in the modern global economy and the ‘expulsion’ of mass numbers of individuals from a decent standard of living. Indeed, to return to the case of the former winery director, his gain was a loss to many others in the community, and his villa was one in which he had to essentially hide out due to anger by the wine region’s residents over the winery’s privatisation.

Within the Southeast European region, personal networks are utilised in a comparable manner to Macedonian *vrski*, and in the neighbouring Slavic-speaking countries the terms are similar: *vruzki* (връзки) in Bulgaria (see Chavdarova 2013) and *veze* (везе) in Serbia. All of these practices can involve bribes, gifts and other forms of potential corruption, and are thus seen as unfair practices by those who do not benefit from them to the extent of others. Such favours help create significant privileges for individuals connected to the ruling powers and state apparatus who continue to benefit from the transfers of wealth occurring between it and the connected private firms and their owners.

### 1.9 **Vruzki** (Bulgaria)

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*Vruzki* means connections or ties in Bulgarian. The term denotes a set of informal rules for building and maintaining personal commitments and loyalties in a formal environment; these are the rules by which a social exchange of favours takes place (Chavdarova 2013: 186–7). The objects



of *vruzki* exchanges are the ‘favours of access to goods and services in short supply’ (Ledeneva 1998). *Vruzki* work to reduce social risk and guarantee privileged access. The phrase *zadejstvam vruzki* (literally, to activate connections) is similar to the British idiom ‘pulling strings’. It emphasises the active element in *vruzki*. It is the action-taker, *vruzkar* (*връзкарь*), who uses *vruzki* and thus engages in the practice of *vruzkarstvo*.

*Vruzki* may be based on long-term relationships that are direct and dyadic (that is, between a pair of individuals), or that are mediated and linked into a chain on a short-term basis. The norms of reciprocity prescribe some delay in reciprocation and some asymmetry in value. *Vruzki* are guided by the norms and ethics of interpersonal relations in general and of extended family and kinship in particular. The latter are manifested in a much-used colloquial word *shurobadjanastina*, which points to the nepotistic usage of *vruzki* in the search for employment or professional promotion. This term consists of two parts, each denoting brothers-in-law: brothers of wives (*shurej*) and husbands of wives’ sisters (*badjanak*). Already a tongue-twister, *shurobadjanastina* is actually a shortened version of *zetjo-shuro-badjanakisum*, where the add-on *zetjo* denotes son-in-law. The first use of this term dates to 1880, when the columnist Zahari Stoyanov published a satirical article, ‘Do you know who we are?’ (Stoyanov 1880/2002: 211). According to Stoyanov, *vruzkarstvo* was set to become an essential institution after the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule in 1878 and the subsequent unification of the Principality of Bulgaria and the then-Ottoman province of Southern Bulgaria in 1885. In Stoyanov’s words, ‘The Unification had first of all to be accomplished in the triple union: *zetjo-shuro-badjanakisma*’ (1880/2002: 214).

As an informal institution, *vruzki* create shared expectations among the parties to the exchange as to how their private roles in personal relationships (family, friends) interweave with their public, socio-professional roles. As a result, two mechanisms emerge through which *vruzki* function: either the instrumentalisation of personal relationships, or the personalisation of social relationships. The primacy of personal relationships in daily life has long been part of tradition and culture in Bulgarian society, but these relationships are also moulded by institutional factors characteristic of the European periphery, such as deep distrust of public institutions and blurred boundaries between the public and the private spheres (Giordano 2003).

The personal trust that underlies *vruzki* relationships has a reverse side: distrust of the faceless ‘Other’. In his seminal analysis of daily life in Bulgaria in the first capitalist period (1878–1944), Ivan Hadjiiski

articulated popular wisdom and expectations as follows: ‘Everybody is a crook until proven otherwise’ (emphasis in original); ‘Treat everyone like a crook; the burden of proving otherwise ... rests on him/her’ (Hadjiiski 1945/1974: 29). To counterbalance the culture of low impersonal trust, personal trust relationships are introduced into the formal environment. These personal channels help to overcome systemic and societal mistrust by creating overlap between the private and the public spheres. *Vruzki* may lead to the accumulation of positive social capital, but they may also reveal the detrimental effects of negative social capital, such as exclusion of outsiders, excessive claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms and ‘downward levelling norms’ (Portes 1998: 15).

The content and specific manifestations of *vruzki* depend on concrete historical conditions. During Bulgaria’s socialist period (1946–90) *vruzki* closely resembled Russian *blat*, defined as ‘use of personal networks for obtaining goods and services in short supply and for circumventing formal procedures’ (Ledeneva 1998: 1). And while scholars refer to *vruzki* as the ‘second network’ (Rajchev 1985: 13–36), folklore emphasised their primary importance. As one popular saying had it, ‘Without *vruzki*, a person can neither be born nor die’ (Benovska-Sabkova 2001: 174).

Bulgaria’s post-1990 transition to a market economy changed the *modus operandi* of *vruzki*, as they evolved from an instrument of *consumption* maximisation into an instrument of *utility* maximisation (Chavdarova 2013). The logic can be traced back to the way in which *vruzki* functioned as early as Bulgaria’s first capitalist period (Chavdarova 2001; Benovska-Sabkova 2003) but remains relevant in the post-socialist period, when the indicators of impersonal, or societal, trust hit a new low (ESS 2009). The hardship suffered by ordinary people during Bulgaria’s transition from socialism to the market partly explains why *vruzkarstvo* has remained so vital. The shortages of goods and services that typified the socialist economy were replaced by shortages of money, jobs and trustworthy partners. Compensating for these deficiencies became a highly significant and widely spread factor in *vruzki* exchanges. Recurrent exchanges of favours have shaped expectations and rules of behaviour. The rules implicitly postulate that utility is expected to increase when impersonal relationships become personal (Chavdarova 2014).

The notion of *vruzki* does not *by definition* mean violating the established formal procedures, even though everyday usage of the term often carries a negative connotation. Such widely used phrases as ‘doing/obtaining/arranging something in the *second way*’ indicate that *vruzki* presuppose taking alternative paths. But using an alternative does

not mean avoiding the formal. Like most informal practices, *vruzki* fall between clear categories such as legal and illegal (permitted/prohibited by law), or licit and illicit (socially perceived as acceptable/unacceptable) (van Schendel and Abraham 2005). The reciprocal exchange of favours of access might be legal/licit (such as the exchange of professional favours) or illegal/illicit (when social ties are used as, for example, a means of practising corruption, clientelism or nepotism). While legal/licit informal practices imply predominantly symmetrical relations between the counterparts, asymmetrical links prevail in illegal/illicit practices. The latter are usually power relations aimed at the covert redistribution of resources. Thus, although *vruzki* obey the principle of reciprocity, the term may also have substantial hidden redistributive effects at the macro-level and support both *profit-* and *rent-seeking* types of behaviour.

The outcomes of the use of *vruzki* may converge with those aimed at by formal institutions or they may diverge from them (Helmke and Levitsky 2004). On the one hand, *vruzki* may guarantee contracts, facilitate transactions and reinforce the mechanisms of reputation, thereby supporting the public order. On the other hand, *vruzki* could overthrow formal mechanisms since they may help create hidden monopolies and uphold unfair competition.

*Vruzki* are found in all areas of contemporary social life in Bulgaria. Much empirical research – mostly sociological and ethnological – has been done since 1989 on specific aspects or practices related to *vruzki*. There is still, however, a need for more theoretical work that would place *vruzki* in comparative perspective with *blat* in Russia, *kombinowanje* in Poland, *veze* (*везе*) in Serbia (see 1.7 in this volume), *meson* in Greece (Benovska-Sabkova 2001: 227) and *torpil* in Turkey (Rutz and Balkan 2009: 62; see 6.10 Volume 2).

### 1.10 **Natsnoboba** (Georgia)

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The South Caucasian republic of Georgia has been known for the spread and importance of informal practices for centuries (Shelley et al. 2007). Until the late Soviet period, similar to its South and North Caucasian neighbours, the bulk of Georgian informal practices thrived within tightly knit kinship networks, sustained by extended patriarchal families. Such kinship networks in essence resembled those found among clan-based

and tribal societies in other parts of the world, yet were also undermined and transformed by the decades of collectivisation, urbanisation and social reorganisation associated with Sovietisation (Aliyev 2015: 77–8). The gradual retreat of extended traditional families into rural enclaves gave rise to informal networks of connections and acquaintances, which became instrumental in rapidly transforming the social milieu of Georgian urban metropolises. The widespread use of contacts and networks, known as *natsnoboba*, also transliterated as *nacnoboba*, became typical.

*Natsnoboba* translates from Georgian as ‘acquaintances’ and, similarly to Chinese *guanxi* (‘acquaintances’) or Korean *gwangue* (Yang 1994; Gold et al. 2002), refers to an extensive individual network of connections and contacts. The use of *natsnoboba* belongs to a ‘bigger family’ of informal practices – Russian *blat* (Ledeneva 1998), Arab *wasta* (Cunningham et al. 1994) and Brazilian *jeitinho* (Amado and Brasil 1991) – which rely on the instrumental use of connections, friends and acquaintances. Among the most notable regional equivalents of *natsnoboba* are Azerbaijan’s *tanisliq* and Armenian *tsanot* networks, which are similarly based upon loosely knit groups of remotely connected friends and acquaintances. The term *natsnoboba* has two subtly different meanings in the Georgian language, which means that researchers must analyse any use of the term in context. First, *natsnoboba* can refer to the strategic use of contacts: one’s informal network of acquaintances and familiar individuals, including colleagues and remote friends, but excluding close friends (the latter are considered part of closer and more intimate *megobroba* (friendship) groups). However, the word *natsnoboba* can also be used in a more general sense, to refer simply to one’s acquaintances in the sense of people one happens to know, with no implications of ‘networks’ or ‘useful contacts’. This dual use of the term makes it challenging to determine specific types of informal relations when referred to in the media.

The rise of reciprocal networks of acquaintances is a relatively recent phenomenon, especially when contrasted with kinship or friendship networks, which were at the core of Georgian social relations for centuries. Due to de-traditionalisation and social standardisation processes enforced by Soviet authorities, networks of acquaintances became part of urban life under Soviet rule. As with many other socialist societies, shortages in the Soviet command economy and the pervasive interference of the Communist Party into the private sphere accelerated the spread of informal networks in Georgia. The decline of traditional kinship structures, particularly in urban areas, and the steady appearance of *blat*-culture both influenced the growth of *natsnoboba* networks.

Expanding one's informal contacts beyond the limits of relatively narrow family and kinship groups enabled Georgians to access resources outside of their immediate friendship ties. Given the lack of empirical data on *natsnoboba*, it is difficult to establish when exactly they became an integral part of Georgian social life. Reliance on networks of connections and acquaintances was best documented in studies of the Georgian informal scene in the late communist period (Mars and Altman 1983). Georgian films of that period (e.g. *Mimino* 1977, *Tbilisi and Her Citizens* 1976) also allow us to conclude that the rise of *natsnoboba* was associated with urbanisation, modernisation and atomisation of Georgian society under 'developed socialism'.

*Natsnoboba* became particularly instrumental during the immediate post-communist period, when economic hardships and the weakness of state institutions forced the population to rely extensively on private safety nets. Of these, access to public goods distributed through *natsnoboba* networks was one of the key assets for every Georgian.

The tough economic environment of the 1990s often necessitated Georgians to maintain complex networks of acquaintances, which could be used in the search for jobs, receiving preferential treatment at state institutions, and other forms of problem solving. With the decline of kinship networks and the gradual shift of Georgian social organisation – particularly in urban settings – towards nuclear family groups, *natsnoboba* networks function as an essential element of private safety nets. As revealed during fieldwork conducted by the author in the Georgian capital city Tbilisi, *natsnoboba* networks have largely replaced kinship and extended family structures in their daily significance.

One of the key reasons behind the rise of *natsnoboba* in contemporary Georgian society, along with urbanisation and modernisation, is the potential of open-ended networks. The use of *natsnoboba* allows individuals to expand their connections beyond fairly narrow groups defined by kinship or close friends. By developing 'weak ties' (Granovetter 1973), *natsnoboba* contacts enable Georgians to access public goods and services inaccessible through their own networks – the feature essential for the effectiveness of the economy of favours.

A typical *natsnoboba* network consists of several 'layers' of contacts. The core of the network normally comprises an individual's well-known acquaintances. The next layer is composed of occasional acquaintances, remote neighbours, work colleagues and former classmates. The final layer includes individuals with whom the immediate network-owner may not be personally familiar – they are friends of friends and acquaintances of acquaintances. For some services and

favours, the network-owner may have to deal with a wide range of individuals or a number of links in the chain of contacts in order to achieve the desired goal. Unlike smaller and more intimate friendship groups, *natsnoboba* extends across several circles of contacts. Although each individual's list of *natsnoboba* contacts may include dozens or even hundreds of names, there would be only occasional interaction with most of these people. As one informant from Tbilisi stated to the author, 'it is very important to maintain these [*natsnoboba*] networks, even if you are never going to contact most of them'. This means that the accumulation of contacts and expansion of one's network functions as a form of private safety net, which can be invoked in case of emergencies. Regardless of previous cooperation (or the lack thereof) between the network members, each contact may potentially be expected to provide a favour when asked.

Employing *natsnoboba* connections almost always generates the need for a reciprocal favour, even if not directly. Sometimes these favours take the form of a gift including monetary gifts (*krtami*), sometimes they necessitate a return favour. The nature of reciprocity in each *natsnoboba* relation depends on the proximity between network members and the importance or value of the favour. Although *natsnoboba* may pave the way for a bribe, the underlying principle of using 'acquaintances' is to secure access to public goods or services, which cannot be acquired through a straightforward offer of a bribe. For example, prior to the 2003 Rose Revolution, receiving a land register or extending one's passport, as well as many other official documents, often required using *natsnoboba* in order to access officials in state institutions.

The extensive institutional reforms implemented by President Mikheil Saakashvili specifically targeted the use of informal practices, including use of *natsnoboba* in dealings with formal institutions. Streamlining the workings of state institutions, reducing their centralisation and bureaucracy and simplifying application procedures for acquiring official documents have significantly undermined the importance of *natsnoboba* in this domain. Numerous informants interviewed by the author in 2013–14 stated that since the mid-2000s neither they nor their family members have employed *natsnoboba* to receive preferential treatment at state institutions. Nevertheless, *natsnoboba* continues to play an important role in the educational sphere and search for jobs (Aliyev 2014: 30). For instance, as reported by the Caucasus Barometer (CRR) survey conducted in 2013, over 30 per cent of respondents indicated that using informal connections remains 'the most important factor' in finding a good job. Personal networks are

still widely used as community-based mechanisms of support and coping with hardship in urban areas, where for many Georgians the availability of kinship connections became even more limited in the post-communist period.

### 1.11 **Tanish-bilish** (Uzbekistan)

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*Tanish-bilish* is an Uzbek term for networks/contacts used for extracting both material and non-material resources, or just for ‘getting things done’ (*ishingni bitirish*). *Tanish-bilish* literally translates as ‘acquaintance-known’, and may thus be considered a form of social capital. Schatz has described *tanish-bilish* as ‘access networks’, but claims they are often mistaken for clan networks (Schatz 2004: 62). In *tanish-bilish* networks, families and other forms of kinship play a primary role in terms of affiliation and strength of ties. However, other ties cross cut or overlap within the networks, including sub-ethnicities, regional identity, clan identity, professional belonging and various kinds of friendships (*tanish*, *dost*, *chin dost*). *Tanish* refers to an acquaintance, *dost* or *jora* to a friend and *chin dost* to a close friend.

Etymologically the term *tanish-bilish* consists of two full words: *tanish* (acquaintance), and *bilish*, which is a gerund form of the verb *bilmak* and can be translated as ‘getting to know’. It can also be written in unhyphenated form – *tanish bilish*. Related terms in other Turkic languages include *tanish orqilu* in Kyrgyz, *tanis bilu* in Kazakh, *daniş biliş* in Turkmen, *tanysh-bilish* in Tatar, and *tanysh-bilish* in Kumyk (Alekseev 2011: 1).

The *Uzbek Explanatory Dictionary* (2007: 664) defines *tanish-bilish* as, ‘Individual(s) who know each other and have some degree of contact’ (*‘Bir-birini tanijdigan va ma’lum jihatdan aloqa munosabati bor shahs(lar)’*). It gives the following example of usage: ‘Well, doctor, nowadays whichever institute/university you go to only the children of *tanish-bilish* pass the entrance’ (*‘Endi, dohtir, hozir qaysi institutga borsangiz, tanish-bilishning bolasi kiradi’*). The term can also be found in Uzbek sayings, proverbs and songs. The Uzbek proverb *Bir ko’rgan – tanish, ikki ko’rgan – bilish* can be translated as ‘once seen is *tanish*, twice seen is *bilish*’. The meaning is that *tanish-bilish* can be established having met a person just once or twice. In contemporary Uzbek poetry one can also find such sayings as: ‘one can buy *tanish-bilish* but not friends’ (*‘tanish-bilish sotib olishing mumkin, lekin do’strarni emas’*). The Uzbek film

*Burilish* featured a song called ‘*Tanish-bilish*’, sung by Ruslan Sharipov and Dilshod Abdullaev, which included the lyric ‘If one has *tanish-bilish* one can accomplish any task, achieve things and from there on, my friend, you handle it’ (*‘Tanish-bilish bular borki bitar har bir yumush, dostum buyogini ozing kelish’*).

The term *tanish-bilish* is used both as a noun to refer to the networks themselves, and as a verb for describing the actions/exchanges involved. As an example of the former, the travel writer Christopher Alexander relates the following comment by a newly made local acquaintance, who offered to help Alexander when he was struggling to find a place to live (2009: 34):

I understand that it is very difficult for you newcomers without *tanish bilish* here in our country, and yet you are our guests and you have come to help us. I have lots of *tanish bilish* and I will help you find a house. Come and live in my house until we find somewhere for you to live.

The term *tanish-bilish* may also be used as a verb for describing how something was achieved, for example, ‘How did your daughter pass the university entrance exams, did you do *tanish-bilish* or did she enter by herself?’ (*‘Qanaqa qilib kirdi okishga qizingiz, tanish-bilish qildingizmi yo ozi kirdimi?’*).

There are two important aspects of *tanish-bilish* networks, which are central to understanding their content and functioning principles. First, there is the hierarchical dimension of social relations. Generational differences often overlap with social status, which is known locally as *katta* (big) and *kichkina* (small). *Kichkina* refers to a person who is generally perceived to occupy a lower social position, and *katta* a higher one. Particular duties and responsibilities are expected of individuals according to their perceived status within a given community. For instance, younger females of any family are always expected to help and cannot appear in public: if they are guests they stay in either the kitchen or a separate room with the children and other young women. Elderly people are always respected, while young men are expected to earn money and support their families. Both of the terms are relative to the person or community by which the individual is perceived. In one relationship or context a person can be *kichkina* and in another *katta*. In both contexts the status of individuals depends on the social relations with others.

Second, there are the dimensions of strength and duration of social relations: superficial/short-term (*bardi-galdi/come-go, yuzaki/*



superficial, *vaqtincha*/temporary) and more intensive and long-term (*boshqacha, muhim*). These are based on various reciprocities: balanced (*qaytarish garak*), generalised (*ot dushi, savab, sadaqa*) and negative (*paydalanish*). In *bardi-galdi* (short-term) relations mainly two kinds of reciprocities are chiefly involved: *qaytarish garak* (balanced) and *paydalanish* (negative reciprocity), whereas in *muhim* (long-term, important) relations *ot dushi, qaytarish garak* (balanced) reciprocities predominate (see Sahlins 1972 for studies on reciprocity and exchange). ‘*Qaytarish garak*’ is literally ‘must be returned’ and could be compared to a balanced reciprocity; *ot dushi*/from the soul (in other words, ‘with pleasure’) is synonymous to a balanced reciprocity; *savab* and *sadaqa* are part of religious almsgiving as an obligation of every Muslim (*har bir musulmon burchi*). *Paydalanish* literally means ‘to make use of’ and can be compared to negative reciprocity; it has a negative connotation that resembles free-riding. These different types of reciprocities are important in any kind of exchange but particularly important to distinguish for *tanish-bilish* networks of exchange. For instance, if one uses the very important type of contacts in one’s *tanish-bilish* then this would suggest a form of balanced reciprocity.

*Tanish-bilish* networks usually have a strategic character and are used to extract resources of various kinds while avoiding formal rules as much as possible, as well as to solve problems. They enable informal exchanges that resemble the Soviet practice of *blat*, inasmuch as exchanges are based on favours of different kinds and not limited to informal payments (‘I scratch your back and you scratch mine’) (Ledeneva 1998, 2006). *Blat* is described by Ledeneva as an informal exchange within personal and kinship networks, through which both material and non-material capital flow. Sometimes *tanish-bilish* is translated into Russian as *po blatu*, for instance in media reports.

One of the strategies used within *tanish-bilish* exchanges is what can be called the ‘politics of naming’. This strategy involves naming a very influential person or key official within the relevant sphere/field where one needs to ‘get things done’ (*ishni bitqazish*) as a door opener or a problem solver. A typical example of this strategy is if one gets caught by traffic police in Uzbekistan. The first thing a driver does is demonstratively telephone someone either real and influential, or somebody fake who pretends to be an important person. The second step is to offer the phone to the police officer. If the strategy is successful the driver will be free to go without punishment; if it is not, more phone calls are made and as a last resort a bribe may be negotiated.

Informal networks have long played an important role at all levels of social and economic interactions not only in Uzbekistan but in Central Asia in general (Schatz 2004). Under Soviet rule they were particularly important as the elite was divided into regional clan groups, which played a decisive role in the political development of Uzbekistan. Although the Soviets influenced the social and political make-up of the Central Asian societies, undermining pre-Soviet social structures, they also had to work with those structures to some extent. Clanship together with other kinship and friendship networks played a crucial role in people's orientations within their professional and social lives, and in Uzbekistan in particular political leadership was designed around clans and regional belonging (Carlisle 1986).

*Tanish-bilish* networks are strongly based on the principle of patron–client relations. Clientelism governs these networks' efficiency. Eisenstadt and Roninger (1980: 48, 1984) identified such variables as hierarchy, asymmetry, inequality, autonomy, spirituality, power, kinship and friendship when analysing patronage and clientelism. The patron–client relations they described are the relations of power and asymmetry, which direct the flow of resources and structure societal relations. If the social status of a person who is seeking to use *tanish-bilish* is lower (*kichkina*) than that of the person providing the favour, then by definition the latter acts as a patron and the former as a client in this specific transaction. The same client and the same patron can very well exchange their roles depending on the circumstances and also depending on who is providing the service for whom.

Post-Soviet social and economic crises coupled with growing uncertainties about the future have led people to rethink their survival strategies and social navigation through societal and political systems. Trust networks of *tanish-bilish* served to support the needs of their members and reproduced social relations of patronage and clientelism. Regional groups which formed during Soviet rule (Carlisle 1986) have persisted as the basis of *tanish-bilish* networks. Since the state legal system and state administration collapsed or became defunct after the collapse of the Soviet Union, alternative (informal) systems of patron–client relations have served as an alternative space for 'getting things done' in post-Soviet Central Asia. The networks of *tanish-bilish* have filled the void left by the state legal system and state administration, to accommodate the basic needs of ordinary people, as well as 'getting things done' at the higher level of state administration and politics.

## 1.12 *Guanxi* (China)

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The Chinese word *guanxi* literally means ‘relationship’ or ‘connection’. It also refers to an important aspect of contemporary Chinese culture: the need to ‘use’ *guanxi*, or call on personal or social connections to get things done, acquire a scarce commodity, or gain access to an opportunity. In this sense, *guanxi* is a dyadic social exchange relationship, in which one person helps the other, and in return, the other owes a social debt. Thus, *guanxi* in practice is like a gift exchange between two persons, in which there is affect or good feelings (*renqing*), a mutual obligation to help the other, and reciprocity, or the expectation of repayment at a later date. Gifts, favours and banquets are the objects of exchange, and the debt may sometimes be repaid after several years.

When a person is socially adept in the deployment of *guanxi*, he or she is said to be skilled in *guanxixue*, which means ‘the study of’ or ‘the art of cultivating *guanxi*’. While relying on social connections is true of every society, most scholars would agree that this practice is more prevalent and more discursively elaborated in contemporary China than many other places in the world. Certainly, ‘the art of *guanxi*’ is more important in China than ‘connections’ in modern Western societies, where individualism and self-reliance are emphasised. For these reasons, ‘*guanxi* studies’ have become a cottage industry in China Studies, generating many academic papers in the fields of anthropology, sociology, business management, political science and history. While the study of informal relations tends to be peripheral in many other academic contexts, in English-language China Studies, *guanxi* is a recognisable theme, since non-Chinese scholars have seen *guanxi* as a prominent feature of contemporary Chinese culture.

In contemporary China, *guanxi* channels are deployed for a myriad of situations and needs: to get a job; to acquire a scarce commodity; to get a child into a good kindergarten or sought-after school; to get into a high-quality hospital; to get official approvals and permits to start up a business; to get a lighter sentence for crime; to avoid penalties for violating the birth control policy; to connect up to electricity, water and gas for new buildings or residences; and so forth. Thus, *guanxi* are often used to skirt around the cumbersome bureaucracy, or to reach a government official, clerk or person in charge of giving permission or making selections of the recipients of some desirable good or opportunity.

*Guanxi* practices grow out of the traditional Chinese cultural emphasis on social relationships and the interpersonal ethics of obligation and reciprocity. The Confucian classical texts are filled with discussions of the reciprocal duties and obligations of different social roles and relationships, and the ethics and etiquettes of gift-relations and host–guest relations at rituals and banquets. However, Taiwanese culture stems from the same traditional culture, but *guanxi* practices there are not as pervasive as in Mainland China. Prior to Taiwanese people re-establishing contacts with Mainland China in the 1990s, the term *guanxixue* was not used in Taiwan. In my own work (Yang 1994), I have suggested that *guanxi* in China was produced out of the political-economic structures of Maoist state-socialist society, where the state took charge of all social organisations and human activities, and goods, jobs, housing and life opportunities were all allocated by the state. *Guanxi* culture was thus born out of the need to get permission from so many gatekeepers, whether state officials or clerks, controlling all social paths and opportunities. It proliferated due to its assuming the burden of replacing the missing market mechanism in the Maoist state-socialist order. It is not surprising that the societies of the former Soviet Bloc also came to rely on *blat*, a Russian term that refers to an informal exchange quite similar to *guanxi* (see 1.1 in this volume).

In contemporary Chinese society, most people rely on the help of well-positioned friends, relatives, former classmates, persons from the same hometown, co-workers and other connections to help them get through life. These are long-term relationships that already have built-in obligations for mutual help and reciprocity. If one needs the help of an influential person, but there is no prior relationship, then a new *guanxi* must be initiated and carefully cultivated. Often the help of *guanxi* intermediaries are necessary to introduce one to a targeted person who may grant a favour. Once the introduction is made, one needs to cultivate the relationship over some time, with friendly visits or conversation, and gift-giving or a banquet, before a request can be made with decorum. Culturally, there must be a crucial temporal delay in between the gift offering and the request or repayment. The offering of the gift, favour or banquet must be couched in terms of friendship, rather than naked instrumentalism, so that sociality, affect and utility coexist as key components of *guanxi*. Otherwise, without sociality or affect, the relationship would be considered a simple barter or bribery, which are culturally disparaged.

Although there is a fine line between *guanxi* and bribery or corruption, most Chinese do distinguish *guanxi* from bribery. The native distinction is mainly in terms of whether the emphasis is on the personal

relationship or on the exchanged favour or gift. If the relationship has been going on for a respectable length of time and the two people are on good terms, then it seems natural that one friend would want to help the other. However, if there is little or no prior relationship between the requestor and the granter of the favour, and cold hard cash or some costly material good is proffered in exchange for granting the favour, then it would be dubbed an act of bribery. If the gift recipient is currently holding office as an official, the monetary value of the gift is high, and the favour is granted in his or her capacity as a serving official, then this would be a case of official corruption.

Yunxiang Yan (1996) has observed that existing scholarship places too much emphasis on instrumental *guanxi*, whereas the bulk of Chinese *guanxi* have more affective resonance and are guided less by instrumental motivations. This is the case in some rural village contexts where the traditional emphasis on harmonious and affective social relations can still be found. However, given that *guanxi* served many functions of the missing market economy during the Maoist era of state command economy, one can also say that *guanxi* has become more instrumentalised in China, especially in urban areas. In the post-Mao era, instrumentalism has further increased with the logic of profit, and many rural areas have been penetrated by new market and industrialising forces, and there is mobility of rural people into urban areas. Thus, even rural *guanxi* have been greatly instrumentalised. When *guanxi* are instrumentalised, first, the emphasis shifts from the cultivation of affective social bonds to the object of exchange, the gift or favour given or received. Second, the intervening time between the presenting of the gift and the expected repayment is shortened. Thus, highly instrumentalised *guanxi* move closer to bribery, and this process has become more frequent in post-Mao commercial society, with a resultant increase in bribery and official corruption.

There have been debates about whether the introduction of a market economy and a legal system in the post-Mao era has resulted in a decline in the use of *guanxi* in China (Gold et al. 2002; Yang 2002). Most scholars agree that there are no signs that *guanxi* has declined overall and, ironically, its practice may have actually increased in certain domains. Although *guanxi* is no longer needed to purchase most goods that are now readily available in the stores bulging with consumer products, a vast arena of new needs and desires has opened up that still creates a dependence on one's *guanxi* network. Yanjie Bian and others have collected quantitative data in eight Chinese cities to show that in finding employment, the dependence on *guanxi* has actually increased steadily

in the post-Mao era: from 24 per cent in 1979, to 45 per cent in 2002 and thereafter (Bian 2012: 150–1). Evidently, the new market economy must still adapt itself to the existing political economic structures and culture of China.

In the Maoist era, the most skilful *guanxi* practitioners were often the ‘supply agents’ (*caigouyuan*) who worked for state or collective factories, and needed *guanxi* to acquire raw materials. While this occupation has declined with the development of private enterprises, today’s private entrepreneurs still need *guanxi* for success in business. They need *guanxi* with key officials to get business permits, purchase real estate or rent space, waive labour or environmental regulations, get connected to the electricity grid and water sources, arrange transport routes, get passports and exit permits to go abroad, etc. So long as the state in China continues to wield such influence and control in the economy and all domains of life, and state-owned enterprises continue to represent a significant portion of the Chinese economy, there will be a need for gift-giving and *guanxi* to soften up those officials and clerks so that they may grant favours and opportunities.

Yet economic prosperity and the increasing globalisation of the Chinese economy have indeed brought changes to *guanxi* culture. The post-Mao increase in instrumentalised *guanxi* that blurs boundaries between *guanxi* and bribery has already been mentioned. The second change has been in the nature of the gifts given in return for expected favours. Whereas in the 1980s, it was enough to give cigarettes, alcohol and banquets to officials, now there is gift inflation and the ‘sexualisation of *guanxi*’. Male entrepreneurs trying to cultivate *guanxi* with officials will sometimes invite them to enjoy the women working in massage parlours, karaoke nightclubs and brothels. Thus, a variety of women’s sexual services have become the new ‘gifts’ of *guanxixue*. Tiantian Zheng (2009) and John Osburg (2013) have written about the cementing of masculine bonds between entrepreneurs and officials as they get together to talk business and enjoy women at these establishments. The third change can be found in the increasing transnational dimension of *guanxi*. Not only Chinese capital and businesses expand across the globe, but also Chinese educational and cultural networks extend overseas, thus enabling Chinese both inside and outside China to gain new opportunities abroad through transnational *guanxi* networks, which now may even include non-Chinese. Finally, with new social media technologies, personal *guanxi* networks have found a new medium to activate their members and expand their geographical and social reach. The technical properties of WeChat (*weixin*), which uses mobile phones to send simultaneous

messages to one's personal contacts, is uniquely favourable to the personal network form of *guanxi*. Scholars have just started to study the confluence of *guanxi* and WeChat networks, and how these have been increasingly significant for the local mobilisation of public protests and street demonstrations in China.

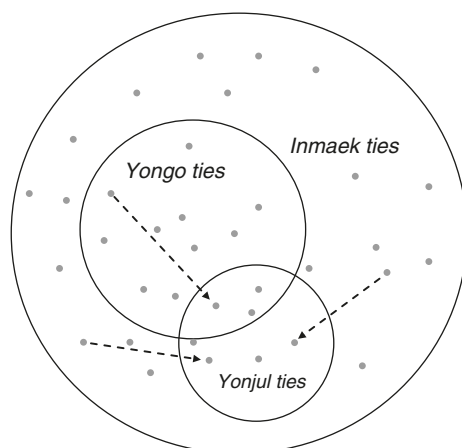
### 1.13 *Inmaek/Yonjul* (South Korea)

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*Inmaek* means 'people entangled like vine' in Korean (Yee 2015: 38), and refers to a network of social ties and relationships one develops in the course of life (Horak 2014). Although distinctively Korean, *inmaek* ties can be described as equating with and having an identical construct to the much studied Chinese *guanxi* (Yang 1994; Luo 2000; Fan 2002; Ho and Redfern 2010; Lin and Ho 2010; Luo 2011) or *blat* in Russia (see 1.12 and 1.1 in this volume). Although *inmaek* ties can be established purposefully, they can also emerge without any instrumental intentions (Horak 2014). The social connection is conventionally developed between individuals from the same home town or alumni, people who do military service together (a relatively strong tie in Korea), ex-colleagues of a workplace who remain connected, or between people who share a hobby or are members of the same sports club. In contrast to the pillars of *yongo* – family, region and alumni (see *yongo*, 3.5 in this volume), the pillars upon which *inmaek* ties are based are more diverse. These include the notions of affection and loyalty between individuals (Lew 2013), and forging informal personal relationships as an important factor in interpersonal transactions in business, politics and society as a whole (Kim 2008). Ties can be interrelated and develop dynamically, i.e. *inmaek* can serve as a fundament to develop so-called *yonjul* ties. *Yonjul* describes the informal ties between people that are oriented towards a certain goal. The ties of *yonjul* serve as a means to an end and hence *yonjul* is purpose-based. The term *yonjul* can be translated as a 'relationship' or 'connection' to someone, implied by the *yon*. The syllable *jul* means 'string' or 'rope' (Horak 2014). As shown in Figure 1.13.1, the bases of *yonjul* ties are diverse and can overlap with *inmaek* ties, although *yonjul* ties may also be established through other direct or indirect connections (Horak 2014: 90).

Compared to *inmaek*, *yonjul* has a rather negative connotation. *Yonjul*-based ties commonly serve morally dubious transactions or



**Figure 1.13.1** *Inmaek, yongo, yonjul* – interrelatedness and possible tie development.

Source: Horak 2014.

unethical purposes, so that in Korea the term is often used to describe corrupt actions of various forms and types: bribery, cronyism, favouritism, etc. (Kim 2000; Lee 2000; Horak 2016). *Yonjul* relations are particularistic and exclusive (Kim 2000; Yee 2000a). A typical characteristic has been described as ‘its facilitative function of backdoor rent seeking’ (Lee 2000: 369). *Yonjul* relationships are regarded as high trust ties extended to single individuals or relatively small communities, which are more amenable to control by peer pressure than larger ones. The rules of reciprocity, commitment and loyalty are pronounced and can be perceived by the individual as more binding than formal rules and regulations, such as corporate codes of conduct. In other words, moral obligations exert greater influence on relationships than formal rules (Lee 2000; Hitt et al. 2002; Park 2004; Horak 2015a). However, in contemporary society, *yonjul* and its ramifications have been viewed negatively (Yee 2000a, 2000b; Cha 2003; Horak 2015b). It has been criticised as an unfair practice, since in-group membership largely determines social progress for the individual, rather than their competence, skill or merit. In particular, it is criticised for bypassing and weakening formalised laws, rules and regulations, thereby clouding decision-making that is perceived as becoming less predictable. Today, *yonjul* is largely perceived as the root cause of bribery, cronyism, favouritism, corruption and all sorts of unfair and discriminatory decision-making; hence it is widely perceived as



amoral (Kim 2000; Horak 2016). Furthermore it is seen as the major factor blocking societal progress.

In sum, *yonjul* can be regarded as the dark side of informal social ties, whereas *inmaek* represents the bright side as it promotes the establishment of positive social capital across society. Nevertheless, what both share is a focus on interpersonal ties that characterise Korean society. Korea is often described as a relational society (Kim 2000; Horak 2015a) in terms of the way in which sociability is entangled with affection or instrumentality. In economic transactions, for instance, personal sentiments are taken into account, thus rational decision-making is seldom detached from personal factors. Solving problems in a business setting, for example, will always include personal ties and consideration of the relationships between the people involved, as they are regarded as an integral part of the solution to a problem. Conventionally a third party may be consulted to act like an intermediary or broker towards conflict resolution.

What is the basis of the affective relationships that distinguish Korean society from Western countries? In the West, the age of Enlightenment promoted a rational fact-based scientific approach to problem solving and, in parallel, Christian ideals supported inclusion and open communities based on the ideals of mercy and charity. In Korea, scholars regard shamanism as the first spiritual belief to have had a deep influence on the Korean mentality (Choe 2007; Seo 2013). Shamanism establishes a transcendental connection between nature and its creatures. According to Hahm (1986: 286), ‘the individual was always considered to be in a partially interlocking or mutually interpenetrating position with other human beings as well as the Material World. The individual was always viewed in the context of his affection network’. Confucian ethical philosophies, later introduced to Korea, are compatible with the shamanistic mindset. Confucianism essentially proposes an order principle that regulates relationships between interconnected people according to family principles, rather than between persons exercising individual rights. In Confucianism, family-like morals are extended to other social relationships in a society, for instance, between business leaders and employees, professors and students, or between friends. To establish community spirit based on family values, an intimate or emotional bond is necessary.

*Inmaek* establishes an emotional bond between people and emphasises sociability as the essence of humanity. It describes social ties between two or more people in a network, connected either directly, or indirectly through others. A direct connection implies a stronger tie, whereas an indirect connection is considered weaker. A direct connection can easily

be established (and instrumentalised as required) by means of an indirect connection that already exists through informal group membership. Quantitative measuring of the strengths of informal ties is problematic, as such ties may be dormant, invisible or regarded as a highly private subject (Ledeneva 1998). Accordingly, whether *inmaek* ties can be considered strong becomes an empirical question. However, scholars assume that both contact frequency and duration are important variables in determining the strength of *inmaek* ties. Furthermore, reciprocal actions are important in the maintenance of *inmaek* ties. Examples of this include the trading of information that is not publicly available, an exchange of favours, or one of a variety of other unregulated exchanges (Yee 2015). While interpersonal interactions are generally embedded in Confucian ethics, *inmaek* requires adherence to particularistic ethics in specific contexts. These include loyalty and acceptance of patronage within the principles of the social hierarchy determined by Confucian norms of behaviour. Dyadic and network-based *inmaek* relationships follow quasi-family ideals that distinguish them from relationships with outsiders. Similar to the divisive principles of *yonjul*, insiders are viewed as quasi-family members and are treated with benevolence and care, whereas outsiders do not receive special attention. *Inmaek* implies a moral obligation to the group; more successful members are compelled by peer pressure to help less successful members (Yee 2015). *Inmaek* is often used with good intentions, for example, to help less fortunate people secure a job or promotion, although this sometimes results in the employment of persons who lack suitable qualifications or skills. In principle *inmaek* ties can be seen as positive relational capital as they are open to new members, promote the advancement of communities, and feature mutual help and social exchange – thus, *inmaek* has the potential to promote public good. Conversely, *inmaek* can become a negative force if it results in communities of small exclusive cliques that support each other for personal gain at a cost to others, acting in opposition to universal codes of conduct.

#### 1.14 **Tapş** (Azerbaijan)

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*Tapş* is an informal practice of obtaining favours on behalf of others, widely practised in Azerbaijan. While nearly any resource can be obtained through *tapş*, access to capital, jobs, promotions and grades in the education system are the most common objects of the practice. A typical *tapş* transaction involves an intermediary (A) who obtains a favour

for the supplicant (B) from a third party (C). A typical example of a *tapş* transaction in an educational setting would be someone calling his/her acquaintance at the university and asking to help a child of his/her 'close acquaintance' pass an examination. The person making the phone call in this case serves as an intermediary between the student asking for the grade and the university professor who can provide the favour.

The word *tapş* is of Azerbaijani origin and comes from the verb *tapşurmaq*, which means to entrust something or somebody into someone else's custody, hence the inherently polyadic structure of *tapş* transactions. The word *tapş* was also adopted in Bakuvian urban Russian vernacular, and has been widely used colloquially, including the Russified verbal forms of 'to entrust' (*tapshanut'*) or 'to be entrusted' (*tapshanut'sa*), although this use has not been recorded in any dictionaries.

*Tapş* is similar to a range of other network-based informal practices, such as Soviet *blat*, Chinese *guanxi*, Bulgarian *vruzki*, and Arabic *wasta* (Cunningham and Sarayrah 1994; Ledeneva 1998, 2008; Hutchings and Weir 2006; Chavdarova 2013). Like *blat* and *vruzki*, *tapş* became widespread under socialism when it served to circumvent the structural constraints (especially conditions of shortage) of the Soviet economy and centralised distribution of resources (Ledeneva 1998: 37). In common with *blat*, *tapş* was used to gain private access to public resources; it is also often described in the rhetoric of help and mutual support. These commonalities, as well as the fact that Azerbaijan was integrated in the Soviet centralised system of distribution, have led some scholars to subsume *tapş* within *blat* (Aliyev 2013). In this perspective, *blat* is understood as a generic Soviet practice of which *tapş* is a specific instance. However, such a view glosses over the differences between the two practices and empties *blat* of its specificity as a non-hierarchical practice based on symmetrical reciprocity ('you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours').

*Tapş* differs from *blat*, its closest analogue, in several significant respects. First is the structure of the exchange transactions. Although *blat*, as well as *vruzki* and *guanxi*, can involve circular chains of favours with many intermediaries, in its most basic form *blat* is a dyadic transaction between two people, one of whom provides and the other of whom receives a favour. *Tapş*, on the other hand, is always a polyadic practice. The most basic form of *tapş* is a triadic transaction, necessarily involving an intermediary. Hence another Russian euphemism for this practice in Baku: *poprosit za kogo-to* (to ask for someone).

The second important difference between *tapş* and *blat* stems from their embeddedness in differently configured social networks. *Blat* is based on non-hierarchical relationships and presupposes a more

or less symmetrical reciprocity between participants (Ledeneva 1998: 52; Fitzpatrick 1999: 63). In contrast, while some *tapş* transactions can involve a horizontal connection or two, for example between colleagues or friends, they are usually embedded within the hierarchical patronage networks and involve vertical patron–client ties. Often, the intermediary (i.e. the person who obtains the favour) and the supplicant are in a patron–client relationship; the intermediary and the person providing the favour are also in a vertical patron–client relationship. These patronage networks, commonly, although inaccurately, referred to as ‘clans’, permeate Azerbaijan’s society from top to bottom, and are usually kinship-based (for an analysis of the role of patronage in Azerbaijani politics see Guliyev 2012; for an ethnographic description of how political patronage interacts with kinship networks in rural Azerbaijan see Yalçın-Heckmann 2010). Depending on the status of the person obtaining the favour, *tapş* can be described as ‘low’ or ‘high’.

The triadic structure of transactions and embeddedness of *tapş* in patronage networks puts it close to the Middle Eastern practice of *wasta*. According to Cunningham and Sarayrah (1994), *wasta* ‘involves a protagonist intervening on behalf of a client to obtain an advantage for the client’ and thus, like *tapş*, it is as a minimum a triadic transaction that involves an intermediary. *Wasta* is said to have originated in the practices of mediation between conflicting tribes; although in modern times the use of *wasta* has become much broader, the networks based on kin remain the primary sphere in which *wasta* is embedded (Cunningham and Sarayrah 1994; Hutchings and Weir 2006). Similarly, in Azerbaijan, *tapş* is sustained by the persistent importance of kinship and quasi-kinship networks based on place of origin, often described as ‘clans’ (Guliyev 2011; Aliyev 2013).

Finally, while *blat* is said to be waning in the post-Soviet period, the practice of *tapş* remains as strong as ever. In post-Soviet Russia *blat* is being replaced by monetised, ad-hoc bribery, as opposed to the personalised, long-term relationships of reciprocity that used to sustain it in the Soviet period (Ledeneva 2008). In Azerbaijan, by contrast, the strengthening of patronage networks in the post-Soviet period and the practice of patronage control over distribution of considerable state wealth produced in the oil sector of the economy makes *tapş* a primary channel for gaining access to the distribution of these resources.

The role of *tapş* in Azerbaijan’s politics, economy and society is highly ambivalent. Like any other informal practice, *tapş* reduces the transaction costs of the actors. As a practice based on traditional kinship networks, it is often perceived as a part of cultural tradition, and therefore

a form of resistance to the individualism and alienation that Western-style modernisation brings. It also allows disenfranchised individuals and groups to access some state-controlled resources through intermediaries, bridging otherwise disconnected networks. At the same time, *tapş* is a particularistic practice that undermines the development of universal norms and generalised trust. *Tapş* also interacts with other practices from Azerbaijan's rich repertoire of informality, including various forms of corruption. Although many *tapş* transactions are ad hoc in nature and involve asking for individual favours in time of need, there can be more permanent arrangements, such as 'protection' for entrepreneurs. Known in Russian as *krysha* (literally 'roof') and in Azerbaijani, *arxa* (literally 'the back'), it refers to patronage protection by state officials against both legal taxes and the extortion of bribes. While this use of *tapş* undermines the universalistic logic of market competition, it does enable business activity to take place that would otherwise be impossible in Azerbaijan (Safiyev 2013b). *Tapş* favours can also sometimes be reciprocated by gifts or informal payments, which links the practice to bribery (*hormet*, referring to payments made out of gratitude for an action already done, or *ruşvet*, referring to payments that are offered or demanded for future actions). In other cases, *tapş* can serve as an alternative to bribery, by providing access to advantage which would otherwise require monetary payment. For example, in Azerbaijan's highly corrupt educational system having *tapş* can protect students from extortion of informal payments by instructors and teachers.

The research on informal practices in Azerbaijan is limited, and there have not yet been any significant attempts to conceptualise *tapş* as a practice specific to Azerbaijani society. This is, however, a common feature of informal practices – scholars often point out that informal practices are insufficiently researched despite their pervasiveness and influence (Ledeneva 1998; Hutchings and Weir 2006). Although there is at present no research focusing on *tapş* specifically, several studies deal with various aspects of *tapş* in the more general context of informal practices. A variety of methods have been used for this research, including interviews (Aliyev 2013; Safiyev 2013a, 2013b), ethnography (Lepisto and Kazimzade 2008) and surveys (Hasanov 2009; Aliyev 2013; Sadigov 2013). Ethnographic methods in particular would be useful for understanding the complex structure of *tapş* transactions and the interaction of vertical and horizontal ties involved in them. However, like other informal practices, *tapş* is difficult to measure because of its hidden nature and the sensitivity of the issue due to its interlinking with illicit practices and political patronage.

### 1.15 **Agashka** (Kazakhstan)

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In Kazakhstan, an influential figure with strong personal connections enabling him to achieve objectives in informal ways is called an *agashka*. This term is formed from the word ‘aga’, the Russianised version of the Kazakh word ‘*agha*’, meaning an elder male relative such as an older brother or uncle, and the Russian diminutive suffix ‘-shka’. *Agashka* is in wide currency mostly among Russian-speaking Kazakhs in contemporary Kazakhstan, but not generally used in the Kazakh language. The term is typically associated with a wealthy Kazakh male of middle or old age. However, the most important characteristic of an *agashka* lies in his ability to use informal connections to circumvent official procedures and to provide favours for his closed circle of family, friends and clients. Thus, the term *agashka* can be applied to any individual who functions as a patron by using personal contacts with those in official positions, irrespective of age or ethnic background. Its female version *tateshka* in most cases simply means an elder female relative or elder (middle- or old-aged) woman, but is also a woman with strong connections, or a spouse of an *agashka*. *Agashka*’s closest synonym is perhaps the word *krysha* (‘roof’ or ‘cover’) in Russian.

*Agashka*, in the usage we observe today, came into common use in the 1990s. While the term is not recorded in dictionaries of the Russian or Kazakh languages, analysts and journalists in Kazakhstan have made some attempts to describe the phenomenon of *agashka* (sometimes suffixes are added to specify reference to the general phenomenon: *agashkizm*, *agashizm* or *agashestvo*). While precise definitions of *agashka* vary somewhat among observers, there is agreement that it is an informal status. A typical *agashka* is a government official with a loyal following of subordinates (whom he helped to get employed), enjoying the use of a high-class official car for private purposes. However, the source of an *agashka*’s influence is not based on his office *per se* but rather *his personal relationships with those in power*, from high-ranking officials in the central government to heads of local administration. Although most *agashki* hold or have held an official position in the state or an organisation connected to it, their ability to exert influence does not necessarily correspond to the level or sphere of the official post.

The term is a pejorative word and reflects the widespread view of the prevalence of nepotism and clientelism, as well as a critical or self-mocking attitude towards the Kazakhs themselves. A popular saying,

*'Bez agashki ty kakashka, a s agashkoi - chelovek'* ('You are shit without *agashka*, and you are a person with *agashka*') suggests that ordinary citizens in Kazakhstan believe that people must have good connections to live a normal life. The same is suggested by a variant of the phrase, which replaces *kakashka* with *bukashka* (a small insect). Indeed, from getting a job and promotion in the government sector or national companies, obtaining or renting housing constructed under state programmes, receiving state-funded medical treatment, to securing credit from the local government or a bank loan, the power of connections and patronage dominates in many key areas of life (Sharipova 2013; McMann 2014). Despite state procedures officially being fair and equitable, in reality decisions are often made informally when state resources are distributed. Success in business largely depends on whether one has a solid and influential patron in official positions or connected to officials. *Agashka* is key to winning a tender for public works projects or state purchases. In addition, maintaining good relations with law enforcement institutions with the authority to control business (police, customs, prosecutors, etc.) is critically important.

*Agashka* as an informal institution reflects values and practices rooted in the Kazakh culture. In the traditional Kazakh society, the elders of the kin community bore the responsibility for taking care of its members. Mutual assistance among kin members is not only a socially imposed obligation, but also viewed as distinct characteristics and ethnic markers of the Kazakhs. In such cultural settings, using one's official position for the sake of family or extended family is often taken for granted. Under the Soviet planned economy, kinship ties with high trust and reciprocal obligation served as a web of networks, providing access to a variety of resources that were difficult to obtain through official channels (Schatz 2004).

In its present form, however, *agashka* is also the product of the post-Soviet expansion of market relations, which brought changes to the function and nature of informal networks developed under the socialist economy. Following the introduction of market principles in the 1990s, those with financial resources increasingly prefer to invest money in expanding their practical networks beyond the kinship divisions (Rigi 2004). One of the most widespread perceptions with respect to *agashka* people is that their children have an advantage in getting a national scholarship to study overseas, or seeking a job in the public sector or national companies. *Agashka*'s network of favours, however, is not limited to family and kinship ties. Here, the simple definition by Kazakhstani political analyst Dosym Satpaev is relevant: '*Agashka* is a person whose connections bring money, and that money brings new connections' (Caravan



**Figure 1.15.1** Cartoon representation of *agashka*, by Vladimir Kadyrbaev.

Source: Dosym Satpaev and Erbol Zhumagulov, *Legenda o 'Nomenclatura'*. Almaty, 2009. p. 84. © Dosym Satpaev, 2009.

2014). Thus, the major criterion for *agashka* in post-Soviet Kazakhstan is affiliation to certain financial sources, or a group of common material interests in which a variety of ethnicities, clans and regions can be represented (Satpaev 1999; Schatz 2012; Umbetalieva and Satpaev 2012).



## 1.16 **Załatwianie** (Poland)

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*Załatwianie* (verbal form: to *załatwić* something) is a Polish euphemism describing a range of informal behaviours carried out mostly to obtain benefits by avoiding the use of arduous legal activities or formal norms (*Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN 2007*). In a rough translation, the phrase ‘*załatwić* something’ means ‘to get something done’ or ‘to get something done in an easier way’; it is related to the verb *ułatwić*, which means ‘to do something easier’. The etymology of *załatwić* derives from the word *łatwy* (easy) with the prefix ‘*za*’, which means that something has been done and/or completed. The word *załatwić* has its origins in Slavonic languages, but its final form has only developed in Polish (*Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN 2007*). Therefore, *załatwianie* cannot be directly translated into any other language.

Other meanings of the word *załatwić* include the phrase ‘*załatwić* someone’, which means to eliminate (kill) or to professionally disable a person, i.e. to thwart their professional aims, such as being promoted. The phrase often appears in Polish criminal films, but also in discussions about murders, when people instead of saying, ‘he killed him’, rather use the phrase ‘*on go załatwił*’, which can be translated as ‘he made him that way’ or ‘he made him dead’. In the second case, a person who wishes to *załatwić* another can, for example, spread some compromising information about them so they cannot be promoted (a tactic particularly used among politicians) (*Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN 2007*).

*Załatwianie* also has other meanings such as ‘excretion’, and is very often used by schoolchildren, for whom any other word associated with this particular bodily function seems vulgar or inappropriate. It is usual for a school pupil to ask a teacher if they can ‘*załatwić się*’, which means ‘*załatwić* myself’ or ‘take care of myself’. More generally, in the Polish language the word *załatwić* plays the role of a replacement word for uncomfortable phrases such as ‘to corrupt someone’ or ‘to kill someone’. It conveys the sense that the result will be obtained using informal methods, which should not be discussed in detail because of their obvious brutality or unethical nature.

Most frequently people can *załatwić* something via other people (relatives, friends, acquaintances) who are in a position that enables them to help provide or enable it. For example, one can *załatwić* a medical examination or a priority appointment with a doctor if one knows someone working in a hospital, such as a doctor or doctor’s friend. It is

also possible for some people to *załatwić* something on behalf of others if they are in a position of power. Very often parents try to *załatwić* a first job for their adult children (e.g. just after graduation), exploiting their social networks and position on the labour market. This is still a very common practice in Poland (Tomaszkewicz 2012).

*Załatwianie*, like Russian *blat*, is therefore a kind of social system based on certain relationships among people (Ledeneva 1998). A person with a wide social network and large number of friends has greater scope to *załatwić* than someone with a smaller number of connections. Consequently, more people want to establish relations with such a person as they are perceived as a valuable friend who can *załatwić* a lot (Wedel 2001). However, unlike *blat*, *załatwianie* does not rely solely on the social networks and position within a group of people, but also on an individual's tacit knowledge of how to get things done: how to approach certain institutions and/or people, and generally how to act in different situations in order to *załatwić* things. Sometimes a person does not even need a specific social network to achieve his/her goals – less than knowing people, it is important to be aware where and how things can be done, and then undertake specific actions (e.g. bribery, blackmailing) in order to obtain goods (Wedel 1986).

The word *załatwianie* became particularly popular in Poland during the communist period, where there was no easy access to goods and society relied on informal practices and networks (Morris and Polese 2013). Some argue that the exclusive nature of *załatwianie* comes from the era of Partitions (1795–1918), during which Poles could only rely on other Poles as they had been surrounded by 'enemies' (the authorities of the invading states) (Pacan 2009). It was better therefore to 'get something done' within the inner circle than to ask for help from external sources such as the Russian authorities, who would most probably be unhelpful or even worsen the situation.

According to an official report on Poland's social situation (Czapiński and Panek 2009), the practice of *załatwianie* is still used by the majority of Polish society. It has a negative impact on general societal trust, which contributes to the lack of social integration and difficulty of creating civil society among the Polish population. Czapiński suggests that when an individual wants to *załatwić* something with another person or a group of people, they are all connected by a common secrecy and benefits, but also by a common guilt. In consequence, the trust can only exist within the group, and those outside the circle come to be considered as untrustworthy. The circles that try to *załatwić* things are everywhere and have very much the same objectives and desires. However, such groups will never interact in

order to obtain goods together, but rather stick to their own social groups because of the lack of trust in outsiders (the thinking goes: why would we *załatwić* it somewhere else when we can do it with ‘our’ people?). To a large degree, therefore, Polish society consists of multitudes of these exclusive informal self-help groups, which does not allow for mutual integration and the increase of general societal trust (Kamiński 1997).

*Załatwianie* on an individual level is almost always profitable; however, in a wider social context *załatwianie*, like many other informal practice, sacrifices long-term societal benefits for short-term private returns. *Załatwić*-ing a job for a friend always implies the rejection of a more suitable candidate; *załatwić*-ing a deal with a company impedes free market competition. Another negative impact of *załatwianie* is in reinforcing the conviction within society that the most effective way to get things done is by informal means, while official procedures will probably be a waste of time and inefficient. People therefore often opt to do something through *załatwianie* in the first instance and, if that fails, fall back on formal methods (although sometimes the order is reversed: when the formal methods fail, people turn to informality). In many cases, people perceive those who try to obtain goods through the formal channels as fools: if they do not know how to *załatwić* it, they must be either lazy, or not well-connected enough to know someone who can *załatwić* it for them (or both). There is a phrase in Polish: ‘*on nie potrafi niczego załatwić*’, ‘*on niczego nie załatwi*’. This literally translates as ‘he cannot get anything done’, relating to a person who is not effective in his aims; does not know how to approach certain people (or does not know them at all); and/or is too righteous or clumsy to reach his goal using informal methods (Wedel 1992).

Through efficiency improvements in the public sector and the ‘Westernisation’ of Polish society, methods of *załatwianie* are gradually being replaced by formal and legal practices, especially among the younger generation (Kulesza 2000). Nevertheless, this is part of a lengthy process of ideological transition from Soviet practices to Western norms of formality. The phenomena of nepotism, bribery and cronyism still operate within Polish society and *załatwianie* is a convenient and widely used umbrella term for them (Tumiłowicz 2009).

### 1.17 **Vitamin B** (Germany)

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In Germany, the term *Vitamin B* is used colloquially to denote the various benefits that flow from cooperation between individuals. ‘B’ in this

context stands for *Beziehungen*, which means relationships, contacts and connections. The term is also used to mean networking or, in its most pronounced form, favouritism. *Vitamin B* may for example be used to refer to an influential personal relationship that enables an individual more easily to get a desirable position in the professional sphere. Such informal relationships may be either private or professional, but they usually originate from social networks that have developed during schooling, internships or studies (student fraternities, university alumni associations), shared hobbies (sports clubs, gyms) or social events (conferences, weddings). These relationships often include family members such as cousins, brothers- and sisters-in-law, and so on.

Just as the vitamin B that is found in food regulates vital parts of our cell metabolism and is essential for human health, *Vitamin B* plays an important role in social life, especially in the work environment. It operates through various channels such as the exchange of useful information (learning about jobs or about other candidates running for office). Practices similar to *Vitamin B* can be found almost everywhere. In Russia, for example, the practice is called *blat* and is defined as ‘the use of personal networks for obtaining goods and services in short supply and for circumventing formal procedures’ (Ledeneva 2009: 257). Already in 1651 Thomas Hobbes described the phenomenon in his *Leviathan*: ‘To have friends, is Power’ (Hobbes 1909: 66) or, as the blogger Danny Ferguson put it, ‘It’s not what you don’t know; it’s who your college roommate knows’ (Nadler and Schulman 2006).

From an ethical point of view, the use of *Vitamin B* has a potential dark side (Bourdieu 1989; Plümper and Schimmelpfennig 2007; Gurr 2014). It is commonly seen as neither good nor ‘fair’ if someone exploits relationships or contacts to gain informational advantage (Dederichs 1999). Such behaviour is viewed as unethical because one person’s benefits usually come at the expense of others who lack such networks (Lin 2000). At the same time, however, *Vitamin B* can have the opposite effect. When a group of relatively disadvantaged people cluster together, the result may be that all the members of the network suffer socially or economically, for example, from closed recruitment opportunities or unfair pricing agreements (Flap et al. 2000; Spence et al. 2003).

In German, it is common to say that ‘*Eine Hand wäscht die andere*’ (‘One hand washes the other’), the English equivalent being ‘You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours’. In everyday speech, it is also common to say ‘*Ich habe den Job über Vitamin B bekommen*’ (‘I got the job thanks to *Vitamin B*’). Indeed, a substantial proportion of individuals, in Germany and in many other countries, use network contacts when looking for

employment. A study by McDonald et al. (2012) found that more than half of the Germans studied had used informal contacts in order to secure at least one job; 40 per cent of them had done so even without engaging in an active job search, compared to just 27 per cent of US workers. According to Germany's Institute for Employment Research (2017), one third of all vacancies that were filled in 2013 were assigned by means of personal contacts; moreover, this trend was rising. Research also shows that the benefits of personal contacts in a job search depend on the size of the institution or company, on an individual's qualifications and on his or her gender. The largest share of new hires via personal networks are found among German micro-entities. Furthermore, vacancies that are filled by means of *Vitamin B* tend to be those that require either very high or very low qualification levels. One in three unskilled or low-qualified workers in Germany owes his or her job to friends or relatives. At the same time, *Vitamin B* is also used to fill highly paid and leading positions; this suggests that, if all the applicants for a particular job are equally well qualified, *Vitamin B* is likely to provide the leap of faith that will secure the post. Men remain more likely than women to secure an appointment by means of *Vitamin B* because they usually have better connections ('old boy network').

*Vitamin B* is based on trust and reciprocity (mutual exchange) and the logic of how it works is simple: if Person A and Person B get along well together, there is a high probability that Person C, who is also well connected with Person B, will also get on well with Person A; this will be the case in both private and professional relations. Accordingly, *Vitamin B* is shorthand for an individual's social capital, the value of all social networks and the inclinations that arise from them to do and to get things for and from one another.

Social capital has been defined as 'investment and use of embedded resources in social relations for expected returns' (Coleman 1988; Lin 2000: 786). It is conceptualised as the quantity and/or quality of resources that an actor is able to access or use through his or her location in a social network (Lin 2000). Following Putnam (2000), who distinguishes between bridging and bonding social capital, *Vitamin B* refers to bridging social capital and is linked to what network researchers refer to as 'weak' ties. These are loose connections between individuals who may provide one another with useful information or new perspectives, but who do not usually provide emotional support. (Bonding social capital, by contrast, is found between individuals in tightly knit, emotionally close relationships, such as family and close friends.) One advantage of weak over strong ties is that the information shared by close-friendship

circles' members may be very similar and therefore less useful, whereas networks whose members are dispersed and dissimilar are more likely to generate new information.

At times, *Vitamin B* is seen as a euphemism for corrupt practices, closely linked to favouritism, nepotism, cronyism and patronage, where power is abused in favour of one's community of friends, family, associates or co-religionists (Nadler and Schulman 2006). It follows that *Vitamin B* can undercut the transparency, equality, fairness and accountability that should be part of the hiring and contracting practices of responsible companies and institutions. Proponents argue that it is not wrong to hire or appoint someone you already know, as long as they are well qualified. It is, however, often difficult to define the precise point at which the border between the legitimate use of *Vitamin B* is crossed and favouritism or corruption takes over. Universities and certain other public institutions have adopted procedures that aim to reduce the influence of informal relationships. Members of an appointments committee are, for example, required to declare a conflict of interest and to leave the room when discussion turns to a candidate who is personally known to them. Such practices are as yet rare, however.

### 1.18 ***Jinmyaku*** (Japan)

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The Japanese term *jinmyaku* loosely translates as 'personal connections'. The word *jin* stands for 'person' and *myaku* translates as 'vein', as in a geological vein of mineral deposits. *Jinmyaku* is of paramount importance in business and politics and is vital in other aspects of life. Members of a *jinmyaku* network support and help each other in terms of career progression and in making decisions. Having a large *jinmyaku* network consisting of influential members is said to be 'a symbol of security and status' (Erez 1992: 57). Establishing *jinmyaku* is a lifetime process, which starts early in life at a child's school. Whereas the Japanese are known to be rather reserved towards people they do not know, an introduction by a third person through *jinmyaku* can open doors and help in debates or negotiations where rational arguments alone cannot secure an agreement (Mitsubishi Corporation 2011).

In comparison with Westerners, Japanese people in general are considered to be less sociable in terms of establishing social ties through small talk, or in establishing friendships with foreigners, defined here as

persons who belong to a different organisation or community (Nakane 1965; Scarborough 1998). In terms of ascribing trust and sociality, Japanese people tend to distinguish between in- and out-groups. The depth and prioritisation of relationships tend to correlate with their duration, thus long-term relationships are maintained on a preferential basis. This is in direct contrast to the ways in which social ties are formed in the West, where people meet less often and frequently move according to career demands, which requires them to develop new social ties in their new place of residence. Westerners tend to establish affinity to others on the basis of shared traits and interests; the Japanese do so on the basis of shared affiliations, obligations or allegiance. Accordingly, the resulting focus on personal relationships, both formal and informal, means that Japan has often been described as a ‘network society’ (Kumon 1992).

In business, the development of large *jinmyaku* networks is considered of utmost importance in decision-making, both as an external source of information gathering for the firm, as well as for career progression (Gilbert 2003). *Jinmyaku* relationships relate to relationships within the company between superiors, peers and subordinates, and also to external relationships with customers, decision makers in other organisations and government officials. Tact and skill are required to develop *jinmyaku*. Within an organisation, important factors include the duration of membership of the network, loyalty and seniority, as well as the care of subordinates and mentoring. The ability to be sensitive to and adequately relate to a situation is also required. As is common in Japanese organisations, decision-making and problem solving involves a large amount of informal coordination, information exchange, the involvement of various stakeholders and the reconciliation of interests and negotiation before a formal decision is made. The final decision is frequently the official result of what has previously been agreed informally. A trusted *jinmyaku* network is a precondition for the informal coordination of this process (Suzuki 1989). To complete an important project or task, or to progress in one’s career, job-related skills are important, but a large *jinmyaku* network is of equal significance. Given both, it is possible to strengthen one’s position as a trusted member of an organisation.

The typical flow of communication in Japanese firms is characterised by a strong top-down attachment, according to corporate hierarchy, which is determined by seniority (Erez 1992: 51). Frequent direct communication with lower ranked employees is encouraged, as is involvement in training activities or employee selection. Top-level managers in

Japan are expected to be approachable. Whereas the decision-making process originates at the top of the hierarchy, the bottom-up approach ensures that each employee is involved, informed and able to contribute to the solution. This ensures consensus among employees and is considered to improve the quality of decision-making. It is usual for middle management to formally trigger a decision-making process by circulating a document to be signed (by stamp) by each manager involved (the so-called '*ringi* system'), to show approval. Simultaneously informal discussions take place to exchange ideas, reach consensus and convince others, with the aim of attaining compromise among the decision makers involved (Erez 1992). *Jinmyaku* is a precondition for influencing and reaching decisions. In the first instance it is applied internally within a company; however, as private and business spheres are not separate in Japan, *jinmyaku* is also part of informal meetings outside of the workplace. Interactions include dinner or drinks meetings and weekend sporting activities with colleagues, superiors, suppliers, subcontractors and other external stakeholders.

*Jinmyaku* is important in an external context, as seen in the practice of former retired government officials becoming managers of large businesses, usually at 55–60 years of age. This practice is common in Japan and is known by the term *amakudari* (天下り - descent from heaven, derived from *ama* meaning heaven and *kudari* meaning descending). Through *amakudari*, the government is able to influence and control decision-making within a company; in return, the company benefits from close ties to the government through the retired bureaucrats (Kevenhörster et al. 2003). This practice has often been associated with corrupt activity as the government-officials-turned-managers help to acquire public contracts, delay inspections and ensure various forms of preferential treatment through their *jinmyaku* network within the administration (Suzuki 1989; van Wolferen 1993).

### 1.19 ***Jaan-pehchaan*** (India)

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The age-old practice of facilitating business by exchanging favours is referred to in India by the Hindi words *jaan-pehchaan*. Batjargal (2007) defines *jaan-pehchaan* as 'Hindi networks', while other scholars define it as '[getting] something done through somebody you know' (McCarthy et al. 2012; Puffer et al. 2013). *Jaan* may be variously translated as 'life',



'to know', 'to be acquainted', 'wise', and 'intelligent', while *pehchaan* may be translated as 'recognition' or 'identity'.

While best known in northern India, *jaan-pehchaan* is known throughout the country's 20 officially recognised languages. These include Assamese, Bengali, Dogri, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Konkani, Malayalam, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Manipuri, Mizo, Urdu and others. *Jaan* and *pehchaan* are the most common variants; also common are *jan*, *jān*, *pahcān*, *pehechan* and *pehchan*. In 1965, Mohammed Rafi, one of India's most admired singers, popularised the term throughout India with his song '*Jaan Pehechaan Ho*'. The song begins with the lyrics, '*Jaan-Pehechaan ho, Jeeana Asaan ho*', which may be translated as 'If I knew you through contacts, references or know-hows, then life would be easier'. It was featured in the Bollywood film *Gumnaam* ('Unknown' or 'Anonymous').

Zhu et al. (2005) examined how Indian businesspeople assess relationship-building in the context of *jan pehchan*, or 'right connections', and found that they prefer the more indirect style of developing connections with 'the right people for doing business' (p. 75). McCarthy et al. (2012) reported a dearth of research on how *jaan-pehchaan* connections are used in business in India. This result was not surprising given the widespread unwritten and oral manner in which personal communications are used in business across India.

To help fill this gap in the scholarly literature, the author conducted a series of interviews from 2009–14, asking over 30 Indian executives employed in India by US and other foreign multinational firms to describe how *jaan-pehchaan* relationships are used in both business and personal settings. The interviewees described *jaan-pehchaan* as an umbrella term for social capital used within specific socio-cultural groups and related networks in India. They further noted that the trust developed within *jaan-pehchaan* relationships can lead to the use of favours to accomplish professional or routine personal tasks, and in worst-case scenarios may spill over into bribery. The interviewees also revealed that using *jaan-pehchaan* is an accepted way of doing business and that developing nurturing relationships, especially with close acquaintances, through the use of in-group favours, lends a helping hand to those seeking jobs, business loans or contracts.

One interviewee, a 52-year-old Indian working for a US multinational company, offered the following example. He had a particularly important contact working at an Indian company, engaged in a similar kind of industry. Initially, their relations were purely business related. Over time, however, they developed into a family friendship, since the

two men were of approximately the same age and social background. The contact had a son who wanted to enrol in a graduate engineering programme, and approached the interviewee to identify good schools and help secure a place. By contacting his own former classmates who now held academic teaching posts, the interviewee was able to secure a place for the son and satisfy his contact's request. Once this 'favour' was granted, reciprocity was expected. Predictably, this took the form of the contact providing privileged information about how the US multinational might better position itself against local Indian competition. Explaining that such favours are common in India, the interviewee added, 'This is how the network grows'. He considered such exchanges of favours to be entirely ethical since no law was broken. 'Neither of us', he said, 'subverted the system'. Contrasting favours with bribery, he stressed that 'Bribery is different because it is an attempt to subvert and break the law'.

These interviews highlight the instrumental role that *jaan-pehchaan* plays in Indian business relationships. In this respect, and taking account of the high rates of growth occurring in key sectors of India's economy – agriculture, industry and the service sector – Indian managers are finding themselves in an increasingly open business environment. They are, as a result, having to re-think how best to use *jaan-pehchaan* to advance their companies' business interests in future (Zhu et al. 2005). One interviewee commented that until the early 1990s the expectation was that, when *jaan-pehchaan* was used within the intimacy of *sambandhi* (close family ties), reciprocity of favours was the expected norm. The same had been true in business. It followed that those who lacked strong personal relationships found it hard to advance either their personal or their business interests. Today, the interviewee noted, following efforts by the state to liberalise the economy, such reciprocity is no longer 'always' required or expected. In the past, he implied, *jaan-pehchaan* played an even more critical role in lessening the opportunity costs borne by millions of Indian citizens who had to navigate around India's slow, inflexible and bureaucratic rules of government.

It seems unlikely, however, that the importance of *jaan-pehchaan* connections will decrease substantially, given the collectivistic nature of India's society. This has developed over centuries and is based on criteria such as caste, gender, language, religion and sect, rural or urban community, philosophy and culture. The caste system, dating back several centuries, served as a system of social stratification in which succeeding generations shared a common history and tradition of responsibility

integral to their group identity. It centred on the teachings of Hinduism, which in this respect acted less as a religion and more as a way of life. The *varna* (class, social order) system referred to the four social classes into which society was divided. Each *varna* – Brahmins (religious leaders and administrators), Kshatriyas (the ruling elite and the military), Vaishyas (farmers, craftsmen and merchants) and Shudras (labourers and servants) – had its own ‘order of life’ which promised, if correctly observed, to enable the individual to break free from the bondage of material life and realise their true spiritual identity. Within each group, members formed links, through either marriage (*sambandi*) or occupation, whereby they protected and fostered their relationships and businesses. Meanwhile certain groups, known today as Dalits or Harijans, were traditionally regarded as untouchables and excluded from mainstream society altogether.

The *varna* system continues indirectly to shape business even today. For instance, India’s Tata Group is both a successful multinational conglomerate and a modern example of a successful company that continues to be largely controlled by the Vaishya community of businessmen.

India is not and should not be viewed as a homogeneous country when it comes to developing, fostering and using *jaan-pehchaan* connections. For instance, there are many in-group bonds across India and each forms well-established networks with norms, based on trust, that offer not only identity but also protection, leading to conscious and unconscious preference giving. A lack of cohesion among these various in-group networks or *jaan-pehchaan* connections can create serious difficulties for outsiders trying to navigate through this complex system (Schuster 2006). The social capital and trust embedded within these complex connections are multi-layered and cannot be easily replaced by traditional Western business contracts. Not having the ‘right’ *jaan-pehchaan* connections has been and continues to be a significant handicap for foreign businesses operating in India.

To conclude, all those interviewed by the author confirmed that the practice of developing *jaan-pehchaan* connections remains essential for successful business and that those without such connections, especially foreign firms, will find themselves at a significant disadvantage. Understanding the nature of these time-honoured relationships and how they work is therefore critically important since the loyalty shared within them can fundamentally influence the ability to achieve personal and professional goals and interests (Schuster 2006; McCarthy et al. 2012; Puffer et al. 2013).

## 1.20 *Aidagara* (Japan)

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*Aidagara* is a Japanese term used generally to mean that a social relationship exists between two persons. However, the meaning of the relationship is actually rather more complex. Hamaguchi's theory of methodological contextualism helps to explain the difference between *aidagara* and social relations (Hamaguchi 1985). Methodological individualism, according to Hamaguchi, assumes that the boundary of an actor as an individual does not include his or her interaction with another actor. In other words, he or she can exist as a singular entity. When he or she then interacts with another actor they get involved in social relations with the other actor (see Hamaguchi 1985: fig. 2). Hamaguchi argues that methodological individualism cannot capture important characteristics of social relations in Japan and proposes using methodological contextualism instead.

Methodological contextualism, in contrast to methodological individualism, assumes that the boundary of an actor covers his or her relations with another actor (Hamaguchi 1985: fig. 3). Such actors are called contextuials or relational actors in methodological contextualism. Contextuials, in contrast to individuals, cannot exist without their relationship with another actor, because the relationship is a part of his or her self. Furthermore, contextuials do not think that they can fully control their relationship with another actor, while individuals think that their relationship with another actor is in their full control.

This relationship between contextuials is called *aidagara* in the Japanese cultural context. Then the difference between *aidagara* and social relations in methodological individualism becomes clear. A social relation is one between independent individuals, while *aidagara* is a kind of social system in which contextuials interact.

The most important characteristic of *aidagara* is that the Japanese do not think that *aidagara* between them is a result of their intention, because they do not think that they can control it. Rather, they think that it is created by a power beyond them, which they call *en* (Hamaguchi 1985). *En* is thought to be an unobserved power that realises *aidagara* between people. Thus the Japanese use the word to positively interpret their new relationship with another person. For example, two Japanese businesspersons who encounter each other at a business meeting would say, '*Koremo nanika no go-en desuraka kongotomo yoroshiku onegaishimasu*' ('*En* enabled us to get together, so let's keep our good relations').

*En* is also referred to in wedding ceremonies such as in ‘*En ni megumarete kekkon surukotoni narimashita*’ (‘Good *en* made us get married’).

In contract situations, *en* is also used when a person does not want to maintain associations with another person. A businessperson who wants to sever his or her links with a potential business partner politely would say, ‘*Go-en ga nakatta to iukotode*’ (‘We should not enter the business, because we do not share *en*’). He or she implies that ending their association is not because of his or her intention, but because of the lack of *en*.

Thus *aidagara* is believed to be the embodiment of *en*, which the Japanese believe (or pretend to believe) that they cannot control. These characteristics are different from those of similar concepts such as *guanxi* and social capital. *Guanxi* is a Chinese word expressing social relationship. It was thought to exist only in China during and after the Cultural Revolution, but Lin (2001) argues that it exists in other countries and at other time periods, implying that it is a general concept. He defines *guanxi* as follows (Lin 2001: 159): ‘*guanxi* are enduring, sentimentally based instrumental relations that invoke private transactions of favors and public recognition of asymmetric exchanges’. What is important in this definition is that *guanxi* is instrumental. For example, if person A wants to conduct business in a city in China, he or she needs to find a person (person B) who has large social networks of locals in the city and needs to establish a relationship with him or her. If person A succeeds in establishing a relationship with person B, he or she may then utilise person B’s networks to conduct business. Person A, in this case, intends to establish a relationship with person B in the expectation of using the relationship as an instrument.

This makes *guanxi* different from *aidagara*. The Japanese do not believe that they can intentionally establish *aidagara* between themselves and another, acknowledging that it is not their personal intention but *en* that creates *aidagara*. As mentioned above, they refer to *en* intentionally only when they want to end their *aidagara*.

This difference is also found when *aidagara* is compared with social capital. Social capital is a technical term in social sciences expressing social relations (see Portes (1998) for an excellent review of the concept). Specialists in the study of social capital are roughly divided into two camps when it comes to how social capital is created among people. Some scholars such as Coleman (1988) argue that social capital is a by-product of past interactions among people. For example, suppose that two close friends decide to be business partners and establish a new company. They did not become friends expecting that they would go into

business together at some future time. Becoming good business partners, according to Coleman, is a by-product of their friendship. In contrast, other specialists in the study of social capital, such as Burt (1995), argue that social capital can intentionally be created. Japanese businesspeople, for example, attend 'business cards exchange' parties (*neishi kokankai* in Japanese) to become acquainted with people in other industries, in the expectation of creating new business opportunities. Thus they intentionally try to create social capital. This second group of scholars investigates social capital as a tool with which actors try to realise a goal.

Although they share some common characteristics, *aidagara* and *en* differ from social capital in two ways. First, *aidagara* is not necessarily a by-product of a relationship. As previously mentioned, two businesspersons meeting each other for the first time would believe their *aidagara* was established thanks to *en*. Furthermore it is important to note that *aidagara* is not intentionally created. These differences make it challenging for outsiders who attempt to interpret relationships between Japanese people through the Western model of social capital, which does not work in the same way in Japanese society.

### 1.21 ***Amici, amigos*** (Mediterranean and Latin America)

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*Amici* and *amigos* are the Italian and Spanish words for *friends*, which, in the Mediterranean and Latin America context, may indicate a specifically instrumental use of friendship ties. Friendship is a recurring theme in social sciences and in sociology in particular. Some of the classic sociology authors have often delved into this topic closely connected to the question of basic interpersonal relations and of cohesion and solidarity among human beings. With reference to interest for the sociological as well as anthropological issue of friendship, first and foremost we ought to mention authors such as Ferdinand Tönnies, Georg Simmel, Niklas Luhmann and not least Anthony Giddens, among others. All of these authors, who may be considered experts on this theme, share a decidedly occidental concept of friendship, i.e. that the emotional aspect is the primary characteristic of this relationship between two individuals. In his now classic text *Runaway World* (Giddens 1999: 61), Giddens formulated the hypothesis that sexuality, love, relationships between parents and children as well as those between friends follow the same development models in the globalisation process. In a possibly too optimistic or maximalist way, Giddens underscores that this evolution occurs

'almost everywhere' (Bell and Coleman 1999: 1). This would imply that the Occident's emotional friendship would become a universal phenomenon. Empirical evidence, however, suggests a rather different scenario since in specific societies this type of evolution is not observable or remains rather marginal because instrumental friendship, as defined by American anthropologist Eric J. Wolf with reference to Latin America and Central America in particular (Wolf 1968: 1 ff.), is predominant. In line with Eric J. Wolf, in this entry we will highlight how this type of informal dyadic relationship is very common also in Mediterranean societies, yet present also in specific African societies. Consequently, instrumental friendship cannot be regarded as a sociological exception or a mere ethnographic oddity.

Before concentrating on the characteristics of instrumental friendship, those of emotional friendship need to be considered. In fact, instrumental friendship can only be defined by contrast with the emotional one (Reina 1959: 44 ff.; Wolf 1968: 10). The latter occurs when two individuals exchange intangible reciprocal favours: spiritual, moral, romantic, abstract, sentimental, psychological. Sociologically speaking, emotional friendship arises when two individuals help each other in specific cases in which one of them needs intangible, emotional support in specific situations of tension, stress or pressure from their community (Wolf 1968: 10). Thus, emotional friendship is a form of solidarity preventing someone from feeling alone or neglected. In most cases, an emotional friendship is a private and intimate psychological relationship generally involving only two individuals. Instrumental friendship, instead, is a socially broader phenomenon since it has a more public quality (Wolf 1968: 12).

Instrumental friendship in Mediterranean and Latin American societies is a symmetrical extra-kinship and extra-family relationship. Therefore, it is a dyadic relationship between two individuals with roughly the same social position and the same economic means. There can be no class or social strata difference between friends. Note that these relationships occur primarily among men. Age difference appears to be irrelevant (Magnarella 1975: 168). Far more important, instead, is that there must not be a disproportionate social gap, a great difference in prestige or a conspicuous class disparity between the two partners of the dyadic relationship.

Crucial to instrumental friendship is the symmetry and resulting transactional nature of the relationship. In fact, the important aspect of dyadic friendships, especially in Mediterranean societies, is not so much the mutual moral, spiritual or psychological support. This does not imply

that these forms of mutual favours are missing, but rather that they are secondary. Far more important, in fact, is the symmetrical exchange of the more material opportunities that may arise from intermediations with *important contacts* and *acquaintances in high places* and in positions of power. In Mediterranean and Latin American societies, a person experiencing some problem with the administrative justice or state bureaucracy will try to influence the outcome of a legal action or to obtain a favourable ruling by mobilising a *close friend* who he presumes or is sure has the *right friends* for the task.

Yet, as previously mentioned, Mediterranean and Latin American instrumental friendships are always transactional because favours rendered must be honoured by corresponding counter-favours. For example, if a person wins a lawsuit or is granted a licence to open a bar or a shop through the *good offices* of a friend, the latter will ask the former to return the favour, if the need arises, in order to obtain a sought-after public construction contract. Instrumental friendships are characterised precisely by this logic based on the transactional symmetry of favours. In Italy's Mezzogiorno in particular, it is quite unremarkable and no one tries to conceal the fact that friends with 'important acquaintances' are mobilised to better one's own and one's family economic position. Neighbours and others in general would be amazed or become suspicious if someone turned down a friend's practical help on mere moral or sentimental grounds. This type of person might even jeopardise his reputation and consequently be regarded as a fool or, worse still, as someone blatantly honourless. He would be deemed unable to adequately protect his own family's interests from the treacherous risks posed by his rivals and more in general by the public sphere, i.e. local administration, state bureaucracy and so on.

These observations point up that material and instrumental transactions between friends are in accordance with current social norms and conventions; therefore, society regards them as 'normal' and 'rational' interactions. To the single actors, friends who utterly reject any instrumental transaction seem 'abnormal' and 'deviant'. In a sense, Western or Euro-American societies appear as a 'topsy-turvy world' to Mediterranean and Latin American actors, and certainly not a desirable ideal. Yet, we need to underscore that instrumental friendships have a multiplex character, i.e. they are not based on single, predetermined and unchangeable roles (Boissevain 1974: 30 ff.). The exchange of favours and counter-favours touches many aspects of everyday life; thus, the informal structure of the single roles within a dyadic relationship between instrumental friends is highly differentiated. Ultimately, instrumental friendship must



be regarded as an essential extension of a nuclear family and relatives, and those who do not conform to this type of relationship's social norms will be censured by their community. The logical outcome in such cases is public ridicule or marginalisation.

At this point, we need to underscore that the term *friend*, understood as a person of whom one can ask a favour that will then be reciprocated with a comparable favour, has an extremely positive connotation. Indicative of this state of affairs is the Mafioso rhetoric in Sicily in which the term *friend of friends* (*amici degli amici*) defines a relationship, not free from mutual instrumental favours, between members of the same Mafia group or even between a boss and his personal political connections. The alleged ritual kiss between Mafia boss Totò Riina and Italy's former Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti would have corroborated the prosecution's thesis of their instrumental friendship.

With reference to instrumental friendship, we cannot focus solely on an analysis of this dyadic relationship. The societies we are examining are socially extremely complex and their members are integrated into highly diversified informal coalitions in which other types of interpersonal relationships are observable. These latter along with instrumental friendships broaden and enhance the highly personalised and essential network of a single individual or nuclear family. In this entry, we will focus on two basic types of relationships. The first of these relationships, aside from instrumental friendship, is godfatherhood (Italian *comparaggio*, Spanish *compadrazgo*, Greek *koumbaria*, Balkan *kumstvo*), i.e. the relationship between godparent and godchild that is particularly significant within the Christian world of Europe's south and south-east and in all of Latin America. In the Islamic Mediterranean world, where godfatherhood does not exist, functionally similar relationships can be observed.

The second type of interpersonal and dyadic relationship that extends the ties of solidarity and protection beyond the limited context of instrumental friendship is the relationship between patron and client. These two roles may also overlap. The patron often institutionalises his informal role by taking on the role of godfather as well. The *comparaggio* institution in Calabria has been cornered by powerful politicians linked to the electorally strongest parties and by high-ranking bureaucrats. Politicians try to acquire as many godchildren as possible in order to control the votes of entire families, and to secure extra votes that can win them the election (Piselli 1981: 210 ff.). The crucial feature of these two types of relationships, therefore, is their verticality. This means that both

godfather and patron are acknowledged as individuals on the higher rungs of the social ladder, with more prestige and more opportunities than their godchildren and clients.

In brief, instrumental friends are primarily middlemen who ensure an increase of their partners' informal social capital (Bourdieu 1980: 2–3). Clearly, the principle of reciprocity applies, i.e. whoever performs a favour will expect an analogous counter-favour, otherwise instrumental friendship can turn into rivalry, if not enmity.

## **Conclusion: managing favours in a global economy**

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A broad view of favours across the globe (as illustrated by the wide array of practices across 19 countries provided in the content of this chapter) raises questions about the relationship between 'economies of favours' in post-socialist countries, discussed in the introduction to Chapter 1, and the ubiquitous nature of the exchange of favours in developed countries. The use of personal contacts for getting things done is extraordinarily important in everyday life for citizens of most countries as they seek information or access to institutions such as those in education and health care, and especially, as empirical data suggest, in seeking employment or advancement in one's career. The phenomenon also features prominently in the conduct of business in emerging or transitional economies, as well as international business and management.

Emphasis on managing favours is important as it is usually managers who effectuate the practice in a global business environment by seeking contracts, as well as licences to operate and various types of permits. 'Favors span a number of issues such as corporate growth strategies, foreign direct investment, joint ventures and other alliances, multinational headquarters-subsidiary relations, knowledge transfer, human resources management, and business ethics' (Puffer, McCarthy and Peng 2013: 321). In addition, the use of favours by managers in emerging markets 'impacts their organizational outcomes of firm growth, legitimacy, and reputation, as well as [...] can facilitate or inhibit the international expansion of their firms' (Puffer, McCarthy, Jaeger and Dunlap 2013: 329). The realities of dealing with various governments and bureaucracies, represented by the entries in this volume, are inherent in the

business arena of developing nations. However, they may also manifest themselves in developed economies, often resulting in lobbying governments, bureaucracies and elected officials, thus generating practices involving paying for favours, yet legalised in those environments.

Although the use of favours is not limited to transition economies, McCarthy et al. contend that it is 'more deeply ingrained culturally, more frequently employed, and more positively viewed in those environments having formal institutions with relatively weak legitimacy, more so than in developed economies' (2012: 27, 28). In fact, several management scholars have identified systematic cultural differences between developed and developing countries which have an impact on management practices and firm behaviour (see Jørgensen et al. 1986 in Puffer, McCarthy, Jaeger and Dunlap 2013: 329; Jaeger 1990; Hoskisson et al. 2000; Aycan 2004).

According to von Weltzien Hoivik (2007), outcomes from using favours in developed economies are likely to be less predictable than in emerging economies where cultural traditions generally place more pressure on the grantor of the favour to see that the desired outcome is achieved. For instance, regarding a job reference, the expectation in the US is that the person granted a favour is likely to gain an interview but not necessarily to be hired, while in emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, India and China, being hired would be expected. Another example would be the permeability of lines between personal and business relationships in China, in contrast to the West, where they are separated by norms and rules regarding conflicts of interest.

Economies of favours can be viewed as part of the informal economies, defined as 'commercial activities that occur at least partially outside a governing body's observation, taxation, and regulation' (AoM call 2012). Although the informal economy is not regulated by societal institutions in the same way as the formal economy, it is not similar to the black market or shadow economies, where practices and transactions are basically instrumental and less defined by social capital and social exchange (Bruton et al. 2012). The importance of sociability is often a fundamental lens for viewing favours, yet insufficient by itself and should be viewed in the context of network theory, transaction cost theory, institutional theory, stakeholder theory, and ethical perspectives around the topics of agency theory and integrative social contracts theory (ISCT).

In fact, the very definition of favours might need a change. We propose to understand favours as 'an exchange of outcomes between individuals, typically utilising one's connections, that is based on a

commonly understood cultural tradition, with reciprocity by the receiver typically not being immediate, and where the process and outcomes would not generally be considered bribery within that cultural context' (McCarthy et al. 2012: 27, 28). A cross-disciplinary outlook is essential in driving this change. For decades, favours fell into the themes of anthropology (Malinowsky 1922; Mauss 1990/1950), sociology (Homans 1958; Blau 1964; Burt 1992; Scott 2008), and economics (Polanyi 1957; North 1990). According to Blau, in contrast to economic exchange, the social exchange of favours 'entails unspecified obligations' and 'involves favors that create diffuse future obligations ... and the nature of the return cannot be bargained' (Blau 1964: 93). This view from an eminent sociologist contains many of the elements of the proposed, more complete, definition of favours. The cross-discipline consensus is that the use of favours is fundamentally anchored in the culture with its social traditions, referred to as an informal cultural-cognitive institution (Scott 2008).

The definitions of favours seek to distinguish them from bribery, but the boundaries between the two are blurred. On the one hand, accepting the culture for favours can lead to bribery: favours may not constitute bribery per se and are generally not illegal in most countries, but they can result in negative consequences for the society, such as creating an uneven playing field for various actors (especially those excluded from the networks within which favours are exchanged). On the other hand, Puffer, McCarthy, Jaeger and Dunlap (2013: 329) note that:

favours may, in fact, be used to avoid paying bribes that carry associated costs and potential penalties. In contrast to favors, bribery involves a payment in money or in kind, with the expectation of something in exchange that requires unethical behaviour on the part of the recipient of the bribe (Luo 2002; Rose-Ackerman 2002), and is considered illegal as well as unethical in most countries.

To place the proposed definition of favours in perspective, favour exchange in China has been categorised as a social norm, while bribery is seen to be a deviation from the social norm (Luo 2002).

Favour exchanges are defined by both culture and the stage of development of a country's formal institutional system that 'can lead to different perceptions regarding the ethicality of using favours. In developed economies where agency theory is fundamental to explaining corporate governance and managerial behaviour (Jensen and Meckling 1976),

managers would often consider some transactions involving favors to be unethical' (McCarthy and Puffer 2008: 13). McCarthy et al. (2012: 4) posit that:

In emerging economies, however, agency theory has far less impact on business and managerial behaviour because strong, legitimate formal institutions are required to effectuate the principles of that theory, and those are generally lacking in those economies. [Thus] the use of favors in such economies is based in the cultural-cognitive institutions that fill the void created by the weak legitimacy of formal institutions in those countries. Individuals thus are often faced with a pervasive bureaucracy due to the communist or colonialist pasts of these countries. Thus we posit that the ethicality of using favors, including those used to achieve business goals, is highly dependent upon the context, particularly the country and its cultural context, and more specifically the communities within that country.

In fact, as McCarthy and Puffer establish (2008: 14– 15):

although often claimed to be an amoral theory, agency theory is used in practice by some Western businesspersons to judge the ethicality of corporate governance and other decisions and behaviours. Some critics thus argue that it must be considered in the context of morality: 'Most agency theorists, despite the denials, make moral claims. Moreover, these moral claims are open to challenge' (Bowie and Freeman 1992: 21). Those authors conclude that 'an adequate theory of agency needs assistance from ethical theory' (Bowie and Freeman 1992: 21).

In contrast to agency theory that is usually based in some form of capitalism in developed economies, the consideration of ISCT may be preferred to judge the ethicality of favours and transactions involving those practices, particularly in undeveloped or developing economies. This is because ISCT takes into account the cultural-cognitive institutions of individual countries based on their historical traditions and values (McCarthy and Puffer 2008: 14– 15):

ISCT acknowledges the legitimacy of many local norms, doing so in an inductive fashion by observing behaviours and recognizing underlying cultural values. ISCT recognizes what 'is' in the context of a local community as the basis for legitimacy of local norms, provided they are consistent with hypernorms and

the theory's priority rules, rather than what 'ought to be' as the basis for ethical legitimacy. Local norms will generally prevail as the ethical standard if they are 'consistent norms' that are more culturally specific, reflecting cultural variations (England 1975), provided they meet the tests of consistency noted above (Carroll 2004; Donaldson and Dunfee 1999; Spicer et al. 2004).

In summary, rather than the more rigid interpretations of the appropriateness, and even ethicality of practices such as favours inherent in agency theory, ISCT provides an appropriate level of flexibility for those behaviours by recognising their cultural-cognitive foundation, but with limitations. Thus this theory is far more appropriate and useful for judging ethicality of practices such as favours in developing economies, and can often be applied with value in developed economies.

The various practices presented in this chapter fall under an overarching umbrella of favours, although the practice in different countries may manifest itself in numerous and varying ways. The definition of favours, differentiated from bribery, has proven to be a useful tool with which to review the entries in this volume and to relate them to the different cultural, legal and institutional environments. While recognising the ubiquitous nature of such practices, we also acknowledge significance of the cultural-cognitive institutions, inclusive of a countries' historical and cultural traditions and values. Given that developed economies have more stable and legitimate formal institutions, they might be less reliant on such informal institutions as exchange of favours, even as the increasing complexity of modern societies seems to produce an unintended consequence for seeking informal shortcuts.

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## 2

# Neither gift nor payment: the sociability of instrumentality

### **Introduction: vernaculars of informality**

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What do ‘beans for the kids’ in Kinshasa, ‘a glass of wine’ in Paris, and ‘little carps’ in Prague have in common? ‘Variations in local cuisine’ may spring to mind, and rightly so. However, they are also ways of referring to informal economic practices – described by many as corruption or bribery – in each of these places. And as with regional variations in cuisine, informal economic activities come in many culturally diverse guises and with many different labels that reflect local customs, histories and practices. Language, in short, is a constitutive part of all semi-legal and illegal practices, as well as the models of informality through which scholars have studied them. What, then, can expressions and euphemisms like these tell us about the way informal economic and political activities are practised and understood in different cultural and institutional contexts?

Academics, policy makers, and third-sector actors have until recently paid very little attention to local vocabularies of informality, preferring instead universal definitions of corruption, which take little account of the socio-economic or cultural difference across time, space and context (Haller and Shore 2005). Paying attention to the use of local idioms for informal practices can provide a fruitful method for questioning such ‘one model fits all’ approaches to investigating informal activities by allowing for a nuanced, case-specific approach to the

phenomena. Because they often take place in the ‘grey zones’ that exist between the legal and illegal, and the moral and immoral, language and gesture are important vehicles for expressing that which must remain unsaid (Brković 2015). Taking local expressions and uses of language seriously can thus provide greater insight into the ‘knowing smiles’ and ‘open secrets’ (Ledeneva 2011) through which various forms of official and unofficial exchanges operate, as well as the spaces of ‘productive ambivalence’ created by such transactions (Stan 2012). As such, they can be an effective tool for studying not only the socio-economic and political context in which these practices take place, but the manner in which the economy itself is imagined, expressed and contested by policy makers and citizens alike. Finally, by situating vernacular idioms within their wider communicative context of embodied expressions – including gestures, jokes, local forms of gift-giving, and kinship idioms – we can appreciate the particularity of different traditions and language ideologies that shape the ways in which people act and make valuations and judgements (Lambek 2010; Henig and Makovicky 2016).

Although they reveal considerable variation in approaches and attitudes to informal practices, local euphemisms from across the world all have one thing in common: *an aesthetics of deception*. They work to deflect attention from a corrupt practice or minimise its importance. Whether it happens on the street, or in the boardroom, informality rests on the abuse of power and privilege. But popular euphemisms often deny this reality and present corrupt behaviour as altruistic ‘favours’ for friends. In Azerbaijani, the word commonly used for bribe (*hōrmət*) is interchangeable with the word for respect. An official requesting a bribe (*hōrmətimi elə*) will therefore ask you to ‘do him a favour’ or ‘pay him some respect’. In many regions, what is technically ‘illegal’ may in fact be acceptable or even moral. In China, for example, health care workers and government officials might expect a ‘little token of gratitude’ (*yidian xinyi*) for their services. As it is said in Russia, ‘you cannot put “thank you” into your pocket’ (*‘spasibo v karman ne polozhish’*). The language of bribery is also closely related to that of gifting. In Hungary, doctors and nurses can expect a ‘gratuity’ (*hálapénz*) from their patients in the form of an envelope containing money, while in Slovakia the term *pozornosť* denotes a token of appreciation given in dealings with officials, including public services such as health and education. In Poland, gifts in kind turn a faceless bureaucrat into an ‘acquaintance’ (*znajomość*) who may be able to ‘arrange things’ (*złatwić sprawy*) for you in the future. Such expressions tell us two things. One is that these ‘tokens of gratitude’ are not just payments, they are about making friends in the right places. Another is

that people excuse their own behaviour as altruism while accusing others doing the same of showing unfair or illegal favouritism.

Like beauty, then, financial and moral corruption exists in the eye of the beholder. Popular phrases used for speaking about corruption are often poetic or metaphorical. Some make reference to unmarked envelopes and other means of concealment. The well-known English phrase describing money being passed ‘under the table’, for example, also exists in French (*dessous de table*), Farsi (*zir-e mize*), and Swedish (*pengar under bordet*). Other expressions emphasise movement. In Hungary, ‘oiling money’ (*kenöpenz*) is paid to officials to grease the wheels of bureaucracy, while the Russians know it is sometimes necessary to put something on the palm of an official’s hand (*‘polozhit na ladon’* or *‘dat’ na lapu’*) in order to move things along. Other phrases work to deflect attention from a corrupt action or to minimise its importance. The Swahili expression *kitu kidogo* (‘something small’) is a good example of this. In the Ivory Coast the police used to ask for a *pourboire* (the cost of a drink), comparing the size of the bribe to that of a small tip. In sub-Saharan Africa, customs officers ask for *l’sk for du carburant* (‘petrol money’). The Brazilian term for a bribe – a ‘little coffee’ (*um cafezinho*) – also doubles as the term for a tip in the conventional sense. The universal popularity of tea and coffee as metaphors for bribes points to another way euphemisms function to conceal the true nature of a corrupt transaction. In Afghanistan and Iran the expression for a bribe is *poul-e-chai*, meaning ‘money for tea’. In both countries, tea-drinking is an essential part of social life. Asking for ‘money for tea’ thus carries the suggestion that the bribe will be shared with others.

In other words, euphemisms allow people to talk about corruption in terms of morally positive actions such as sharing, tipping or even charity. Some expressions – such as ‘beans for the kids’ – appeal to the charity of the victim by claiming a bribe will be passed onto someone else. Indeed, across the globe, many euphemisms draw on local traditions of food provisioning and cooking, as the entries on ‘feeding’ in Russia (*kormlenie*, 7.1) and ‘eating’ in Tanzania (*kula*, 7.2) in this encyclopaedia show. In Kenya you might be stopped by traffic policemen and asked to contribute to ‘tea for the elders’ (*‘chai ya wazee’* in Swahili). In North Africa, you may be stopped and asked by the traffic police to sponsor their next *kahwe*, or coffee. In Turkey, the police would rather you give them ‘cash for soup’ (*çorba parası*) – soup is traditionally eaten at the end of a night of heavy drinking. The phrase ‘a fish starts to stink at the head’ (*‘balık baştan kokar’*) also comes from Turkey, reminding us that petty bribes at street-level are often matched by greater corruption at the top of organisations

and institutions. In the same vein, Mexican officials looking to earn a kickback for arranging a business deal will demand they are given ‘a bite’ (*una mordida*). This seemingly universal use of metaphors that connect petty corruption with food indicates the degree to which such practices are connected to both a pragmatic need for survival, as well as an obligation to share or distribute a windfall with friends and relatives.

Finally, large-scale corruption and fraud has its own vocabulary, often created by the media. ‘Cash for questions’ in British politics comes to mind, as well as the Italian ‘*tangentopoli*’ (‘bribesville’) scandal in the early 1990s. Combining ‘*tangente*’ meaning kickback, and ‘*poli*’ meaning city, the term referred to kickbacks given to politicians for awarding public works contracts. The term *Fimi Media* (see 6.5 Volume 2) emerged in Croatia from a political scandal surrounding the marketing agency of the same name, and has come to refer to any misuse of public funds and power by political parties in the country. In Hungary, the term ‘Nokia-box’ became a symbol of corruption in 2010 after the Head of the Budapest Public Transport Company, Zsolt Balogh, was caught handing over cash to the Deputy Mayor of Budapest, Miklos Hagyo, in a Nokia box. Since then, ‘Nokia box’ has also become a sort of ‘unit of measurement’ – meaning 15 million Fts., the size of Mr Balogh’s original bribe. In the Czech Republic, the terms ‘little carps’ (*kapřiči*) and ‘fish’ (*ryby*) were used as coded language during a large corruption scandal in Czech football. In communication between the managers, referees and players a ‘little carp’ also operated as a unit of measurement, meaning 1,000 CZK per ‘fish’. Indeed, even for established criminal gangs, references to food and animals can provide a convenient vehicle for secret communications. When several members of the Italian Cosa Nostra were arrested in the summer of 2015, it was revealed that they had communicated with the mafia boss Matteo Messina Denaro via coded messages left on a farm in western Sicily. One read: ‘I have put the ricotta aside for you, will you come by later?’ and another: ‘The sheep need shearing’.

## 2.1 *Okurimono no shûkan* (Japan)

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In Japan, *okurimono no shûkan* is the practice of giving gifts. There is not a single, generic word for ‘gift’ in Japanese; rather, there are hundreds of terms for specific kinds of giving. *Okurimono no shûkan* is extremely important in Japanese society, and people invest substantial amounts of money in the practice. It is not uncommon for people to become so



overwhelmed by their gift-giving obligations that they make deals with their friends not to invite each other to their children's weddings, or they avoid telling their neighbours if they go on a trip in order not to have to bring back presents for them. One Tokyo taxi driver, when circumstances forced him to return briefly to his hometown in Niigata, stayed in a hotel and let only very few people know of his presence, because he could not fulfil his various gift obligations (Norma Field, personal communication).

*Okurimono no shûkan* is an important social practice not only at the personal and household levels, but on the national, macroeconomic level too. Japanese people spend a lot of time, worry and money on gift-giving, and it thus accounts for a significant share of consumer spending. For example, 60 per cent of the annual profits of Tobu department store, one of the biggest department stores in Tokyo, come from 'summer' and 'winter gifts' (*ochûgen* and *oseibo*, Miura Seiichi, Vice President, Tobu Department Store).

A major avenue for social mobility in Japan is through bribery and patronage. The distinctions and continuities between 'gift' and 'bribe' are subtle and complicated. People give summer and winter gifts to their bosses, to the teachers of their children, to their doctors. At their sons' weddings, parents give huge sums of money to the bosses of their sons when those bosses perform as 'go-betweens' or 'matchmakers' (*nakôdo*) and serve other important functions in the couples' lives before, during and after marriage. Parents and spouses pay the equivalent in yen of thousands of dollars to doctors (particularly surgeons) who care for their loved ones. Bureaucrats in Japan have wide authority to make policy, grant licences and dispense lucrative contracts, sometimes with very little accountability, and people in industry naturally seek their favours. Politicians receive donations from industry, and intercede with the bureaucracy to secure projects on industry's behalf.

All of these practices can be considered *okurimono no shûkan*. The grey area between gift-giving and corruption is very complex. The notion of bribery (*wairô*) is certainly present in Japanese society. In her own research, the author came across two instances of people who refused to participate in *okurimono no shûkan* because they found it repugnant. In one instance, a middle-aged woman refused to make a cash gift to the surgeon who performed a complicated operation. When it became absolutely clear that she was not going to hand over the large sum of money, the quality of her care declined precipitously, and she eventually died in the hospital. Her daughter related this harrowing experience, and emphasised her mother's stubborn and upright character. On a

lighter note, an elderly man who worked as a stockbroker for many years refused to participate in seasonal giving, which he believed often serves as a 'cover' for bribery. He once returned a box of live shrimp that had been sent to him by a client. The shipping clerks were so disconcerted by his refusal of this gift that they returned it to him, by which time all the shrimp were dead.

Bribery between government and construction company officials is extremely hard to investigate, although the author at times came close to accessing pretty specific information by interviewing the wife of a construction company president. Often, large amounts of cash are concealed within boxes containing seasonal gifts (such as traditional Japanese sweets). These large cash amounts – sometimes the equivalent in yen of tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars – are made before the government official grants a particular favour and would be considered by most Japanese to be bribes. However, the perceived line between 'gift' and 'bribe' varies from one individual to another, and the pressure to participate in all kinds of *okurimono no shûkan* is fierce. There are individuals who resist, but they often find themselves in the minority.

Many of the practices comprising *okurimono no shûkan* originated in other parts of Asia. The seasonal cycles have correlates in China, as do many of the numerological and divinatory aspects of Japanese gift-giving. Examination of Japanese gift practices leads to a deeper exploration of networks and social relationships in Japanese society, and, at the same time, to a more detailed understanding of processes of borrowing and transformation in the history of Asian cultural interchange.

Very many gifts take the form of cash, the prototypical commodity form. Even when gifts are objects other than cash, in numerous instances it is prescribed that they be as impersonal as possible. The giving of gifts is subject to a calculus of value based on monetary price, for precise attention to monetary cost is integral to the negotiation of certain relationships. When one receives a gift from a department store, for example, there is a code printed on it, and this reveals how much the gift cost. Japanese florists report that when they deliver flowers, recipients enquire how much the flowers are worth (Rupp 2004). The reason why the receiver is so concerned with the price of the gift is that in many cases, a return gift is necessary, and in order to make the appropriate type of return gift, it is essential to know the cost of the original gift.

From one point of view, the cash value of gifts and the cash given at these exchanges has nothing to do with buying and selling. Rather, it is connected to notions of auspiciousness, encompassment and alignment. Giving related to weddings and other happy occasions often emphasises

units of odd numbers. Some sums of cash that are technically even – such as 10,000 yen or 100,000 yen – are considered as odd numbered units of one. The cords used to tie the envelopes are made from odd numbers of strands; the cord with the highest number of strands, nine, is appropriate for a very auspicious event, such as a wedding. The envelopes that contain the money are folded in such a way that left is placed over right and top is placed over bottom.

These internal ‘rules’ governing *okurimono no shūkan* stem from the philosophy of *yin* and *yang*. In terms of position, top and left are *yang*, bottom and right are *yin*. In regard to numbers, odd is *yang*, even is *yin*. Every odd number greater than one contains within it both an even number and an odd number (e.g.  $3 = 1 + 2$ ). Odd numbers are preferred to even numbers because a hierarchical principle is at work, in which ‘the elements of the whole are ranked in relation to the whole’ (Dumont 1980: 66). The inferior becomes a member of the superior, the even is subsumed within the odd. In philosophical discourse, the relationship between *yin* and *yang* is not represented to be hierarchical, but in many forms of practice, the flourishing of the natural and social worlds is accomplished only when disorder (*yin*) submits to order (*yang*).

The number of strands in the cord that ties the envelope, the odd numbered units of bills the envelope contains, the way the envelope is folded, are all material embodiments of the encompassment of *yin* by *yang*, of female by male, and the life that flows from that hierarchical ordering (see Figure 2.1.1). Precise measurement, both in terms of the emphasis on odd units of bills and on the cash value given, enables and underscores this encompassment. Gifts to male employees are of considerably higher cash value than gifts to female employees. Unequal treatment of male and female itself underscores the importance of reproduction, because within this symbolic system, it is through the combination of male and female in unequal relationships that life is believed to be created and sustained.

Hierarchical ordering is believed to nurture life, and refusal to synchronise one’s giving and receiving with this larger system is considered inward-looking and selfish. The strong pressure to conform is probably related to certain Chinese derived beliefs that moral human action consists of alignment with the cosmic order; lack thereof results in disorder in the realms both of nature and society. This may be why so many individual Japanese people devote so much time, energy and money to giving and receiving, and feel pressure to perform ‘correctly’. Performing correctly means taking each particular instance of giving and linking it up to something more general and abstract, such as cycles of seasons,



**Figure 2.1.1** The top of a bamboo box given to guests at a wedding as a return gift and envelopes with different meanings – one is for an auspicious occasion that can occur more than one time, and one is for a funeral.

Source: Author. © Katherine Rupp.

frameworks of specialty items from faraway places, and hierarchical orderings of human beings, department stores, or numbers. In this context, monetary and quasi-monetary signs are important for giving in that they are apprehended as specific quantities that are auspicious because they align with a greater process.

## 2.2 *Songli* (China)

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The Chinese word *songli* means gift-giving (*song* meaning ‘giving’, *li* meaning ‘gift’). *Songli* denotes the use of relations in the form of social exchange and is often related to *guanxi*, a dyadic social exchange relationship (see *guanxi*, 1.12 in this volume). While *guanxi* refers to the social connections that can get things done, *songli* indicates the means whereby these goals may be achieved.

In Chinese, *li* may mean ‘rite’, ‘courtesy’ or ‘gift’. The relatively modern meaning of gift comes from its ancient usage as rite and courtesy. Gift exchange has always played a crucial role in human society, and the Chinese have since ancient times regarded the ritual of *songli* as indispensable etiquette. *The Book of Rites*, or *Li Ji*, a Confucian classic, states,

for instance, that ‘Courtesy demands reciprocity; courtesy is given but does not come back; it cannot be maintained. Given and not returned, there is no courtesy’ (Li Ji 2013). Courtesy visits among the upper social classes should normally be accompanied with gifts. Ancient gifts included meat, wine, jade or silk (Yang 1994: 224). Since reciprocity is highlighted in the code of Confucian ethics, recipients will always give something in return to the donor of a gift in order to keep the balance and maintain the harmony of their relations.

Deeply rooted though it is in traditional Chinese culture, *songli* has transformed dramatically in contemporary China. The function of ‘maintaining courtesy’ has gradually faded away and utilitarianism has become the dominant logic governing the practice.

In general, *songli* is an important way to build and maintain social networks, strengthen personal connections, accumulate ‘social capital’ that can be ‘cashed in’ in times of need, reach goals and receive favours from relevant individuals. Since *songli* comprises both expressive and instrumental features, it can sometimes be difficult to distinguish one from another. Usually, it is the degree of intimacy, the interaction dynamics and the purpose of gift-giving that determine various *songli* strategies and logics.

For instance, when *songli* is practised within a close circle of relatives and friends, donors often use gifts to express goodwill and cement social bonds. They may not necessarily expect immediate ‘repayment’ from the recipients; rather, they tend to see *songli* as an ‘investment’ from which they may benefit in the longer run. When *songli* is practised between two persons with weak social ties but with certain interests at stake, the donor may expect direct or concrete ‘payback’ from the recipient. It is, for example, common for patients and their relatives to give gifts, often in the form of a ‘red packet’ (money in a red envelope) to the medical doctors in charge of their case, in anticipation of special treatment and extra care (this is especially the case when surgery is required). Parents give gifts to their children’s teachers on Teachers’ Day, hoping that their children will receive more attention and special consideration at school.

Reciprocity and instrumentalism are not the only logics driving *songli*. Sometimes people give gifts because of normative concerns or as a result of peer pressure. In China the *songli* culture is so prevalent in the job market and the workplace that it has become to some extent a ‘hidden rule’. A survey conducted jointly in 2006 by China Central Television and a recruitment website found that 26 per cent of college graduates said that they had given gifts or dinners with a view to obtaining a good

job, and that *songli* and dinners accounted for 8 per cent of the total cost of their job hunting activity (Images.zhaopin.com 2015). Those who got jobs with the help of intermediaries gave gifts or meals to the intermediaries to express their gratitude, while other interviewees said that, since ‘red envelopes’ and *songli* were in some cases the only way to secure a desired job, they felt they had no choice but to take that path (Images.zhaopin.com 2015).

In modern-day China, *songli* may take various forms. Gifts may include money; goods such as wine or cigarettes; an invitation to tea or dinner; a VIP card to a golf club; or a trip to a well-known resort. The successful practice of *songli* usually implies the agreeable acceptance of the gift, a strengthened bond between donor and recipient and the eventual granting of the desired favour.

To go smoothly, *songli* requires delicate handling. Traditional holidays such as the Spring Festival and the Mid-Autumn Festival provide excellent opportunities since the givers need no extra ‘excuses’. Weddings and housewarmings are often occasions when ‘red packets’ are presented (Mack 2014). Before engaging in *songli*, an experienced donor will always conduct in-depth research into the potential recipient’s hobbies and preferences in order to ensure that the gift will please. When presenting the gift, the donor often employs a euphemism such as ‘This is a little token of my gratitude’ to disguise the utilitarian nature of *songli* and to make the story sound plausible.

The association between *songli* and *guanxi* reflects China’s transformation from a planned to a socialist market economy. In the early transition period of the 1970s and 1980s, the underdeveloped nature of the economy led to a shortage of goods and, as a result, the state played a dominant role in the allocation of scarce resources. Ordinary people gave gifts in an effort to ‘skirt around the cumbersome bureaucracy’ and to reach the officials who controlled access to desirable goods or opportunities (Yang 2002). At that time, *songli* was mainly to satisfy basic personal needs.

With the introduction and blossoming of the market economy in the 1990s, *songli* came to be used more to pursue opportunities and resources for self-development and welfare, such as better kindergartens, schools, jobs and hospitals. At the same time, most of the high-quality social resources still remain within the control of the state.

Yang observes that *guanxi* flourishes in the business and urban-industrial sphere where private or foreign entrepreneurs need to engage with the officials who control state contracts, access to favourable resources, valuable information and other opportunities (Yang 2002).

Naturally, the nurturing of *guanxi* in such realms is often accompanied by the practice of *songli*.

As explained above, the use of *songli* in the common gift-exchange mechanism usually involves a two-way flow of gifts between two individuals regardless of their relative social status (Li 2011). When used within the context of *guanxi*, however, *songli* typically entails a one-way flow of gifts – from the weak to the strong, the subordinate to the superior, and not *vice versa*. Moreover, ‘repayment’ often takes the form of permissions and opportunities rather than of tangible gifts. In the *guanxi* context, moreover, the recipient of the gift is often someone whose right to use, allocate or redistribute certain public resources enables him or her to use official authority to grant favours and opportunities. In such cases, the boundary between *songli* and bribery becomes blurred.

Examination of *songli* in China sheds light on the popular gift-giving culture across Asian societies. Like China, South East Asian countries also use the ‘red-envelope’ together with other *songli* strategies in order to cultivate interpersonal relationships. There are, for example, significant parallels between the Japanese gift-giving practice of *okurimono no shūkan* (see 2.1 above) and China’s *songli*. Both are instrumental in nature, stay in the grey zone between bribery and gift-giving, and reflect the overall structure of power.

China’s current anti-corruption campaign has had a huge impact on *songli* strategies towards government officials. In fear of being accused of bribery and abuse of power, officials tend to refuse or return gifts given by those who want favours from them. Sexual propositions, which used to be presented as gifts to the officials at nightclubs or saunas to strengthen the so-called ‘brotherly bond’ between the businessman and the official (Yang 2002), are now labelled as ‘power-sex deals’ (*quan-se jiaoyi*) and their use has fallen sharply as a result of the anti-corruption campaign. Similarly, luxury goods presented as gifts to officials or business partners, which in the past could amount to hundreds of thousands of yuan, have been categorised as bribery. Such exchanges are now labelled as ‘power-money deals’ (*quan-qian jiaoyi*) and can result in severe penalties. As a result, many luxury brands have recently reported a sharp fall in sales in China (News.xinhuanet.com 2013; Finance.people.com.cn 2014). In such circumstances, skilful gift-givers now tend to choose gifts that are hard for investigators to measure or to track down.

New technologies and operational tactics have also been adopted. For instance, the social network app WeChat (*weixin*) enables users to transfer money in the form of ‘e-red packets’ to their Wechat contacts. The time-saving, easy to operate and hard to track way of giving makes

e-red packet a potential new *songli* tool. The original function of the e-red packet was social networking and entertaining, especially during the Chinese New Year celebrations. Nowadays, however, it serves more as a reliable electronic instrument for the transfer of funds. As such, it has gradually developed into a *songli* technique. Similarly, the rapid development of online shopping in China offers donors more choices, while the express courier-service ensures the fast delivery of various forms of gifts. Meanwhile, the use of shopping cards and e-shopping allows recipients to choose gifts according to their preferences, making today's *songli* more precise and customised.

### 2.3 **Hongbao** (China)

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Chinese people regularly give a red paper packet or envelope (*hongbao*) filled with money (always in notes) as gifts for weddings, birthdays, New Year celebrations and other important events. Normally, it is given as 'luck money' by the older generation to the younger generation, or by a superior to subordinates, or by married colleagues to unmarried colleagues on the first working day after the New Year (Huang 2003: 1–24). The sum of money in the *hongbao* is not fixed and it is based on the relationship between the giver and recipient, i.e. the closer the relationship, the greater the sum of money given. The *hongbao* culture is also commonly found in other Chinese societies; analogous practices include *lishi* in Hong Kong and *ang pow* in Singapore.

In present-day China, however, in certain circumstances *hongbao* can also be considered a bribe. Although bribery worldwide is usually related to monetary reward and to unethical behaviour, in China, where there is a distinctive and historical custom of *hongbao*, a case of bribery is harder to distinguish as it depends entirely on the context in which the money is given. The widespread practice of giving money as a gift can be traced back to the Song Dynasty in the twelfth century, when giving money, or *lishi*, was first recorded. One thousand years ago Chinese parents gave their children 100 coins called *yasuiqian* in the belief that it would bring them luck and that they would live to be 100 years old (NLB Singapore 2005). The first use of the term *hongbao* seems to have been in the nineteenth century.

In contrast with many other countries in the world that are influenced by a spiritual tradition that perceives money as something dirty or unspiritual (Bian 2011: 17–131), China with no dominant religious



belief, has no such inhibition. Contemporary Chinese culture is not influenced by spiritual values and as a consequence money is not negatively connoted. As a result, Chinese people are generally very money oriented and consider that money can bring them the two most important things in life – fame and power. Some Chinese people even regard money as a crucial criterion in determining social status, believing that the richer you are, the higher your social standing. Such money-oriented culture can be traced back to ancient times. The Chinese people have had a long-standing tradition of burning paper money in ancestral veneration. The offering of money is made to the spirits and then the paper is set alight to transfer it to the afterworld.

In recent times, *hongbao* has become a commonly used tool in China for developing *guanxi* (an instrumental network of relationships – see 1.12 in this volume), with the specific aim of gaining preferential treatment. The boundary between *hongbao* being given as a gift or as a bribe has become blurred. For example, in the context of education it is common for parents to give their child's teachers a *hongbao* on Teachers' Day to show their appreciation. In this instance parents give *hongbao* as a manifestation of gratitude, and as such, the practice is considered ethical. However, it is also possible for the donating parents to use this act to convey a subtle expectation of receiving some advantage or preferential treatment for their child, such as personal attention or better grades. In this situation, the giving of the gift of *hongbao* may be regarded as a bribe. Similarly, one might give *hongbao* as a wedding gift to the son or daughter of an influential government official. The *hongbao* is given straightforwardly as a wedding gift. However, if shortly after the wedding, it turns out that the government official will grant a government permit to the donor for some business expansion the gift might rightly be construed as a bribe.

Since giving *hongbao* as a bribe most commonly serves the interaction between businessmen (bribers) and officials (bribe takers), it is easy to see how the private/public boundary is routinely crossed. In China, under the duress of law and social norms, officials are reluctant to accept bribes, so self-justification strategies come into play (Huang 1987).

Businessmen use two main 'self-justification' strategies during *hongbao*-giving, employing a variety of subtle measures to disguise the bribes as gifts, thus outwardly behaving in a normative manner. First, businessmen do not give *hongbao* to officials direct – instead they find an intermediary to act as a third party. In instances where a businessman and official have not yet established a relationship, the use of an intermediary is even more essential. In the context of a relationship of low

mutual trust, no matter how much an official was desirous of receiving a bribe, it would be refused. In order to be successful, in a premeditated sequence of events, the businessman will give *hongbao* to relatives or close associates of the official he wishes to bribe. Then, at a later date, once relationship ties are better established, he will ask the intermediary to deliver *hongbao* to the official he originally wanted to bribe. Even though the official might be fully aware of the real nature of *hongbao*, presented in this way as normative gift-giving behaviour between parties who have close relationships, the official is able to accept it. The culture of *hongbao* dictates that the recipient should not open the envelope in public, nor show too much eagerness to receive it. This allows officials to feel 'obliged' to accept the offering, as refusing a gift is considered inappropriate and discourteous. However, once the 'gift' is accepted, it opens the door to future demands of bribery in return for benefits.

The second criterion businessmen use to give legitimacy to *hongbao* is to ensure that it is given only at specific times and in specific spaces. Businessmen wait and use the traditional Chinese holidays such as New Year, the Spring Festival and important family functions such as weddings as opportunities to give *hongbao* bribes disguised as gifts. The normative gift-giving practice of the special occasion allows bribery to be transformed into acceptable gift-giving. In the absence of laws regulating gift exchange between officials, or where laws are barely enforced (as is the case in China), bribery in the form of *hongbao* becomes practically impossible for officials to resist. The space in which it is given also plays an important role in the transformation from bribe to gift. In business, the most common location for *hongbao*-giving is within the officials' homes (Lee 2009: 85–106). Since homes are the officials' private space rather than workspace, *hongbao* given in a domestic setting can be simply validated as an interaction between friends.

In Chinese society, the practice of 'gift-return' has long been regarded as an intrinsic feature of gift-giving. Therefore, the 'gift-return' between the officials and businessmen produces an artificial form of gift-giving. In a further pursuit of the 'self-justification' strategy employed by officials keen to avoid gaining a morally disadvantageous status for having accepted *hongbao*, the official may symbolically reciprocate with a gift of little value, such as a self-made painting or drawing (Yue 2012: 102–5).

Because of the moral ambivalence of *hongbao*, using legal criteria to determine whether *hongbao* is a gift or bribe is difficult. Therefore, other criteria should be applied. Gu examined the boundary between *hongbao* as a gift and a bribe in China; he asserts that the distinguishing criterion

is determined on the basis of the exchange involved in *hongbao*, rather than the character of the social relations between the actors involved. If the exchange involves material interest and short-term reciprocity only, then the *hongbao* is classified as a bribe (Gu 2001: 5–9). Such an argument is further elaborated by Lin’s study of the interaction between businessmen from Hong Kong and politicians from Mainland China, in which he points out that giving *hongbao* as a gift to someone one is connected to within a network should not be instantly reciprocated, as this would be considered impolite or even offensive; rather the gift is expected to be repaid in the future (Lin 2006: 80–7). At a future time, a genuine *hongbao* recipient will always return a *hongbao* containing exactly the same amount of money as they were originally given. In contrast, when *hongbao* is given as a bribe, the *hongbao* taker will not reciprocate with money; rather, they will repay the gift in another form, such as in a lucrative contract or in the gift of valuable resources or land offered at below market prices.

The implications of *hongbao* are twofold. *Hongbao* may be economically beneficial in the short term and as such can be positively connoted. In China, where elaborate bureaucracies make it hard to get access to limited resources, *hongbao* can be seen as a useful mechanism for ‘greasing the wheel’, or cutting through red tape and serves as ‘speedy money’ (Yang 2001: 87–102).

In China, although most people condemn bribery in its broadest sense, and acknowledge that it is illegal, it is so closely related to perfectly legal and ethical behaviours that this very ambivalence makes it very easy for a cynical bribe-giver to argue that he is not guilty of wrongdoing – he is simply presenting a gift to a friend. In the long term, however, the moral ambivalence of *hongbao* hinders the progress of anti-corruption processes in China.

#### 2.4 *L’argent du carburant* (sub-Saharan Africa)

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In some African Customs administrations, ‘fuel money’ (*l’argent du carburant* or *le prix du carburant*) is a metaphor designating a small sum of money given to officials. The term most likely originates from the pre-paid fuel coupons given to civil servants to cover their transportation costs on official business. *L’argent du carburant* usually takes the form of something that is represented as personal, immediately and individually consumable. Sub-Saharan Tax and Customs administrations deal

with the very raw material of corruption – money – which distinguishes them from spending administrations. Moreover, they are a powerful State apparatus: according to the 2011–12 Annual Report of the World Customs Organisation, out of 26 African countries that have disclosed their figures, the customs service collects between 15 per cent and 96 per cent of total tax revenues, with an average of 45 per cent. In comparison, the customs services of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries collect between 0.6 per cent and 52 per cent of tax revenues, with an average of 21 per cent.

Instances of *l'argent du carburant* may be overtly corrupt in nature: for instance, when a customs official is inspected by colleagues from the internal audit service, the latter may demand the 'money for the fuel' (that he has consumed to come to the audited staff) to draw up a favourable report. But more often the term refers to cases in which there is no real material exchange or extortion. Rather, *l'argent du carburant* serves more as a goodwill gesture to facilitate smooth long-term working relations between the parties. In a customs office, forwarding agents who present declarations regularly give *l'argent du carburant* after the declaration has been processed by the customs officer, without a fraud having been concealed or the processing sped up. Declarations are allotted to inspectors automatically and at random, so this gift remains 'personal'. The sums are relatively small compared to the amounts of duties and taxes paid, and are recorded as 'miscellaneous expenditure' on invoices the forwarding agents submit to their clients. When asked how much they give, some forwarding agents refer to a very elaborate scale according to the nature of the goods passing through customs – a sign of the institutionalisation of this type of payment.

In principle, service users who do not give *l'argent du carburant* do not suffer any adverse effects other than a reputation for stinginess. In fieldwork conducted by the author in Cameroon, no respondent stated that a person who had not handed money over had been discriminated against on subsequent occasions. The forwarding agents interviewed were too verbose to fail to mention any penalties they would have incurred had they not offered such payments. *L'argent du carburant* is thus more of a custom than a source of corruption.

*L'argent du carburant* is part of a wide range of practices of donations with nothing in return that occur in day-to-day social relationships. When visiting headquarters for a meeting, one customs officer who had obtained a very gainful position (i.e. one that provides plenty of opportunity to earn extra money, both legally through bonuses as a share of fines on detected frauds and sometimes through bribes) gave

his mission *per diems* to a colleague and friend, telling him it was for his 'fuel'. Another, who no longer works at the port, was given an envelope by a forwarding agent with whom he had ceased to have any relations, for old time's sake. Fuel money also facilitates relations between subordinates and their bosses, who, deprived of contact with users because of their position, cannot increase their income like their subordinates do. This is referred to as 'giving account'. Although *l'argent du carburant* is not a form of bribery (in that it is not given for an immediate result in return), nor should it be considered a 'gift', given out of gratitude with no expectation of anything in return. Rather, *l'argent du carburant* facilitates connections that may be exploited subsequently.

Although in practice such connections may never be used, they can be employed if necessary. In the case of relations between a boss and his subordinates, it is similarly not certain that a subordinate will need his boss to cover him in an event of a problem, or that the boss has means to control his subordinates' real activity. However, the main role of *l'argent du carburant* may be to ensure what Gluckman (1955) called 'peace in the feud', i.e. the constraint of conflict by custom.

The environment of customs administration is indeed fundamentally combative in nature, due to the conflicting interests of the actors involved. Such competitive interactions take place both between service users and customs officers, and among the officers themselves. Service users aim to pay as little as possible, while officials seek either to maximise revenue to meet monthly targets (and thus advance their career), or



**Figure 2.4.1** At the customs.

Source: Author. © Thomas Cantens.

to take the highest possible bribe in the light of the risk taken. Customs officers also compete with each other to be appointed to the best positions (Cantens 2012). *L'argent du carburant* is one of many unofficial practices that anticipate or resolve the conflicts among officials and between officials and taxpayers, a form of courtesy that finds its legitimacy in the latent conflicts. Other practices exist, such as various kinds of negotiation of the tax pressure on the big taxpayers and on the 'informal sector' (Cantens 2013; Cantens et al. 2014).

*L'argent du carburant* can turn into a major issue when change or innovation – for instance, a technical reform – breaks the equilibriums. In Cameroon in 2008, when a new IT (information technology) system was installed that allotted declarations at random according to workloads, certain customs officers began to process them as quickly as possible by settling them without fully checking. This meant that the system would allot them more declarations so that they could increase their income through *l'argent du carburant*. This fast-tracking created informal income inequalities among customs officers working in the same office, resulting in some officials blowing the whistle on this malpractice among their colleagues. The system has now been adjusted to resolve this problem. It could be said that to some extent the system of *l'argent du carburant* has led to a legal improvement, since the 'bad' customs officials do now spend more time on controlling declarations. As with *l'argent du carburant*, all informal practices related to money generate competition among officials, as well as creating fragile equilibriums. At border offices where the trade traffic is low, a collectivisation of *l'argent du carburant* has been reported: the figures of the amounts given to each official are recorded in a book and the total amount is shared among officials according to their hierarchical rank on a weekly or monthly basis.

*L'argent du carburant* challenges some of the common assumptions of policy developers and researchers. On the one hand, it is legally categorised as a 'corrupt' practice: most penal codes classify the receipt of money that is not officially explicitly sanctioned as corruption. On the other hand, this kind of practice does not easily fit in with the conceptual framework of policy makers, whose definitions of corruption are often narrower than the law itself. Payments that are not extorted or unofficially exchanged for a service are generally considered from perspectives that can be either pragmatic – the importance of the informal practice is related to its cost for the taxpayers – or symbolic – the conformity of officials' action to Weber's ideal-type bureaucracy. *L'argent du carburant* serves as a reminder that notions of 'corruption' and 'legality' are at least

in part based on what is acceptable in a society and the individual freedom to respect what society considers as acceptable or not.

Providing quantitative estimates for the amounts paid in bribes and *carburant* is not such a difficult task for ethnographers. Estimates given by respondents – both officials and intermediaries – for typical amounts paid can easily be cross-checked. Such respondents often talk candidly because they are keen to ‘explain’ what corruption is and the extent to which such payments compensate for the weak salaries of civil servants. For example, in Cameroon in the 1990s, officials’ wages were reduced by 75 per cent as part of ‘structural adjustment plans’, which understandably gave rise to a feeling of entitlement to informal payments as a means of fair compensation.

Quantitative measurement of *carburant* is important for challenging the usual distinction between ‘major’ and ‘petty’ corruption, based on amounts and beneficiaries. This typology has been roundly criticised as an ideological construction by Western societies (Amselle 1992). The case of customs administrations in sub-Saharan Africa reinforces such criticism: in Cameroon, the total amounts collected under ‘petty’ corruption – including *l’argent du carburant* – significantly exceeded the amounts reported in the press in ‘major’ corruption cases between 2006 and 2010. In addition, the ideological distinction between ‘petty’ and ‘major’ corruption may serve the idea that the higher status someone has in society, the higher the amount of bribe should be to consider him as ‘corrupt’.

Another difficulty in defining practices as ‘legitimate’ or ‘corrupt’ is that official procedures are always permeated by unofficial practices. An example of this official–unofficial dynamic arising from *l’argent du carburant* is the ‘protocol’, a formal but local institutional agreement between the administration and the private sector. Aware that the issuing of documents or the fulfilment of minor administrative action gave rise to intentional bottlenecks and payments of money, customs officials concluded ‘protocols’ with their private sector customers: an agreement defining the sum to be paid according to the action performed or the document provided. The amounts are collected together from forwarding agents or hauliers and divided among customs officers according to a fixed transparent scale. The managers of these enterprises preferred a protocol to a confrontational relationship with the customs officers. Moreover, the managers never actually knew whether their representatives gave the entire sum to the customs officer or kept part for themselves; thus the firms’ relationship with their forwarding agents could also potentially have been upset had they tried to clamp down on

informal payments. A 'protocol', on the other hand, provides them with transparency.

If a state institution detects an informal threat to its power that it is unable to eliminate, then it will create or co-opt unofficial practices to try and regain some degree of control. The 'protocol' is an example of this – given that the customs authority lacks the means to eliminate the practice of *l'argent du carburant*, it standardises it and regains some degree of control over it in the form of the 'protocol'. Such state pragmatism is a kind of 'reason of state'. In this respect, addressing corruption by forcing actors to live up to idealised, abstract rules that are not recognised as legitimate precisely because they are so far removed from everyday practice is not realistic.

## 2.5 ***Paid favours*** (UK)

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The term 'paid favours' refers to acts of one-to-one material help within wider kinship, friendship and neighbourly networks that are reimbursed with money. For example, a friend offers you a lift in their car, so you give them 'money for the petrol'. As a general rule, the sum paid bears little relation to the market price: the closer the relationship between you and your friend, indeed, the less likely is it that the fee will conform. So far, this practice has been discussed mostly in relation to the UK and other Western economies (Williams 2009).

The provision of one-to-one material help within wider kinship, friendship and neighbourly networks has been recognised as an important coping practice ever since the seminal studies by Stack (1974) and Young and Wilmott (1975). Indeed, the idea that social relationships form a community resource has become popularised in recent decades by the burgeoning social capital literature (Coleman 1988; Gittell and Vidal 1998; Putnam 2000). Unlike the earlier focus on the benefits derived from close ties between people who already know each other ('bonding' social capital), the later literature, following Granovetter (1973), has highlighted how the 'strength of weak ties' between people who do not know one another very well ('bridging social capital') is just as useful as a community resource (Gittell and Vidal 1998; Putnam 2000).

The traditional assumption has been that, when help is provided on a one-to-one basis within the extended family or social and neighbourhood networks, such help is provided on an unpaid basis (Pahl 1984; Renooy 1990; Leonard 1994; Komter 1996). Indeed, the recurring



narrative is that making monetary payments would shift such community exchange from the non-market sphere of reciprocity into the market realm. This is premised on the notion that monetary transactions are always market-like and profit-motivated. Such a reading of monetised exchange not only prevails across a range of economic perspectives from the neo-classical to the Marxian (Harvey 1989; Sayer 1997; Ciscel and Heath 2001), but is reinforced by a 'formalist' anthropological tradition that views exchange mechanisms in advanced Western societies as less 'embedded' than those in pre-industrial societies. Viewed through this lens, the idea is that there has been a separation of the 'economy' from 'culture', resulting in exchanges in Western societies being 'thinner', less loaded with social meaning and less symbolic than traditional exchanges (Mauss 1966).

Over the past few decades, however, this conventional 'thin' reading of monetary exchange as always conducted under market-like relations for the motive of profit has been subjected to critical scrutiny by an array of analysts (Zelizer 1994; Carrier 1997; Crewe and Gregson 1998; Carruthers and Babb 2000; Crewe 2000; Lee 2000; Kovel 2002; Williams 2005; Gibson-Graham 2006). As a result, the formalist anthropology approach and economistic discourses that adopt a 'thin' understanding of monetary exchange have begun to be challenged from a 'substantivist' anthropological position and institutional economics approach that adopts a 'thicker' understanding of monetary exchange in which transactions are viewed in terms of social norms and values, and as being socially, culturally and geographically embedded (Davis 1992; Zelizer 1994; Bourdieu 2001; Slater and Tonkiss 2001; Comelieau 2002).

Studies providing 'thicker' descriptions of the relations and motives involved in monetary exchange have focused upon what Leyshon et al. (2003) term 'alternative economic spaces', investigating car-boot sales (Crewe and Gregson 1998), nearly-new sales and classified advertisements (Clarke 1998, 2000), second-hand and informal retail channels (Williams and Paddock 2003), inflation-free local currency schemes such as local exchange and trading schemes (Lee 1996; Williams 1996; Williams et al. 2001), sweat-equity currencies such as time dollars (Cahn 2000; Seyfang and Smith 2002; Michel and Hudon 2015) and small horticultural nurseries (Lee 2000).

Studies conducted in various UK localities have begun to unravel the relations and motives involved in one-to-one material help within wider kinship, friendship and neighbourly networks where payment was involved (Williams and Windebank 2000; White 2009, 2011; Williams 2009). Although conventional 'thin' readings of monetary exchange view

the introduction of money into transactions between kin, friends and neighbours as shifting such exchanges from the non-market sphere into the market realm – on the grounds that monetary transactions are always market-like and profit-motivated – this is not the case. Williams (2009) found that in just 5 per cent of cases did the recipient paying wider kin, neighbours or friends assert that their primary motive was to save money, and that in only 7 per cent of cases did those recompensed with money for supplying material help to wider kin, friends and acquaintances assert that they undertook the task primarily to make money. If they were not engaged in such paid exchanges primarily for monetary gain, why was money changing hands?

When asked why they offer or accept payment to or from wider kin, friends or acquaintances, most assert that it is a ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ thing to do. In other words, there is a self-evident culture of paying for favours. The only time payment does not occur is in situations when it is unacceptable, inappropriate or impossible. It is *unacceptable*, for example, in situations where the favour is too small to warrant a payment (when a screwdriver is loaned), *inappropriate* when the social relations mitigate against payment (such as when the recipient cannot afford to pay and has no choice but to offer a favour in return) and *impossible* in situations where the supplier would not accept a payment because they wanted to receive in return a specific favour that only the customer could provide (e.g. babysitting). In all other circumstances, monetary payment was the norm in community exchange.

The first common reason for giving or receiving payment is to prevent relations turning sour if a favour is not reciprocated. This use of money to avoid the need for reciprocity is particularly prevalent among elderly people, single-parent families and multiple-earner households, that is, those who perceive themselves as potentially unable or incapable of repaying a favour. By paying, they see themselves as offsetting the need to reciprocate while still maintaining and/or consolidating their social support networks. Suppliers similarly often prefer to be paid, once again to avoid a souring of their relations with the recipient if the favour is not returned. Consequently, money is acting not only as a substitute for trust, but also a lubricant to facilitate community exchange.

The second reason for paying for favours relates to a ‘redistribution’ motive. Often the primary reason why somebody asks for a favour is because they want to be able to give money to the person doing the work. Such ‘redistributive’ rationales usually apply more when kin conduct the work. Paying is in these circumstances a means of giving the

supplier some much needed spending money, such as when they are unemployed. Asking for favours and paying for them is thus a way of giving money, especially to kin, in a way that avoids all connotations of charity, even if this is the objective. As Kempson (1996) has revealed, most people avoid accepting charity at all costs. This is well understood. As a result, someone wishing to give money to another asks for a favour from them and then gives the person money in return for 'helping them out'.

This redistributive motive is similarly present when examining the motives of those supplying favours to wider kin, friends and neighbours for money. Often they do the work because they recognise that the recipient would not be able to do it. This applies not only when skilled craftsmen supply favours to wider kin, friends and neighbours but also when the unemployed, early retired and so on use their free time to help out others suffering from time-famine.

Generally, the fee paid for favours is not the market price. Indeed, the closer the social relations between customer and supplier, the likelier is it that the fee will diverge from the market price. By the same token, the greater the social distance between customer and supplier, the closer is the fee likely to move towards the market norm. The fee is also more likely to diverge from the market price when redistribution is the primary rationale of the recipient. When the motive of the supplier and customer is to prevent relations from turning sour if a favour is not repaid, the fee is often little more than a token-gesture.

Paid favours, in consequence, are not market-like exchanges motivated by monetary gain, and the social relations involved are akin more to unpaid mutual aid than to market-like relations. By the same token, the motivation behind paid favours is grounded not in desire for profit so much as in unpaid mutual aid. Whether these paid favours prevail in other societies beyond the UK has been seldom if ever investigated.

## 2.6 *Egunje* (Nigeria)

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*Egunje* is a form of involuntary giving. Colloquially, the extorted 'gifts' are 'cursed' by the donor, who does not want the recipient, most commonly a predatory official, to enjoy them. *Egunje* is a pejorative term that refers to the fact that the given 'gifts' are not really gifts under certain circumstances. It conveys popular displeasure, particularly because the 'gift' has to be given despite the entitlement of a citizen to receive a public

service from an official. Officials who receive *egunje* can include security personnel, medical personnel, judicial staff, petrol station attendants, school teachers, marriage registry officials, public servants in charge of core services such as import licences, planning approval, allocation of agricultural inputs and other resources, and other types of bureaucrats.

The practice of *egunje* derives from traditional practices of gift-giving shared by most of the prominent ethnic and tribal groups in Nigeria. Among the Yorubas of south-western Nigeria (one of the three dominant ethnic nationalities), gift-giving (*ore* or *ebun*) is an age-long practice that is encouraged to further strengthen communal living. The term *ore* or *ebun* stands for a legitimate, open and voluntary gift signalling goodwill (Akinseye-George 2000: 7). The worth of a gift (*ore* or *ebun*) is not in its size or quantity, but in the spirit of kindness that is supposed to be behind it. Although kindness may be given in response to the request of a recipient, it is generally regarded more honourable when it is volunteered by the donor. Givers of *ore* or *ebun* are expected to be blessed by God, as reflected in the popular expression: 'givers are never short of (anything)'. *Ore* or *ebun* can be given in the form of a tip (*dash*) to appreciate a service rendered. It may also be given in the form of support for expenses incurred by individuals or families organising ceremonies, such as funerals, weddings, house commissioning and child-naming, in which a large number of invited guests will be fed and entertained.

The Hausas of Northern Nigeria distinguish between voluntary gifts that are generally regarded as tips (*dash*) and involuntary ones, which can be described as tribute or bribe. The Hausas disparage the involuntary ones, using such terms as 'eating of nose' (*hanci*), or 'plugging of mouths' (*toshiyar baki*) (Auwal 1987: 293). Alongside *egunje* among the Yorubas and *hanci* and *toshiyar baki* for the Hausas, other euphemisms have emerged to denote the necessity of paying public officials: 'public relations', 'welfare package', *gwo*, and *kolanut*. 'Public relations' and 'welfare package' in their original sense may be used to mean hospitality, and are used here as an adulterated adoption of the terms. *Gwo* (*kolanut* in the Hausa language) is used in a subtle reference to the common hospitable practice of offering kola nuts to guests.

While viewed as involuntary and extortive, such forms of tribute are linked to the practices of lobbying in Nigeria's recent democratisation under the Fourth Republic (1999 onwards) (Abolarin 2005; Ribadu 2005). Lobbying, essentially carried out through various methods of political advocacy for certain interests, involves applying pressure to public officials (especially legislators) to influence pending action or legislation, in terms of policy agenda setting or formulation

(Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. 1980; Bello-Imam 2005). Although lobbying can be associated with cases of bribery (e.g. the ‘Abscam’ and ‘Koreagate’ cases in the USA, see Rodee et al. 1983: 176), the practices of lobbying are not only regulated in most advanced democratic systems, but also monitored by political opponents and the press. The situation in Nigeria, where a culture of impunity for lobbying prevails, is rather different. Thus, during the alleged attempt in 2006 by the Obasanjo administration to change the constitution to legalise a third presidential term (the ‘Third Term Agenda’), many independent television stations reported cash-filled ‘Ghana-Must-Go’ (GMB) bags as evidence of bribes paid to those national legislators who ostensibly refused to agree on the tenure extension allegedly requested by the president. Pushing for involuntary decisions by means of bribes was also referred to as *egunje*.

The open demand for *egunje* among police, border and airport officials points to a practical norm (Olivier de Sardan 2011), as does the ubiquity of *egunje* offerings by ordinary Nigerians, who do not want to be unnecessarily delayed or unjustly penalised by government officials in these extortive agencies. Despite its resemblance to petty corruption, *egunje* is viewed as a legitimate ‘survival strategy’ by a significant section of society. It is common for people living in countries with systemic corruption to point out that such shortcuts save time, effort, and get work done, while also using euphemisms for bribes.

The culture of gift-giving among the Yorubas, Hausas and several other recognised ethnic nationalities in Nigeria has probably always had an element of solicited or forced giving. However, the notoriety of *egunje* seems to have coincided with the so-called ‘politics of settlement’ under the Babangida military regime of 1985–93. The practice continued unabated under the subsequent Abacha and Abubakar military regimes, and up to the Fourth Republic, albeit in varying degrees. The ‘politics of settlement’ is a form of political patronage established by the military government, where it lavishly deploys state funds to enrich political sycophants, and buys off or tarnishes potential opponents. Needless to say, such a corrupt regime ran contrary to the original spirit behind the culture of gift-giving in traditional societies of Nigeria. The corrupt mutation of political patronage grew to a larger scale, encompassing political clientelism, personal rule and evidence of gross economic mismanagement (see Jackson and Rosberg 1998). Democratising systems like Nigeria’s Fourth Republic is hardly possible, as the democratic institutions do not tackle the deep-rooted neo-patrimonial relationships. These are parasitic and predatory, as well as capable of turning

campaigns for transparency, accountability and disclosure against political opposition.

The practice of *egunje* has multiple implications at every level – individual, institutional and societal – which will have a profound effect on Nigeria’s future if not effectively addressed. These include the erosion of the public good, institutional and societal trust; the debasement of personal, social and political values; and increased economic and business costs.

Although the acceptance of *egunje* as a practical norm coexists with disapproval of corruption, it nevertheless gradually erodes trust in state institutions. This is particularly relevant for the disadvantaged segments of the population that can fall prey to populist politicians. If one cannot afford *egunje* in situations where official support, endorsement or approval by the state is essential for family survival, one loses confidence in a system, becomes eager to sell one’s vote, and has to resort to self-reliance. In other words, aggrieved citizens often take the law into their own hands when unsure that government agencies will act appropriately without *egunje* – as in the case of the suspected pepper thief in the Ejigbo area of Lagos State who was widely reported in 2014 to have been tortured by market leaders, and the many cases of gang battles as well as ‘jungle justice’ against suspected petty thieves. Such ‘help yourself’ practices and anti-social behaviour are rapidly increasing in many parts of Nigeria, especially where the aggrieved feel that security and law enforcement agencies are unlikely to do justice without *egunje*. There is a danger that this could lead to a crisis of legitimacy in the Nigerian political system. The country’s past military regimes suffered great problems of legitimacy, if not illegality (Yagboyaju 2011), and this has continued to be the major challenge that has confronted the three successive civilian administrations (of Obasanjo, Yar’Adua and Jonathan) in the country’s relatively recent history, since the military regimes gave way to the civilian government in 1999.

In the process of selecting leaders or representatives, such values as integrity, service, hard work and humility used to be the essential qualities for a person who embodies good values and is acknowledged as such by peers and neighbours (*omoluabi*). Among the Yorubas of south-west Nigeria, a leader or representative of the people is supposed to, first and foremost, be an *omoluabi*. In contemporary times, particularly since the spread of ‘stomach infrastructure’ (a euphemism for the ‘politics of the belly’), voters have gradually come to expect more and more *egunje* and other forms of inducement from political aspirants and party candidates. The danger is that the giver of the biggest *egunje*, no matter what his

views or values are, most probably will emerge as the leader – with detrimental consequences for the future of Nigeria.

*Egunje* has unduly increased the costs of doing business in Nigeria, especially in public procurement. On the basis of several cases investigated and prosecuted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) between 2000 and 2014, it has been reported that *egunje* constitutes the major factor in corruption and associated trends in Nigeria.

## 2.7 **Baksheesh** (Middle East, North Africa and sub-continental Asia)

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*Baksheesh* is prevalent across the Middle East, North Africa and sub-continental Asia; it is even reported in the Balkans. Where translated into English it can be variously described as ‘tipping’, ‘bribery’ or ‘giving alms’, depending on the context (Delahunty 1997). Often it is simply left untranslated. In its native context, the concept lies somewhere between these three senses, having commonalities with other informal financial practices that result in the ‘greasing of the wheels’ (see *l’argent du carburant* and *všimné/pozornost*, 2.4 and 2.11 in this volume) – although it almost always refers to a cash payment, rather than an exchange of goods or services, especially in modern times (GR Reporter 2014).

The term itself has Persian origins, from the verb ‘to give’ – *bakšīdan* (Cannon and Kaye 2001). It appears to have been first described in the English language by Samuel Purchas in 1625, referring to a manuscript dating from 1600 (Purchas in Cannon and Kaye 2001). The Persian term is widely acknowledged to have Sanskrit roots – *‘bkiksha’* or *‘bheeks’*, which also have the same meaning as *baksheesh* (Carstens 2014). Not only is the term listed in English-language dictionaries including the *Oxford English Dictionary*, it has migrated to European languages, where it can vary in meaning according to the three broad contexts described above. In the Albanian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Macedonian and Turkish languages, a *‘baksheesh’* means ‘tip’ in the conventional Western sense. In Greek, *‘baksisi’* can refer to a gift in general, while in French and German the term *‘bakschisch’* means a small bribe. Likewise in Romanian, the term is typically used as a euphemism for a bribe (Carstens 2014: 77).

The original sense of the term appears to be closely correlated with the concept of alms. *Bhiksatana* – the Hindu god Shiva’s wandering in

search of alms – is first described in the Kurma Purana, a Hindu religious text first appearing in written form between 550 and 850 AD (Collins 1988). The author of this entry has personally experienced specific requests for *baksheesh* where no service has been rendered, from street beggars in Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Pakistan and Yemen. *Baksheesh* as a form of spontaneous and specific generosity is however distinct from the third Pillar of Islam, which is an annual charitable donation of a proportion of one's wealth (*zakat*).

Conversely, *baksheesh* is often encountered as a gratuity, on top of a solicited fee paid for goods or, more commonly, services. In this sense it lies somewhere between a tip and bribery: it is closer to an accepted emolument to facilitate the speedy or higher-quality provision of the desired service. The practice is so commonplace that it is an accepted cultural phenomenon, which Westerners often find peculiar. Joseph Campbell, the American mythologist, has documented what he saw as the pervasive influence of this practice on all aspects of Indian social and political culture, which he referred to as the '*Baksheesh Complex*' (Campbell et al. 1995).

For example, in Afghanistan, Yemen and other countries, obtaining a driving licence through the official application process may be sped up with the judicious use of *baksheesh*, namely small cash incentives to one or more officials involved in the process. It is important to note that this is distinct from simply buying the licence by paying off a single government official. The latter would constitute circumventing the official process entirely, and thus even locals would regard it as bribery. A *baksheesh* payment will most likely be suggested by the officials who are facilitating the process, although they may also allude to long waiting times or potential complications in the process, in order that the applicant might then volunteer *baksheesh* to speed things along. The size of the *baksheesh* payment is modest and (e.g. in Afghanistan and Yemen) not fixed: it is decided according to the financial status of the applicant. Poorer people would pay less *baksheesh* than richer people. In some countries, it would appear that the fee is fixed: in Lebanon, for example, the *baksheesh* for a replacement driving licence was reportedly \$7 USD in 1999 (Transparency International 2003).

What exactly is considered *baksheesh* varies according to the country and the context in which it is encountered. In some countries, such as Egypt, tipping a waiter would be considered *baksheesh* (indeed, in Egypt it is common for gratuities to be requested on top of services where Westerners would not usually expect to tip, for example by a taxi



driver). In Afghanistan by contrast, tipping a waiter for good service is not considered *baksheesh*. Such tipping is not an established practice in Afghanistan: in the context of discussions on the concept of corruption with Afghans, locals indicated puzzlement as to why in Western society this practice was widely established. They noted that the waiter did not represent a significant obstacle to the provision of the service, and was paid a salary for his work. For many Afghans, providing a tip to a waiter seems as perverse as bribing an official does to a Westerner.

*Baksheesh* often falls into a grey area between an innocent gesture showing appreciation of good service, and a corrupt practice to obtain preferential treatment. Nevertheless, sometimes the practice descends into outright bribery. In Afghanistan it is common, especially in rural areas, for policemen to ask for money at security checkpoints. No actual infraction needs to have occurred; indeed, drivers will often pay the policeman a small amount as ‘tea money’ (which is regarded as distinct from *baksheesh*), partly in recognition of their extremely low and ill-disbursed salaries. The amounts are so small that Afghans, who have a culture of charitability, will usually pay if asked, although if someone did refuse they would almost certainly be allowed to proceed with no further hassle. However, some policemen will stop truck drivers from proceeding past a checkpoint until a far more sizeable amount has been paid. In such circumstances, this might euphemistically be referred to as *baksheesh*, although this is partly shame avoidance by both parties to disguise what it really is, namely a bribe. Although giving ‘tea money’ is tiresome, it does not overstep the boundary of what is ethically and culturally acceptable to the same extent as asking for a large sum. Yet in other countries, even small-scale ‘tea money’ is termed as *baksheesh*: in Morocco, over 80 per cent of business respondents admitting giving *baksheesh* ‘to avoid hassle’ from traffic police and the *gendarmerie* (Transparency International 2003: 208).

*Baksheesh* has thus entered common parlance in many countries to denote outright bribery, and hence can also refer to far larger-scale corruption in business processes – even if culturally it might not be considered as outright ‘bribery’ by locals familiar with the ways of doing business in that environment, or by foreign entities who have operated in the environment long enough to simply consider the practice as necessary to maintain goodwill (Jacoby et al. 1977; Cavico and Mujtaba 2010). *Baksheesh* poses a dilemma for Western companies operating in countries where it is the norm, as it is often unclear whether it constitutes a ‘corrupt practice’ under anti-corruption laws, for example, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) in the USA. The legal implications

of *baksheesh* for such companies are a matter of much debate in the legal and academic literature.

Generally speaking, *baksheesh* where it is encountered is simply considered to be part of ‘doing business’, whether it be for a company facilitating a delivery through customs, or an individual seeking a permit (e.g. in Lebanon a building permit for a residential house can cost more than \$2000 USD (Della Porta and Vannucci 2012)). Cumulatively, however, it can be argued to have a significant retarding effect on an economy. When the Mozambican government clamped down on *baksheesh* among customs officials (over a hundred customs officials were dismissed for taking *baksheesh* in 1997), tariff revenues increased by 50 per cent in two years (Economist.com 1999). Yet, despite the large cumulative impact that *baksheesh* may have on an economy, its effects are not as immediately obvious as those of ‘grand’ corruption. As such, locals tend to make a conceptual and normative distinction between cash backhanders (bribes) to powerful officials, for example in order to secure a large construction contract (Cavico and Mujtaba 2010), and the multiple smaller payoffs to various low-level officials that allow the construction project to proceed (*baksheesh*) – even though the overall effect on the economy may be similarly negative (Transparency International 2013).

## 2.8 *Magharich’* (Armenia)

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*Magharich’* refers to a traditional gift-giving practice in Armenian culture, which in more modern times has also become a euphemism for a bribe. Thus, the word *magharich’* is used to characterise two substantially different practices, with the meaning shifting according to the context of use.

In its original meaning, *magharich’* means a gift given by a person who receives good news on personal matters, to a friend, relative, neighbour, or to the person who conveys the news (*Hayots slezvi barbarayin bararan* 2007: 17). The first appearance of this word in Armenian dictionaries can be dated to 1944 (Malkaseants 1944: 244), where it was presented as a synonym of the word *avetcheq*, which means a gift given to a person who brings good news (Raffi 1970, see also Aghayan 1976: 960; *Jamanakacic hajoc lezvi bats’atrankan bararan* 1974: 468). Essentially, the *magharich’* gift is given because the recipient of the good news is so thankful that they wish to share it in some way. Indeed, the

receiver of the *magharich*' might not even expect anything in compensation for the service. The same meaning holds where the beneficiary offers a *magharich*' to friends, neighbours or relatives, in order for them to share joy, good fortune or happy news. A typical example of this type of *magharich*', especially in Soviet Armenia, was money given to midwives who brought news of a successful delivery and announced the gender of the newborn. Armenian fathers were especially generous when the newborn was a boy. Another example is giving money to a doctor following successful surgery.

In the modern sense of the word, *magharich*' is simply a 'camouflage' word for a bribe. To give a *magharich*' or to ask for *magharich*' commonly means to bribe or to solicit a bribe. Many examples of the use of the word *magharich*' in this sense can be found in the Armenian media. For instance, in a report on a high profile court case, a witness was quoted as saying that he gained employment because his mother gave *magharich*' to the accused, a former head of a government agency (Hetq.am 2004).

The use of 'camouflage' words to describe bribery-related practices can be found in different countries. In this context the use of the word *magharich*' is very similar to the notion of 'envelopes', which is widely used in a number of countries including China, France and Latvia, or '*un petit cadeau*' (a little gift) in North Africa. The word *magharich*' in this meaning is also comparable to the Persian word *baksheesh* (see 2.7 in this volume), which is widely used in many Middle Eastern countries to mean 'tip' and 'alms' as well as 'bribe' (*The Economist* 2006).

In Armenia it is widely believed that the term *magharich*' (in the original sense of gift-giving) is an Armenian word that has migrated to wherever Armenians went in the former Soviet Union and beyond. However, both the word and the same definition of the practice are found in other languages too. The etymological roots of the word *magharich*' might come from an Arabic word *maḥāriḡ*, which literally means costs and expenses (Wikipedia.ru). The use of the word in Russian (in modern Russian: *magarych*; in old Russian: *mogorets*', *mogorets*"', *magarets*"') dates back to the beginning of the sixteenth century (*Slovar' ruskogo yazika XI–XVII vv* 1982: 230). The word can also be found in Dal's esteemed *Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language* (Dal' 1863–6), where it is described in both contexts: first as a gift, mostly in the form of alcohol, given after a good deal has been concluded; and second as a bribe.

In Russia, examples of the use of *magharich*' in both meanings (gift-giving and bribery) have been documented by a number of researchers exploring various aspects of the cultural, political and economic life of



**Figure 2.8.1** Local representations of *magharich*'. Drawings by Sona Minasyan and Sveta Ghazaryan.

Source: Author. © Left: Sona Minasyan. Right: Sveta Ghazaryan.

people in the regions of Kazan, Don and Tula (Kiselev 2009; Krasnov 2010; Skryabina 2011). The word featured in the tsarist police force's anti-corruption plans in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century (Salnikov 2009: 171–4). Interestingly, while describing the functioning of the legal and social autonomy of the Cossacks in the Russian Don area, Krasnov draws attention to the practice of 'putting out *magharich*' (in form of alcohol) at village meetings, to solicit support of the most articulate and dominant representatives of the community. These 'speakers-shouters' (*krikuni*) often had more influence than the village elders, and supplying the *magharich*' to them could influence their view and help to achieve the desired outcome. This practice of influencing the process of community decision-making in Cossack villages in the Don region has become enshrined in the saying 'Without *magharich*' a person from the Don wouldn't make any speeches' (*Bez magaričej net u dontsa i rečej*), widely used from the second half of the nineteenth century (Krasnov 2010: 45). Moreover, the elders (*atamans*) in the Don region 'put out *magharich*' in order to be elected as heads of their communities (Riblova 2008). This local practice has been satirised in the film *Election Day* (*Den' vyborov* 2007). Other typical examples in contemporary Russian discourse include, 'Hey, friend, they say your daughter got married, so you owe us *magharich*', meaning that the father of the bride should buy drinks or a meal for friends or colleagues in accordance with the tradition; or 'I got a place at university – the *magharich*' is on me!', referring to the willingness of a student to share their joy with friends by offering them a drink.

In the most recent linguistic analyses, *magharich*' is viewed as a type of a bribe alongside other colloquial terms such as *peshkesh* and *baksheesh*

(Shaev 2013: 863–6). Similarly, Nona and Robert Shahnazaryan refer to the word *magharich*’ as a form of bribe in their discussion of alternative economic relations, family relations and forms of corruption in the communities of the Caucasus. They also identify other euphemisms for bribery such as ‘to show respect’ (*uvazhit*’), ‘to sweeten’ (*podslatit*’), ‘to feed’ (*kormit*’), ‘to cajole’ (*umaslit*’), and ‘to thank’ (*otblagodarit*’) (Shahnazaryan and Shahnazaryan 2010: 68). It can be concluded that the meaning of *magharich*’ has evolved in the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts.

The traditional unsolicited gift-giving as a token of gratitude turned into all kinds of informal add-ons to underpaid professionals in Soviet Armenia. The practice of compensating doctors and teachers for their inadequate pay and giving *magharich*’ for good service was widely perceived as appreciation, and to some extent the state connived in the practice. Although morally dubious and illegal, informal payments were often perceived by both donors and recipients as fair and necessary under the constraints of the Soviet regime. However, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, such practices have become regarded as a form of corruption. In 2013, according to Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index, Armenia was ranked 94–101 out of 177 countries on the basis of payments for services in the public sector (Transparency International 2014). No study to date has examined the ambivalence of informal payments – associated with blurred boundaries between traditional gifts and monetary payments – in the context of the Armenian tradition of *magharich*’. It is a cultural tradition that conflicts with international measurement of corruption, and the reinvention of such ‘traditions’ can lead to dangerous territory that ‘camouflages’ pragmatic needs, greed and extortion. Further research on *magharich*’ is needed in order to better understand the boundaries between traditional gift-giving practices and corruption in Armenia.

## 2.9 *Kalym* (Russia)

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‘*Kalym*’ exists as an informal word for a panoply of informal and undeclared work practices that approximate the term ‘moonlighting’ in English. While often the term denotes work related to one’s formal job and skills, *kalym* has a wider meaning than moonlighting because it can refer to any opportunity for short-term work in the informal economy. As such, the term reflects the widespread nature of opportunistic



**Figure 2.9.1** Forklift driver holds up money as if to say, ‘Is this all I’m worth? I can get a lot more moonlighting.’ Photo courtesy of Sergei Lavrov.

Source: Author. © Jeremy Morris.

and tactical engagements with undeclared work in Russia that exists for many, particularly in manual or blue-collar work (Morris 2011, 2013). Its wide currency as a word also highlights the ubiquitous nature of informal work and employment.

In the Global North ‘moonlighting’, as its name suggests, is more often associated with informal contracted work or informal illicit employment (Schneider 2009), and therefore sometimes has less of an opportunistic ring to it and more of an association with one’s profession and skills-set. In addition ‘moonlighting’ has less of a working-class or manual labour marker to it, being used in relation to both trades, blue-collar work and highly qualified professions such as medicine or teaching (Li et al. 2000; Sliter and Boyd 2014), household service work (Sundbo 1997), and not always referring to undeclared work, but to legal portfolio work or multiple jobholding. In various tax enforcement jurisdictions moonlighting is synonymous with, or translated as, ‘undeclared work’ as an illegal part of an existing formal employment. Thus, the term moonlighting is more often translated simply as ‘black

work' (*Schwarzarbeit*) or 'undeclared work' (*Sort arbejde*). Nonetheless, analogous usages occur to the term '*kalym*' – in German: '*Pfusch*' – which indicates undeclared 'moonlighting' work using employer resources during paid working hours. The literal meaning of '*Pfusch*' is 'botch', rather like the term '*khaltura*' in Russian, also sometimes used as a synonym for '*kalym*', but also indicating rushed, poor quality work.

In Russia and other post-socialist societies, *kalym* is often used also to mean additional, supplementary income from working informally in a way related somehow to one's primary employment. However, it has the additional nuance of unforeseen opportunity. Blue-collar workers use *kalym* in particular to refer to any moonlighting job using skills, connections or even materials related to formal work. For example, using a formal-job works truck to informally deliver building materials (off or on the clock!) is *kalym*. The worker may get more money per hour from this *kalym* than from formal work. He may even have an informal 'employment' (i.e. unregistered and undocumented as a legal entity) on the basis of his access to a truck in his formal job. This case of *kalym* stresses the semi-perpetuating informal work environment dominated by a social network of current and former workmates (Morris 2013: 52). The extent of a horizontal social network is important for exploiting *kalym* opportunities at the same time as skills and resources (access to a truck) that enable vertical social networking (soliciting work from potential clients). In this case *kalym* comes to resemble informal versions of trades well known for their formal self-employment basis in the rest of the Global North: plumbers, carpenters, car repair, etc. The difference here is that perhaps the majority of trades work in Russia is in the shadow economy and may well be accompanied by a less well-paid formal job, in a factory, for example. By contrast, *kalym* is used by Russian white-collar workers in a similar sense to 'moonlighting' in the West. In addition, semi- or unskilled workers are more likely to use the term for any opportunities for extra earning – typically in construction work, or manual handling odd jobs for cash without any necessary long-term perspectives.

As can be seen by the above examples, *kalym* practices, at any level, are illustrative of the 'portfolio' nature of incomes (see Rose 2000), and the relative reduction in importance of single breadwinning wages. And in a sense this echoes the particular dualist structure of Soviet-era and contemporary Russian formal wages with their small base and large, discretionary, bonuses. Thus any worker actively seeks the potentially more lucrative moonlighting opportunities, connected or disconnected from their formal employment. There are few *kalym* niches for

the rural, poorest and least skilled. For those at the bottom of society, moonlighting opportunities are more to do with mutuality and barter arrangements with cash less likely to figure than alcohol as currency (Rogers 2005).

Some see moonlighting as a necessary insurance policy, whether because formal incomes are too low, protecting against shocks to income in formal work (due to the threat of furlough, holding back of bonus elements), or an alternative to precautionary savings in an uncertain inflationary environment (Guariglia and Kim 2004: 290). In any of these cases, it turns out that moonlighting emphasises the long-term rational economic calculation of individuals and households – ironically the complete opposite of the opportunistic ‘ducking and diving’ it is associated with. Indeed, in some low-pay blue-collar contexts, formal employers acknowledge the need for employees to engage in moonlighting, with unwritten rules about the amount of time off workers can take to use for *kaly*m (Morris 2011: 626).

Fundamentally, like other forms of undeclared work, *kaly*m highlights the basic tension between interpretations of the ‘right’ to work and receive income in addition to taxed earnings, and the right of the state to know and tax forms of work. But in addition, the Russian context of *kaly*m is the cementing and extension of social network ties, the opportunity to build skills set out from existing work competencies, and not least a sense that one’s labour is valued over and above the often low paying formal jobs.

## 2.10 **Mita** (Romanian Gabor Roma)

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Among the Romanian Gabor Roma, *mita* is a sum of money that, depending on the context, can be interpreted as a wage (to a broker, etc.), a success fee, a compensation, a gift as an expression of gratitude, a gift for persuasion (bribe), and a gift as a representation of joy. The word *mita* entered the Romani dialect of the Gabor Roma from the term *mítă* of Slavic origin. In the Romanian language, the word has negative connotations, and correspondingly, offering, giving and receiving a sum of money called *mita* is regarded as a negative or at least a morally ambivalent practice. *The Dictionary of the Romanian Language* defines *mítă* as a ‘bribe’, or ‘sum of money or gift received by someone or offered to someone in order to win her/his good will, especially to persuade her/him to fulfil (more diligently) or to violate work



obligations ... Without bribe = honest, just, incorruptible' (Academia Română 2010: 637–8).

Instances of cash gifts for persuasion (bribes) can be found both among members of the majority Romanian society and the Gabor Roma (Precupețu 2007; Moldovan and Van de Walle 2013). A significant difference is that among the Gabor Roma *mita* also has meanings that are morally unmarked (wage, success fee) or valued positively (compensation, a gift as an expression of gratitude, or a gift as a representation of joy). In the following, only two meanings attached to *mita* by the Gabor Roma will be analysed: a gift given informally for persuasion (bribe), and a gift given as a representation of joy.

Offering a cash gift for persuasion (bribe) is a practice occasionally used in order to assert economic and social interests (to handle situations of economic competition, for conflict management, etc.). In situations of interethnic encounters between Gabor Roma and non-Roma, a gift for persuasion can speed up administrative procedures, help to circumvent formal proceedings for minor misdemeanours (such as traffic offences), and in some cases can also help to place individual Gabor Roma building contractors in an advantageous position in the state or local government tenders for construction work.

In interactions between Gabor Roma, cash gifts for persuasion are generally given as part of competition for prestige among individuals and families ('Roma politics' – *Řomani politika* in Romani, see Berta 2014; Szalai 2014). This strategy is often used in the politics of marriage. The Gabors practise ethnic endogamy and arranged marriage (often of children) is organised and supervised by parents and grandparents. When a marriage is arranged it establishes a multifunctional marital alliance between the families of the young couple (*xanamikimo* in Romani). There is often intense competition between Gabor Roma parents/grandparents for marital alliances with prestigious and influential individuals, who likewise seek an appropriate marriage partner for their child/grandchild and allies for themselves. In such a competitive context, a secretly offered cash gift is frequently used as a means of inducement for a potential co-father-in-law (*xanamik* in Romani). *Mita* is given with an intention to persuade the recipient to accept the giver's proposed marital alliance and not that of someone else. In proprietary contests for marital alliances with extremely high reputational profit, the secretly given gift for persuasion can amount to several tens of thousands of US dollars. *Mita*-giving is thus an informal practice that can be interpreted as a source of dynamism characterising the marriage politics of the Gabor Roma.

Strategies of informal offering of a cash gift for persuasion also take place in other contexts of intraethnic social and economic competition among the Gabor Roma. For example, *mita* may be offered to persuade the recipient to give up his intention to buy a house or a building site that the giver would also like to purchase.

In certain cases, *mita* is regarded as a gift given as a representation of joy (*ărămajandiko* in Romani). Such gifts are normally given on the occasion of a marriage or engagement, or as part of certain economic transactions (mainly the purchase of antique silver beakers and roofed tankards regarded as prestige goods, and credit deals involving the pawning of such prestige objects (Berta 2014)). A common feature of these gifts is that they are handed out publicly.

The distribution of *mita* as an expression of joy handed out at weddings is governed by a certain informal code. The sums of money for this purpose are pooled by the parents of the young couple, and the host generally requests an older, influential man to distribute them. The latter does this by making an unspoken classification of the guests into gender and age groups. The most important principles of distribution are: (1) men can expect to receive a larger sum than women of the same



**Figure 2.10.1** Public *mita*-giving at a Gabor Roma wedding.  
Source: Author. © Péter Berta.

age; (2) the gender groups are also differentiated by age: the biggest sums go to the oldest men, middle-aged men receive less, and the young men even smaller sums, with adolescent boys and male children at the end of the line with the smallest sums. The same age/generation principle is applied in the case of women. Sometimes the person trusted with distributing the sums names the exact amount aloud when the cash gift is presented so that everyone present can hear.

According to the Gabor Roma's interpretation, the purpose of gift-giving at weddings is to enable the parents to 'publicly share with the guests the joy' they feel about the marriage and the marital alliance. The distribution of cash gifts is also a practice thanking the guests for coming, and often serves to establish, demonstrate and reproduce social closeness and solidarity between the giver and the recipient. Furthermore, gift-giving at weddings is a widespread form of conspicuous consumption or display of economic prosperity and a socially required and rewarded strategy for maintaining public image (through *mita*-giving, parents marrying off their children demonstrate to the assembled guests their commitment to the Gabor Roma ethic of sociability, and so on). It is not unusual for the total value of such cash gifts at a wedding to approach or exceed 2,000 Euros.

Although these wedding gifts are presented publicly, the scope of publicity is limited in respect of both ethnicity and social distance. With a few exceptions – such as the presence of an anthropologist – only Gabor Roma attend Gabor Roma weddings, and participation is usually restricted to those who have been invited in advance by the parents of the young couple. Consequently, from the perspective of the Romanian state, the distribution of *mita* given as a representation of joy at a wedding is an informal, invisible transaction, similar to the giving of gifts for persuasion (bribe).

The set of tropes (see below) used by the Gabors and associated with cash gifts for persuasion (bribe) and cash gifts defined as expressions of joy draw special attention to two dimensions of *mita*-giving. One is the relationship of *mita*-giving to publicity, and the other to the Gabor Roma ethics of managing social relations and interactions (i.e. morality).

The Gabor Roma attach two attributes to *mita* when given publicly: *table* (that is, the *mita* is given at or above the table; here the 'table' is a reference to the hospitality accompanying joyful events); and 'white' (*parni*). In contrast, *mita* given in secret is associated with such attributes as 'stolen, concealed' (*čordani*), and 'black' (*kali*). The set of tropes constructed by the Gabors represents the moral dimension attached to the gift-giving by linking 'white' (*parni*) to the noun *mita* in the case of morally approved

gift-giving, and 'black' (*kali*) for gift-giving that is morally stigmatised or is considered to be morally ambivalent. Thus the attributes 'black' and 'white' may refer to gift-giving in the context of both publicity and morality.

To sum up, cash gifts interpreted as expressions of joy among the Gabor Roma are linked principally to arranged marriage (often of children) and marriage politics, and to the prestige consumption organised around antique silver beakers and roofed tankards. These practices are informal, ethnicised and gendered elements of the post-socialist Romanian society and economy. The distribution of cash gifts representing joy is a widespread phenomenon among the Gabors, playing a significant role in the conceptualisation of certain social identities and relations. Due to their multifunctionality and social significance, the Gabor Roma often refer to the giving of *mita* (in the sense of an expression of joy) as an ethnic identity practice symbolically distancing and differentiating them from the Romanians and Hungarians living in Romania.

### 2.11 *Pozornosť, ďakovné, všimné* (Slovakia)

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In Slovak, the words *pozornosť* (attention), *ďakovné* (gratitude) and *všimné* (a colloquialism meaning 'expressing gratitude by means of a small gift' or 'kickback') all refer to ways of expressing gratitude for official or unofficial services. These practices are sometimes seen as an innocent expression of gratitude, but sometimes as a bribe, which explains their ambivalent character.

The term *všimné* best describes ambiguous interactions. It is used today as a euphemism for a bribe, as in the blog headline: 'Love is such *všimné* from Heaven, a little bribe, in order to survive life ...' (*Láska je také všimné zhora, malý úplatok, aby sa život dal vydržať, a ako vieme, darovanému koňovi sa na zuby hľadieť neodporúča*) (Anonymous 2013). Twenty-five years ago, *všimné* was defined as a jocular term referring to voluntary payment for a service provided (Hegerová 1991: 330).

The term *pozornosť*, by contrast, was dissociated from 'bribe' by the sociologist Iveta Radičová (who served in 2010–12 as Slovakia's first woman prime minister). Emphasising that it has long been customary in Slovakia to visit a notary, teacher, priest or mayor bearing a small gift, Radičová argued that there is a clear distinction between such traditional 'elementary decency' and paying bribes (Topky. sk 2011). In practice, however, it is not always easy to make such a

distinction. Just as the tradition of paying tribute for state services was once criminalised (Lovell et al. 2000), in modern societies the size of the gift is usually regulated by anti-corruption legislation. Small gifts and payment, however, remain a matter of individual discretion. Even this is not always unproblematic, however, and much depends on the context. For example, Slovak courts frequently hand down heavy penalties for bribes as small as 5 to 10 Euros paid for putting someone on sick leave without genuine medical justification. These penalties may include a suspended prison sentence and a fine of several hundred Euros. While such sentences have been criticised as too harsh by bloggers and the press, Judge Hrubala has pointed out that, taken together, such corrupt practices can cost the state and society huge amounts of money paid out in the form of health and social benefits from public insurance funds (Hrubala 2015).

As a result of the fact that parts of today's Slovakia were under Ottoman rule in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Turkic word *baksheesh* was commonly used in Slovakia at least until the 1920s to denote such practices as tipping a waiter (Makarová 2005). It was also used to denote a small bribe paid to someone in authority. (Indeed, it is used in that sense in many other countries to this day, see entry on *baksheesh*, 2.7 in this volume). Since the 1980s, Slovak terms have come to dominate and for 20 or 30 years *baksheesh* ceased to be used. Recently, it has begun to be used again, but only in the context of travel on holiday to North Africa or the Middle East.

It is telling that the standard dictionary of the Slovak language, published in 1987, included only one of the three words discussed here – *pozornosť*. Among other meanings, the dictionary included the informal meaning of 'an object (*vec*) given to somebody to show affiliation, thankfulness' (Doruľa et al. 1987: 327). The 1987 edition of the dictionary (which included all the words judged most likely to be used at that time by high-school graduates) contained no entry for either *ďakovné* or *všimné*. This suggests either that these terms were morally ambiguous, and/or that they were not frequently used. The 2003 edition of the same dictionary (which listed the 60,000 words most frequently used at that time in everyday speech) defined the term *všimné* as a jocular way of referring to a small bribe, while *ďakovné* received no mention.

Today, *ďakovné* is still used relatively rarely. It seems to have an archaic connotation. Indeed, linguistically similar terms can be found in a dictionary published in 1825 (*Lexicon Slavicum* 1825). By contrast, both *pozornosť* and *všimné* are commonly used, normally in the context

of the spread of informal practices and corruption in the Slovak public services.

*Všimné* can also be found today in the popular online dictionary, Slovník Online. There it is defined as a clear case of a bribe but is also likened to tipping, a relatively small amount of money given for services rendered. Because tipping is not seen as reprehensible, the moral meaning of *všimné* remains ambivalent: unacceptable when associated with bribery but acceptable when associated with tipping.

The same ambivalence can be found in the use of *pozornosť*, loosely defined as ‘appreciation of someone’s attention in official relations’ or – in a simpler sense, ‘a present given without expectation of recompense’ or ‘something given as an expression of gratitude’ (Slovník Online). Where informal practices are concerned, ‘official relations’ might include public services such as health care, education or registering official documents. As measured by the Global Corruption Barometer 2013, the frequency with which such practices are carried out in Slovakia is similar to those in the Czech Republic and Italy as well as many countries around the world.

The relatively low approval ratings enjoyed by Slovakia’s public services appear to confirm the negative impact of practices such as *pozornosť*. Slovakia’s ratings lag behind those of many other developed countries. A study conducted over the period 1995–2009 compared the performance of nine public services in 28 developed countries. Comparing outcomes (‘what is achieved?’) and financial efficiency (‘at what price?’), the study found that Slovakia scored on the low side as regards public administration, health care, housing, economic affairs and infrastructure. Similarly low scores were reported in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia. In line with their relatively low performance, public confidence in the public sector in the Central European countries was also found to be below average (Jonker 2012: 17).

In Slovak media mini-surveys, one can find questions related specifically to the practice of *všimné* (see, for example, the daily newspaper *SME* during the 2014 presidential election campaign). The fact that this term was selected for inclusion in the questionnaires, and in the possible responses that were offered, indicated the moral ambiguity of the term. When asked whether they had ever offered a *všimné*, four presidential candidates replied ‘No’, while three replied ‘Yes’ with reference to giving *všimné* to a doctor or physician. However, even some of those who responded in the negative admitted to having given some presents (such as a box of chocolates) to a doctor after they or their family had received medical treatment. One presidential candidate considered *všimné* to be a warm ‘thank you’ for health care services. In other words, there was no

consensus among the candidates over the reading of *všimné* or its positive or negative connotations (SME.sk 2014).

This casts doubt on the impartiality of Slovakia's publicly-funded health care. Some physicians claim to have refused all presents from patients – though giving such gifts is common practice in Slovakia – while others see no problem in accepting small gifts. It is telling that opinion poll data reveal that health care is generally seen as Slovakia's most corrupt sector (Transparency International Slovensko 2014a). In some hospitals, informal norms of *všimné* apply, though the word is not officially used. For example, a payment of up to 20 Euros may be seen as an acceptable way to express gratitude for good care, with higher fees being acceptable for special privileges such as choosing which surgeon will carry out one's operation (Krempaský and Vražda 2012).

Some of these morally ambiguous practices are increasingly contested. For example, when an online discussion was initiated in 2015 on the web portal *modrykonik.sk* by young mothers who had paid *všimné*, *pozornosť* or *dakovné* when giving birth, this was picked up on and reported on the agenda-setting portal SME. This was not just an acknowledgement of the importance of the issue, but also a contestation of the legal status of this social norm, and an investigation was launched by the Special Prosecutor's Office (Burčík 2015; Gécziová 2015). The moral ambivalence of the issue was clearly reflected both in media reports and in online discussions, where journalists and bloggers drew attention to the ambiguity of the words *dakovné*, *pozornosť* and *všimné* by putting them in quotation marks.

Another focus of public discussion was the way in which the word *pozornosť* can cover illegal non-monetary privileges or rewards that may amount to bribery, such as membership of an exclusive club, privileged service at an airport, or a state award. *Pozornosť* was also used in a report on a corrupt Chinese general, who preferred to receive gold rather than a monetary bribe, leading to the headline, 'Mercedes full of gold as *pozornosť*' (Sladkovská 2014).

Because of their elusive nature, the practices of personalisation implied by the use of *dakovné*, *pozornosť* and *všimné* remain under-researched. On the one hand, they may imply only an enhanced quality of services that are in themselves legitimate. On the other hand, the personalisation of state services is generally viewed by the state as corruption. As long as one of the parties is willing to cooperate with the police, this type of minor crime is easy to prosecute; it also makes for popular newspaper reporting. But, while hundreds of minor or relatively minor corruption cases come before the Slovak courts every

year, far fewer cases of large-scale corruption do so (Transparency International Slovensko 2014b). Petty corruption also provides moral cover for more serious crimes by top politicians or influential businesspeople.

Morally and practically, much depends on whether gifts are voluntary, expected or even extorted, and whether they are presented before or after a service, such as a medical operation. However, all cases of *ďakovné*, *pozornosť* and *všimné* seem to hinge on the need to personalise a relationship in order to secure preferential treatment. This suggests defects in the functioning of impersonal institutions, which in turn justifies personalisation to some extent. On the other hand, getting preferential treatment at the expense of others will always be morally dubious. In early 2015, the Slovak government abolished fast-track access to doctors on the grounds that it was prejudicial to the poor and to those who were prepared to wait patiently for treatment. Interviewed on television Dr Peter Lipták, a physician, admitted having received thousands of gifts from patients, including flowers and small amounts of money. He strongly denied that either could be considered a bribe. At the same time, he claimed that he needed these voluntary gifts in order to finance his medical practice (Turanský 2015). The case was widely discussed in the media and was investigated by the police. In the end, Lipták was not charged with either corruption or tax evasion. But his story illustrates how the informal practices examined here are evolving: they are being publicly discussed in the media, investigated and transformed into new legal and social norms that will help to transform such practices in the future.

## 2.12 ***Biombo*** (Costa Rica)

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*'Biombo medico'*, more commonly referred to as *'biombo'*, is a term for a Japanese-style bamboo curtain (Figure 2.12.1), but in the Costa Rican context it is used to refer to an illegal payment made to a medical professional in exchange for providing preferential treatment to a patient or a patient's family within the state-funded health care system. According to an official report on the Costa Rican health care sector finance, patients have increasingly used *biombos medicos* as a response





**Figure 2.12.1** Although *biombo* in Costa Rica is used to mean a small bribe, usually paid to a medical professional, in the rest of Latin America (and the world) it is a Japanese-style folding screen used as a room divider.

Source: <https://flickr.com/photos/linkogecko/13609293284>. © David Cabrera, 2011. Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

to longer waiting times for consultations or treatments. The payments enable them to leapfrog waiting lists for surgery, to see specialists and to receive diagnostic tests and treatments usually reserved for emergencies. The report defines *biombos* as ‘illicit agreements between doctors and patients, to overcome administrative barriers and to access certain benefits and to solve the recurrent problem of the shortage of medical supplies’. The report argues that the practice ‘promotes corruption of the [health care] system in general and places the neediest people at a clear disadvantage’ (Organización Panamericana de la Salud 2003: 34).

While the practice of securing preferential treatment from health care providers is common not only in Costa Rica, and similar practices are to be expected in other countries with similar health care systems, the use of the term *biombo* appears to be limited to Costa Rica. This can be explained by the near universal state-owned and run health care system that exists in Costa Rica, whereas in other Latin American Countries (or

Central America) there are factors that mitigate the need to engage in *biombo*-type exchanges.

Although no formal method is used to measure the extent of the use of *biombos* by medical personnel, by 2008 it was believed to have become a sufficiently significant issue for the *Código de Moral Médica* (Medical Moral Code) to be modified to specifically prohibit the practice. As a deterrent, the state introduced penalties, which ranged from a verbal warning to the suspension of a medical licence (Nuevo Código Moral Médica 2008).

Since the changes in the Medical Moral Code in 2008, the practice has, perhaps, become less common, but it remains virtually impossible to measure. It is a hidden practice, does not involve large amounts of money, there is an immediate benefit in return for the payment and it is viewed by most people as a normal cost of doing business, rather than being considered a form of corruption. Consequently, the payment of *biombos* does not register on any of the government's illicit income measurement mechanisms, nor does it merit the attention of Costa Rica's investigative journalists who have previously been able to expose major corruption scandals by tracking the spending habits of relevant government officials. The prohibition of *biombos* might also have changed the nature of the practice as it necessarily became more sophisticated. Currently, as an increasing number of doctors practise in both the private and state health care sector, they enjoy an increased level of control; patients might be obliged to pay for several private consultations and tests at a private clinic before they can undergo a major procedure at a public hospital.

Interestingly, the openness of access to the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court may have helped limit the practice. The Constitutional Chamber provides two deterrents: first, individual patients who have to endure long waiting times for procedures, specialist visits or access to medication can petition the court (without hiring a lawyer) in order to pursue a quick, low-cost, personal resolution. In this context, there is no need to pay a *biombo* to move up the waiting list; instead they file a free, quick *amparo* (protection) claim with the Constitutional Chamber. This litigated approach may have the potential to produce similar results and ethical problems as the *biombo*. Although litigation is completely legal, it has been argued that it produces comparable unethical medical outcomes (Wilson 2014).

A second deterrent diminishing the incidence of *biombos* is related to the first: the low-cost access to timely judicial resolutions. If medical personnel demand a *biombo* from a patient, the patient can

denounce the doctor to the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court. In this instance the court can level significant penalties against guilty medical practitioners, which increases the inherent risk of demanding a *biombo*.

### 2.13 **Mordida** (Mexico)

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In Mexico, *mordida* is a widely used ‘euphemism’ for a petty bribe (Morris 2003). The word literally translates as ‘bite’ from Spanish. While the origins of this euphemistic use of the word are contested, probably the most recurrent explanation given by Mexicans is that it alludes to police officers and other public officials being seen as dogs, on the lookout for an innocent citizen to ‘have a bite of’. It is significant that several studies (Del Castillo and Guerrero 2003; Bailey and Paras 2006: 64) have found that *mordida* is the one practice consistently identified by Mexicans as linked directly to corruption, whereas average citizens appear to struggle with articulating the meaning of corruption in a more abstract sense (Del Castillo and Guerrero 2003).

*Mordida* can be distinguished from another term that also translates into English as ‘bribe’ – *soborno*. Some authors have pointed out a subtle difference in meaning between the two terms (e.g. Coronado 2008). While *soborno* is presumed to be a serious crime (involving large amounts of money), *mordida* refers to commonly occurring, petty transactions associated with the ‘folklore of corruption’ pervading Mexican popular culture (Covarrubias González 2003). In this latter connotation, *mordida* may be understood as one of many practices from the toolkit of informal strategies that Mexicans often employ in order to deal with a state that is perceived as undemocratic, unfair and even abusive. Other examples of such informal strategies used in Mexico include the use of personal connections to insiders or influential people in order to obtain preferential treatment (*palancas*), resorting to persons who are paid to do others’ administrative transactions, frequently through use of personal contacts inside the organisation (*coyotes*), and giving gifts (*regalos*) (Coronado 2008).

There are several reasons why the *mordida* is a pervasive practice in Mexico, preconditioned by inconsistent rules, inconsistent enforcement of the rules, rules exploitation and extortive rule-making. First, the *mordida* is widely viewed as necessary because of the perception that Mexican laws and regulations are so difficult to comply with that

people feel they are left with no choice but to find an arrangement through extra-legal means (Morris 2003). Furthermore, excessive red tape is often exploited by unscrupulous bureaucrats, who arbitrarily come up with endless requirements to complete an administrative process. For instance, it is not uncommon for people seeking everyday public services (renewing a driving licence, obtaining a birth certificate, regularising a land title, applying for construction permits, etc.) to be asked to present documents never mentioned before or listed anywhere, or to be sent through an endless succession of queues. Alternatively, as Coronado (2008) narrates, the public official can also play upon the possibility that the applicant's documents may 'get lost' or the procedure could be 'delayed'; it is not uncommon to ask for a 'tip' after the paperwork has been submitted, 'whatever you would like to give for the judge's cooperation' (*'ahí lo que quiera dar para la cooperación del juez'*). The overall effect of these patterns is to create a sense of unpredictability when citizens engage with state officials. Not surprisingly, in some cases citizens resort to a *mordida* as a preemptive action just to avoid time-consuming procedures.

Besides being linked to excessive and costly bureaucratic procedures, the *mordida* can also take the form of an outright coercive act. Perhaps the most common example of this involves law enforcement officers threatening severe consequences from (sometimes even minor) traffic violations or other misdemeanours. The *mordida* is, then, often offered out of fear of the consequences that would befall the individual should he or she fail to 'appease' the officer. In such cases, the act of bribing arises from the perception that law enforcement officers can and do commit abuses of power with impunity. As LaRose and Maddan (2009) recount, in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 the victors pursued strategies to centralise power, which led to the development of a police force with great autonomy and little oversight. Since then, the commonly held view is that the police remains a tool of political oppression rather than a law enforcement institution (LaRose and Maddan 2009; Alvarado Mendoza and Silva Forné 2011). Such beliefs themselves are a factor contributing to the willingness of citizens to settle legal issues informally through a *mordida* rather than having to face the criminal justice process. Therefore, as Del Castillo and Guerrero suggest, the bribe is often rationalised by citizens as a means to buy security (Del Castillo and Guerrero 2003).

There are specific rituals associated with giving a *mordida*, which most Mexicans are familiar with, and which determine how to negotiate the process of bribing. For instance, the preamble to negotiating the

*mordida* comes at the point where the public officer has made it clear that the citizen's situation is serious and it often involves phrases such as 'Is there no other way?' ('¿no habrá otra manera?') or 'How can we reach an arrangement?' ('¿cómo nos podemos arreglar?'). At which point usually an amount is mentioned.

Not infrequently, some negotiation is involved before agreeing on the price of the bribe. This is an interesting moment because it often opens up an informal space between the citizen and the public officer. Thus, the process of negotiating the amount of the bribe can involve both parties appealing to each other on the basis of the hardships each must face in their personal lives. For example, criminologist and blogger Christina Johns has written about a strategy she and her husband devised to lower the amount of the *mordida* while travelling around Mexico: she would pretend not to speak Spanish and when her husband 'translated for her' what the police officer wanted she would hysterically start screaming 'No, no, no, no!!' In her analysis, this strategy consistently worked because police officers would empathise with the husband, who apparently had to contend with a difficult 'foreign woman' (*gringa*) (Johns 2014).

In spite of the fact that 'paying the way' is known to be widespread, and the amounts are often trivial, the language used during an actual



**Figure 2.13.1** Policemen.

Source: <https://flickr.com/photos/aztlan/489061694/>. © Alan Zabicky, 2007. Licensed under CC BY 2.0.

transaction should be careful and respectful: one does not make any direct reference to the act of bribing or call it by its name. There is a mutual understanding that the transaction needs to be discreet. For example, when dealing with a traffic officer, the money is often hidden inside the traffic rulebook before it is handed over.

The amounts paid for *mordidas* seem to be related either to the value of the prospective fine, in the case of traffic violations and other misdemeanours, or to whether the service can be obtained elsewhere, in the case of bureaucratic processes. Furthermore, *mordidas* to evade sanctions typically involve higher amounts of money than those intended to speed up a process. According to data reported by Transparencia Mexicana (2011), the average cost of a *mordida* in 2010 was 165 MXN (about 12 USD). Transparencia Mexicana also found that in the same year, more than 32 billion Mexican Pesos' (2 billion USD) worth of *mordidas* were paid in order to access or expedite public service provision.

At the national level, there are several measures that quantify the prevalence of the *mordida* in Mexico. *The Índice Nacional de Corrupción y Buen Gobierno* published by Transparencia Mexicana ranks 35 public services according to the frequency with which households have reported having used a *mordida* to obtain a service (Transparencia Mexicana 2011). Another available data source is the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP): it conducts surveys every other year, including questions on the prevalence of *mordidas* given to police officers and other public officers. The results are published in a searchable database (LAPOP 2014).

The *mordida* probably represents the most palpable incarnation of a corrupt political system for average Mexicans who, partly due to a sense of vulnerability *vis-à-vis* public authorities and partly due to a lack of trust in the formal legal mechanisms of the state, widely resort to this practice in order to obtain solutions to their everyday predicaments.

## 2.14 **Coima** (Argentina)

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*Coima* is a colloquial term for a bribe. It is commonly used in the Southern Cone – the southernmost areas of Latin America – in particular in Argentina. It is defined as ‘gratification [or] gift with which to bribe an employer or an influential person’ or simply as ‘bribe or [the act of] bribery’ (Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy (RSA)

1925–2016). Also used, though to a lesser extent, are the verb *coimear* (to give or receive a bribe) and the nouns *coimera* (fondness for bribes) and *coimero* (one who gives a bribe). ‘Backhander’ may be *coima*’s closest English translation, given its underlying informal, illicit and immoral nature.

The Spanish word *coima* originally denoted a concubine or prostitute, and probably had its roots in the Arabic word for girl, *quwaima*. The word *coima* arrived in South America under Spanish colonial rule when it was used to describe a rake-off – a share or small fine paid to the keepers of often illicit and clandestine gaming houses (Collins Spanish–English Dictionary; Dictionary of the RSA 1925–2016). Since colonial times *coima* has been used to denote the fastest and indeed sometimes the only way to ‘get things done’ (Soca 2012), often therefore fulfilling a practical and necessary function in day-to-day life. The practice of *coima* in the form of payments to low- and medium-ranking officials follows established informal rules and tariffs, which are part of what Calcagno (2000) dubbed ‘the folklore of public administration’.

There has been a steady increase in the recorded use of the term *coima* over the last century both in and increasingly beyond the borders of Argentina to neighbouring countries such as Uruguay, Ecuador, Peru and, eventually, to all of Latin America (Collins Spanish-English Dictionary). Meanwhile, other countries developed their own terms, such as ‘bite’, *mordida* in Mexico, ‘tie’, *corbata* in Colombia, ‘bottle’, *botella* in Cuba and ‘rattle’, *matraca* in Venezuela.

What might today be labelled ‘state capture’ by a bloated and opaque public administration was observed by the journalist Giuseppe Bevione in Argentina in 1910. He wrote then of *coima* as ‘The only way to get something out of the bureaucracy is by offering a tip. ... It opens all doors’ (Bevione 1910). A century later, in 2012, 6 out of 10 Argentines interviewed said they had been asked or forced to pay *coima* at least once in the previous year in an administrative or institutional setting (Lodola and Seligson 2013). According to Ruth Sautu and colleagues (2004: 93) *coima* occurs only occasionally, usually in order to obtain or accelerate a one-off administrative transaction, such as the issue of a passport, or to avoid a fine for a minor legal transgression. Again according to Sautu, citing Argentine opinion surveys and interviews, one of the most typical instances of *coima* involves bribing a police officer over a traffic violation (Sautu et al. 2002).

The size of *coima* is significant. Calcagno (2000) distinguishes between ‘petty corruption’, *corrupción minorista* and ‘large-scale

corruption', *corrupción mayorista*. *Coima* used to be distinguished from larger bribes (known as *comisión*, *retorno* or *soborno*) in that *coima* referred to an occasional, 'petty' transaction involving a 'reasonable' payment. Today, however, *coima* is increasingly used to describe any type of bribe, regardless of its frequency or size. For while the act or practice of *coima* may remain occasional, those affected by it are often part of a stable social fabric that upholds a consistent and habitual pattern of corrupt behaviour (Sautu 2004). Over time, *coima* has come to play a crucial role in the working patterns of a greater regulatory system of social relations: while the traffic offender resorts to *coima* to pay an occasional bribe to a police officer and thereby avoid a formal penalty, the officer on the receiving end engages in *coima* on a regular basis.

As José Sarrionandia pointed out, the embeddedness of *coima* in social relations extends far beyond state politics; the term bribe (*soborno*) only approximates to the true meaning of *coima* since it does not capture the common acceptance of and even enthusiasm for *coima* among society at large. Sarrionandia issued the following warning to any traveller to Argentina (1964: 4):

You may call it white-collar gangsterism or South American opportunism, but the reality is that *coima* is already furtively insinuated at customs. It can be seen in the inquisitive look of the customs officer who is about slowly to search the visitor's luggage ... The difficulties and inconveniences are summed up when a covetous offer presents itself. In two gambits [as in a poker game], an arrangement can be reached for everything.

For Sarrionandia, *coima* is rooted in anti-social attitudes generated by deep-seated distrust and mutual suspicion and enforced by complexly regulated yet inefficient public services in a precarious environment of economic shortage. In the context of asymmetrical relations of political, economic, social or institutional power that generate benefits for some but disadvantages for others, informal unwritten rules and punitive mechanisms uphold and perpetuate *coima* as an informal practice (Sautu 2004). This is reflected in the Argentine expression *pasar la factura* (pass the bill on), which refers to the act of excluding those who refuse to pay a bribe from official administrative processes, such as issuing a passport. Another sanctioning mechanism is the deliberate delay of administrative procedures by public officials, or the threat to enforce the letter of the law by, for example, health and safety inspectors.



*Coima* has a coercive element because it is rooted in social bonds and societal relations, requiring an act of exchange between the giver and the recipient that resembles the act of exchanging gifts, favours and other forms of reciprocity while ultimately helping to form and strengthen social ties based on a sense of obligation. In the words of the Argentine writer Roberto Arlt, ‘We live in the *coima* empire, the realm of trickery, the land of villainy ... *Coima* is everywhere: invisible, certain, effective, precise. ... And those who do not engage in *coima*, tolerate *coima*’ (Arlt 1929). Nearly a century later, Eric Calcagno wrote that Argentines had become indifferent towards the incidence of *coima* at almost any level, and that, as a result, corruption of almost any size had ceased to shock them. *Coima* and corruption was a ‘settled and accepted custom’, as a result of which the country had entered an ‘advanced stage of decomposition’ where *coima* had become an institutionalised mode of social regulation and part of a larger ‘system’ (Calcagno 2000).

The practice of *coima* has also been captured by Argentine cartoonist Quino, creator of the comic series *Mafalda*. Quino said of his character Manolito that ‘out of his interest in money and his little preoccupation with culture, [he] has become the prototype of the [Argentine] political class’ (*La Razón* 2015).

## 2.15 **Chorizo** (Latin America)

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The literal translation of *chorizo* is sausage, but the term is frequently used in Costa Rica and across Central America to refer to a wide range of corrupt acts. Such acts include those in which government officials accept personal financial gain from private factions seeking contracts from public institutions. In general the term is used when two or more actors participate in an illegal transaction involving considerable sums of money. These types of transactions are generally associated with large infrastructure projects or public procurement purchases. In some Latin American countries *chorizo* is implied by alternative terms such as *trinquete*, *trance*, *movida* or *chanchullo* when referring to corrupt public/private transactions.

*Chorizo*, as used in Costa Rica and Central America, covers a wide range of corrupt acts, including bribery and conflict of interest crimes.

It can be used to refer to acts that appear on the surface to comply with all requirements of the legal framework, and to be completely legal, but actually confer an illegal advantage. For example, an international company hired José Maria Figueres, a former President of Costa Rica, as a consultant shortly after he left office. He was hired to facilitate the company's introduction into the Costa Rican market and was paid a fee of approximately 1 million US dollars. There was nothing illegal in his actions as, given that he was no longer President, he could charge whatever he liked for his services and could not be prosecuted for doing so. However, once the story appeared in the press, it became a major scandal and he was forced to resign his position as director of a multilateral organisation. His was an act of *chorizo*.

*Chorizo* is a frequently used expression in conversation and political discourse, but less commonly found in written Spanish. It is however sometimes used in the media, especially in the front-page headlines of popular newspapers. For example, the headline, 'The Real Culprits of *Chorizo* of the Border Trail *La Trocha* are Exposed', referred to a major new road running along the border between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, initiated under an emergency executive decree. Because of its emergency status, the project was allowed to proceed via fast track procurement, without the usual accountability agencies' oversight, which resulted in massively inflated prices. Another headline, '13 Million Colones *Chorizo* in 19 Hospitals', detailed the purchase of 13 million colones of non-existent medical supplies for state-owned hospitals.

There are two possible origins of the word *chorizo* for corrupt acts. The first explanation points to a nineteenth-century Spanish use of the term to describe corrupt politicians ('*chorizos*'). In recent times, this meaning has been extended to refer to any kind of thief and enjoyed popular usage in Spain, but in Latin America it retains only its original meaning. The etymology of *chorizo*, according to this version, is that it came to Spanish from the Caló language, which was influential in the early development of the Spanish language. In Caló, the word for 'thief' was *chori*, hence *chorizo*.

A second explanation for the origin of the word *chorizo* is its association with the sausage-making process: meat is forced into a membrane, and periodically the membrane is tied with a cord, forming a long chain of sausages. In this instance each tie (*un amarre*) symbolically represents the closing of an irregular transaction. The sausage links signify the interconnectedness of the separate events. Corruption is possible only if a number of people are involved in a business and each of them keeps a part of the proceeds. Participants may include the main authority,

medium-level officials, and the secretary, the driver and others who are all linked to other private individuals outside the business.

While it is very difficult to measure the extent of the practice, the large data collection and analysis by the anti-corruption unit at *La Nación*, the country's leading daily newspaper, formed the basis of investigations into incidences of *chorizo*. Investigators examined the official salary and assets data of public officials and looked for anomalies in the lifestyles of the same public officials. One of these investigations uncovered the fact that a mid-level employee at the state insurance agency (CCSS), the agency that covers the massive state-owned health care system, was clearly living beyond his means. As the investigation progressed, the official's ties to companies winning lucrative contracts with his agency and his ties to a former President (Rafael Angel Calderon) revealed a substantial corruption scheme involving public servants, current and former politicians, a medical equipment importer, and a major medical equipment manufacturer in Finland. As a result of the investigation, which linked the parties together, the former President and many of his associates were imprisoned and fined (Wilson 2014).

## 2.16 ***Aploksne, aploksnīte*** (Latvia)

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The literal meaning of the Latvian word *aploksne* is 'envelope' – a common word whose primary meaning is similar in every language. It might therefore seem surprising that, during the years 2005 to 2014, less than half of all mentions of 'envelope' in the Latvian print media referred to a flat paper container for letters or documents. Equally often, the word was used to denote the all-too-common problems of tax-avoidance and lack of employment contracts in the context of labour relations (e.g. 'wages in an envelope', *aplokšņu algas*). In a fifth of all the articles, the meaning shifted again, this time to refer to corrupt practices in the health service – unofficial, sometimes illegal, cash payments to doctors, hospital nurses and other health care providers. A similar concept exists in countries bordering Latvia – for example, unofficial payments to doctors in Russia and Lithuania are also associated with the idea of an envelope (*konvert*, in Russian, *vokelis* in Lithuanian) – and in the Greek language (*fakelaki* – 'little envelope').

Unofficial payments in the health care sector are referred to as 'envelopes' even in cases when the physical object itself – an envelope – is not present. There is, nonetheless, a common expectation in Latvia that banknotes will be placed in an envelope before they are handed over.

This holds true whether what is being made is a gift or bonus payment, or whether cash is being shared outside the context of regular daily transactions. Banknotes do not, therefore, change hands directly, but through an intermediary in the form of an envelope. Such a practice is considered to be both more convenient (banknotes are less likely to get lost) and more polite.

An envelope as a container does not of course discriminate between a legitimate birthday gift and a bribe. Over the years, the meaning of the term ‘envelope’ has undergone a semantic change in the Latvian language. Today, it has the secondary meaning of ‘illegal’ and/or ‘unofficial’ payment. This secondary meaning refers not to the envelope itself as a physical object, but rather to its contents and the purpose those contents are intended to serve (e.g. reducing the waiting time for a medical examination or encouraging a more benevolent attitude from medical personnel). A content-analysis of media articles from 2005 to 2014 finds that the term ‘envelope’ may refer not only to bribery in the health care system (though health care is clearly dominant) but also to bribes paid to judges, journalists, local officials and members of parliament.

Sometimes the term is used in its diminutive form ‘tiny envelope’ – *aploksnīte*. In Latvian, diminutive forms often convey a sense of endearment, and do not necessarily refer merely to the smallness of an object. There might therefore be an even larger amount of cash in an *aploksnīte* than in an *aploksne*. However, the choice of the word *aploksnīte* in the context of unofficial payments is usually sarcastic: it may serve as a means of creating ironic distance and of protecting oneself against the danger of being seen to be engaged in illegal activity. In Latvian, the word for a bribe also has a diminutive form (‘bribe’, ‘little bribe’ – *kukulis*, *kukulītis*).

Unofficial payments in the health care system are part of the legacy of the Soviet era. In Latvia, just as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, all health workers were state employees, and health care was a highly centralised public service, free at the point of delivery. Physicians’ official salaries were deliberately kept low – below the average wage of a factory worker, for example (Barr 1996). The quality of the care provided was notoriously low. This explains why patients were willing to pay extra to physicians (Barr and Field 1996). Over time, unofficial payments from patients in the form of cash or gifts became the rule and an unofficial system of fees-for-services became common. A survey conducted among physicians in Estonia indicated that, during the Soviet era, unofficial payments by patients for services that were supposedly free were not only the norm, but were not seen as a source of embarrassment (Barr 1996).

With the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the newly independent states, Latvia included, were forced to reform their health care systems. This was not an easy task, given the shortage of public resources and the prevalence of the Soviet tradition of unofficial payments to physicians. The World Bank and other institutions identified informal, unreported and sometimes illegal payments to doctors as characteristic of health care systems in both Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Lewis 2000). The problem was aggravated by another legacy of the Soviet era: generally lenient public attitudes towards petty corruption. Such attitudes have persisted into the present. In 2015, for example, approximately one-third of Latvians questioned said that they considered corruption to be justified in cases where there was no other way of solving a legitimate problem. A similar proportion of Latvians said they did not object to someone defrauding the state, given that the state did not provide any service of value (KNAB 2015). In 2013, 72 per cent of Latvians said they considered it acceptable to make a gift to a civil servant in order to get a needed service from public administration. Latvia scored more highly in this respect than any other European Union (EU) member-state (European Commission 2014).

The general confusion associated with changes in values and institutions that followed the break-up of the USSR makes an ‘envelope’ a particularly fitting symbol of the times. The amount of cash placed in an envelope is not immediately apparent; neither is the nature of the transaction. Is it a gift? Is it an undisclosed payment? A tip? A bribe? If it is a bribe, has it been extorted? The term *aploksne* covers all such eventualities, thereby conceptually placing each individual case in a grey zone of semi-legality and semi-legitimacy. When asked in 2002 whether an envelope was a form of corruption, almost one-half of Latvians surveyed denied that this was the case (CIET International 2002).

In the early 2000s, however, informal payments to doctors did begin to be generally perceived in Latvia as a serious problem. Media coverage of *aploksne* peaked in 2007, when a former doctor who had admitted having received envelopes throughout his career was elected as President of Latvia. By then, a consensus had emerged as to what forms of envelopes were unacceptable, and doctors were prohibited from demanding unofficial payments. There still remained a grey zone in cases where no such demand had been made: the so-called ‘gratitude’ or ‘thank-you’ money (Latvian – *pateicība*). Such ‘gratitudes’ were frequently given to doctors or nurses before a service, which cast doubt on their fully voluntary nature. A patient who made no such up-front payment might reasonably

expect to get worse treatment than a patient who had already expressed his or her ‘gratitude’ in the form of an envelope.

Analysis of media usage of the term *aplōksne* indicates a steep decline in recent years. In 2006–7, for example, the term had been found four times more frequently than was the case in 2015. The resultant decline in media attention has been so rapid that it even seems that the term may be on the verge of obsolescence.

Improvements in living standards in general and the health care system in particular have led to a situation where fewer people in Latvia now say that they feel the need to bribe their doctors. The number of respondents who say they expect to pay a bribe to health care workers (3 per cent) is now only slightly above the EU average (2 per cent), and considerably lower than in neighbouring Lithuania (21 per cent) (Special Eurobarometer 397 2014). Recent public-awareness raising campaigns have spread the message that all kinds of unofficial payments to public sector health care workers are unacceptable, even when they are intended as an expression of gratitude for a job well done.

It might therefore not be surprising if in the not-so-distant future there is again just one meaning for *aplōksne* – the Latvian term for an envelope.

## 2.17 **Fakelaki** (Greece)

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*Fakelaki* (literally ‘little envelope’; plural *fakelakia*) is the Greek term for a small envelope of money that is used to secure various services such as medical treatment in hospitals or at doctors’ surgeries, legal documents, preferential treatment in public services (local council, electricity company, police) or a driving licence. *Fakelakia* may also be given as gifts on the occasion of marriages, baptisms or birthdays.

The word *fakelaki* is often used in popular discourse to imply corruption, bribery or obtaining something by illegitimate means. That said, the *fakelaki* is an accepted part of everyday life in many parts of Greece, being so commonplace that local people do not perceive it as corruption in the Western sense. This is partially to do with the ambiguous nature of the *fakelaki* as something between ‘bribe’ and ‘gift’ in local perception. The multivalent contexts in which *fakelakia* are given, and the conflation of the term with gift-giving, has clouded the explicit morality of the exchange.

*Fakelaki* has become infamous since the outbreak of the Greek economic crisis of 2009. As of October 2015, this had resulted in three bail-out packages amounting to €295 billion administered by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (known as ‘the Troika’) in return for economic reform and restructuring by Greece (Knight 2015a). International media have repeatedly highlighted the fact that *fakelakia*, *meson* (use of contacts), patronage and clientelism (Campbell 1964) in economic transactions are long-standing examples of the ‘bad economic practice’ that provoked Greece’s economic crisis. The Troika set numerous policy goals to be implemented in Greece and aimed at eradicating the ‘*fakelaki* culture’ and promoting what bureaucrats in Brussels and Berlin term ‘economic modernisation’.

*Fakelaki* is also connected to a work culture that perceives the various documents issued by authorities as ‘papers’ that you need to pay a price for in order ‘to buy’. Anthropologists working in Greece have found that patients have been denied emergency medical treatment, building permits have been denied and university degrees withheld due to the inability to pay the amount required in a *fakelaki*. At the other end of the spectrum, it has been noted that politicians, civil servants and building companies have obtained office and/or paperwork through significant *fakelaki* payments that have been made ‘under the table’. Some particular cases of *fakelaki* payments have become infamous after being caught on camera as subjects of investigative journalism. Transparency International (TI), the global non-governmental organisation that campaigns against corruption, reports that individuals and companies can bribe inspectors and evade taxes through the payment of *fakelakia*. In 2012, TI asserted that the average bribe paid to a public servant in Greece amounted to €1,228 (US\$1,372). TI puts the average ‘cost’ of a driving licence in Greece as between €100 and €300, while getting surgery in a hospital can cost anywhere between €100 and €30,000 ([www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)).

The practice of giving *fakelakia* is linked to local conceptions of people in positions of power ‘eating money’. In 2010, Greece’s then deputy Prime Minister Theodoros Pangalos announced to reporters that ‘together we ate it’ (*mazi ta fagame*). He was referring to the €310 billion public debt Greece had built up during 30 years of economic prosperity since its accession to the European Economic Community in 1981. With this slogan, Pangalos was trying to sell a notion of collective responsibility for the debt. He asserted that, since the 1980s, Greeks had ‘got fat’ from government handouts, an almost unregulated banking sector that facilitated handsome personal loans, a stock-market boom, lucrative European Union-endorsed business schemes and the ‘norm’ of corporate

kickbacks. It was common knowledge that people in positions of authority ‘ate money’ (*fagane lefta*), and the culture of the little white envelope stuffed with money was part of everyday life.

In a comparative context, in West Africa fear of hunger and fear of the insatiable appetites of the political business elites are described as ‘twin demons’ (Argenti 2007:110). As Jean-François Bayart (1989) points out, in Cameroon, myriad subtleties of the trope of eating encompass every form of political life, especially the accumulation of wealth by means of crime, graft and corruption. Both Bayart and Nicolas Argenti explore local idioms that construe the belly as the source of power. In Greece, the *fakelaki* is inextricably linked to money-eating and the insatiable appetites of people in power to ‘get fat’ on the money of the general population (Knight 2015b). Even so, the provision of *fakelakia* in return for services and in contexts of gifting continues to occupy an important and morally ambiguous place in local imaginings of socio-economic transactions.

## 2.18 **Cash for access** (UK)

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In the United Kingdom, ‘cash for access’ denotes the exchange of money between two or more parties, with the donor seeking to gain access to an office holder and the recipient facilitating access in exchange for money. The term is most frequently associated with cash given to Members of Parliament (MPs), parliamentary aides or ministers who agree to use their connections with office holders to secure meetings in exchange for money. The term cash for access emerged in the wake of the 1998 ‘Lobbygate’ scandal involving Tony Blair’s political advisor, Derek Draper. While the term appears to have been created shortly after the scandal, with its first use occurring in 1998, it has now entered common political parlance to describe the exchange of money for access to office holders. Despite its contemporary origins in the British media, cash for access is closely associated with the linguistic term ‘open door’ (OED 2015). Often individuals embroiled in cash for access cases use terminology that suggests a particular sum of money can ‘open the door’ or ‘open doors’ to the office holder in question (BBC 2010).

Cash for access is part of a wider set of informal practices known as ‘cash for favour scenarios’. Cash for favour scenarios are defined by the clandestine exchange of money for some type of privilege (Rowbottom 2010: 80). Two notorious examples that are also well established in the



British political and journalistic lexicon are ‘cash for questions’ and ‘cash for honours’. The term ‘cash for questions’ was coined in the wake of a 1994 political scandal, in which two British MPs were accused of taking money from lobbyists to ask questions in parliament that would benefit the lobbyists’ cause. Cash for honours refers to the awarding of life peerages to those who donated or loaned large sums of money to the governing political party, and is particularly associated with a political scandal of the same name under Tony Blair’s administration in 2006–7. The main feature that distinguishes cash for access from other cash for favour scenarios is that in cases of the former, financial inducement merely secures access to the office holder and does not guarantee a ‘result’ or ‘benefit’ in return. Mere access to a politician may not directly influence their decision-making. In contrast, other cash for favour scenarios directly influence the actions of the office holder. For example, in the 1994 cash for questions scandal, the money received by the MP Neil Hamilton directly influenced Hamilton’s line of questioning in parliament (Farrell et al. 1998: 83).

‘Cash for access’ is broader in scope than other ‘cash for favour’ practices. The term covers a range of practices – from the corrupt and potentially illegal, to others that are more ethically ambiguous, and widely and openly practised as part of political life. A distinction can be made between cases in which an individual agent personally pockets the money and those where the beneficiary is an institution – typically a political party. All the major UK political parties use fundraising events such as balls and dinners, which often include tickets costing several thousand pounds to be seated on the same table as eminent politicians. For example, the Labour Party was criticised in 2014 for allowing wealthy donors to attend a gala dinner at £15,000 per head without having to publicly register their names. At a similar event held by the Conservative Party in 2015, guests were invited to bid up to tens of thousands of pounds to have dinner or partake in other social activities with various politicians. Such events are often criticised by the media, but this does not appear to affect the practice of them.

Although cash for access is closely associated with the institutional practices of UK politics, similar practices occur in other countries. In China, for example, some cases of *shouhui* can involve the exchange of money for access to office holders. *Shouhui* refers to the practice of office holders receiving unsolicited money in exchange for undertaking a specific action (Kwong 2015: 15). Despite *shouhui* cases often having a cash for access element, the practice is closer to other more illicit cash for favour practices (Navarro 2006: 169). Given that cash for access

requires a certain set of institutional mechanisms to occur, it is perhaps unsurprising that in addition to the UK, its occurrence has been noted in other Westminster political systems such as Australia and Canada (McMenamin 2013: 135; Jabour 2015).

Despite the relatively recent emergence of the term itself, cash for access *as a practice* can be seen as a historically embedded phenomenon within parliamentary life. Historical accounts of individuals able to buy access to office holders stretch back to at least the early twentieth century. For example, Winston Churchill used his parliamentary connections to secure access to senior office holders for Burmah Oil in 1923 (Jones 1991: 164). It is not always parliamentarians who receive the money that is exchanged in cash for access cases – they can involve any individual that has connections to an office holder, who seeks to provide access for personal profit. For example, the 1998 ‘Lobbygate’ case involved the parliamentary aid Derek Draper offering access to ministers to ‘those who could make their case’ (Theaker 2004: 77). Other high-profile cases that have been exposed by the media include the 2010 cash for access scandal involving the Duchess of York; the 2012 cash for access scandal involving MP Peter Cruddas; and the 2015 scandal involving MPs Malcom Rifkind and Jack Straw – both former foreign secretaries.

The perception of cash for access cases has changed dramatically since the early 1990s. A series of high-profile scandals in both the Major and Blair governments has made the general public increasingly critical of ambivalent parliamentary practice (Farrell et al. 1998: 80–94). While the majority of these scandals were not cash for access cases, ambivalent practices in general have become associated with a deviant parliamentary culture rife with ‘sleaze’ (Flinders 2015: 244). Consequently, cash for access has become associated with a wider set of practices that is perceived as degrading British politics and undermining the transparency of political conduct.

One institutional mechanism that may have increased the number of cash for access cases over time is the role of the party system in British politics. Since 1950, only three MPs have entered the House of Commons without any party political affiliation (Flinders and Matthews 2012: 337). Because political parties act as the vehicle into parliament, any decline in grassroots political party membership is likely to affect the ability of parties to remain competitive. Traditionally, political parties have relied on a broad membership base to mobilise and generate donations. As the links between political parties and wider society have fragmented in the post-war era, traditional support in the form of public donations or support from worker organisations has declined, resulting

in a funding gap for political parties (Abbott and Williams 2014). As a consequence, private donors are increasingly filling this funding gap. Often the large sums donated by individual donors or businesses are conditional on access to office holders. In the words of Tony Blair's former Director of Policy Geoff Mulgan: 'It is fairly obvious that if you are a funder you are more likely to have a meeting with advisers, a meeting with ministers, a meeting on occasion with the Prime Minister' (Friedman 2013: 141).

As a consequence of the shift in political party funding, cash for access cases are likely to increase. While the general public is increasingly sceptical of current parliamentary practice, political life in the UK remains relatively free from corruption and cash for access should not always be perceived as corrupt practice. The increased occurrence of cash for access is best understood not as the degradation of politics but rather as a reaction to institutional change (Richards et al. 2014: 21). One mechanism that could be used to reduce the reliance of political parties on private donors is the expansion of the Short Money state funding for political parties. This would allow the state to further regulate political party funding. However, given that the general public opposes state funding for political parties and there remains a reluctance on the part of politicians to extend what are already seen as generous state subsidies, the cash for access dilemma is likely to be perpetuated (Johnston and Pattie 2014: 23).

## 2.19 **Korapsen** (Papua New Guinea)

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Those writing about Papua New Guinea (PNG) sometimes pass off the term *korapsen* as the local equivalent of the English word 'corruption', commonly understood as the 'abuse of power (or public office) for private gain'. For example, an article in the international magazine *Time* conflated the two words and assumed that, '[e]ven the humblest citizens know what *korapsen* is' (Feizkah 2002: 1). What is 'lost in translation' here is the difference between the local knowledge, embodied in this distinctly Papua New Guinean word *korapsen*, and the presumed connotations of the increasingly globalised term 'corruption'. While these homonyms (corruption/*korapsen*) have some points of overlap, for Papua

New Guineans, the local term *korapsen* has taken on a more informal meaning than its English counterpart.

Officially, there is no equivalent for the word corruption in PNG's lingua franca, Tok Pisin. The *Jacaranda Dictionary and Grammar of Melanesian Pidgin* (Mihalic 1983), the most comprehensive guide on the language, does not include an entry on *korapsen*. Nor does the more recent *Papua New Guinea Tok Pisin English Dictionary* (Baing and Volker 2008). In turn, translators have avoided using *korapsen* in literary works. The Tok Pisin version of the Bible, the *Buk Baibel*, does not appear to use the word. For instance, in the English Bible, Isaiah 1:4 reads, 'Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption'. This line is translated into: 'yupela ol manmeri i nogut tru na pasin bilong yu i nogut olgeta' (The Bible Society 1993: 896), where *nogut olgeta* ('completely bad/useless/no good') fills in for the word corruption (John Burton 2009, personal communication). Thus, *korapsen* is quint-essentially an informal word, which is most prevalent in its spoken form, rather than in written pidgin. Nevertheless, the term does sometimes appear in print – particularly at the growing number of anti-corruption events and in Tok Pisin news outlets, such as Radio Australia's Tok Pisin news service and the local PNG paper the *Wantok Niuspepa* – where it is used to describe behaviour and organisations. As an example of the latter, Zimmermann highlights how the *Wantok Niuspepa* translates the National Fraud and Anti-Corruption Squad to 'Nesenel Fraud na Enti Korapsen skwat' (2010: 124).

In analysing results of a household survey conducted with over 1,800 respondents, I have shown that many Papua New Guineans associate *korapsen* with 'harmful activity' (Walton, 2015). Yet, somewhat paradoxically, respondents were less likely to equate it with 'unacceptable' behaviour. Respondents were presented with nine scenarios that depicted a range of different types and scales of possible corruption. They were asked to rate – on a scale of one to four – the degree to which each scenario was a form of *korapsen*, harmful or unacceptable. They were more likely to rate scenarios as totally unacceptable, rather than harmful or as *korapsen* – with the latter two categories highly correlated. This suggests that for many Papua New Guineans *korapsen* can be acceptable, even though they acknowledge that it causes harm.

The ambivalence that some Papua New Guineans hold towards *korapsen* became especially apparent in focus group discussions conducted around the country in 2008 (Walton 2009, 2013, 2015). While many respondents defined the term similarly to modern definitions of corruption (the abuse of power for private gain) others, rather

courageously, spoke about the functionality of *korapsen*. When discussing a scenario depicting a candidate bribing a citizen in return for their vote, many argued that such transactions were necessary due to cultural, social and economic pressures. For some, the candidate was not at fault as long as everyone in the community was given money; they believed that this scenario was unacceptable if money only went to a few. Voters themselves are thus actively engaged in such illicit transactions, often demanding that candidates and representatives distribute state largesse directly to the community rather than through the state.

This response needs to be understood in the context of PNG's communally oriented culture (Larmour 2012). The vast majority of land in PNG is communally held and cultural norms stress the importance of reciprocity for maintaining relationships. These values often trump the rules and laws of the state, particularly where the state is weak and ineffective (Walton 2015). Indeed, respondents in remote areas, particularly women, who are often economically and politically marginalised and more engaged in the informal sector, suggested that they would accept money in exchange for their vote because it was one of the few times they benefitted from the state. This resulted in an ambivalence towards *korapsen*, in that respondents had a sense that it was considered 'wrong', but the benefits it brought meant it was often supported.

*Korapsen* is also tied to more informal activities that do not involve people in positions of power (an important prerequisite for modern definitions of corruption, see Walton 2015). Results from the household survey showed that the scenario most aligned to *korapsen* involved a woman selling sex and drinking 'homebrew' (homemade alcohol). This suggests that *korapsen* in part reflects the 'decay definition' of corruption (Walton 2015), which has its origins in ancient Greece. Indeed, the ancient Greeks defined corruption as both *individual* and *institutional* decay (Bratsis 2003; Walton 2015). Individual decay includes 'the corruption of the mind by which the ability to make sound judgments and pursue the good has been impaired' (Bratsis 2003: 12). The strong link between *korapsen*, prostitution and homemade alcohol suggests the concept is thus strongly linked to individual decay in the minds of many Papua New Guineans.

Institutional decay involves the deterioration of social and political institutions. Again, the focus groups conducted across PNG captured this interpretation. Some respondents said that *korapsen* occurs when the 'one talk' (in Tok Pisin *wantok*, see 3.8 in this volume) system – a social institution of reciprocity within kinship groups – benefits particular individuals more than the community as a whole. The *wantok* system has

been criticised within PNG for causing corruption; particularly because its focus on maintaining kinship ties means citizens prefer distributing state resources to relatives rather than following state bureaucratic rules. But for some respondents, the *wantok* system was in decay, not because it challenged the rules of the state, but because it could create inequalities within the community, and thus was not living up to its ideal institutional function. In identifying the *wantok* system as a form of *korapsen* in this sense, respondents' perceptions reflected the institutional side of the decay definition. Thus, while *korapsen* is a uniquely Papua New Guinean word, it resonates with other interpretations of its root word ('corruption') found in pre-modern Western thought.

There might be reservations about seeking to understand *korapsen* through its vernacular meaning. As homonyms, 'corruption' and *korapsen* are indeed difficult to distinguish. Even speakers of Tok Pisin would find it difficult to articulate whether they were referring to the English or Tok Pisin meaning; and the research (Walton 2009, 2013, 2015) did not try to distinguish the two. However, if one is sensitive to the meaning of *korapsen* shared by local communities – whereby the definition of the concept is determined by the views of Papua New Guineans – it is easy to see that *korapsen* and 'corruption' are related but distinct concepts. The latter focuses on wrongdoing by those in positions of power, where 'wrongdoing' is determined by the rules and laws of the state. In a distinctly Papua New Guinean sense, *korapsen* is associated with informal practices necessary for the daily workings of the community and reflects Papua New Guinea's social, cultural and economic conditions.

## 2.20 ***Bustarella*** (Italy)

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*Bustarella* is the diminutive of the word 'envelope' (*busta*), and may be translated literally as 'little envelope'. The term has its roots in the Neapolitan dialect, and refers to an envelope in which money is hidden in order to facilitate favours or smooth a process. It thus equates with a kickback or bribe. In the context of corrupt practices in Italy, *bustarella* has become a term commonly used to represent the brazen exchange of favours, which encompasses not only the exchange of money or offshore funds, but also refers to 'arrangements' such as the offer of yachts for holidays, the gift of new luxury cars, apartments, the payment of mortgages, the promise of prostitutes, free holidays and the payment of housing costs (Ceccarelli 2012; Mapelli and Santucci 2012).

Cultural references abound. In the song 'A bustarella', by the Italian film actor and comedian Nino Taranto, 1950s Italy is described as the 'Land of Plenty' ('*il Paese della Cuccagna*'), where you just need a *bustarella* ('brown envelope') to satisfy your greed. In the book '*Il male italiano*' ('The Italian disease'), prosecutor Raffaele Cantone describes the impression of Italy he gained as a result of his investigation of Expo 2015 in Milan. The year preceding the opening of the Expo saw the rise of corrupt practices with regard to contracts on buildings and infrastructure, and clear evidence of nepotism and clientelism (*La Repubblica* 2015).

The Italian political system has long been recognised as 'distinctive' in relation to party domination at the local level. *Bustarella* has been a widespread feature in land development and contracts; a mechanism described as 'an extensive system of bribes and kick-backs to party officials ... [where] parties [can] penetrate the bureaucracies, and share the heights of the economic power. This power is passed down to local party officials and technocrats, so that they may enjoy significant autonomy vis-à-vis incipient local-growth activists' (Molotch and Vicari 1988: 203–7).

Institutional arrangements for preventing the use of *bustarella* in political parties and government authorities can be effective in principle, but due to constantly evolving structures and external pressures they do not tend to be effective in practice. The practice of *bustarella* itself is so prevalent because it is able to thrive and flourish on a small scale, often falling within the 'grey area' of corruption (Heidenheimer and Johnston 2002: 33). In general, only a minority in society wants to see the practitioners punished, and even then only in instances regarded as 'severe violations of community moral or legal norms' (Heidenheimer and Johnston 2002: 33). As a rule *bustarella* helps speed up a process, such as an exchange of services, or may be used as a means of successfully accomplishing work. Further evidence of the practice can be found among public officials. In Rome, for example, construction workers were intercepted discussing the corrupt work of an officer who had asked for a *bustarella* of nearly 8,500 Euros in return for processing papers relating to security (*Il Fatto Quotidiano* 2015). In another example, a private agency was investigated after it was found to be controlling the funeral services offered within four hospitals in Rome (*Il Messaggero* 2014).

The case of *Mafia Capitale* (Guerra 2014) shows the extent to which a 'greasing' system involving *bustarella* and a clientelistic culture combine to support a criminal mafia-type network. Approximately 200 million Euros were frozen when the *Mafia Capitale* case was uncovered in

December 2014, and some 46 politicians, administrators and businessmen were put on trial. All appeared to be members of a criminal network that extended across Rome's administration. Money originally intended for community centres for refugees and basic city services was embezzled through *bustarella* and other corrupt schemes. In a wire-tapped phone conversation, Salvatore Buzzi, Head of the 29 June Co-operative, which provided services to the homeless and marginalised of society, was recorded boasting that the network had made €40m from the misuse of funds for 'gypsies and immigrants', and that it was 'more profitable than trafficking drugs'. Buzzi's secretary, arrested for her involvement in the case, confessed that she had been responsible for arranging *bustarelle* on behalf of her boss (Guerra 2014).

Italy was ranked joint fifteenth (out of 28) on Transparency International's Bribe Payers Index (2011), which ranks the world's wealthiest and most economically influential countries according to the likelihood of their firms to partake in bribery abroad (China and Russia being 27th and 28th). The attitude of government leaders to bribery and *bustarella* gives some indication of why this is so. In 2013 the then Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi declared in a televised interview that bribery should not be regarded as criminal activity but merely a form of 'commission': '[B]ribes are a phenomenon that exists and it's useless to deny the existence of these necessary situations [...]. These are not crimes. We're talking about paying a commission to someone in that country. Why? Because those are the rules in that country' (Transparency International 2013). Berlusconi made this statement regardless of the fact that in 2000 Italy (along with 38 other countries) had signed and ratified the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Convention on Combatting Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions, a step that was seen as being key to halting global corruption.

The Italian government headed by Prime Minister Matteo Renzi (February 2014–December 2016) also suffered from bribery-related scandals. In March 2015, the Infrastructure and Transport Minister, Maurizio Lupi, was forced to resign following an investigation of kick-backs and other unspecified matters connected with infrastructure projects and the high-speed railway system. Thus, despite the fact that *bustarella* is a widespread practice in Italy, it is still subject to sufficient moral disapprobation to end political careers. The minister's son allegedly accepted a €10,000 Rolex watch for the 'honour' of granting the giver some work experience. The minister's response was 'I didn't have the heart to tell my son not to accept it' (Day 2015).



Prevention of opportunity has been suggested as the most successful tool to combat small cases of corruption like *bustarella*, thus stopping them from expanding into to a well-functioning system of corruption. It is noted that while there are costs to detecting a case at an early stage, it is more challenging when the case becomes ‘too big to be ignored’ (Brytting et al. 2011: 243). The best solution is to maximise the risk of getting caught, since ‘a good record of detecting fraud when it occurs acts as a deterrent and reduces the likelihood of other frauds’ (Brytting et al. 2011: 244). Yet Italy may be regarded as ‘a model of the failure of ordinary institutional mechanisms to control corruption in advanced society’ (Vannucci 2009: 234). This was starkly demonstrated by the ‘Clean hands affair’ (*Mani pulite*), a nationwide judicial investigation into systemic political corruption in the 1990s that led to the demise of the so-called ‘First Republic’. Gherardo Colombo, one of the main prosecutors in the ‘Clean hands affair’ asserted that, ‘the culture of this country is based above all on cunning and privilege. Since the statute of limitations and other laws were changed or annulled, we have arrived at a complete renaissance of corruption’ (Moore 2007). This is perhaps unsurprising in a country that has often failed to establish one of the key principles of a healthy democratic state: the mutual independence of the judiciary and politics.

## 2.21 *Dash* (Nigeria and other West African countries)

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One of the most common informal transactions in Nigeria is the *dash*. A *dash*, as it is called in Nigerian English and Pidgin English, may be a gift or a bribe; indeed its ambiguity is part of its function. The wide spectrum of circumstances in which it occurs and the range of meanings associated with it attest to the complexity of the social work it does. In its most benign occurrence, to give someone a *dash* is to offer a present, with no strings attached. In this form, a *dash* is even more generous than a gift, because it is given with no expectation of reciprocity. Most gifts, as Marcel Mauss (1925) famously showed, come with obligations. The giver creates a social relationship with the recipient that is not easily forsaken. In contrast, in some cases when Nigerians speak of a *dash*, they refer to a present given freely. A passer-by might *dash* money to a beggar; a man might *dash* children a soccer ball. Because so many gifts come with obligations, a *dash* of this sort is especially welcome.

However, in many instances in Nigeria a *dash* is a cover and a euphemism for a bribe, or a levy. When a police officer stops a motorist

and demands 'a *dash*' to buy cigarettes, for example, the driver will experience the request as something close to extortion. If the *dash* is not given, the police officer will demand documents, open the car's bonnet to look for the engine number and most likely invent some infraction to delay the journey until something is paid. In this case, the *dash* is even more resented than a bribe, because nothing is gained by paying except freedom from harassment. More typically, when state officials request a *dash* – or citizen service-seekers offer one – it is expected that the *dash*-as-bribe will produce a favourable outcome for the giver.

Somewhere in between the *dash* as a present with no strings attached and the *dash* as a levy or bribe sits a whole range of *dashes* that look more like gifts in that they come with some anticipation of reciprocity, whether it involves a specific return gift or action, or a more generalised expectation of future mutual generosity. Despite the diverse set of transactions and the variety of motivations and expectations associated with them, almost all *dashes* are characterised by the way in which they socialise or make personal forms of transaction that could otherwise be interpreted in more anonymous, impersonal terms. As noted, in its most positive valence a *dash* signals a pro-social, freely undertaken act of generosity. Somewhat paradoxically, this more positive aspect is closely connected to the role *dashes* play in euphemising and enabling transactions that might be – and often are – interpreted by Nigerians as corruption. Situating the *dash* in relation to corruption provides a revealing perspective both on the range of semiotic interpretations of the behaviour and on the nuances of how Nigerians understand and navigate so-called corruption.

On the one hand, Nigerians are commonly frustrated and express considerable discontent over the fact that state officials expect a *dash* to provide services that ought to be a routine part of their job. In many instances, ordinary Nigerians feel aggrieved that civil servants expect a *dash* to issue a driver's licence, release a pension payment, or pass along one's job application to someone higher up. The fact that the requested (or at least implicitly expected) *dash* is really just a bribe couched in more pro-social terminology rankles. Nigerian citizens resent having to pay bribes and recognise that the euphemism of a *dash* protects corrupt officials and corruption itself. To ask for or to offer a *dash* invokes moral rules different from those that supposedly govern the bureaucracy. Nigerians understand both sets of rules, but they also recognise the ruse.

On the other hand, despite their awareness of the ruse and the frequent anger it generates, ordinary citizens are often agents in deploying the *dash* as a means to personalise (and, one might argue, corrupt) an

otherwise formal and official transaction. If Nigerians are in a hurry, if they seek an outcome that the official rules would not easily accommodate, or if it simply appears that formal procedures will stymie their goals because officials always expect something 'on top', Nigerians commonly take the initiative to personalise the transaction by offering a *dash*. To the extent that a *dash* symbolises and enables a more personal and informal interaction with the state, it is often welcomed as much as it is resented.

Based on a comparative study of corruption in three other West African countries, Giorgio Blundo and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan (2001a) developed a useful typology of forms of corruption that maps reasonably well onto the Nigerian scene. The seven basic forms they identify are (1) commission for illicit services, (2) unwarranted payment for public services, (3) gratuities, (4) string pulling, (5) levies and tolls, (6) sidelining and (7) misappropriation. In Nigeria, all but sidelining and misappropriation are instances in which a *dash* might occur, and the spectrum of corrupt behaviours illustrates well the social work that *dashes* accomplish in their more nefarious incarnations. Briefly, commission for illicit services refers to the payment by users to officials who then grant access to unwarranted advantages. For example, a contractor might provide money to a government official to ensure that he receives a job in a process supposedly based on competitive bids, or an importer might pay a customs official to underestimate the value of his goods in order to reduce a tariff. Unwarranted payment for public services involves an official forcing a user to pay for a service that is ostensibly provided for free, or inflating the cost of a routine job. In Nigeria, people commonly pay extra money for basic services such as the issuance of passports and birth certificates. A gratuity is also a kind of payment for services, but usually after the fact, and is commonly couched in the idiom of a 'thank you'. Nigerians typically call such a gratuity 'a *dash*', and do not always think of it in the same terms as a bribe. String-pulling on one's behalf would also typically be followed up (or preceded) by a *dash*. As noted above, levies extorted by police or other officials are frequently euphemised as *dashes*. But, as Blundo and Olivier de Sardan (2001a) point out, a *dash* makes sense only in an environment where officials diligently doing their jobs without the demand for a bribe are the exception and deserve a reward.

Understanding the *dash* helps elucidate the nuances and complexity of official corruption in Nigeria. A *dash* is the lubricant that enables actors to make the mechanisms of bureaucracy more personal, not only in actual relationships between officeholders and their clients, but also

by building on and reinforcing a moral economy that facilitates corruption, even in situations where citizen and bureaucrat are, in fact, complete strangers (Joseph 1987; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Olivier de Sardan 1999; Blundo and Olivier de Sardan 2001b; Pierce 2016). Actors on both sides of the exchange are frequently more comfortable operating in an informal idiom of accountability that humanises the transaction between citizen and state. As much as Nigerians sometimes lament the system that makes the *dash* so ubiquitous, many will admit that they would also feel lost without it.

## **Conclusion: ‘interested’ vs ‘disinterested’ giving: defining extortion, reciprocity and pure gifts in the connected worlds**

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In [Chapter 2](#), we find a wide variety of giving. Examples range from ceremonial gifts in Japan and China to ritualistic giveaways among Gabor Roma and instrumental payments in sub-Saharan Africa and the Philippines. To analyse each practice, as well as to discover their similarities and differences, we need to be aware of the key principles of giving.

The work of the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss focused on the way in which the exchange of gifts between groups and individuals builds social relationships, alliances and solidarity, but also antagonism and hierarchy. Mauss identified two fundamental elements. On the one hand, an essential lapse of time separates the first gift (the opening gift in an exchange of gifts) from the counter-gift (the return gift). On the other, the gift raises the status of the donor and lowers that of the recipient. It was on the basis of these two points – made repeatedly in Mauss’ text – that Pierre Bourdieu deduced the existence of a third principle – personal dominance. In Bourdieu’s view, this raised doubts about the very possibility of a ‘free’ or ‘pure’ gift, that is, a gift made without expectation of reward.

In his analysis of simple reciprocity between two partners, Claude Lévi-Strauss stressed both the peaceful and balanced nature of the relationship and the instantaneous character of a gesture of exchange such as, for example, the exchange of wedding rings between husband and wife at their marriage ceremony. Such a symbolic gesture does not come under the purview of Bourdieu’s reading of the gift, not only because

it lacks an essential element – the length of time that separates the gift from the counter-gift and supposedly establishes the donor’s personal dominance – but also because the identity of the two rings symbolises the equality of the two spouses.

For Bourdieu, it is the time lapse between the gift and the counter-gift that distinguishes the Maussian gift from the instantaneous exchange of two equal goods. Such instantaneousness characterises three other types of exchange: market and monetary transactions, market and non-monetary transactions (when, as in barter, strict equivalence of goods is sought by the partners), and ritual transactions (when the goods exchanged are identical, as in the example of the wedding rings). It is the time lapse that allows the donor to lower the status of the recipient, who is compelled to remain for a certain time in the donor’s debt, even when this is hidden under the guise of generosity with no ulterior motive. In this way, Bourdieu subscribes to the view proposed by Mauss: that of fiction and the social lie. It is also the time interval that establishes a parallel between gift and debt: the recipient becomes dependent on the donor, is obligated to him and becomes his inferior.

Further ethnographies of gifts (Weber 2000; Zelizer 2005; Testart 2007) enable us to make a clear distinction between two forms of circulation: ‘transaction’ and ‘transfer’. A transaction entails the obligation to repay and remains incomplete until repayment is made. A transfer, on the other hand, entails no obligation to repay, even in a sequence of repeated transfers.

Let us therefore reserve the term ‘transaction’ for services that entail an obligation to repay, be they market and monetary transactions, non-monetary market transactions, or ritual/ceremonial transactions. We may also introduce the notion of a ‘half-transaction’ for unsettled dues. Such incomplete transactions take various forms: financial credit, commercial debt or ceremonial transactions; unsettled relations between a mutual insurance company and its subscribers, between an insurance company and its clients, or between social security and its beneficiaries. In this volume, for example, ‘petrol money’ in sub-Saharan Africa would be a half-transaction, whereas *okurimono no shūkan* in Japan, *songli* in China and *magharich’* in Armenia would count as ritualistic gifts or ceremonial transactions. Creating a time lapse between the gift (payment) and the counter-gift (required service) by making gifts on specific dates (Christmas, birthdays, weddings) reduces their instrumentality and highlights their sociability.

Let us reserve the term ‘transfer’ for services that do not entail the obligation to repay, and introduce the notion of a ‘double transfer’ for

repeated provision of services. A simple transfer could be a 'disinterested' or 'pure' gift if the donor felt free to give or not (see 'enactment' in Sneath 2006). It might also, however, be a theft or an 'extorted gift', where physical violence or emotional blackmail is involved, where the donor is forced to give, or where no return is implied.

We may then qualify a relationship maintained between the same two partners as 'a chain of services' or a succession of transfers and/or transactions. There are three levels of analysis with which we can look at the chains of services presented in this chapter: the nature of the relationship between the two partners, the form of the circulation of goods (single or double) and the nature of repayment (monetary or not). Testart (2007) emphasises the crucial difference between exchanges with an obligation to repay and those without.

This fundamental distinction enables us to read Mauss' text in all its complexity while also explaining the distinction between the systems of exchange he studied in Polynesia. On the one hand, the system of market exchanges ('barter' – *gimwali*) consists of *transactions* related to ordinary goods during which the relationship between the two partners is equal and where there is equivalence between the two goods in terms of both turn-taking and measure. On the other hand, the system of giving material possessions in return for immaterial status (*potlatch* – as practised among some native American peoples of the west coast of North America) consists of repeated *transfers* linked by the logic of an antagonistic personal relationship in which each actor is eager to offer a more beautiful present than the one he receives, since the alternative is to accept a relationship of dependence. Between those two, the system of ritual giving (*kula* – the exchange system practised in Papua New Guinea) consists of *transactions* related to specific ceremonial objects. Under this practice, 'armbands' (*mwali*) are exchanged for 'necklaces' (*soulava*) during which the relationship between the partners is defined as a political alliance.

With *potlatch* and *kula*, Mauss explored a whole range of possible services where what matters is the personal relationship embodied by the thing given, in contrast to services where interchangeable goods flow between interchangeable individuals, thereby making it possible to relegate personal relationships to the background. These include market transactions (monetary or in kind) and simple anonymous transfers (monetary or non-monetary). In this volume, entries related to forced giving or extortion of gifts, such as *egunje* in Nigeria or *mordida* in Mexico, add a new type of personal domination – that of extorting the giving – where the donor is seen as inferior (forced to make an

informal payment and remain dependent on the recipient to deliver the service).

In Western societies there also exist services that involve personal relationships in terms that imply superiority on the part of the donor (charitable donations as well as political relationships of clientelism); in terms of rivalry (when public buildings testify to the superiority of their sponsors, and the practice of patronage); or in terms of alliance (such as customer loyalty cards where personal relations are used to build trust in commercial transactions and are materially rewarded).

Many entries in [Chapter 2](#) emphasise the importance of ritual in giving. More generally, rituals carve out in the flow of social life a space – a ‘social scene’ (Weber 2001) – with its own specific rules. This enables transactions and transfers, whose instrumental nature might even make them look like bribes to outsiders, to become socially acceptable in their own setting. A solemn opening ceremony – an acknowledgement of mutual understanding between the parties – affirms the Goffmanesque distinction between ‘stage’ acts and those that remain ‘backstage’. The formulae of politeness open and close an interaction. They frame the context, constitute societies’ know-hows and allow, among other things, the distinction between transactions and transfers.

Such an ethnographic analysis of non-market services relates to theories of *Connected Worlds* (Zelizer 2005; Dufy and Weber 2007) that attempt to analyse individual practices stretching between different social scenes. They focus on the institutional construction of these scenes and on the individual ways of joining them. Interested and disinterested giving coexist in our modern societies, just as market and gift coexisted among the indigenous peoples studied by Mauss, and as *kula* and *gimwali* coexisted in those studied by Bronislaw Malinowski (1922). Such coexistence results from multiple norms and moralities of behaviour with respect to different social scenes.

Finally, it is important to emphasise the policy implications of Mauss’ concept of the gift. Shifting from scientific observation to political issues, Mauss rejected the personal, inegalitarian charity that had until then formed the cornerstone of social policy, dismissing it as ‘the unconscious and injurious patronage of the rich almsgiver’ (Mauss 2001: 84). This paved the way for a reconceptualisation of the idea of social services and citizens’ rights in modern society, moving away from the private welfare practices described in [Chapter 3](#). Mauss’ thinking laid the foundation for France’s modern social security system, based on the principle that the state and society have obligations to workers and their families: workers should be supported by the members of society gathered

in a social state, not only when they are contributing to the economy by actively working, but throughout their entire lives.

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### 2.1 *Okurimono no shūkan* (Japan)

#### Katherine Rupp

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## Conclusion: 'interested' vs 'disinterested' giving: defining extortion, reciprocity and pure gifts in the connected worlds

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## Part II

# Solidarity

*The normative ambivalence of double standards:  
'us' vs 'them'*

### Preface

**Alena Ledeneva**

Among the four modes of human interaction discussed in this volume – redistribution, solidarity, market and domination – solidarity may sound the least contentious. Yet the comfort of belonging, of sharing an identity, also means the exclusion of others, and double standards for ‘us’ and for ‘them’. Kinship and local communities reward members with a safety net and support, but also limit individual rights. Social networks in so-called open access societies are declared open, yet are equipped with hidden social filters. The double standards applied to ‘us’ and to ‘them’, to insiders and outsiders, differ considerably depending on the context, but a common pattern is the ambivalent nature of belonging: enabling but also constraining. The modern transformation of identity politics reveals the traps of belonging and the unintended consequences of strong ties, often resulting in conformity and cohesion not necessarily conducive to openly declared freedoms and values.

Entries in Part II explore the identity-based forms of belonging and solidarity. The perspective of normative ambivalence is grounded in the fundamental divide into ‘us’ and ‘them’, based on identities and the associated play of inclusion and exclusion. It enables us to reveal the open secrets of identities, shaped by lineage, community or consumption (whether religion, music or art) as well as multiple identities emerging in complex societies with their constellations of coexisting rural, urban, local and global mindsets. The entries are organised by strength of obligation within social circles, termed the ‘lock-in effect’: from the traditional grip of kin ties and observance of customary laws to the more voluntary forms of belonging; from traditional values to those of self-expression; from norms generating conformity to those that generate non-conformity and protest.

**Chapter 3**, ‘Conformity: The lock-in effect of social ties’, assembles evidence of the ambivalence of the informal lock-in effect that identities, associations and solidarities can produce. In his introduction, Eric Gordy points to the ambivalent nature of identities. These are neither imagined communities nor social facts. They are both socially construed perceptions of shared culture, history and memory, and linked to concrete historical and social phenomena. Informal practices enhance the perception of shared belonging to a group, but can also undermine it. In conclusion, Christian Giordano offers a variety of theoretical paradigms of solidarity, and points out that informality together with its specific coalitions, networks and personalised relationships has a questionable, if not notorious, reputation. These aspects are often regarded as pre-modern or dysfunctional because they foster or serve as the foundations for social phenomena such as favouritism, nepotism, cronyism, patronage and corruption. Yet they are also the enactment of identities, solidarities and so-called social capital. Thus it is not enough to distinguish between functional and dysfunctional associations, good and bad networks, positive and negative social capital; it is essential to see the substantive ambivalence of personal relationships (Part I).

**Chapter 4**, ‘The unlocking power of non-conformity: Cultural resistance vs political opposition’, focuses on the informal practices associated with non-conformism and cultural resistance. It explores the grey zones between cultural resistance and political protest by illustrating – somewhat provocatively – what informality means for actors in terms of creativity, innovation and self-expression. Practices of cultural resistance and non-conformism can be aligned with Barbara Misztal’s conceptualisation of informality as freedom (Misztal 2000). In his introduction, Peter Zusi highlights an important distinction between cultural resistance and political opposition. Whereas opposition implies a tug-of-war or a zero-sum game, with the advantage of one coming at the disadvantage of the other, resistance by contrast does not operate through clear dichotomies. Resistance is multivalent and poly-directional, and its forms of expression are often complex and informal.

Accepting that various forms of resistance are more common than political opposition, in his conclusion, Jan Kubik takes issue with the ambiguities of accommodation, resistance and rebellion. Why do people not challenge political systems that they do not accept and want to see reformed as often as might be expected? Why does accommodating quiescence prevail most of the time and why is open rebellion so infrequent? How does opposition express itself? The ambivalent discovery in Chapter 4 is that informality unlocks the potential for innovation, talent

development and freedom for self-expression. Cultural resistance to the classical schools has, for example, been the impetus behind many of Russia's major contributions to the global cultural scene: the Silver Age, modernist avant-garde, musical innovation, non-conformist art in the 1960s, among others.

Yet informality also produces freedom within the constraints that allow for the evolution of the classical schools through artistic repossession and accommodating symbiosis. In these contexts, the simultaneously subversive and supportive role of informal practices is best understood by reference to functional ambivalence (Part III). The focus on normative ambivalence in Part II enables us to envisage how informal channels serve in practice to enact both inclusion and exclusion, conformity and non-conformity, accommodation and resistance, thereby resulting in both lock-in and unlocking effects.

The remaining questions include: Can identities that are non-divisive, and not diminishing the other, be as strong as those that are divisive? On what basis can non-divisive identities rest or be construed? Which constraints are particularly conducive to creating shortcuts? And how do certain types of political and economic constraints correlate with forms of innovation, risk-taking and talent development? Finally, the theme of fluidity of multiple identities leads to the challenge of measuring normative ambivalence and assessing its role in re-shaping solidarities and cohesion in complex societies.





### 3

## Conformity: the lock-in effect of social ties

### Introduction: group identity and the ambivalence of norms

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The entries in this chapter all deal with informal practices of regulation that derive their authority from the perception of shared membership in a group. The perception of shared identity plays a highly visible role in most popular understandings of group, political and institutional behaviour. It has also been prominent in social science from the first generation of scholarship in the field, with Emile Durkheim (1912) theorising that religion, ritual and law can be traced to the need of societies to ‘represent themselves to themselves’, and Max Weber specifying the importance of ‘ethnic membership [which] does not constitute a group; it only facilitates group membership of any kind, particularly in the political sphere’ (1909: 389).

The category of collective identity has been applied in various ways to the understanding of social and political phenomena, most frequently ethnic solidarity and nationalism. While a group of theorists does exist (e.g. Smith 1991) that makes an effort to trace collective identities to an ahistorical ‘time before time’ and argues for their underlying reality in contrast to variable social forces, there is a greater consensus among researchers that perceptions of shared culture, history, memory and identity can be traced to concrete historical and social phenomena. The attribution of these phenomena varies: from the coalescence of elites around a legitimating principle (Anderson 1983; Breuilly 1993), the need of expanding markets and administrative structures to draw on a base of shared knowledge and literacy (Gellner 1983), legitimization of political

projects (Hobsbawm 1990; Billig 1995), to rejection of rigid understandings of shared identity as a form of aggressive propaganda (Dimitrijevic 2001; Lieven 2004). Regardless of the historicity or ahistoricity of shared identities, their power in the reinforcement of boundaries and enforcement of rules is readily apparent. The old dictum of W. I. Thomas (1928) seems to apply: if people 'define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'.

Informal practices would appear to belong largely to the realm of what Durkheim (1895) identified as 'social facts', which establish, routine and reaffirm the importance and meaning of group memberships and identities by means of the performance of rituals, in particular rituals involving acts of mutual recognition or, conversely, exclusion or antipathy. In most cases the content of the performance involves the group member confirming membership in the group through an act of conformity, which simultaneously affirms the primacy of the group as a repository of value and commonality. Among the benefits of a performance that involves well recognised symbols is that an activity carrying low prestige (such as crime) can be associated with institutions carrying much higher prestige (such as religion or nationality).

The shared identities affirmed in this set of performances function, in the first instance, as expressions of a relationship to the political and institutional environments that provide the context for their performance: as sources for the organisation and expression of political power, and sometimes as mechanisms enabling resistance to a hostile or competing political power. Such informal practices have functioned as resources enabling the maintenance of symbolic resistance, in particular under regimes that have been hostile to religious (Ash 1990) or ethnic (Simic 1973) expression. In some authoritarian contexts in particular, certain informal arenas such as sport, especially football (Mills 2010; Brentin 2016), function as an auxiliary arena in which otherwise discouraged expressions of ethnic solidarity are encouraged or tolerated, in the hope that they will remain confined to a controlled sphere.

Informal social practices of mutual recognition of group membership may also function as mechanisms allowing for the enforcement of social exclusion and discrimination. The informal mechanisms engaged to maintain discrimination in housing, for example, may range from subtle encouragement of cultural similarity and the channelling of announcement of availability through heritage-based informal social institutions (Gans 1962) on through the establishment of clandestine parallel real-estate markets (Rieder 1985). Similarly the enforcement of

social boundaries can function both through subtle recognition of commonality in areas such as taste and aesthetic preference (Bourdieu 1984), on through aggressive discouragement of the presence of visible ethnic markers (Wilson 2012). A developing body of social theory assesses the totality of these practices as contributing to the development of a permanently excluded underclass (Wacquant 2008).

Shared identity functions as a source of solidarity and resource of enforcement in groups dedicated to illegal activity, encouraging the maintenance of different types of codes of silence, helping to assure the acquiescence and sometimes the support of communities with large populations of co-ethnics in the operation of illegal enterprises, and promoting loyalty and obedience within groups (Sanchez-Jankowski 1991; Gambetta 1993). The phenomenon is well enough known that it is, for example, frequently rendered and performed as a principal dramatic element in popular entertainment revolving around the theme of organised crime, possibly most famously in the series of films dramatising the professional and family activity of an imaginary Sicilian-American crime syndicate, *The Godfather*. These types of dramatic portrayals, while open to the criticism that they reinforce ethnic stereotypes, could also be assessed as contributing to the useful mythology that activities such as organised crime are in some way symbolically representative of an ethnic community, and consequently on some level legitimised or protected by this association.

It is not necessarily the case that all perceptions of shared identity follow lines that are expected or lead in the directions of conformity that are expected. It can particularly be the case that when ethnic identity is strongly associated with an identifiable material interest, entry into the identity group may become extraordinarily fluid. This has been documented both in states undergoing changes in imperial or colonial control, where people may recognise an advantage in entering or leaving an ethnic community (Freyre 1947; Roudometof 2001), and in contemporary consumer societies, where people respond to changing social conditions that make some memberships appear at times to be more appealing (Waters 1990). Well-documented cases include the distribution of Chinese identity in Jamaica (Patterson 1977), which over time loses any connection with family origins in China and instead comes to represent access to informal business and financial resources. With the post-communist rounds of accession of states in Europe to membership in the European Union and changes in access to visa-free travel, it has been possible to witness the discovery or rediscovery of ethnic roots allowing for the acquisition of convenient passports.

The examples listed in this Encyclopaedia tend to underline the mixed character of group membership and group norms, operating on several levels. The encouragement of perceptions of belonging, through practices and rituals related to their reinforcement, functions both as a source of norms and, in some instances, as a source of power under conditions of social or political subjection. At the same time, the same sets of practices can also function as means of subordination of the individual to imposed identities, and flattening of the diverse social landscape into a restricted number of categories.

## Kinship lock-in

### 3.1 *Adat* (Chechnya)

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*Adat* is a term used to describe a system of Chechen customary laws and norms practised in the North Caucasus among ethnic *Vainakh* and the diaspora. Although variations of the practice exist between different clans, in essence *adat* encapsulates what it means to be Chechen (*nokhchalla*). Heroic tales of war and the struggle for independence are an inseparable part of Chechen culture (Johnson 2008). *Adat* traditions influence several aspects of social life and inform practices of hospitality, relations between men and women, and the custom of blood revenge (see *ch'ir*, 3.2 in this volume). While today Chechens feel their Chechenness and *adat* are under attack by Wahhabist influences and the power of Russian rule, *adat* remains paramount in defining Chechen social and cultural norms (Gendron 2009; Souleimanov 2015).

The *Vainakh*, the ancient natives of the Caucasus, were pagan, probably Zoroastrian peoples whose religion centred on family and worship of ancestors (Cremer 2012: 198). In the late fourth century, Christians were the first to attempt to convert these peoples, though they met with little success. Arabs of the Umayyad caliphate brought the Sufi tradition of Islam to the region in the mid-seventh century (Yemelianova 2015); however, Islam did not become established among the *Vainakh* until the nineteenth century. *Adat* therefore pre-dates Islamic traditions (Cremer 2012: 199). Over time, some elements of Islamic law (*shari'a*) became enmeshed in traditional *adat*, and some variation is found between clans (Johnston 2008; Yemelianova 2015). While similar customary laws exist in other parts of the Islamic world, including Islamic law (*shari'a*), the

manner in which Zoroastrian and early Christian components were interwoven with *shari'a* resulted in a unique version of Chechen Islam and culture (Yemelianova 2015).

Through a clan-based system of blood ties (relationships forged by birth), laws were upheld and agreements (*ittifaqs*) forged. All social conflicts were litigated in this way: from rape and murder, to the use of land and water resources, and importantly, pronouncements concerning the common defence of the land (Cremer 2012: 199). Clans are further broken down into branches (*gar*) and yet further into families (*nekye*). This clan structure remains today. Each clan is autonomous and controls the affairs of their own blood members. No clan is viewed as having higher status than any other; there is no hierarchical leadership over all the clans (Layton 2014: 68–9). In contemporary Chechnya, loyalty seems to be increasingly displayed at branch level of *gar* or families (*nekye*) (Souleimanov 2015). Given the horizontal nature of their society, adherence to *adat* is what maintains the Chechen social order in a society, which in their view lacks legitimate vertical authority. Individuals therefore assume a heavy responsibility for ensuring the honour of their clan and/or family (Layton 2014: 69; Souleimanov 2015).

*Adat* is seen as highly disciplined, and as such, outsiders are not expected to adhere to its laws and norms for themselves; it is a burden unique to the *Vainakh*. Modesty, self-restraint, and sobriety are key personal codes for both sexes. Mothers teach their daughters to cook, to serve their husbands and to keep the home spotless in readiness to receive guests at any time (Layton 2014: 77, 95–7). Fathers teach their sons to take care of their future families, respect their mothers and elders, to be generous of spirit, and to be strong both personally and physically (Layton 2014: 95–7; Souleimanov 2015). Boys live at home until they have sufficient money to start their own family. They are not allowed to date, as doing so would dishonour the family.

Until marriage, virginity is a requirement for both males and females, though loss of virginity for a man is not considered as scandalous an event as it would be for a woman. A woman who lost her virginity out of wedlock would, as a consequence, be banished from her family, or in an extreme case (in violation of Russian law), if a family or group felt that their honour had been tarnished, the end result might be an honour killing (RFE/RL 2015). On the day of marriage the only exceptions made for the lack of female virginity are in instances of divorce or widowhood. It is customary for the family to arrange a marriage and a dowry is given that helps the new couple set up home (Layton 2014: 94).

*Adat* is not strict in relation to religion. Embedded in the Chechen code of honour (*nokhchalla*) is the notion of the importance of personal freedom, as well as the freedom and independence of others (Johnson 2008). As a result, issues surrounding religiosity are left to the individual. Chechen Muslims are allowed to drink alcohol, though women would only do so in private in the company of other women. It is understood that in society some people may be unable to accomplish, or have difficulty in, praying five times a day; this is seen as an internal struggle for the individual concerned and privacy of individual choice in this matter is preserved. The main exception to this point of view concerns the celebration of Ramadan and the Feast of the Sacrifice. In these instances it is considered that the values these holidays instill exemplify *adat* in decrying greed and placing importance on generosity (Layton 2014: 71). It is thus imperative that the collective should experience these shared religious and social events together. Even non-believers avoid announcing that they are not honouring these holidays for fear of being deemed 'weak in character' (Layton 2014: 80).

Hospitality, or *siskal*, is a key component of *adat*. Hospitality is extended not only to friends and family, and to strangers, but also to those who are deemed enemies. *Siskal* demands all who seek help or are in need of shelter must be taken in. This sense of honour and duty to others extends to all persons regardless of who they are. All guests are thus treated with the highest respect. This hospitality is extended for as long as the guest is in need; if applicable, enemy status applies once more only once the guest has left the home (Layton 2014: 77).

The entrenchment of *adat* personal codes naturally transitions into laws governing society, which often conflict with formal Russian laws, rendering them informal. Severe mistrust of Russian rule and the chaos resulting from political corruption in the region has resulted in the strengthening of *adat* laws and councils in an attempt to circumvent Russian federal rule (Malashenko 2014). Legal matters, which are officially the domain of the Russian federal and regional authorities, are sometimes ignored in favour of *adat*.

For example, if a marriage is not arranged through family, or negotiated between individuals, a man may kidnap the woman he wishes to marry. Sometimes this is done playfully, and is entered into willingly by the woman who is also attracted to the man in question (Layton 2014: 105). On other occasions the woman may be forcefully abducted, though this is less common. This is a violation of both human rights and Russian law. Women have few avenues of recourse and are often accused

of encouraging the event by flirting, which is seen as provocation, leading to the abduction (Evangelista 2011; RFE/RL 2010).

If a married couple separates, rather than seek mediation through the Russian courts, family members step in to resolve possible custody issues. Typically, the woman will keep primary custody of the children while they are still young and will turn over custody to the father's family once each child reaches puberty (Layton 2014: 92). On occasions, however, women are kept away from their children, in violation of Russian law (Bazaeva 2013).

Typically, male family members handle other familial conflicts in the first instance. If the issue cannot be resolved in this way, it may eventually be brought to the council of elders (*Mehk-Khel*) for resolution. Inter-clan conflict can also occur. The ruling of one clan's elders may be acknowledged as carrying validity, but it is not always enforced by the other clan(s) involved. Depending upon the severity of the alleged crimes, such as rape or murder, blood feuds (*ch'ir*) between clans can emerge. Russian law prohibits blood feuds, requiring all crimes to be dealt with by the official authorities via a fair trial. However, instances of blood feuds are often unreported due to another *adat* value: silence. *Adat* hospitality and silence make adjudication of these crimes near impossible, which is a threat to Russia's legal authority in the region (Gendron 2009).

Chechens feel their culture is under attack. Some point to 'impure' Chechens who have strayed too far from *adat* by adopting Russian behaviours and attitudes (Layton 2014: 34–5). Another alleged cause is the influence of imported *Wahhabism* from the Arab countries. *Wahhabism*, a strict version of Islam, sees the Chechen-styled Sufi Islam and *adat* as incompatible with 'true Islam' and *shari'a* law (Souleimanov and Ditrych 2008). Many young people have been attracted to this ideology after study abroad, or have been influenced by the teachings of local *Wahhabist* clerics (Gendron 2009). Others blame the conflicts in society on Russia, which they feel is actively trying to destroy their culture through war and propaganda (Layton 2014: 60). It is noted, however, that *adat* makes it possible for Chechen society to function successfully outside the control of corrupt official government institutions (Gendron 2009).

Examples of *adat* are found both in film and literature. Films in which *adat* is shown include *Kidnapping, Caucasian Style* (*Kavkazskaia Plennitsa*, 1966) and *Prisoner of the Mountains* (1996). In literature, famous examples include Lermontov's description of *adat* practices in *A Hero of Our Time* (1841) and the portrayal of society in Tolstoy's *Hadji Murat* (1912).

### 3.2 *ch'ir* (Chechnya and Ingushetia)

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Blood revenge – a custom of avenging a grave insult by killing either the offender or his male relatives – has been prevalent in the Caucasus for centuries. Various terms have historically been used across the Caucasus to designate blood revenge or blood feud (that is, a cycle of subsequent blood revenges). These include *ch'ir* in Chechen, *ch'ir* or *pkhä* in Ingush, *bidul k'isas* in Avar, *öttul kisas* or *badal* in Lak, *kanga kan* or *kanly* in Kumyk and Noghai, *litsvri* in Svan, and *qanli qisas* in Azerbaijani, to name a few. This social practice expired in most of the region over the twentieth century owing to processes of modernisation and urbanisation. However, it is still commonplace in Chechnya and Ingushetia, two ethnic republics within the Russian Federation (Souleimanov 2007: 24–9).

Blood revenge is by no means unique to the Caucasus. As part of informal local codes, known as unwritten or customary law, blood revenge has been practised widely by tribal or clan-based societies, among which central authority was either weak or absent and law enforcement was poor. Therefore, tribes or clans had to take upon themselves the task of defending their individual members (MacCormack 1973; Chagnon 1988; Boehm 2011; Nivette 2011). Blood revenge was widespread in ancient Mesopotamia, Palestine, Greece and Rome as well as in the (proto)states of the Fertile Crescent (Barmash 2004). In early medieval Europe, it was practised by Scandinavians, Franks and other Germanic tribes (Rosenthal 1966). Blood revenge was practised well into the twentieth century in Southern Europe: for instance the notorious *vendetta* in Southern Italy and Corsica (Wilson 2003), as well as in parts of Greece and in Montenegro (Black-Michaud and Peters 1975; Gallant 2000). Beyond Europe and the Middle East, it spread from pre-modern Japan (Mills 1976) through Cambodia (Laban Hinton 1998) to Oceania (Hoebel 2006). Nowadays, in addition to the North-East Caucasus, blood revenge remains active among the Gheg Albanians of northern Albania and Kosovo (Boyle 2010); in the Kurdish-dominated areas of Turkey and Iraq (Icli 1994); in Pashtun-dominated areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan (Mahdi 1986); Somalia (Mohamed 2007); as well as in Yemen (Morris and Trammel 2011) and in other predominantly tribal Arabic societies.

Blood revenge in general, and specifically *ch'ir*, entails that following an insult – either verbal or physical – an offended male or his patrilineal relatives are expected to exact revenge on either the direct culprit



of offence or his patrilineal relatives (Elster 1990; Souleimanov 2007: 24–9). Grave verbal insults include those directed against a male or his female relatives, wife, or his/her ancestors. Significant injury, particularly injury leading to permanent disease or death, murder, manslaughter, rape or any form of defilement against women, including bride abduction, are regarded as grave physical attacks in Chechnya. In the past, a variety of acts were considered disrespectful, making a case for *ch'ir*. Killing one's dog or showing disrespect to a man's hat (*papakh*) by means of touching it with one's feet or throwing it on the ground, were considered a grave insult in the Caucasus that was to be 'washed off' by the offender's or his relatives' blood. Nowadays, *ch'ir* is triggered almost exclusively by murder, manslaughter and rape.

The perception of honour is closely linked to the understanding of an individual as part of a larger community made up of ties of common ancestry, 'shared blood' and identity. Individuals in Chechnya and Ingushetia are perceived with reference to their patrilineal family (*nekye* or *dözal*) or clan (*teip*) ties (Sokirianskaia 2005). Therefore, offence against an individual is considered to extend to relatives. Retaliation, too, becomes the business of the entire family or clan. Failure to retaliate sharply decreases the social status of the offended individual and his or her clan. This may lead to opprobrium, with the entire family or clan dishonoured, and its male members regarded as weak and cowardly. Members of a dishonoured family or clan may be excluded from the community: girls lose the chance of a worthy marriage, while men are ridiculed and marginalised. It may take many years and great effort for a family or clan to restore lost honour. Triggered by the threat of social sanctions, members of the offended families and clans usually seek to 'take their blood' in order to avoid 'losing their face' (Souleimanov 2007: 24–9; Souleimanov 2015).

Since the mid-1990s, *ch'ir* has been instrumental in shaping violent mobilisation in Chechnya (Souleimanov 2007). Many Chechens took up arms in order to avenge their relatives' murder or fatal injury, or to seek *ch'ir* for the humiliation at the hand of the Russian counterinsurgents or their Chechen allies. Those who mobilised even included politically neutral individuals and those with prior antipathy towards Chechen separatist elites and their ideas. Those who knew the individual perpetrator of an offence – who was typically a Russian officer or a member of Chechnya's pro-Moscow paramilitary force (*kadyrovets*) – usually sought to retaliate on their own. There is evidence of insurgent units drawing on a network of relatives formed exclusively for the purpose of retaliation. Following a successful *ch'ir*, some of these units disbanded, while others

were absorbed into the insurgency and continued fighting. When the actual culprit of the offence was unknown or could not be found, the perception of the legitimate target of retaliation was broadened to *all* members of the Russian military or Russians as an ethnic community per se (Souleimanov and Aliyev 2015b).

The codes of hospitality (Chechen: *siskal*) and silence (Chechen: *disttsakhilar*) are important sources of pro-insurgent support in the Northern Caucasus (Souleimanov and Aliyev 2015b). While considerably weakened over recent decades, these codes still persist, especially in rural and mountainous areas. Enshrined in the customary law, *adat*, the code of hospitality requires the highlanders to provide support to those in need. Fugitives escaping enemies in *ch'ir*, or *abreks* (outlaws or lone-wolf guerilla fighters) are required to be sheltered by fellow highlanders, regardless of the risk of armed confrontation with their guest's personal enemies or with the authorities (Bobrovnikov 2000). This tradition partly survives in the North-East Caucasus. The code of silence, close to the South Italian custom of *omertà*, (see 3.23 in this volume) requires highlanders to reject collaboration with outsiders, including formal authorities. Even in the case of severe inter-personal or inter-clan conflict, highlanders are not supposed to approach the authorities; such a move would expose the violators of the unwritten code of honour as fearful and weak. The code of silence prescribes highlanders to remain silent about their community's internal affairs and resolve their issues on their own, within the circle of clan or religious authorities. Insurgents have routinely been provided with shelter, food, medicine, clothes and other basic needs by the local population. Even those disapproving of the insurgents and their activities are unlikely to report them to the authorities (Souleimanov and Aliyev 2015a).

### 3.3 **Uruuchuluk** (Kyrgyzstan)

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*Uruuchuluk* denotes lineage-based identity in Kyrgyzstan, where both public and private identity is determined primarily by a person's membership of one of the descent groups known as *uruu* and *uruk*. Ancestors, patrilineage and genealogies constitute identity for the Kyrgyz. Genealogy is of crucial importance in the segmentary lineage system, which in turn is relevant to the present discussion since it explains how the Kyrgyz construe their social world and the extent and quality of their relations with others. The Kyrgyz can usually name everyone in the previous seven

generations of their patrilineage. This form of social organisation has been customary and stable for many years; as a result, the Kyrgyz people consider it natural or God-given.

There are 40 large patrilineal descent groups in Kyrgyzstan today. Historically, Kyrgyz divide themselves according to 'Right Wing' (*Ong kanat*), 'Internal' (*Ichkilik*) or 'Left Wing' (*Sol kanat*). In general, all Kyrgyz patrilineal descent groups have traditionally tended to be in competition with one another (Abramzon 1971; Geiss 2004).

Under Soviet rule, the Communist Party authorities shaped the local identities of the Kyrgyz people to a certain extent, but by no means completely. Soviet ideology and local values were not separate domains; rather, they were complementary and congruent. Looked at from the outside, the Soviet system appeared to be one of top-down control. Seen from within, however, it was a system where local social relations were closely linked to the collective farm's (*kolkhoz*) workers or to the Communist Party officials. At the top, therefore, there was a Soviet system of governance, but inside this system Kyrgyz kinship relations continued to play an important role. As a result, the Soviet system did not eradicate but rather conserved pre-existing kin-based relations. Kinship identity and affiliations continued to form the basis of cultural identity and to play an influential role in everyday relationships (Yoshida, 2005; Hardenberg 2009; Jacquesson 2010; Ismailbekova 2017).

At the same time, kinship was officially viewed as backward and primitive during the Soviet period. As a result, state officials were often afraid to openly reveal their lineage identity. Kinship became a private affair. Even so, in the villages the chairman of the *kolkhoz* usually ensured that key positions such as deputy chairman, livestock specialist and team leader went to his own relatives (Roy 2000; Yoshida 2005; Jacquesson 2010; Isakov and Schoeberlein 2014).

Attempts by the Soviet authorities to dilute or even destroy kinship affiliations and to impose a new ethnic (national) identity on the Kyrgyz ultimately failed. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, kin-based relationships suddenly began to re-emerge. Genealogy became increasingly important in independent Kyrgyzstan, partly as a result of nation-building processes, and partly because of the new freedom that people had to express their previously hidden identities (Gullette 2010; Jacquesson 2010; Light 2011). As a result, present-day Kyrgyzstan has seen a reorganisation of kinship relations and a 'renegotiation' of identities. Along with the transformation of institutional structures, the Kyrgyz started to revive and reaffirm their local, traditional and cultural values and apply them to structures of state power (Ismailbekova 2017).



**Figure 3.3.1** Doing ethnographic fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan.  
Source: Author. © Professor Günther Schlee.

Kinship-based affiliations and provincial kinship play significant roles in both politics and society, since people use their kinship or provincial affiliations to build social networks. In times of economic hardship, kinship-based patronage networks have played a particularly important role. Kinship-discourse has begun to be used by ordinary people as a way of meeting their everyday needs and maintaining their hopes for a better future. People in rural areas are particularly involved with kinship practices in their everyday lives, but urban dwellers also become involved as a means of acquiring influence or financial capital. When people are engaged in business, they feel confident that they can rely on their kinsmen, united as they are by a sense of mutual responsibility and solidarity. In the event of a crisis, they rely particularly heavily on the support of their relatives.

As the Kyrgyz revived and reaffirmed their local, traditional and cultural values, they also began to apply them to institutions of state power (Ismailbekova 2017). Today, kinship is highly valued by politicians as a means of competing for social and economic position. Those who are not related through kinship-patronage networks are often isolated. Divisions along kinship lines may provoke and exacerbate struggles between

political groups and conflicts over positions within the state infrastructure, obtaining funds for development, education and so on.

Any politician – even one with presidential ambitions – will rely primarily on the support of his or her kinsmen. The logic behind this is that the politician knows that while he or she is unlikely to win the support of the entire country, they can rely on that of their kinsmen. They are also aware of the need to build alliances with other *uruu* members who will have recruited their own followers along kinship lines. Even so, alliances between *uruu* members may be temporary, since all politicians have their own ambitions. And if a politician rejects his or her former allies, he or she will be able to rely, again, only on the kinsmen. There is a mutual interest here: it is no secret that if a leader gains a higher rank, then his kinsmen will also be rewarded with higher positions. And if the leader loses his position, then the whole pyramid will collapse.

Lineage-based identity and kinship-belonging are very strong forces. If an individual breaks the rules of identity, he or she immediately loses status and becomes an outcast. As a result, no Kyrgyz would insult or ignore their kinsmen. Ties within political parties in Kyrgyzstan are, by contrast, much weaker and less disciplined. Parties are fluid organisations: their members converge or diverge, constantly moving from opposition to pro-government and back. The European party model has not taken root in Kyrgyzstan; the parties that function most actively and effectively are kinship-based (Ismailbekova 2014). Kinship played an important role, for example, in rallying people to take part in the mass protests of recent years – from the events in Osh in 1990 and 2010 to the revolutions of 2005 and 2010.

In times of instability and economic hardship, ordinary people choose to rely on strong politicians or entrepreneurs with political power and economic resources. People seek the patronage of such politicians and businesspeople by stressing their shared lineage, kinship ties and common provincial identities, and by using kin terms that lend legitimacy to their relationship. People imagine and construct a union with these figures built on closeness, hoping thereby to gain access to resources, protection and influence. Politicians and entrepreneurs, for their part, also use kinship ties to further their own political and economic interests. They do this by scrutinising the family history of potential kin in the hope of identifying common ancestors (Ismailbekova 2017).

Today, patrons are perceived as a source of economic and social support. This is reflected in people's attitudes towards them in times of socio-economic hardship. During the Soviet era, people performed

shared labour for the supposed benefit of the state. Now it is performed for the benefit of particular individuals. There is no term for patron. People use kinship terms such as ‘elder brother’, ‘younger brother’, ‘son’, and ‘father’ when seeking social and economic support from a wealthy politician or entrepreneur (Ismailbekova 2017).

In the Central Asian context, the ambiguous and manipulative behaviour of social actors such as patrons has been described by political scientists under such headings as ‘clan politics’, ‘tribalism’, ‘neopatrimonialism’, ‘provincial identities’ and ‘power of localism’.

### 3.4 **Rushyldyq** (Kazakhstan)

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*Rushyldyq* is a strong feeling of sub-ethnic identity with and loyalty to one’s *ru* in Kazakhstan. The word *rushyldyk* is derived from the Kazakh term *ru*, which denotes membership of a particular sub-ethnic group, or clan, united by actual or perceived kinship and descent and inhabiting a shared territory. Traditionally, the Kazakhs have been divided into three *zhuz* – ‘Great Zhuz’ (*Uly Zhuz*), ‘Middle Zhuz’ (*Orta Zhuz*), ‘Little Zhuz’ (*Kishi Zhuz*) – with each *zhuz* further subdivided into *ru*, the number of which varies. Western political scientists refer to the concepts of *ru*, *zhuz* and *rushyldyq* as ‘clan’, ‘umbrella clan’ and ‘clanism’ respectively (Schatz 2004; Collins 2006). *Rushyldyq* can also be defined as the use of *ru* ties. When discussing *rushyldyq*, the Russian-language press uses various terms such as tribalism (*tribalizm*), nepotism, patronage or ‘economy of nephews and sons-in-law’.

The Kazakhs appeared as a distinct ethnic group in the sixteenth century, and were nomadic up to the twentieth century. During these nomadic times, genealogy was central to group identity. As Schatz explains (Schatz 2004: 28):

After inquiring into the health of one another’s livestock, nomads meeting in the steppe would typically ask, ‘What clan do you come from?’ (*Qai rudan keldiniz?*), or more generically, ‘What people do you come from?’ (*Qai eldensiz?*). The answer was couched by recounting ancestry; genealogical knowledge was thus reiterated with every new interaction and comprised a dense discursive

exchange that helped to establish the widely recognized contours of clan at various levels.

From nomadic times to the pre-Soviet era, *ru* divisions (Kazakh: *rugha bolinu*) were not based on visible indicators that distinguished members from non-members, but rather defined by demonstrable knowledge of kin relations. To this day, every Kazakh is expected to be able to list his or her own genealogical background to the seventh generation (*zheti ata*), as well as his or her *ru* and *zhuz*.

The Soviet state stigmatised and criminalised *rushlydyq*, thus removing it from public domain. Yet the fact that the boundaries of *ru* were not catalogued or stored by the bureaucratic state as a statistical category meant that the Soviet authorities could not punish *rushlydyq*, due to the very informality of its institutions and practices. Being easily concealable, *rushlydyq* avoided state surveillance and continued to exist in the private domain. Schatz (2004) has suggested that *ru* divisions in the Central Asian region persisted precisely *because of* the efforts of the Soviet state to eradicate them from political and social life, rather than in spite of them. The Soviet crusade to eliminate clan divisions had an opposite effect: Kazakhs hid their clan affiliations, which are based on exchanged genealogical information and therefore not visible from the outside. Consequently, the place of residence, the collective farm (*kol-khoz* or *sovkhos*) for rural Kazakhs, became a public marker of identity and subethnic background.

The institution of *zheti ata*, *ru* and *zhuz* genealogies has experienced a rehabilitation since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Kazakhstan. This revitalisation of genealogical knowledge is widely discussed privately and semi-publicly in Internet forums, and in relatively independent newspapers and magazines. For some Kazakhs, *rushlydyq* only extends to actual kinship ties as well as kinship derived through marriage (*kuda*). However, many Kazakhs extend their clan-nish behaviour to fictive kin identities such as long-lasting friendships, school ties (*synyptastar/odnoklassniki*), and neighbourhood affiliations (*zherlester/zemlyaki*). This broader conception of *rushlydyk* has even extended to and is practised by Kazakhstani citizens of all ethnicities, not only ethnic Kazakhs (Kazakhstan is populated by more than 120 ethnicities, including Kazakhs, Russians, Uzbeks, Ukrainians, Germans, Tatars and Uyghurs).

*Rushlydyq* can help to secure access to various essential goods: economic, social or political. Minbaeva and Muratbekova-Touron (2013)

give examples of the use of kin connections to find a job for a relative or a friend. These examples are especially observable in state-owned companies. A popular joke circulating in Kazakhstan goes: ‘There are no love affairs in state-owned companies. Why? Because they are all relatives’. However, the influx of Western multinational companies has lessened the influence of clanism on managerial practices, especially in their subsidiaries.

Shatz (2004) describes in detail how *ru* or *zhuz* attachment can be a principal consideration in political patronage. Political appointments among Kazakhs often follow the logic of *rushyldyq*. For example, when a new mayor (*akim*) is appointed, he may replace the majority of the office staff with his kin relations. According to one unpublished study regarding attitudes towards clanism, around 45 per cent of respondents believed that kin connections were also important for the recruitment of deputies for *maslikhat* – local representative bodies (Mustafaev 2010). Incidentally, the concealability of *rushyldyq* helps to avoid the visible nepotism, since kin relations from the same *ru* are typically not public knowledge.

Attitudes towards *rushyldyq* are ambiguous even among Kazakhs. Some Kazakhs encourage mutual assistance among kin, maintaining that *rushyldyq* defines Kazakhness (*qazaqshylyq*) – that which distinguishes ethnic Kazakhs from other non-titular citizens of Kazakhstan (Russians, Uzbeks, Ukrainians, etc.). Other Kazakhs consider *rushyldyq* to be a ‘disease’, and a threat to the unity of Kazakhs as an ethnic group. Non-titular citizens of Kazakhstan and some outsiders typically regard it as abuse of power for the benefit of kin groups.

To study *rushyldyq* (and clanism in Kazakhstan and Central Asia in general), Western political scientists have used intensive and extensive ethnographic methods, interviews and focus group methods (Schatz 2004; Collins 2006). Minbaeva and Muratbekova-Touron (2013) have developed ‘clanism’ as a management concept and studied its implications for human resource management practices in Kazakhstan. They undertook a qualitative case research method based on several sources: formal interviews with human resources (HR) managers; informal conversations with Kazakhstani people; and the authors’ own personal experiences as Kazakhstani citizens. Hotho et al. (2013) used a vignette experiment to study the effects of clan ties on the recruitment and selection decisions made by managers in Kazakhstan. The scholars asked participants to impersonate a decision maker during a recruitment and selection process based on realistic situational descriptions (the vignettes), which contained the variables of interest.



Ironically, the use of *rushyldyq* is crucial for field researchers to gain the required trust from respondents and access to companies for research cases. Kazakhstani people are often apprehensive about participating in management research, particularly when a study touches upon sensitive issues, such as the influence of clan relations. However, they tend to be more comfortable participating if they trust the party conducting the study; in particular if an interviewer is perceived as *bizdiki* or *svoi* ('one of ours' in Kazakh and Russian, respectively). The following quotation from a respondent illustrates the general attitude of Kazakhstani people to interviews: 'If your friend had not asked me to meet you, I would never have spoken to you. I know that the director of the company values her a lot and trusts her. That's why I said "yes" [to the interview]'

### 3.5 **Yongo** (South Korea)

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*Yongo* describes personal or network ties in South Korea resulting from affiliation to an informally organised group. It derives its main cohesive power from strong particularistic ties, based on kin, educational institution (school/university), and region (Horak 2014: 87). In common with *yonjul* (see *inmaek*, 1.13 in this volume), the syllable *yon* means 'tie'. The syllable *go* infers that the bond exists for a certain reason, which is usually a mutual personal background that is regarded as the basis for *yongo* ties.

There are three traditional ties that are the foundations upon which *yongo* is established: first, kinship and blood ties (*hyulyon*), including ties to extended family members; second, ties to people from the same region or hometown (*jiyon*); and third, attendance of the same educational institution – high school, college or university – which represents *hakyon*. With regard to the latter, co-attendance is not a mandatory precondition for the development of a *yongo* tie: even if individuals attended the educational institution decades apart they share *hakyon*. These three forms of tie, either separately or in combination, represent bonds that last for life. *Yongo* is to a great extent preset and thus it is scarcely possible for outsiders to establish *yongo* ties. Two of the three ties – family (*hyulyon*) and region (*jiyon*) – are predetermined by birth, i.e. ascribed (Yee 2000, 2015; Lew 2013), and therefore cannot be influenced by the individual. The educational institution is the only affiliation that can be chosen, which explains its particular importance for social mobility and status. However, the importance of *alma mater* (*hakyon*) is a feature

of modernity and has only recently gained importance relative to high school ties, which are associated with family and region. In earlier times, people used to attend high school in the region in which they were born; hence *hakyon* based on high school ties was strongly predefined. Today, high school graduates are more inclined to choose a university away from their hometown. Such geographical and social mobility is a fairly recent phenomenon. Moreover it has to be mentioned that *hyulyon* can be acquired through marriage and *jiyon* through moving from one place to another. However, how strong or influential these ties are when quasi-voluntarily acquired remains an empirical questions for future research endeavours.

Lines of social demarcation were observed as early as the Choson period (c.1392–1910), in which the aristocratic rulers (the *Yangban* class), ‘grouped itself into mutually exclusive factions and clans that engaged in fierce rivalry. The fragmentation of the *Yangban* society along the line of scholarly association, kinship and region gave rise to purges and factional strife’ (Sik 2005: 84). These three camps separating communities from each other are the bases that define *yongo* and are still found today.

As *yongo* is predominantly ascribed, it is cause-based, immutable and irreversible (Horak 2016). *Yongo* networks are rather closed and exclusive. Although they can be (and frequently are) instrumentalised, in principle having *yongo* does not imply pursuing any purpose. *Yongo* is often a determinant in distinguishing between in- and out-groups. When people share *yongo*, proactive cooperation, flexibility, mutual understanding, tolerance, loyalty and trust prevail. In contrast, relationships with people who belong to a different *yongo* camp are rather oppositional, not considered worthy of care or dismissive. Y.-H. Kim notes that ‘outside the boundary ... people are treated as “non-persons” and there can be discrimination and even hostility’ (Kim 2000: 179).

The influence of *yongo* can be observed in contemporary politics and the business world in Korea. For instance, family ties (*hyulyon*), which represent one of the traditional pillars of *yongo*, include extended family members, meaning that the networks can be extensive. Although the large Korean business conglomerates (*chaebols*) are fiercely competitive, they are, surprisingly, interconnected by family matrimonial ties. According to Kim (2007), inter-family marriage is an important mechanism for establishing social ties and interdependencies among leading families. Indeed, 23 of the 30 largest Korean corporations are connected to each other through inter-marriage ties. Marriage ties are said to reinforce financial standing and strengthen the political status quo. Co-option

can be assumed to be the main mechanism for aligning interests in an efficient and effective way.

Ties based on regional origin (*jiyon*) are widespread in politics (Kim 2007; Horak 2015). Voting is strongly influenced by the regional origin of the candidate. Shim et al. (2008: 85) point out that, ‘many Koreans will vote for a political candidate, even if the person is less qualified, just because he or she attended the same school or came from the same region of the country’. Between 1948 and 2013, Korea had 10 presidents, 5 of which were born in the same region, the Kyungsang province in south-eastern Korea. Furthermore, approximately one-third of industry leaders, executives and government ministers were born in the same region (Kim 2007) (Table 3.5.1).

Increasingly, alumni ties (*hakyon*) are regarded as the most influential form of *yongo* ties. Possessing a degree from a prestigious, elite university with a large alumni base can potentially provide access to influential decision makers and hence can provide high-quality *yongo* ties that are useful in business or career development (Horak 2017). The possibility of being recruited by a top firm is greater than for graduates of other universities (Lee and Brinton 1996). Although Korea has 370 institutions of higher education (QS 2015), the elite universities are concentrated geographically in Seoul, Korea’s capital. Of these, three universities are considered the most prestigious: Seoul National University (SNU), Korea University and Yonsei University (commonly referred to as the SKY universities), with SNU being the most favoured. A disproportionately high number of Korean leaders of business and politics graduated from SNU

Table 3.5.1 Regional backgrounds of big business founders, business executives and government ministers (1991–5)

Region	Big business founders	Business executives	Government ministers
	%*		
Seoul	7	34	16
Kyonggi	9	7	4
Kyungsang	32	35	32
Cholla	11	6	16
Chungchong	10	8	23
Kangwon	3	4	2
Others	28	6	7

Source: Kim (2007: 31).

Note: \* rounded

Table 3.5.2 *Alma mater* of the big business executives and government officials (1991–6)

	<i>Seoul National University</i>	<i>Korea University</i>	<i>Yonsei University Military Academy</i>	<i>Other</i>
			%*	
Executive	37	9	11	1
Minister	53	7	–	10
Senior official	54	13	7	26
National Assembly member	32	10	3	4

Source: Kim (2007).

Note: \* rounded.

as did approximately 50 per cent of government ministers and senior officials. Moreover, approximately 30 per cent of business leaders, as well as members of the national assembly, belong to the large base of SNU alumni (Table 3.5.2).

It is hard to say whether the influence of *yongo* may persist or decline in the future. Current theoretical debates assume that the more a country advances economically and the more formal institutions stabilise (i.e. reliable courts and enforceable legislation), the less people feel the need to rely on informal relationships (Peng et al. 2008). The case of South Korea can contribute to this debate. Today South Korea is an advanced industrialised country, an established democracy that possesses stable formal institutions. Not only have informal networks such as *yongo* not disappeared (Kim 2000; Yee 2000, 2015; Lew 2013; Horak 2014), but their use may have intensified as the personal cost of a free market economy increases individual competition for jobs and careers. *Yongo* is said to provide a reliable base for actors to be ahead of the competition in the society. Renshaw shows that employees in Korea today believe that the ‘only way to succeed in this kind of society is through family, school or hometown cronies’ (Renshaw, 2011: 95) – in other words through *yongo* ties. Horak and Klein (2016) provide empirical evidence that *yongo* is still actively used in South Korea today. *Yongo* has thus persisted even in modern times and appears unlikely to decline, though its precise form may change as it continues to transform and adjust to modernity.

### 3.6 **Kumstvo** (Montenegro and the Balkans)

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*Kumstvo* (from *kum* a godfather, *kuma* – a godmother) is an informal network based on fictive kinship in Montenegro (a similar term associated with slightly different practices exists elsewhere in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia). *Kumstvo* is one of the most venerated social institutions in Montenegro, often described with the words ‘*kumstvo* is holy’ (*‘kumstvo je svetinja’*). *Kumstvo* plays a significant role in the informal ties that permeate Montenegrin society. *Kumovi*, just like blood relatives, are supposed to help each other and in most cases they do so in spite of formal bureaucratic ideals, thus often leading to nepotism.

*Kumstvo* is usually established by a person serving as a godparent, either in the baptism of a child or as a witness at a wedding, and thus is formally established through an official ceremony. Nevertheless, other means of initiating *kumstvo* that are not related to formal ceremonies are also described in the available literature. In contrast to other similar institutions e.g. Latin American *compadrazgo* (see 1.4 in this volume), Montenegrin *kumstvo* eschews hierarchical relations. After *kumstvo* has been established, all members of the nuclear families involved become *kumovi* (plural from, *kum* (m) or *kuma* (f)) to each other and are considered relatives for several generations (historically the relatedness could be counted up to the seventh degree (Tomašić 1948: 80)).

The choice of a *kumstvo* partner or *kum/kuma* is preferably made on the basis of prior friendship and *kumstvo* itself then serves as a formalisation of such friendship. Thus *kumovi* are usually best friends and *kumstvo* is a proof of a very deep and important relationship. However, an offer to become a *kum* even if it comes from someone who is not a close friend is considered an offer that should not be refused. An offer to become a *kum* is considered a great honour and grounds for pride. In almost all cases an offer of *kumstvo* to a previously unknown person is done through baptism of a child, and such cases clearly indicate the presence of vertical relationships that (similarly to godparenthood in other areas) require the godfather to take care of the godchild. *Kumstvo* can be established across religions (although not in accord with the Christian idea of godparenthood where the godparent should be a spiritual parent already experienced in the particular faith) at an event celebrating the first haircut of the child (called *šišano kumstvo*), or during the circumcision ceremony (only regarding boys) if the parents are Muslim.

The ideal basis of Montenegrin *kumstvo* is a prior affectionate connection between the would-be *kumovi* and therefore calculated cases of *kumstvo* offers are treated with some contempt. Nevertheless, because according to the tradition one is obliged to accept *kumstvo* offers, historical sources provide evidence of tactical usage of *kumstvo*, for example, a thief could offer *kumstvo* if caught in action, or a drowning man could offer it to oblige a passer-by to help him. Up to the end of the nineteenth century *kumstvo* was also widely used in the final phase of ending blood feuds as a means to seal relationships between previously feuding families (Boehm 1984: 136). Historical sources also describe the use of *kumstvo* for medical purposes, such as seeking a new *kum* if a child becomes sick. In such cases the parents would place the child at a crossroads and the first person to approach would be offered *kumstvo* (Hammel 1968: 43). The idea was that the choice of *kum* was left to destiny or God's will, and could bring about a change in the child's fortune. Contemporary *kumstvo*, however, rarely if ever has such tactical usage.

Similar institutions to *kumstvo* can be found elsewhere in the world. The term *kum* and derived terms associated with the process of becoming a *kum* are known across Eastern Europe (compare: *kummi* ('godmother' in Finnish), *kūms/kūma* (Latvian), *кум/кума* (Russian), *kmotor/kmotra* (Czech and Slovak), *kum/kuma* (Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian)). The particularities of the institution may differ from country to country, while in other societies a similar institution may be described by a different term. All Christian confessions have the institution of *godparenthood*: a person or a group of persons invited to become a spiritual parent of a newly baptised person. The number of godparents varies greatly, as does the role of the godparent in the life of the godchild.

The most well-known counterpart of *kumstvo* is *compadrazgo* (see 1.4 in this volume) in the Iberian peninsula and especially Latin America. *Compadrazgo* shares many essential features with Montenegrin *kumstvo*, however, these features vary from place to place in Latin America. Latin American *compadrazgo* is almost invariably created at a baptism of a child and establishes a strong bond between the three parties involved. Particularly important is the tie between the co-parents. Refusing an offer to become a *compadre* is almost impossible. Literature describes both vertical (class-external, mostly seeking a *compadre* from a higher social class) as well as horizontal (class-internal) choices of *compadre*. In some places, strategic choice of a *compadre* from an upper social class is treated with contempt (Mintz and Wolf 1950: 359), while in other cases it is a common guiding principle. The *compadre* can be chosen either from among relatives or from people who are not kin; again, preferences vary regionally. Although the

Latin American tradition of *compadrazgo* has undeniable roots in Europe and Christianity, some authors (e.g. Mintz and Wolf 1950: 353; Halbich 2010) point out that the pre-Columbian Aztecs may have had a similar institution with very similar implications.

The functionality of *kumstvo* (as well as *compadrazgo*) is almost invariably linked with the possibility of extending one's network of support and allegiance beyond that of kin relations. A person born in Montenegro finds themselves embedded in various networks that tend to define not only personal affiliations, but quite often political alliances too. An individual belongs to a particular linguistic and religious group, family (patrilineage or *bratstvo*), and geographic area. None of these can be changed by the individual to suit his or her particular life-course. Thus, *kumstvo* can provide a means of breaking away from the rigid frames of the prescribed networks. Because *kumstvo* is not exclusively a Christian endeavour, *kumstvo* links can be created across national and religious borders if necessary.

*Kumstvo* depends on and reinforces the strength of kin relations as a structuring element of Montenegrin society. Since the tendency of the modern bureaucratic nation-state is to minimise the importance of kin relations in society, *kumstvo* and obligations of mutual help have a strong potential of conflict with the bureaucratic principles of governance. It is therefore often associated with nepotism and political corruption, and is invariably interpreted in relation to the functioning of the state (see e.g. Tomašić 1948: 80; Mintz and Wolf 1950: 346).

The flourishing of *kumstvo* in Montenegro and surrounding areas can be seen as related to the historical nature and trajectory of the state in these countries. As with other Eastern European countries, the Montenegrin state has been subject to considerable political, geographical and ideological upheavals throughout its history. In this context, trust in state institutions tends to be comparatively low, while trust in traditional forms and principles of organising day-to-day business (including *kumstvo*) is often much higher. A person who has a wide and well-integrated group of blood and fictive relatives has much better prospects in life than a person who lacks it. Having a *kum*, just like having a relative or simply an acquaintance, is not necessarily a source of abuse in every case of dealing with state bureaucracies and similar interactions, but on average will put a person in a better position. As a result, residents of Montenegro who have recently migrated from other areas (e.g. Kosovo) and whose relatives and *kumovi* have stayed behind may typically complain of a lack of general support that reduces chances of success compared to long-term residents. With time, this problem is remedied by

inter-marriage and in particular by means of *kumstvo* – the latter being more flexible and more reliant on the networking capabilities of the particular individual rather than on his or her ascribed status (Boehm 1984: 171; Sedlenieks 2013: 136–41).

In contrast to membership of a family group or *bratstvo* that is advertised publicly via one's surname, *kumstvo* relations are not generally public knowledge. Helping one's relatives is a fundamental obligation for most people in Montenegro, but it is publicly suspicious if an office starts to be filled with people sharing the same surname. *Kumstvo* is more concealed (although it is by no means a secret), but cooperation between *kumovi* may be even more intense and trustworthy. Knowledge of who is whose *kum* can therefore provide an insight into internal alliances that might not be visible at the surface. Investigative journalists in the Montenegrin media often draw on such knowledge when they describe formally undefined relations among government officials or politicians and other influential players.

### 3.7 ***Azganvan popokhutyun*** (Armenian diaspora in Georgia)

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*Azganvan popokhutyun* (literally meaning 'changing of surname') is the practice of name-changing by ethnic Armenians, who adopt Georgian names in order to gain ethnicity-based advantages. A similar practice exists among ethnic Georgians, *gvaris gadaketeba*, which literally means 'surname alteration' in Georgian. These practices of socially constructed ethnicity change, whereby a surname loses one suffix and acquires another, have been observed during numerous periods of ethnic tension in the region from the second half of the eighteenth century to the post-Soviet era. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the practice has been particularly widespread among ethnic Armenians residing in Georgia, although the issues of swinging ethnicity are at the core of disputes between Armenian and Georgian historians. Swinging ethnicity is a controversial aspect of the historical narratives of national identity that lay foundations for the statehood in the countries of the former Soviet Union.

From one's birth, the surname constitutes an important part of an individual identity. Surname change takes place all over the world: an individual may change their surname for many reasons, most commonly associated with marriage or adoption of a 'professional name' to ensure



uniqueness or effective ‘branding’. *Azganvan popokhutyun* – surname change as a means of hiding one’s ethnic origin and adopting a new identity – is a subset of such general practices, observable in many countries around the world. An informal practice of surname change emerges when a significant number of individuals from an ethnic minority change their surnames to those that are more representative of the ethnic majority, to confront or comply with the invisible constraints of political regimes.

As a response to the ‘external pressure’, surname change can be associated with a sense of personal loss, in as much as the surname represents an important attribute of personal identity to the individual (Arai and Thoursie 2009: 129). However, in the face of ethnic discrimination, surname change can allow one to avoid an even greater cost of ‘existential isolation’ – isolation from ‘moral resources’ that are important ‘to live a full and satisfying existence’ (Giddens 1991: 9). Another perspective on surname change is that of ‘place-identity’, which is defined as, ‘those dimensions of self that define the individual’s personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, values, goals, preferences, skills and behavioural tendencies relevant to a specific environment’ (Proshansky 1978: 155). Intolerance towards one’s ethnic origin can damage one’s place-identity, and surname change can become the means of restoring it.

The first evidence of practices of surname change in Georgia dates from the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1783, the Treaty of Georgievsk established Georgia as a protectorate of Russia. From this time a trend of changing Georgian surname suffixes, such as *-shvili* to the Russian form *-ov* emerged, and continued up to the beginning of the twentieth century (Akhuashvili 2005: 43). For example, in the 1890s the Georgian surname Markarashvili was registered as Markarov. The Armenian Church baptised Markarovs as Armenians, while Armenian landowners in Georgia would change the Georgian surnames of the locals to Armenian ones (Akhuashvili 2005: 82–3, 504). This was seemingly as an attempt to expand the ‘official’ Armenian population in the region and accorded with Russian policy, which concentrated on diluting Georgian ethnic identity.

There are a number of controversies over Armenian and Georgian surnames, which have a common stem, but different suffixes. For instance, the following surnames have Armenian/Russian/Georgian suffixes respectively: Torosyan/Torozov/Torozashvili; Khechikyan/Krechikov/Khechikashvili; Kirakosyan/Kirakosov/Kirakozashvili. The Armenian surnames take the suffix *-yan* (sometimes also transliterated

as *-ian*), while the suffix *-shvili* is Georgian. Similarly, while Badalian is an Armenian surname, Badalashvili is Georgian.

An interesting controversy exists over the stem *Badal*, an Arabic word meaning 'equivalence'. According to Georgian sources, the surname Badalashvili first appeared in the Georgian village of Koda in 1873 (Akhvashvili 2005: 274). An Armenian church was proactive there, resulting in many Georgians being baptised by Armenian priests as Armenians, with subsequent changes to surnames, including Badalashvili, modified to accommodate the suffix *-ov* or *-yan* to the stem. This process is reported to have reached its peak in 1886 (Akhvashvili 2005: 173–4, 186–7, 274). However, Armenian sources provide a different story, suggesting that Badalyan is an Armenian surname in its own right, rather than an adaptation of the Georgian version. For instance, in the case of the surname Badalyan, 'Badal' itself was a widespread name in Armenia during the eighteenth century, which suggests that the surname Badalyan was derived from this first name (Durgaryan, 1985: 23).

Another controversy concerns the Catholics resident in the Javakheti region of Georgia, just north of Armenia, which has an Armenian ethnic majority. In the post-Soviet period the region has demanded greater political autonomy within Georgia, and some Armenian nationalist groups have even called for a transfer to Armenia. Armenian ethnographers and historians (Melqonyan 2003 in Avakian 1994) document that these Catholics came to Georgia from Western Armenia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Georgian church, it is alleged, forced Armenian Catholics to change their religion over the period 1860–80, while the then-government of Georgia re-categorised Armenian Catholics as Georgians through incentives, threats and terror. Some Armenian Catholics in the Javakheti region changed their surnames by adding Georgian suffixes such as *'-dze'* or *'-shvili'* to their Armenian surname stems, while others chose to preserve their national identity by retaining the Armenian form of the surname (Simavoryan and Hovyan 2009: 11–12, 16). In contrast, Georgian scholars such as Javakhashvili (2005) and Akhvashvili (2005: 111–12) claim that the Catholic Armenians of Javakheti had originally been Georgians, but changed their surnames into Armenian ones. They accuse the Russian Empire of 'Armenianising' the Georgian Catholic church by acting through Armenian Catholic clergymen, who were encouraged to give Armenian names to the Georgian Catholics after baptism. Furthermore, the Catholic population of eight villages of the Javakheti region categorised themselves as Armenians, despite formally being of Georgian origin (Mamulia 1999).

The practice of *azganvan popokhutyun* re-surfaced in the 1990s following the fall of the Soviet Union. Many Armenians living in Georgia adopted Georgian surnames to cope with discriminatory policies towards ethnic minorities pursued by the first Georgian government (1991–2). Armenians, Azeris, Greeks and Ossetians were all affected (Komakhia 2008). The nationalistic rhetoric of the government led to the de facto oppression of ethnic minorities. Despite the nationalistic course being abandoned by subsequent governments, the exodus of ethnic minorities continued due to fear and uncertainty. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, there have been significant changes in the proportion of ethnic minorities in the population count of Georgia. Thus, according to the last Soviet 1989 census data, ethnic minorities comprised 30 per cent of the population, but in the 2002 census this figure fell to 16 per cent (Statistical State Department of Georgia 1989, 2003).

Surname change reflecting ethnicity takes place in other parts of the world. There is evidence of Jewish and Italian surnames being changed to American surnames in the USA during the 1900s. American students at the University of Copenhagen tended to adopt abbreviated names because of the ‘pressure of environment’ (Drury and McCarthy, 1980). Arai and Thoursie (2009) have documented the surname change of Asian, African and Slavic immigrants in Sweden during the 1990s.

Borkowski (1963) studied the patterns of Polish surname changes in the USA, where the most frequent was one of complete ‘substitution’ of one surname by another, e.g. Czarnecki to Scott, Borkowski to Nelson. Another pattern was ‘subtraction’, when the ending of the surname was dropped, e.g. Bolanowski became Bolan, Adamski – Adams, and so on. The third pattern was translation of the literal meaning of the Polish surname into English, e.g. Krolewski into King, Zimotrowicz into Winters.

The reasons for Polish Americans changing their surnames included ‘spelling and pronunciation errors’ and the ‘confusion and embarrassment’ caused by surname errors (Zagraniczny 1963). ‘Business reasons’ was another factor cited – for instance, one respondent stated that his Polish name confused his customers. Generally, simple names, short and easy to remember, were preferred in order to ‘facilitate business transactions’. Another reason for ‘Americanising’ a Polish surname was to hide the individual’s Polish origins. The rationale behind the ‘Americanisation’ of surnames would appear to be the desire to be fully integrated in American society, although more research is needed in order to fully understand the motives of those involved. Finally, and relatedly, Zagraniczny’s study found 64 cases where Polish professionals such as teachers changed their surnames to increase their chances of career advancement.

According to Armenian electronic media sources (such as [armarlur.com](http://armarlur.com), [archive.ankakh.com](http://archive.ankakh.com), [artsakhnews.am](http://artsakhnews.am)), some Armenians residing in Georgia in the post-Soviet period also changed their surnames in order to help their advancement in the labour market, believing that, even after the change of the first nationalistic government, they would be more likely to succeed in the labour market with Georgian surnames.

### 3.8 ***Wantoks and kastom*** (Solomon Islands, Melanesia)

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The *wantok* system in the Solomon Islands, and the Melanesian countries more broadly, strongly links to the practices of group identity and belonging, reciprocity, and caring for one's relatives. It is a term used to express patterns of relationships that link people in families, tribes, islands, provinces, nationality and even more superficially at greater Melanesian sub-regional aggregates. Various aspects of the *wantok* system are called different names by distinct language groups in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Nevertheless, the word *wantok* originates from the English words 'one talk', which literally means in Melanesian pidgin (*Tok Pisin*, *Pijin* and *Bislama*), speakers of the same language.

*Wantok* is an identity perception at the macro level and a social capital concept at the micro and family levels, especially in rural communities. It signifies a setting demanding cooperation, caring and reciprocal support, and a shared attachment to locality. It consists of a web of relationships, norms and codes of behaviour (*kastom*) that maintains group security and stability and distinguishes one group from another (Nanau 2011). Renzio (1999: 19) defined the *wantok* system as

the set of relationships (or a set of obligations) between individuals characterised by some or all of the following: (a) common language (*wantok* = one talk), (b) common kinship group, (c) common geographical area of origin, (d) common social associations or religious groups, and (e) common belief in the principle of mutual reciprocity.

*Wantok* and *kastom* are attributes of Melanesian societies that both unite groups of people with a sense of identity and rhetorical common objectives but also distinguish them from others.

To appreciate the practice of *wantokism*, it is necessary to comprehend how local communities organise themselves and how *kastom*

and cultures are employed in intra-groups and inter group relationships. A very good way of perceiving the *wantok* network is as a picture of many small boxes in a bigger box where the bigger picture does not necessarily depict the status and condition of the smaller components, which may or may not relate to the bigger picture. Distinct *wantok* groups as clans and speakers of the same language present a formidable force for identity continuity and differences, even in the face of rapid social change. At the local level, a *wantok* connotes affective, moral relationships and claims to certain resource rights such as those over land, gardening areas and fishing grounds. *Wantoks* in this category determine one's rights to existence and support and depend on the group to which the person belongs and affiliations of that person's blood family. Narokobi (1980) argues that *wantok* gives a new meaning to the word community. It is common to regard people under a particular 'clan leader' (*bigman*, Sahlins 1963) as *wantoks* at the local level.

The smaller distinct *wantok* groups normally trace their origins to common ancestors. The common ancestral connection is the basic building block of what researchers now call a local *wantok* unit. A person's claim to a piece of land is usually determined by his or her ancestral connections with the land concerned. Ascription to a common ancestor thus brings claims to land and properties of the *wantok* group, and it also requires group cooperation, often cemented by the act of reciprocity. Reciprocity plays an important part in maintaining cordial relationship within *wantok* groups at the basic level. This could be in the form of food produce, the making of shelters, vegetable gardens, hunting and fishing catches, bride-prize (dowry) payments and land settlements. Giving and receiving are two sides of the reciprocity coin in Melanesia.

The 'spirit of the gift' entrenched in *wantok* is more of a 'you scratch my back and I scratch yours' understanding. Bugotu (1968: 68) succinctly described it:

Gratefulness, sharing and giving are a way of life, accepted and practiced almost unconsciously by all. When I give, I have the satisfaction of giving in a continuation of friendly relations. I wouldn't expect a verbal 'thank you' [or immediate reciprocation] because thankfulness is seen in deeds rather than in words.

One person gives and does not receive payment, although (s)he knows that his/her giving will be returned when (s)he needs the support of his/her *wantok* members. Giving and reciprocating goods and services

(physical work) is a way of caring and uniting, especially through festivities such as ‘feasts, gift exchanges, dances, and ... ceremonies celebrated to mark stages in the growth of individuals, their births, deaths and marriages’ (Belshaw 1947: 5).

Apart from these *kastoms* developing goodwill and cooperation, there are also instances where divisions and competitions occur that drive *wantok* groups apart. In both intra- and inter-*wantok* relationships, respect expressed through reciprocal gestures of goodwill and honest dealings by leaders is an acceptable norm. Each *wantok* group is happy when it is respected and its territories not infiltrated by external forces and groups. Accordingly, successive governments of the Solomon Islands since independence in 1978 were conscious of this and often made decisions claiming to be in the interest of national unity and stability by appearing to address national needs but de facto on provincial and *wantok* lines (Nanau 2016). LiPuma and Meltzoff (1990) claim that ‘[t]he various Solomon Islands were joined not because they bore any inherent relationship or because their peoples desired to be united, but for reasons foreign and external’ (LiPuma and Meltzoff 1990: 83). More directly, Kabutaulaka (1998: 33) explained that the post-colonial nation-state of the Solomon Islands exercises authority over boundaries carved during the colonial era.

The further one uses *wantok* away from the local towards the national, the greater the system changes from being a subsistence and livelihood buffer, to one of exploitation and corruption. This explains the identity and allegiance predicament demonstrated by the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIP) during the 1998–2003 ethnic crises. Police officers who were supposed to be impartial took sides instead of protecting all citizens. Arms that were supposed to be used for the protection of citizens were used against them. A good number of Guadalcanal and Malaita Police officers ignored their national duties and affiliated themselves with militant fighters from their *wantok* groups (SIG 2001). This was due to the strength of *wantok* affiliations over national considerations. The existence of very strong internal bonds among and between *wantok* groups nationally affects efforts towards a united and stable Solomon Islands.

The above discussions on *wantok* and *kastom* also convey an unequal system that supports the interests of certain individuals. This is more pronounced in relation to the formal state. In the modern government setting, the *wantok* system is often associated with nepotism and the use of one’s personal connections to secure public service jobs at the expense of equal opportunity and meritocracy. Cockayne (2004)

explained that *wantoks* could use their positions of influence to protect their own, as when police officers block or frustrate investigations involving close relatives (Cockayne 2004: 20). Appeals to *kastom* could be the scapegoat for letting a *wantok* member off the hook. Others argue that because it promotes the traditionally noble act of reciprocity, politics is currently being administered poorly because of tribal, ethnic and clan loyalties (Rynkiewich 2000). Those who progress through the government hierarchies thanks to the *wantok* system have usurped the space for meritocracy.

In urban areas, at the personal and household level, a commitment to the *wantok* attributes of caring, sharing and looking out for others' needs is increasingly difficult because city life engages with the cash economy on a daily basis. The *Solomon Times Online* newsletter (2008) highlighted the negative effects of unemployed families relying on other *wantoks* in Honiara for their children's school fees, food and other needs. A 'frustrated' person who experienced the demands of such



**Figure 3.8.1** *Wantok* groups contributing and reciprocating the earlier assistance and generosity of other *wantok* groups in local Guadalcanal community, Solomon Islands. Taken in Tathimboko, District of Guadalcanal.

Source: Author. © William Nanau.

a network while trying to make ends meet for his family made the following statements on the negative impact of *wantoks* in Honiara; 'I think the system is making us very poor, and we will continue to be poor if we encourage it' (*Solomon Times Online* 2008).

The concepts of *wantok* and *kastom* are important for understanding informal networks in the Solomon Islands and Melanesia more broadly. The history of the Solomon Islands' integration into the global economy directly links to continuities and changes to the *wantok* system and networks at the local level. The *wantok* groups' attachments to each other, and within themselves, changes from that of a reciprocal redistributive buffer to that of exploitation and political expediency the further one moves away from the village. Despite the changes brought about by colonisation and now globalisation, *wantok* identities and *kastom* are maintained and continue to be the norms of operation at the village level. Cultural *wantok* concepts and attributes such as *kastom* influence other aspects of development, particularly those related to opportunities, security, stability and access to government resources. It is the 'invisible hand' in livelihoods, governance and development in the Solomon Islands and Melanesia more generally.

### 3.9 ***Bapakism*** (Indonesia)

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*Bapak*, which literally means 'father', is a term used to denote the patriarchal role of men in every aspect of life in Indonesia. *Bapakism* was particularly prevalent under President Suharto's regime, a 32-year period of dictatorship that lasted from 1965 to 1997. Suharto was known as the 'Father of (National) Development' (*Bapak Pembangunan*) in Indonesia. He introduced several Javanese principles into national life, and in so doing influenced both formal and informal practices in Indonesian society (Vickers 2005).

Historically, the term *bapakism* refers to a patriarchy in which society respected its elders and their opinions, pronouncements and decisions. Being a *bapak* can mean not only being the father of a family, but also the head of a formal or informal organisation, and the mentality of *bapakism* informs all aspects of life from the social, political and cultural to religious relationships. Indonesia comprises a number of ethnicities (more than 300 ethnicities are documented in literature), but *bapakism* is derived from Javanese culture in particular. Javanese is one



of the largest ethnicities, and over time its traditions have significantly influenced the behaviours of the people in Indonesia. Koentjaraningrat (1985) notes that being a leader in the Javanese culture system means being concerned with familism (*kekeluargaan*) which Irawanto et al. (2012) confirm is a crucial part of a *bapak's* identity.

The role of a *bapak* specifically demands obedience, in particular from those of lower status – defined by being younger in age, junior in work status, or culturally ascribed as having lower status in formal relationships. In formal contexts, *bapakism* requires both obedience and flattery from subordinates, which is reflected in all aspects of bureaucratic relationships. Ideally, a *bapak* is the person who is considered to be the most knowledgeable and therefore has legitimacy. However, it is not uncommon for *bapaks* to make unwise decisions because of the informal social rules governing expectations and obligations to which subordinates are forced to comply. The prescribed relationship prevents subordinates from advising against or remedying poor decisions made by their *bapak*. It is forbidden in Javanese culture to question a *bapak's* decision under any circumstances. The reality is that the cultural norms of *bapakism* mean that subordinates are inclined to speak only in ways that will please the *bapak*, even to the extent of withholding the truth. Being a *bapak* also demands the display of a paternalistic leadership style (Irawanto et al. 2013), which includes demonstrating authoritarian acts to display knowledge and in order to be seen as a credible leader. This kind of relationship is defined by concepts of hierarchy and demand. In the public sector at the present time, this hierarchical structure can still be readily identified with regard to the civil servants who hold high positions and thus, for example, are obliged to respect the city mayor's decisions because the city mayoral position has political status. Often decisions taken at local level are out of line with government planning, but due to the respect demanded by the *bapak* – whatever the consequences – the civil servants comply. This behaviour is also found in relations between civil servants and business, and commonly this practice leads to collusion and nepotism for personal fulfilment (Pye 1999).

In Indonesia, being in a position of authority automatically imbues the holder with power, and because the *bapakism* culture is so embedded, it becomes inevitable that even well-intentioned power holders take on the behaviours attributed to a *bapak* (Lubis 2001). As a consequence, during the dictatorship of President Suharto (who described himself as a Javanese King), all participants in the government were obliged to obey the President at all times and in all situations. This frequently led to

behaviour termed '*asal bapak senang*', which literally means 'as long as the father is happy', and influenced every aspect of life from the political to the business sector. In a region where Javanese customs of life, moral deeds and etiquette are still practised, for example, in reporting the completion of assignments, the subordinates in order to show high respect to the leader only report the good (Vickers 2005).

*Bapakism* has been described as 'loyalty to a hierarchical structure of authority' (Koentjaraningrat 1985). In a working environment, such cultural norms are at their worst when they result in blind submission to the higher authority and present as a lack of concern about work performance, standards or initiative. Javanese culture strives for a system that encourages harmony, trust and deference and one that motivates the subordinate to work diligently to obtain the superior's goals. Here the word 'diligently' is not equated with achieving high standards, as the main aim is to keep the *bapak* happy and complete the task given by the *bapak*.

In a culture in which loyalty to a hierarchical structure of authority is highly valued, followers have a tendency to try to please their superiors, regardless of the fact that they frequently have no precise idea of what their superiors want (Caraka 1988). They remain untroubled by this as the cultural norm leads them to believe that their superiors have divinely inspired knowledge and abilities. Those in a position of superiority in this culture are able to control others thanks to the requirement for respect demanded of their position in the hierarchy of the organisation and, more generally, in their positions in society, regardless of their sophistication, actual competence, or technical ability. Complaints about superiors simply don't occur because of the belief that such action would result in semi-divine retribution. The cultural norm demands that the superior with their position and knowledge is always right. Subordinates rarely lose respect for, or argue with a superior if they make a mistake; and equally, the superior remains indifferent, as the ultimate goal is concern with his own status and the deference paid to him.

In contemporary society the application of *bapakism* is becoming less common. National reforms starting in 1997 were the catalyst for moving from an authoritarian regime towards democracy. The political movement is progressively leading to greater transparency in all aspects of formal life. People are increasingly basing their decisions on reason, and as reforms start to influence all aspects of national life, there is a growing awareness that conforming to *bapakism* means extending the application of unhealthy collusion and nepotism to daily life and realising that at its worst it may lead to corruption.

Since the start of the reforming era, corruption in Indonesia has been known by the acronym KKN (corruption, collusion and nepotism). The legacy of 32 years of the Soeharto dictatorship left practices of the *bapakism* culture rooted mostly in the civil service. However, the new era has been marked by the establishment of many corruption watch organisations who take part in national development and have helped bring about an era of greater transparency (Hamilton-Hart 2001). As a consequence, in contemporary society *bapakism* tends increasingly to be restricted to being used only when showing respect to the elders of organisations.

## Closed community lock-in

### 3.10 *Krugovaia poruka* (Russia and Europe)

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Joint responsibility, in one form or another, is characteristic of any society where state capacity and the reach of its law enforcement agencies are limited. In those circumstances local communities have to improvise their own ways of preserving law and order. Sometimes they act in the interests of higher authority, but sometimes they defend their communities *against* that authority's attempts to extend its jurisdiction and 'interfere' with their traditional communal practices.

Early medieval England offers an example: in the smaller townships (*villata*) free males aged 12 and over were required to belong to a tithing, and to take an oath, or francpledge, to maintain local law and order and the 'king's peace'. Each tithing had its own 'chief-pledge' or 'elder'. The members were divided into groups of 10 or 12. Much is obscure about their operation, because their members were all illiterate, and even their existence can be adduced only from sheriffs' records. If a felony was committed, for example, a murder or a cattle theft, members of the tithing were required to raise a 'hue and cry', find the culprit and deliver him to the king's justice. Similarly they were required to provide for defence against brigands. When they failed they could be fined collectively: the tithing was responsible as a whole, not individually. Sheriffs checked regularly that every free adult male in a community was fulfilling his duty in a tithing, so their function was evidently considered important (Pollock and Maitland 1968: 268–71).

According to Jerome Blum, village communities of collective responsibility emerged in most European countries during the Middle

Ages, were dominant for several centuries, then began to weaken in the eighteenth century, and faded away with the growing penetration of central and local government institutions during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was 'simultaneously an economic community, a fiscal community, a mutual-assistance community, a religious community, the defender of peace and order within its boundaries, and the guardian of the public and private morals of its residents' (Blum 1971: 542). Typically, it had a collegially organised council of 'chosen' or 'best' people, headed by an elder (*Schultheiss* or *Ammann*), which took decisions as far as possible by consensus. It also had a court, often composed of the same people, to adjudicate disputes and to judge criminal cases. Its priority was to preserve the peace, order and economic viability of the community rather than to observe laws strictly. In dividing up responsibilities among households its guiding principle was requiring from each household what it had the resources to fulfil (*Hausnotdurft*, Blicke 1991).

The community of joint responsibility was obviously useful to higher authorities in ensuring that low-level administrative functions were carried out. At times of crisis, though, these communities could become the seedbed of rebellion. Whole communities could apply the principle of *Hausnotdurft* to their own needs: they came to believe they had a right to self-defence against excessive landlords' demands or threats to their rights and property, especially if these were not sanctioned by tradition, by asserting that violations of this principle were an offence against God's law (Blicke 1981).

In France the collective responsibility of village communities lay at the foundation of the monarchical *ancien régime* as late as the eighteenth century. Hilton Root, who has studied peasant institutions in Burgundy, believes that they were in a sense more democratic than the reformed institutions that were set up after 1789. The village assembly typically handled the collective financial liability of the community for royal and municipal taxes and the mortgaging of communal property. It also took all the main decisions required by open-field farming: crop rotation, the timing of the harvest, the use of common land, the management of cattle, the upkeep of roads and bridges. For this purpose it elected an elder (*échevin*) who oversaw the operations and liaised with higher authorities. Seigneurs and royal officials would try to insist that all heads of household participated in the deliberations of the village assemblies, so that they should not be dominated either by the wealthier households or by narrow clannish interests (Root 1987: 66–72).

In Russia the term *krugovaia poruka*, literally ‘circular surety’, was used to describe the functioning of analogous local institutions. In the nineteenth century the Slavophiles and later the *Narodniki* argued that the principle of communal democratic governance and mutual aid embodied in them was peculiar to Russia. That is not really the case: what had happened is that such institutions survived later than elsewhere. It could be argued, though, that Russia had special need of communities of joint responsibility: its land was abundant but relatively infertile and much of it was situated at the northernmost extremity of viable agriculture. It was a highly risk-prone environment, especially if one considers that most urban and rural buildings were constructed of wood and hence posed a fire hazard. It made sense to spread risk as widely as possible and to ensure that in case of a poor harvest or a major conflagration the whole community was required to help those who had suffered most severely.

From the earliest times collective surety developed in rural and urban communities as a way of ensuring that (a) local law and order was upheld, (b) taxes were collected and paid to an official, (c) recruits were available for the army as needed. Rulers took a direct interest in their operation. The earliest mention of joint responsibility comes in *Russkaia pravda*, in which communities are fined as a whole for crimes committed on their territory. In Muscovy fines were jointly levied if excise or tavern duties were not paid (Brokgauz and Efron 1895: 836–9; Dewey 1988).

Given the hazards of Russian agriculture, the normal procedure was to divide open fields into strips, so that each household had a share in the different kinds of soil available. From the seventeenth century the population grew and land became scarcer in certain regions; accordingly, it became common practice to periodically redistribute the strips as households grew or declined in size. Then the liability for taxes and other dues, which were imposed by landlords or state officials on the whole community, would be redistributed proportionately among households, so that the largest or wealthiest would bear the largest share. If any household fell behind on its payments, then the others had to make up the difference. For that reason villagers were inclined to look askance on any behaviour that might impoverish, endanger or bring disrepute on the whole community. Drunkenness would be frowned upon, as it degraded the work capacity of the drinker. Sexual irregularities likewise, as they could disrupt households.

The communal assembly was democratic, in that it represented all households, but paradoxically it was also authoritarian, in that it

tended to be dominated by the more affluent villagers or by older males. Russian village communities also bore responsibility for welfare provision, for maintaining village infrastructure and for keeping peace and order in their lands. When serious crime took place, it was incumbent on the whole community to find and apprehend the criminal and bring him to justice, either in a community court, or by delivering him to higher authorities. If conflict between individuals or households became violent, the community as a whole was expected to stop the fighting, limit the damage and ensure restitution took place in such a way as to minimise the harm to the common interest. If the community failed in any of these obligations, then higher authorities could impose penalties on them collectively (Robinson 1932; Danilova and Danilov 1996: 22–39; Milov 1998: 418–23; Hosking 2004: 47–62; Ledeneva 2004: 85–108; Dennison 2011: chap. 4). ‘Joint responsibility’ affected Russian peasants’ attitude to all social institutions: authority, law, property and tradition. They regarded the land as belonging to God, which implied that it should be available to all who needed it and could work it, together with their dependents.

The mentalities associated with joint responsibility persisted in Russia long after *krugovaia poruka* was officially abolished in 1903, indeed well into the Soviet period. The concept of personal duty or legal responsibility tended to remain diffused in the collective. Lower-level collectives arose whose members both acted as a channel for commands from above, yet also as a means of unobtrusive resistance when those commands were uncongenial. Members covered up each other’s transgressions. Party secretaries would bring with them to any new appointment their trusted associates from the underground or civil war. They would then dig themselves into the new authority structures and protect each other against investigations or reprimands from higher up. At the party Central Committee of February–March 1937 Stalin’s accusations of nepotism (*semeistvennost’*) reflected this survival of *krugovaia poruka* into an apparently incongruous milieu (Ledeneva 1995; Easter 2000: chs 2–4).

### 3.11 ***Janteloven/Jantelagen*** (Scandinavia)

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*Janteloven* is a term that describes a set of norms, which state that ‘one should never try to be more, try to be different, or consider oneself as

more valuable than others' (Bromgard et al. 2014: 375). These norms are embodied in informal practices that confer negative attitudes towards individuality, individual self-expression and measures of success. These practices can take many forms across a range of social settings. In a business and work environment it may be seen in the condemnation of new ideas and the reluctance to voice those ideas; in a school setting it may pertain to serving the needs of average and low-skilled students, while neglecting the needs of talented students; in public life it may refer to voiced disapproval of material displays of success (Avant and Knutsen 1993–4: 456; Stigsgaard 2005; Lelner and Fabler 2008c). Common to these examples is the disapproval of individualism, independent thought and the overall support for a homogenous, egalitarian collectivity.

The term was first coined by Danish-Norwegian author Aksel Sandemose in his book *En flygtning krydser sit spor* (1933/1994). Inspired by his own upbringing in the small town of Nykøbing Mors, Denmark, Sandemose depicted the upbringing of a young boy in the fictional town of Jante who experienced immense pressure to conform to the peasant life of its inhabitants. By studying the behaviour of the villagers, the author codified the norms of the small society into 10 commandments reminiscent of the Biblical 10 Commandments, and named them *janteloven* (Sandemose 1994: 76). They read as follows (emphasis added):

1. Thou shalt not believe that thou *art* something.
2. Thou shalt not believe that thou art as good as *us*.
3. Thou shalt not believe that thou art more than *us*.
4. Thou shalt not fancy thyself better than *us*.
5. Thou shalt not believe thou knowest more than *us*.
6. Thou shalt not believe thou art greater than *us*.
7. Thou shalt not believe that thou art a worthwhile human being.
8. Thou shalt not laugh at *us*.
9. Thou shalt not believe that anyone is concerned with thee.
10. Thou shalt not believe thou canst teach *us* anything.

The function of these laws is to subdue the individual to the community. The spiteful linguistic framing of the norms by Sandemose reflects his own opposition to *janteloven*, which he believed drained the spirit and motivation of individuals.

While the practice exists in Denmark and Norway as *janteloven*, it is known in Sweden as *jantelagen*. It has been claimed that the same norms and practices, although not identified by a specific name, are



**Figure 3.11.1** Commemorative plaque at Sandemose's birthplace in Nykøbing Mors.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sandemose\\_Janteloven.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sandemose_Janteloven.jpg). © Poul Krogsgård.

present in other Nordic societies such as Finland (Booth 2015: 242). The Greek mythology concepts of *hubris* and *nemesis* express similar ideas (Sprognævnet 2004). Sandemose claimed that *janteloven* applied not only to small communities within Denmark, but identified it as a specific



trait of human nature that had the possibility of flourishing in any society (Sandemose 1933/1994: 15). However, those who practise it seldom clarify what is meant by the term, which poses challenges when investigating its supposed influence. Some consider it a social practice, while others use it as a label for a specific set of norms. The ambiguity of the term is also recognised in public. According to a survey conducted by a Danish newspaper in 2008, half of the Danish population believed that *janteloven* was often rhetorically misused as an excuse by people who were experiencing a lack of success (Lelner and Fabler 2008b).

There has been little academic research on *janteloven* in its own right. This is likely due to the conceptual imprecision of a term loaded with meanings and controversies, as well as the elusive character of these practices, which do not easily lend themselves to scientific research. Nevertheless, the term has been used in an academic context to explain social relations in Scandinavia: it has been suggested that as a set of norms and informal practices it plays a role in Scandinavian society. Some scholars have considered it a useful label for describing socially acceptable and appropriate behaviours in Norway (Avant and Knutsen 1993–4). In this case *janteloven* reflects larger societal norms of conformity. Norwegian society is highly homogenous and egalitarian with a considerable emphasis on societal solidarity. The extensive welfare state reflects this solidarity as it tries to eliminate poverty through welfare redistribution and social benefits. In the context of this research *janteloven* functions as a label for the underlying norms explaining these modern developments, while also being used as a social tool to ensure that people stay within the boundaries that serve the community and do not set out on an independent trajectory.

The strong emphasis on community serves to ensure its continued existence, while at the same time limiting those who dare to stand out. It can be problematic for creative and innovative persons, who may be discouraged from pursuing their passions, especially if their actions are considered a threat to equality. One example of this limitation is the public education system, where pupils are socialised into the Norwegian idea of community from an early age. Education most frequently is targeted towards the needs of the average student, and supplemented with special assistance for those who lag behind, but rarely is any separate teaching available for those who display particular talent. It has been claimed that this is a direct consequence of the belief and values of *janteloven*, which dictates that no one should consider themselves better than any other (Avant and Knutsen 1993–4: 456).

In Denmark, *janteloven* has been described as a set of norms present in public institutions and life, which are taught to citizens from an

early age and reproduced throughout life (Gopal 2004). Perceptions of equality in Danish society are described as the belief in the equality of people across economic, political, cultural and social spheres. The supremacy of the community poses a challenge to people with a mindset of individualism.

The term is widely known and referred to outside academia. In the aforementioned 2008 survey, three-quarters of the respondents believed that *janteloven* existed in contemporary Danish society (Lelner and Fabler 2008a, 2008b). The same poll also suggested that successful people experience different attitudes from people to their success depending on how they express their accomplishments. The majority of respondents did not believe that if a person held a prestigious job or went to an elite school as a result of his or her talents, that this would produce



**Figure 3.11.2** Anja Andersen as coach for the Danish handball team Slagelse HF.

Source: Author. © Claus Bonnerup.

negative responses from others. Conversely, it was found that individuals who displayed their success through material possessions, such as owning an expensive car or electing to have plastic surgery, would be negatively connoted (Lelner and Fabler 2008c).

Critics have vehemently attacked *janteloven*'s prescription of conformity, pointing to its petty mindset that only accepts mediocrity. This criticism is especially visible among business leaders and celebrities. One of the most famously outspoken critics of *janteloven* is Anja Andersen, a successful and controversial former Danish handball coach. Often criticised for her aggressive manner and swearing on the sideline during matches, she was renowned for wearing T-shirts with the words 'fuck *janteloven*' printed in bold capital letters on the front (Figure 3.11.2). These T-shirts later became available for public sale, which exemplifies the broader popular critique (Information 2006).

### 3.12 *Hyvä Veli* (Finland)

Besnik Shala

UCL, UK

The Finnish term *Hyvä Veli*, which in English translates as 'Dear Brothers', is believed to have gained common usage and popularity during President Urho Kekkonen's Presidency (1956–82) as he habitually addressed his network of political friends with these words. More recently the term has become associated with corruption and favouritism arrangements in the business world and in public tenders in Finland.

Unlike the UK or USA, where 'old boy' networks (see 'old boy network', 3.13 in this volume) exist based on being a member of the alumni of a prestigious school or college, Finland is a country with low social inequalities and does not have 'elite' universities. The quality of education is high and it is free of charge, therefore *Hyvä Veli* networks are not directly analogous with 'old boy' networks. *Hyvä Veli* networks are characterised as a phenomenon that occurs in a large number of diverse social circles. It is possible for *Hyvä Veli* networks to be established within many environments and groups; examples include *Hyvä Veli* networks within rotary groups, associations, 'niche' sports clubs, business networks, religious groups, minorities and the military.

The military and specifically the Reserve Officer School (ROS) is acknowledged to be among the most common environments for creating strong interpersonal ties of *Hyvä Veli* networks (Ledeneva 2016), attracting as they do, only the most motivated and best candidates for military leadership training (Finnish Defense Forces 2014). After graduation the

candidates meet annually for training purposes, and some continue to do so for decades (Ledeneva 2016). Generally, ROS graduates have excellent leadership skills, and traditionally the majority of the candidates go on to have successful careers. Unsurprisingly, continued networking among the group is inevitable.

Likewise, members of minority groups in Finland, such as the Jews, Tatars, Catholics and Mormons, are found to have particularly strong links with their communities, therefore *Hyvä Veli* networks are to be expected within them and are enduring. This is also true within sporting groups, particularly within niche sports such as sailing, golfing and skiing, which also serve as an opportunity to meet similar-minded people and create strong interpersonal ties. Many big corporations organise seasonal sports weekends to bring employees together in completely new environments. Such events are designed to enable employees to have access to management in totally relaxed conditions, which contributes to better relations and strengthens interpersonal ties. The possibility of establishing *Hyvä Veli* networks can occur anywhere and it is not limited to the above-mentioned scenarios – rather it is a matter of individuals' social skills, personality and chemistry with others.

In 2012, Former Prime Minister of Finland Esko Aho (1991–5), who also acted as a Senior Executive at Nokia, stated that '*Hyvä Veli* networks are good for a small country such as Finland. These networks can consist of hunters, labourers, farmers and business leaders sitting around the same campfire and talking with each other about various issues' (Helsingin Sanomat 2012). Research shows that in a small country, such as Finland, strong interpersonal ties are to be expected, therefore for the most part, favours are not even considered a form of corruption – they are systemic (Isaksson 2009). However, defining the exact boundary between healthy and corrupt networks is not always easy.

The strength of *Hyvä Veli* ties depends on the level of interaction between the actors (Granovetter 1973, 2005). The most typical characteristics of these interpersonal ties are: gratitude, loyalty, reciprocity, friendship and protection of 'the members' (Salminen and Mäntysalo 2012). These ties hold with the appointment of friends to positions (cronyism), preferential treatment (favouritism), favouring relatives (nepotism) and abuse of government resources (kleptocracy), as well as political or professional protection (Salminen and Mäntysalo 2012; Peurala and Muttilainen 2015). While *Hyvä Veli* networks may be considered unethical, it should be noted that from a legal perspective they are not necessarily illegal (Salminen and Mäntysalo 2013).

Corruption is not considered to be a major threat in Finland (see Salminen 2010, 2015; Peurala 2011). Based on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI), Finland has for many years been ranked among the least corrupt countries in the world. In 2015, it ranked as the second least corrupt country in the world out of the 168 countries scrutinised (Transparency International 2016). The Special Eurobarometer on Corruption (European Commission 2013) also positions Finland among the least corrupt countries in the European Union (EU). The majority of EU citizens (76 per cent) believe that forms of corruption are common in their country, but only 36 per cent of Finns think the same about their country. However, based on the same report, 35 per cent of Finnish respondents agree that corruption and favouritism are part of their business culture (European Commission 2013).

Salminen (2015), describing the different aspects of corruption and corruption control systems in Finland, states that the main weakness of the CPI measurement is that it does not address the problem of *Hyvä Veli* networks because it does not include the particularities of corruption.

Despite the low corruption perception level (CPI corruption ranking), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Working Group on Bribery noted that Finland needed to do more to counter foreign bribery in high-risk sectors of state-owned enterprises. Bribery occurs mainly in foreign markets where Finnish companies may be pressured to act according to local culture and violate OECD conventions. Based on OECD reports (2006), bribery in overseas markets has been the subject of media attention, with some investigations reaching Finnish courts. For instance, according to Finnish broadcaster Yle, in 2015 a court found the Finnish arms company Patria and two of its executives guilty of charges relating to foreign corruption (Yle 2015).

Further concerns were also raised with regard to the financing of political parties, due to funding disputes during election campaigns. In a report from 2009, the Ministry of Justice of Finland considered *Hyvä Veli* networks as a problem at national level, especially in municipal government, which it found to be particularly susceptible due to its small size. It found that at municipal level strong ties were likely to develop between public decision makers and the private sector (Joutsen and Keränen 2009). In the same report, the Ministry of Justice stated that 'there is reason to believe that favours are exchanged among insiders in government and businesses on the basis of informal relationships', i.e. *Hyvä Veli* networks (European Commission 2014).

A study conducted in 2010 (Salminen 2010) measured the perception of Finnish citizens to corruption in general, as well as to the

occurrence of *Hyvä Veli* arrangements in Finland. This large national citizens' survey (N = 5,000) found that corruption in Finland in general was low. However, violations relating to *Hyvä Veli* networks, such as nepotism, close relationships in business and administration, were highlighted as problems in the survey. *Hyvä Veli* networks and other forms of favouritism were perceived by Finns to be of greater concern than widespread corruption in the politico-administrative system (Salminen 2010; Peurala and Muttilainen 2015). These networks, like other forms of corruption in general, are difficult to spot by competent authorities even though they are part of everyday life, because they are considered normative.

Although *Hyvä Veli* networks have been recognised as harmful to the Finnish society and economy by scholars, the government and the EU, there is no evidence of its impact in monetary value or value 'in kind'. Literature on the issue is also very limited. Finnish investigative media has been active in recent times and has identified numerous deals characterised by favouritism and brought them to the attention of the public (Salminen and Mäntysalo 2013). Nevertheless, a study by Tuominen (2012) on the local media of the Tampere region of Finland showed that there was evidence of constant external and internal attempts to influence the content of publications when there was a perceived threat of *Hyvä Veli* arrangements being made public. The study found that some editors were members of *Hyvä Veli* networks, and therefore were compromised by having strong interpersonal ties with other group members (Tuominen 2012), which prejudiced their ability to report proceedings openly and without bias. *Hyvä Veli* networks are generally dominated by men, as is the case in 'old boy' networks in the UK, as well as *Aidagara* networks in Japan (see 1.20 in this volume). This may change in the future as a result of the appointment of an increasing number of women to managerial positions, as well as the establishment of rival 'female networks'. *Hyvä Veli* networks are unlikely to disappear from Finnish society anytime soon, however, public awareness is increasing regarding the potential negative effects of such networks.

### 3.13 ***Old boy network*** (UK)

Philip Kirby

Sutton Trust, UK

'It's not what you know, it's who you know' – the oft-quoted phrase that captures the essence of the 'old boy network'. In the UK, it refers to the informal system of connections and social capital that benefits certain

members of society – especially those that have passed through the country’s private school system and Oxbridge (old boy being a synonym of alumni). Such networks expedite, so it’s claimed, the progress of certain individuals to the top – of the professions, of society, of the country as a whole. It’s an informal system found in different forms across the world (for a discussion of the US example, see Rivera 2012), but the UK’s is perhaps the most well known.

Some figures provide context: of the UK’s top judges (High Court and Appeals Court), three-quarters (74 per cent) went to private school – the same proportion (74 per cent) that attended Oxbridge; of Members of Parliament (MPs), the figures are 32 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively; of the senior civil service, 48 per cent and 51 per cent. Similar proportions exist across the professions and have remained remarkably stable across time (Kirby 2016). Schooling and university are not the only markers of social capital, of course, but given that only 7 per cent of the population attend private schools (and far fewer Oxbridge), they are emblematic of how moving in certain circles increases one’s chances of success. Given that the best state schools academically outperform private schools, there’s more going on here than the simple fact of the best-educated rising to the top.

So what is happening? The precise mechanism is that curious mixture of the obvious and the opaque – researchers know it’s there, they can often identify the people who it affects, but the precise mechanics are complex and variable. Corporeality is important, of course – a look, an accent, even a posture; the kind of qualities often imbued by a private, but not state, education. But it is also about more direct forms of assistance – a parent who can secure a top internship for their son/daughter at a firm their old classmate runs; a recruiter who attended the same school (or at least type of school) as you did, and trusts you slightly more because of it.

It’s adaptable, too. Research has shown that, where education level ceases to be an indicator of a particular individual’s social milieu (such as in education-blind recruitment practices), other traits fill the gap (Bathmaker et al. 2013). Did you play football at school, or did you row (a sport traditionally associated with the elite in the UK)? Did you spend the summer waiting tables, or working at that investment bank? Did you have the requisite ‘polish’ and confidence, or were your manners a little more ‘coarse’? It might be possible to disguise someone’s school on an application form, but you cannot disguise a candidate’s background completely.

Why does this happen? Again, the reasons are plural. There is a recognised tendency for people to select, favour and employ others like

themselves (Ashley et al. 2015). There is also the legacy factor – those from certain social classes and backgrounds, especially in the UK, have always disproportionately populated certain employment fields, such as the judiciary. People expect to see particular people in particular places and changing such cultural assumptions is not straightforward – and certainly not feasible overnight. Less generously, many of the powerful are keen to retain their power, of course, or bequeath it to friends, family or others like them who they favour.

In this way, it is perhaps easy, when discussing the network in the abstract, to construe it as some kind of singular grand conspiracy. But much of this work is done subconsciously, without necessarily a dedicated effort to reproduce elites of a similar social background over time. In this sense, ‘network’ is something of a misnomer. Undoubtedly, there are concrete examples of people giving others who (literally) wear the same school tie opportunities that they would not have otherwise, but we are all culpable to an extent. The lionisation of particular attitudes and qualities runs throughout society and is often associated with certain educations. Being a ‘statesmanlike’ politician is widely respected, but the next time you hear the term used, consider the background of the politician in question – almost invariably the ‘statesmanlike’ qualities they possess are synonymous with the ‘polish’ they acquired from a private education. Of the UK’s 76 Prime Ministers to date, the vast majority attended private schools, with 19 attending just one – Eton College (BBC News 2010). You do not have to be *in* the network to implicitly support values associated with the same.

‘Statesmanlike’ is also a useful term for thinking about perhaps the most obvious characteristic of the ‘old boy network’ – its gendering. In keeping with the UK’s historical patriarchy, the term originally referred to ex-students of all-male schools; students who proceeded to lead the country in business, warfare, politics and so forth. The gendered dimension remains, albeit the almost complete domination of elite professions by men, characteristic of UK society as recently as the middle of the twentieth century, has slightly eroded. In the High Court and Appeals Court today, one in five (21 per cent) judges are female (Judicial Office 2016). The present (but gradual) procession of gender equality is replicated across other professions, too. If the ‘old boy network’ is no longer literally true, therefore, it still captures the dramatic over-representation of men in positions of UK social power.

Given the durability of the network, what is to be done to break its power and make the top of UK society more representative of the rest? Perhaps the gravest threat to its continuation in recent UK politics has



been the advent of ‘social mobility’ and associated agendas – the effort to ensure as free movement as possible between social classes, so that one’s life chances are no longer predicted by schooling, family background or similar (Blanden et al. 2005). ‘Education-blind’ recruitment strategies, as mentioned, are one way that this goal has been approached, including in a recent proposal by the UK civil service (Civil Service 2016). In her first statement as UK Prime Minister, Theresa May promised to fight the injustice that, ‘If you’re at a state school, you’re less likely to reach the top of professions than if you’re educated privately’ (Prime Minister’s Office 2016). The influence of Internet-based social networking will be interesting to follow here too – will services such as Facebook and LinkedIn help to democratise recruitment and level the playing field? Perhaps – but they might also become new vehicles for the perpetuation of the ‘old boy network’.

### 3.14 *Klüngel* (Germany)

Lea Gernemann

UCL, UK

*Klüngel* denotes secret agreements and underhand dealings made possible through personal connections to family members, friends, colleagues or political associates, and often, but not necessarily, used for personal gain. The word stems from the regional dialect of Cologne and is used predominantly in the broader Rhineland region, commonly in reference to Cologne itself, though it also occasionally appears in national media in the context of national or international scandals concerning public mismanagement and corruption. It derives from the diminutive of the Old High German noun *klunga* (‘ravel, entanglement’; see also English: ‘to cling’). The first known use of the word in the sense of deceitful scheming can be traced to the year 1782 (Wrede 1971: 55).

The word *Klüngel* has a predominantly negative connotation and is associated, albeit not synonymous, with administrative secrecy and cases of suspected or proven corruption among municipal authorities. In the most prominent case in recent history, the 1999 Cologne donation scandal, it was revealed that private contractors had paid millions of Deutschmarks in bribes to city officials in order to secure construction contracts. The contractors further bribed local politicians to gather support for the construction project, while the politicians then added the money to party funds as faked donations from party members (*Die Welt* 2004). Key actors in the scandal were personally acquainted or otherwise socially associated, lending weight to accusations of *Klüngel* (Überall 2007: 170–2).

Other local instances of allegations of *Klüngel* include the 2009 collapse of the Historical Archive of Cologne, which was heavily covered in the media in conjunction with accusations of cover-ups of inadequate construction supervision by local authorities (Bannas 2009; Driessen 2009). Use of the term in the national media may also occur in reference to other city administrations or higher-order authorities such as the European Union or the World Bank, indicating a conflation of the term with corruption and the inappropriate usage of personal networks in general (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 2007; *Die Welt* 2008).

It is important to note that in any instance of this broad, but in no way exhaustive, range of negatively associated examples of *Klüngel*, a characteristic feature of the practice is the role of social ties in underhand dealings rather than in any particular illegal practice (Überall 2007: 183). Broadly speaking, *Klüngel* describes the pursuit of a particular goal, often economic or political in nature, with the help of available social connections. The criminal meaning with which the word is often associated in everyday usage stems from the potential for private networks to divert resources from the common good through the subversion of official procedures.

The meaning of *Klüngel* should therefore not be confused with corruption, particularly as local manifestations and perceptions of *Klüngel* are far from universally negative. High-level officials such as former mayors Norbert Burger and Konrad Adenauer have publicly depicted *Klüngel* as a positive feature of urban life in Cologne, with the former pointing to its usefulness in efficient and unbureaucratic decision-making and the latter describing it as a social network of mutual assistance (Klauser 2007:183). In this more positive sense, it has even been suggested that *Klüngel* may contribute to the democratic culture of Cologne by increasing communication between the municipal administration and local citizens and creating unofficial opportunities for civic participation, assuming that it is not performed within closed networks (Überall 2007: 242). Researchers and local folklorists such as Überall, Feldhoff (2006) or Klauser acknowledge this more positive understanding of *Klüngel* as a shortcut that skirts official channels without necessarily causing harm for those uninvolved. At the same time, however, they warn that the possibility of positive and constructive functions of *Klüngel* should not detract from the potential of *Klüngel* to be employed for personal advantage over the common good (see also *jaan-pehchaan*, 1.19 in this volume).

*Klüngel* as a term and practice can perhaps be best conceptualised as a form of social capital that is simultaneously bonding and bridging

(see, for example, Putnam 2000): On the one hand, it may build on existing connections between individuals of similar social standing and occupation, closing out those lacking necessary connections and generating potential incentives for abuse to the disadvantage of outsiders. On the other hand, *Klüngel* can also form a strategy for cooperation within and across social and political networks that facilitates formal procedures. This ambiguity is reflected in the local understanding of *Klüngel*, which acknowledges the centrality of social connections in decision-making procedures and the fragility of purportedly rigid barriers between public and private life in an urban context.

The influence of social ties in local decision-making procedures is not a unique feature of urban administrations in the broader Rhineland area. Studies of the impact of decentralisation and privatisation measures in municipal administrations across Germany indicate that such institutional reforms may generally generate incentives for corruption by complicating accountability and blurring boundaries between the public and private sector (see, for example, Von Maravic 2006). The distinctive feature of *Klüngel*, then, lies not in the unusual role of social ties in the institutional environment of the Rhineland, but in local awareness of these structures and understanding of the ambivalence of their effects.

Research on *Klüngel* is sparse, both in terms of empirical study and theoretical discussion, and practically non-existent in non-German academic literature. Micro-level studies of both the publicly documented cases of corruption as well as of the positive manifestations of *Klüngel* promise, however, to offer insights into the functions and effects of social networks in the context of strong formal institutions. Research into the prevalence of *Klüngel* might also investigate private contexts with little connection to public affairs, for example, local business-to-business interactions or even purely social situations, as *Klüngel* does not necessarily involve administrative or political representatives. Such information could prove useful in enhancing the understanding of the functions and perceptions of social networks in Western societies.

### 3.15 **Vetterliwirtschaft/Copinage** (Switzerland)

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*Vetterliwirtschaft* is a widespread expression denoting mutual favours or preferential treatment in German-speaking communities in Switzerland. It derives from the German term *Vetternwirtschaft*, which literally

translates as the ‘cousins’ economy’. Swiss-German dialects exclusively use the diminutive form *Vetterliwirtschaft* (i.e. signified by the suffix *-li*, which makes the literal meaning akin to ‘little cousins’ economy’). Like nepotism, *Vetterliwirtschaft* implies the favouring of friends or family by those in a position of power. Everyone knows what is meant: ‘back-scratching’ exchanges of favours between colleagues in politics and business.

In the French-speaking parts of Switzerland, the equivalent term *copinage* is used, from the French *copain*, meaning ‘buddy’ or ‘mate’. Although *copinage* is usually translated as ‘cronyism’, the meaning of *copinage* and *Vetterliwirtschaft* strongly reflects the social, political and economic idiosyncrasies of Switzerland. Switzerland is a small country, which prides itself on its egalitarian and citizen-based political system. Historically, Switzerland came into existence through a growing coalition of communities, as exemplified by the Swiss national folk hero Wilhelm Tell. The founding legend, in which Tell assassinated a brutal Habsburg ruler with his crossbow, sparking rebellion and the eventual independence of the Old Swiss Confederacy, represents the resistance of oppressed Swiss communities against the occupying force of the counts of Habsburg. The Old Swiss Confederacy was based on a coalition (literally: an ‘oath-fellowship’, or *Eidgenossenschaft*) of communities from Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden in what is now central Switzerland, with the Federal Charter of 1291 regarded as its founding document. In subsequent centuries, more so-called cantons and cities joined the confederation (a loose union of federal states), leading to the establishment of modern Switzerland on the basis of a federal constitution in 1848. The history of Switzerland is embodied in its official name, the ‘Swiss Confederation’ (Kreis 2014).

This history has translated into a strong bottom-up democracy, where the smallest political unit is the community, which to this day is vested with real political power. The centrality of the idea of the community as the core unit of society is reflected in the country’s executive body. Switzerland’s executive is headed not by an individual (such as a president or prime minister), but rather a collective body, the Federal Council, which acts as both head of state and head of government. Tellingly, the seven-member Federal Council, elected by Parliament, forms a multi-party body representing the different regions and languages of Switzerland (Kriesi 2008; Kreis 2014; Vatter 2014).

Thus, the community as a political institution and as a frame of reference for political identity plays a key role in Swiss culture. It also has economic implications: as a result of the political authority vested

in communities, business and politics are closely intertwined on a local level. Many people running a small business, such as an electrician or a small construction company, will also have some local political position, or have had one at some time. This is where *Vetterliwirtschaft/copinage* comes into play: a local electrician may be awarded the contract to rewire a municipality's public buildings without a public tender or clear criteria; or a local farmer may have a 'gentleman's agreement' with the village council to maintain the school grounds or clear the roads from snow in winter. However, *Vetterliwirtschaft/copinage* also takes on more obviously corrupt forms, especially in procurement and construction; typical examples include the brother-in-law of a local politician getting a contract to build a new school, or the re-zoning of land so that an influential member of the community can build a house, or a commercially lucrative hotel or ski-lift (Queloz et al. 2000). However, although all these decisions pass through a village or municipal council, it is striking that the community routinely turns a blind eye to these informal practices. This is even true of cases where other members of the community are being excluded from such deals.

One reason for the widespread societal acceptance of *Vetterliwirtschaft/copinage* may lie in the so-called 'consensus-democracy' (Kriesi 2008; Kreis 2014) that characterises Switzerland. The Swiss loathe being confrontational – issues are solved by consensus, while conflict is frowned upon. This deep-seated suspicion of individuals who go 'against the grain' remains highly topical, illustrated by the heated debates surrounding the introduction of an (ironically toothless) whistleblower law in Switzerland (Carranza 2014; Jürgensen 2015; *The Economist* 2015).

Furthermore, the nature of Swiss nepotism differs from 'old boy networks' (see 3.13 in this volume), which usually serve to entrench the economic and political privileges of the upper classes. *Vetterliwirtschaft/copinage* is more democratic and inclusive; it is an everyday occurrence on the local level, and is not only tolerated but viewed with some fondness by many Swiss. The political history, the smallness of the country, and not least the high density of all sorts of associations, mean that the Swiss know each other very well on a local level. Politics is very accessible, and social capital – i.e. horizontal ties between community members characterised by high levels of trust and reciprocity – is high (Freitag 2014). Arguably, *Vetterliwirtschaft/copinage* contributes to the density of social capital by fostering exchange networks that are embedded in a community.

Switzerland may be highly democratic, participative and egalitarian compared with many other societies, but *Vetterliwirtschaft/copinage*

can also be observed in the higher echelons of society. Especially since the Second World War, elite networks mutually reinforced their ties and opportunities by occupying key positions in politics, business and the army (which to this day is a militia army based on conscription of all adult males). For decades, these ‘higher’ forms of *Vetterliwirtschaft/copinage* enjoyed virtual immunity from public critique. This changed in the late 1990s, when a series of scandals shook the famously stable country. The most spectacular incident was the cessation of flight operations of the renowned Swiss airline Swissair on 2 October 2001. Due to the company’s inability to make payment to creditors on its large debt, fuel suppliers refused to fuel the waiting aircrafts, grounding thousands of passengers around the world. The incident sent shockwaves through Swiss society as the Swiss held great pride in Swissair, seeing it as a national treasure and the epitome of Swiss stability and quality. Swissair’s previously inconceivable collapse was a result of seriously misguided management strategies and regulatory failure. In particular, it brought to light what the media has called the ‘inbreeding’ of top management: the systematic ‘recycling’ of a handful of board members between several large Swiss companies, some of whom also acted as members of parliament (Stämpfli 2003; Lüchinger et al. 2006). For the first time, this type of *Vetterliwirtschaft/copinage* within the political establishment was seen to be deeply problematic, and has since led to a far more critical attitude towards such practices.

The new millennium has seen significant changes in terms of access to politics and business. *Vetterliwirtschaft/copinage* among political and economic elites has become the exception due to a transformed political and social landscape, tightened regulatory frameworks and highly internationalised boards of large companies (Stock 2007; Aiolfi 2015; Bühlmann et al. 2015). Yet although this may hold particularly true on a national level, on a local level the many forms of *Vetterliwirtschaft/copinage* remain more tenacious.

### 3.16 ***Tal*** (alt. *taljenje, taliti, utaliti, rastaliti*)

(Serbia and countries of former Yugoslavia)

Danko Runić

UCL, UK

*Tal* is a term used throughout most of the former Yugoslavia to colloquially describe an agreement, a settlement, or an arrangement between two or more parties, reached with the predominant goal of obtaining a

financial cut, such as a kickback, or other types of advantage through illegal means. Etymologists agree that the term is derived from the modern German word *Teil* (Klaić 1978: 132; Uroić and Hurm 1994: 801), which translates in English as ‘part, portion, component, piece, bit, share, deal or slice’. *Teil* is clearly linked to *Thaler*, a silver coin used throughout Europe, an abbreviation of ‘Joachimsthaler’, meaning from the town of Joachimsthal in the Kingdom of Bohemia, where the first such coins were minted in 1518. In languages spoken in the former Yugoslavia, *tal* originally meant the same as in modern German, primarily to signify part or portion and less commonly to signify part of inheritance or dowry (Klaić 1978: 132).

The term *tal* was first used in urban centres to imply widespread engagement in illicit practices through reaching secretive agreements (Imami 2003: 353; Ćirković 2011: 72–3). The use of the term has evolved since, with the noun *taljenje* and verbs *taliti*, *utaliti* and *rastaliti* deriving from it, indicating that the practice has become a complex phenomenon, well established in the informal economy, with several variants having similar meanings. The term *tal* is commonly used nowadays among many generations and all levels of social strata (Imami 2001).

The participants of a *tal* come together in order to combine resources that each has at their disposal. For example, if one person has financial means, another might have the necessary political connections to get a deal done. The type of resources involved can vary; *tal* can be private, political, commercial, criminal and often a combination of these. According to the Serbian language online dictionary of slang, *Vukajlija*, *tal* is most often negotiated ‘face-to-face’ and its existence is thus known solely to parties involved and people of trust (*Vukajlija rečnik slenga* 2007). It goes on to explain that

besides a petty *tal*, in which common people are engaged on an everyday basis in order to earn some money to feed the family, there are also *tals* between criminals, large businesses and political establishments, a combination of which is most dangerous, as it enables tycoons and politicians to accumulate wealth at the speed of light and at the cost of the state and the people.

Entering *tals* is both a large-scale survival strategy for ordinary people and a widespread practice of bending the formal rules of economy caused by extensive lack of trust in institutions.

Across the former Yugoslavia, the practice of entering different *tals* has become so widespread that the formally obtained knowledge about normative business practices in market economies is mostly

redundant (Cigler 2013). To be awarded a lucrative contract or to enter a business deal with an important client does not depend on achieving the best price, on knowledge, quality of product or service, but depends solely upon the prospect of acquiring personal wealth for the individuals involved in the decision-making, i.e. being part of the *tal* (Cigler 2013). Hence those who prosper most and acquire most profit are those who make the best *tals* and participate in the highest number of *tals*.

The term *tal* is thus also used to 'express appropriating a share in currency or some other commodity, which the seller returns to the buyer, an influential individual inside a company, an institution or an organisation, after the process of purchase is completed' (Cigler 2013). The individual becomes part of a *tal* by guaranteeing the purchase of goods or services from a particular seller. In this sense, *tal* is easily translated in English as *kickback*. In such cases the amount of *tal* can vary significantly. It is usually no less than 10 to 20 per cent of the value of a transaction, however, it is not uncommon for it to be much higher.

Both *tal* and *kickback* imply collusion. Such collusion, based on trust as a moral predisposition, contributes to the accumulation of 'social capital, which acts as a force of cohesion on the quantity and quality of mutual social interactions' (Vehovec 2002: 230). Although hidden and secretive, it is not uncommon for an individual who is part of a particularly important *tal*, or a *tal* in which the other party is influential in certain circles, to boast about it so as to demonstrate self-importance and well-connectedness. Being part of high-profile *tals* is hence seen as not only highly profitable, but also socially beneficial and desirable within business and political communities in systematically corrupt regimes.

The practice of entering *tals*, i.e. *taljenje*, is also widespread by elected and appointed public officials in their attempts to disguise ownership and management of private businesses. In Serbia, for example, the Law on Anti-Corruption Agency prevents government officials from owning or managing a private business while exercising public function (Zakon o Agenciji 2008). Similar legislation is in place in all countries throughout the region. Yet in order to earn extra income, and faced with a number of conflicting interests, government officials opt to become part of a *tal*, whereby their share in a business venture is disguised by trusted frontmen, close friends or distant family members posing as *de jure* owners. It is also not rare for a politician to become part of such a *tal*, being entrusted with the primary role of ensuring the speedy delivery of necessary licences to get a business started, or charged with arranging



other preferential treatment by government institutions through influence peddling.

The term *tal* is frequently used in the media. In cases where solid evidence of wrongdoing is absent, one might choose to publicly accuse someone of being part of a *tal*. Since *tal* does not appear in the Criminal Code, the media can avoid charges for defamation, while at the same time making a reference to illicit doings. For example, in September 2015, Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanović publicly accused Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić of being in a *tal* with the Croatian opposition leader Tomislav Karamarko and Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán (B92 2015). The event that led to such an accusation during the height of the election campaign in Croatia was the influx of refugees from the Middle East that passed through Serbian territory on their way towards the European Union, who were allegedly transported and directed by Serbian authorities exclusively towards the Croatian border. Milanović implied that although he offered assistance to Vučić, to provide a fleet of buses to transport refugees from the Serbian border with Macedonia towards not only Croatia, but also to Hungary, Vučić refused them.

In a statement the Croatian Prime Minister declared (B92 2015):

The man simply refuses it. Can anyone explain what motives can one possibly have to refuse such help? Our offer is clear and well-intentioned. But he refuses it because he has motives, because he must be in a *tal* with someone. He is in constant contact with Budapest, he secretly meets Karamarko in Zagreb. They are all part of the same clique [Vučić, Karamarko and Orbán all belong to the same family of political parties, i.e. conservative and centre-right].

Similarly, in an interview to Jutarnji in 2014, Mirela Holy, the leader of Croatian political party ORaH – Sustainable Development of Croatia, noted that there was no strategic approach by the government to support investment in the economy and that rules of the game were not the same for everyone. She concluded by saying ‘if you are not in a *tal* with someone in the local administration or national government, your investment proposal will sit in a drawer for years’ (Penić 2014).

An almost identical point was made by famous Serbian documentary film director Željimir Žilnik when he was asked to comment on poor government support of the cinematography industry. He noted that ‘we film with budgets of several thousand Euros and with such amounts

there is no place for someone to *utaliti* and that is the key reason why the funding is poor and not because they hate documentaries' (Akter 2013).

*Taljenje* has serious implications for both the economy and society. In business transactions it is damaging for companies and institutions, as the price paid for goods or services is higher than the market price, while the quality also often suffers (Cigler 2013). When *tals* are part of public procurement processes, the government budget is severely damaged. In cases when the value of *tal* is not financial, it nevertheless leads to all manner of illicit acts, including favouritism, seen in providing employment to family members of *tal* partners in government administration, for example. Entering *tals* is thus closely connected to influence peddling, tax evasion, racketeering, kickbacks and the grey economy in general.

### 3.17 **Mateship** (Australia)

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Mateship is part of the Australian male heritage; it originated in colonial days and was glorified in war and sport. An important element of mateship has always been that the company of other men is preferred to the company of women (Bell 1973). Thus Australian mateship developed in the context of the harsh reality of bush life for men without female companionship. The central elements are that mates are 'exclusively male, not female, they share a particular sceptical camaraderie in doing things together [and] there is a lack of emotional expression other than sharing jokes' (Edgar 1997: 79).

The First World War introduced a new stage of mateship. Men had to be moulded together into an effective fighting force (Webb 1998). In fact, as Garton (1998: 74–5) has noted, war played a significant role in 'constructing particular masculine ideals in Australian culture'. Perhaps, more than any other event, it was the Gallipoli campaign that enshrined mateship as a significant part of the Australian male self-image. This mythologising began immediately after the landing in 1915. The Anzac legend of mateship, anti-authoritarianism, larrikinism and fortitude, became translated into a national ethos (Garton 1998).

There are many positive dimensions claimed for mateship. Bruce Ruxton, president of the Returned Soldiers League in Australia, says it means 'supporting one another in life or death situations. Your mate is someone you can rely on. It is a bond between persons made in war or in civilian life' (*The Age* 1999). While historian Geoffrey Blainey says it

‘primarily means personal or group loyalty’ (*The Age* 1999). As Edgar (1997: 79) notes, ‘mateship implies a deep and unspoken understanding that a mate will always stick by you’. Thus your mates would never ‘dob’ (inform on) you to the police no matter what crimes you may have committed. For many Australian men, mateship implies that loyalty to one’s mate is a higher virtue than observance of the law.

While bonds between men have often been used as a basis for male solidarity in many countries, Australia is perhaps the only country where ‘the romanticisation of male bonding provided so useful a basis for national ideology’ (Altman 1987: 167). So it is more than just an Australian version of male bonding. Rather, such bonding has formed the basis of myths of national identity among Australian men. Bell (1973: 8–9) noted that while male comradeship is common in most cultures, the Australian version seems to exaggerate this institution ‘almost as if Australian men were constantly in a state of emergency where they needed one another’.

The Anzac period has continued to establish a particular version of Australian national identity. When Australia prepared for a referendum on the option of becoming a republic in 1999, the then Prime Minister John Howard proposed a preamble to the Australian constitution that extolled the virtues of mateship and numerous references were made to the war years.

While mateship is often presented and promoted as healthy and positive, Marston (1994: 12) has drawn attention to a number of aspects of mateship that are ‘unhealthy, oppressive and ultimately destructive’. While the idea of mates staying together is presented as one of the virtues of mateship, it can be used to justify violence against women, gays and indigenous people. In fact, Australian manhood and masculinity were constructed against the image of ‘others’ who were different.

In this context, Bell (1973: 24) argued over 40 years ago that an understanding of mateship is important to an understanding of female and male relationships in Australian society. He said that frequently ‘the interpersonal satisfactions of mateship for the husband are achieved at the cost of marital satisfaction for the wife’. Marston (1994: 14) similarly argues that mateship ‘cripples the full potential of men and their relationships’.

A number of writers have commented on the emotional poverty of Australian masculinity. Colling (1992: 50), for example, says that mateship embodies toughness and a disdain for ‘weak emotion’. Meanwhile, Webb (1998) regards the celebrated culture of silence and emotional repression as the main issue facing Australian men. In fact, silence is

seen as the essence of traditional mateship, as evidenced in the nature of men's relationships that emphasise sport and communal drinking.

Australian men are renowned for their dedication to drinking beer. Drinking in the company of other sporty and gambling men has come to be seen as being archetypically Australian. Dixon (1982: 169) says that 'heavy drinking is a symbol of mateship and solidarity'. Thus drinking beer has become part of the mateship subculture. Beyond the expression of mateship in sport and communal drinking, there are more troubling aspects of this Australian form of male bonding.

Pack rape is more prevalent in Australia than in America or Britain. Looker (1994) suggests that this is connected to the intricacies of relationships between men in Australia and the affirmation of an aggressive form of masculinity. She cites a convicted rapist (Looker 1994: 218):

There's ... a sense of camaraderie about a gang bang, where you have a good mate and you will share a woman with a good mate. It's ... a very binding act with you and your friend, with you and your mate. The sense of camaraderie would be possibly the biggest aspect of it. You do everything together.

This aspect of male culture is elucidated in a book by Carrington (1998) who retraces the police investigation into the rape and murder of a 14-year old girl at a beach party in an Australian town in 1989. The book describes what happens when shame and mateship mix with a small-town mentality. The police responsible for the murder investigation reported that a 'wall of silence' hampered their investigation. This silence was seen to be related to 'a rigorous adherence to the ethic of not dobbing in a mate' (Carrington 1998: 99).

Homophobia is also a dominant feature of Australian masculinity with widespread condemnation of homosexuality by men evidenced by the hostility and violence shown towards gay men. Tacey (1997) says that homophobia is the most recently discovered aspect of Australian mateship. While 'men adore their mates, there will be no obvious caring, no touching, no outward display' (Tacey 1997: 135). Thus while male bonding is an important prerequisite for the development of masculine identity in Australia, many men fear that if the bonding is too close, it will destroy heterosexual identity and become confused with homosexuality (Webb 1998). Nevertheless, mateship and homosexuality have a very close homo-social proximity. Certainly, there are affinities between mateship as a social relationship and homosexuality as a sexual relationship. Dixon

(1982: 81) even suggests that mateship involves ‘powerful sublimated homosexuality’. Australian mateship is also constructed against the image of indigenous men, immigrant men and non-Caucasian males. The ‘virtues’ of mateship are thus reserved for native-born white men.

The women’s movement and pro-feminist masculinity politics have played a significant role in challenging mateship and putting men’s violence and gender-based inequalities on the political agenda in Australia. Community-based initiatives tackling men’s violence and campaigns challenging patriarchal ideologies and belief systems underlying mateship have all contributed towards more egalitarian gender relations. However, Australia has a long way to go before its claimed commitment to the principles of social equality, as they relate to gender relations, can become more than rhetoric.

## Semi-closed lock-in

### 3.18 *Sitwa* (Poland)

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*Sitwa* is a Polish word describing a powerful informal network of mutually supportive individuals who pursue their own personal interests even when these are harmful to the interests of society as a whole. In recent years, the word has come to be used to describe unorganised, informal networks in local or central authorities, lacking hierarchical structure or clearly defined leaders. The term may also be used to denote influential circles within professional corporations or social organisations. Relations between *sitwa* members are often based on a non-market exchange of favours (see *kumoterstwo*, 7.14 Volume 2). While *sitwa* is a form of professional rather than family relations, its structure resembles that of the social networks that controlled local politics in Italy in the aftermath of the Second World War (Banfield 1958). The moral basis of *sitwa* in Polish politics bears striking resemblance to what Edward Banfield described as ‘amoral familism’.

The noun *sitwa* (plural *sitwy*) derives from a Jewish word meaning cooperative or company (*szitwes* in Yiddish, *szuttafuth* in Hebrew). In the years preceding the Second World War, it was used in criminal slang to denote worthless, badly behaved and poor people, or partners in crime. While *sitwa* has not always been used pejoratively (Kamiński and Kowalczyk 2008), today its meaning is entirely pejorative. In the 2000s,

it became widely used in the mass media and in everyday language to mean informal networks within the privileged public authorities.

As an expression describing informal activity, *sitwa* resembles the German term *Kamarilla* (literally ‘little chamber’, from the Spanish *camarilla*, meaning an elite circle of courtiers or favourites surrounding a king or ruler). *Kamarilla* was used in the German Empire in the late nineteenth century and again during the Weimar Republic, notably to describe the coterie surrounding President Paul von Hindenburg, to whom responsibility is attributed for the decision to appoint Adolf Hitler as Chancellor. In German, however, the meaning of *Kamarilla* has typically been limited to the central authorities. Similar expressions found in many languages are ‘clique’ and ‘coterie’ (*kliki* and *koteria* in Polish).

While informal networks flourished in pre-modern Poland (as indeed they did throughout Europe), the term *sitwa* came into use relatively recently. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1569–1795) saw coteries cluster around the families of the richest noblemen; based on patron–client relations, these groups exercised strong influence over parliament and the regional authorities. Such networks, with their focus on securing political and financial benefits for their members, have been identified by Polish historians as one of the main reasons for the crisis of the Polish political system that provoked the collapse of the state in the eighteenth century (Mączak 2003).

In the nineteenth century, when Poland was partitioned between Russia, Prussia and Habsburg Austria, informal networks were not found within the leadership for the simple reason that Poland was no longer an independent state and had no central government. Poles in those days had little access even to local government. The years between the two World Wars saw the rebirth of Polish politics, and new cliques and *sitwy* sprang up.

They continued to flourish during the communist period (1945–89). At that time, the *nomenklatura* system saw appointments to influential posts approved exclusively by the Communist Party apparatus. This quickly evolved into a hierarchical mechanism whereby clients or friends were promoted by Communist Party patrons (Hirszowicz 1973, 1980; for a description of a similar process in the USSR, see Voslensky 1984 and Gregory 1990). As a result, informal patronage networks became established at both central and local levels (Tarkowski 1994; Tymiński 2002).

These coteries (cliques, *sitwy*) focused on securing personal benefits and privileges for members of the network by, for example, providing

access to rare or hardly accessible goods and services such as motor cars, privileged health care, apartments, houses or summer cottages. In certain circumstances, cliques might play a positive role for a specific enterprise or local community. Since the system of central economic planning led to frequent shortages of virtually all resources, goods and services, network members might help a local enterprise to obtain resources, machinery or investment funds (Tarkowski 1994). While such activity would benefit a specific enterprise or local community, however, it was unlikely to benefit the wider community since, in a centrally planned economy, the informal acquisition of goods or resources by one local community or enterprise would result in a loss by others.

Many of the informal networks created under the communist system survived the collapse of communism. As shown by Łoś and Zybertowicz (2000), such networks captured significant sectors of both economic and political capital during the transition from state-socialism. In one notable incident, for example, Mariusz Łapiński, minister of health from 2001 to 2003, accused Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski (in office 1995–2005) of presiding over a *sitwa* that sought to reap benefits from public institutions. ‘The presidential palace’s *sitwa*, built in the past ten years’, Łapiński (2005: 5–6) asserted,

is a group of people connected to one another by their various interests. In order to realise their interests, this group does not hesitate to break the law or to harm inconvenient people. ... How this most dangerous *sitwa* works can be summed up as ‘MSM’ – money, secret services, media.

Łapiński’s allegations should be viewed with caution in light of his conflict with President Kwaśniewski’s administration (see e.g. Krasowski 2014). In 2006, however, in a conversation with Aleksander Gudzowaty (one of Poland’s richest men, who recorded the conversation), former Prime Minister Józef Oleksy stated that, ‘My *sitwa* did not give a damn about Poland’, though he went on to stress that this did not apply to him personally (Zapis 2007).

Large amounts of information on *sitwy* has been published in the Polish press. For example, in an interview published in 2012 under the heading, ‘Gorzów [a city in western Poland] is governed by *sitwa*’, a member of the local opposition accused the city authorities of creating a *sitwa* consisting of a pyramid topped by the city’s president. ‘In this pyramid there are some 60, maybe 80 managers, various directors and friends. Then there are their families and colleagues’ (Rusek 2010). Also in 2012, the Justice Minister accused prosecutors and judges of operating as a

*sitwa* after they refused him access to documents in the notorious Amber Gold financial scandal (Drozdowski 2012).

Again, these accusations should be taken with a pinch of salt. In recent years, the term *sitwa* has become widely used in the mass media to describe informal networks within local and national government. Often it is hard to distinguish accusations levelled as a form of political campaigning from descriptions of real problems.

### 3.19 ***Barone universitario*** (Italy)

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As a general term, *barone* has come to indicate people who wield power and wealth in contemporary Italy. In particular, the term is used with reference to ‘university barons’ (*barone universitario*), who use their authority within their profession to exercise undue power.

The term *barone* (in English ‘baron’) originally referred to the highest feudal degree in the thirteenth-century Italian feudal system. According to the *Treccani Encyclopedia*, the word ‘*barone*’, from the Latin, *baro-baronis*, may also refer to a cheater, villain or rascal. Don Abbondio shouts this insult in Alessandro Manzoni’s novel, *The Betrothed* (Manzoni 1972 [1842]). In the Italian university system the term is negatively associated with the practice of nepotism, although it may also be used more generally to describe senior academics working at the highest levels of scientific research. When positively connoted, the term *barone* refers to full chair professors, who have built a network structure in their field of excellence, in which colleagues include a number of their former researchers engaged in a career in academia. In this instance *barone* refers to knowledge and experience, but it can also be used negatively to refer to a system of undue personal influence and co-optation (Tagliavini 2003).

The term *barone* is widely used in the national press and the media, and several major newspapers and magazines have produced special editions dedicated to ‘*baroni universitari*’. Magazines and newspapers, such as *L’Espresso*, *Il Corriere della Sera* and *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, have investigated the impact and extent of the phenomenon, comparing it in style to practices employed by the mafia. Other publications and debates in the national media have been inspired by the personal accounts and experiences of scholars.

When considering the Italian system of higher education, a comparison is often made with practices in the Spanish higher education system as it is considered to be the most closely related to the Italian case,



although the levels of localism in appointments in Spanish universities seem to be lower (Francalacci 2014). A study conducted between 2000 and 2010 looked at family connections in the Italian university system. It found evidence of the recruitment or promotion of a close relative (defined as ‘son or daughter, spouse, nephew or niece, son or daughter in law’) in 18 out of the 57 universities it surveyed across Italy. This practice could be detected in 6 of the 10 largest universities in the country (Bari, Bologna, Florence, Milan, Naples and Palermo) (Durante et al. 2011). In 2008, at the Faculty of Medicine in Palermo, 58 of the 384 professors had at least one close relative in the same faculty, while in 2010, at the Medical Faculty in Messina, 100 out of 531, and in the Faculty of Law, 27 out of 75 members of the faculty were found to have appointed a close family member. A prosecutorial inquiry in Bari was reportedly known as the ‘I give, so that you will give’ (*Do ut des*) trial, which seems to accurately describe the nature of relationships within the local network.

The impact of ‘familism’ in universities also has a negative effect in terms of the quality of research within departments. Studies show that the higher the levels of familism, the poorer the research performance. Further, an examination of poor civic values, along with a low sense of civic responsibility, shows that the decentralisation implemented after the 1998 educational reforms instigated by Minister Luigi Berlinguer had a negative impact, resulting in an even higher incidence of nepotism (Durante et al. 2011: 23). The Berlinguer Act implemented by the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR), enabled universities to appoint staff at a local level and replaced the previous system in which the national committee (*concorso nazionale*) had decided the selection of candidates. The reform was well intentioned in that it sought to speed up the hiring process and diminish bureaucratic selection processes (Verzillo 2013), but had unexpected consequences.

Empirical results reveal a number of remaining shortcomings. First, it shows that the phenomenon of nepotism (Durante et al. 2011) might actually be hugely underestimated. When investigators attempted to trace relationships they based their searches on the assumption of a shared surname, which was not always the case. It was also supposed that large universities would be easier to investigate. Analyses at the administrative level of small universities, and at the periphery, with the opening of new universities, could have provided additional evidence. Second, it was found that decentralisation did not improve the low competitiveness rates. In Italy salaries and teaching are controlled at national level (by MIUR), which results in a very low mobility rate of professors,

and as was observed, ‘no penalties were associated with collusive behaviours’ (Verzillo 2013: 20).

Nicola Gardini’s book, *I Baroni* (‘Barons’ 2009) provides a snapshot of Italian academic life from the perspective of a member of staff, hired locally, but educated overseas. The system he describes has elements of both an old type of clientelism, which mixes a personal and affective nature, and new clientelism, which brings tangible benefits and provides the opportunity of an academic career to staff members (Caciagli 2006). He suggests that in order to distinguish between the two main types of *baroni*, it is necessary to divide them into two categories: ‘strong’ barons and ‘weak’ barons. He defines ‘weak’ barons as professors, associates and researchers who are not involved in final decision processes and are in place ‘just to obey ... as a consequence, they become very important [for *baronia*]. Without their cooperation, “strong” barons would not exist, as fathers would not exist without their sons and daughters’. Weak Barons support each other and subscribe to the same logic, which sees them defend the status quo, reasoning that to abolish the system might damage their own future prospects (Gardini 2009: 201–2). This system is called ‘*baronia*’, and the author further postulates that ‘*baronia* is a language’. *Baronia* describes an informal power of relations that maintains relationships of trust between individuals in unequal positions, based on an exchange of benefits. *Baronia*, as a clientelistic relationship, is based on particularistic interests, and within this system ‘in Italian academia’, Gardini warns, ‘purity does not exist’ (2009: 202).

As is typical of systems of corruption, the dynamic flows ‘from the top to the bottom’, spreading and choosing the network on the basis of pragmatism, to then further move upwards and create a system of ‘complicity of interests’ (Della Porta 1997: 35–6). The further the system spreads, the lower the costs and the more probable network opportunities become. Italian Professor Francesco Gazzoni’s volume *Co-Optations: Yesterday and Today* (*Cooptazioni: Ieri e oggi*) describes this network of interests as a mafia system of organisation. The ‘mafia’ analogy has also been made by Maestripieri, another university professor: ‘They [*baroni*] have hierarchies of power with a “boss” at the top, they aim to control entire areas of academia, and they do not hesitate to threaten and intimidate to get what they want’ (Maestripieri 2012: 2). For example, there have even been cases where qualified job candidates who competed against the *baroni*’s relatives or protégés were threatened with physical violence by mafia associates in order to make them withdraw from the competition (Maestripieri 2012: 2). Another shortcoming of the *baronia* system highlighted by Gazzoni is that the selection criteria are generally



**Figure 3.19.1** *Narcisismo e cecità dei baroni uccidono l'accademia italiana (The Narcissism and Blindness of Barons is Killing Italian Academia)*, *Corriere della Sera*, 28 January 2015.

Source: Author. © Corriere della Sera.

independent of the profile and requirements of the candidates and the curriculum. He compares the situation to the appointment of Incitatus, Caligula's favourite horse, to the position of consul in the Roman Empire.

Further reforms, named after the Minister of Education, Mariastella Gelmini, and implemented in 2010, introduced, among others, a system of national scientific licences, or *abilitazione* ('National Scientific Qualification', MIUR n.d.) – which called for the submission of a CV, publications and the research profile of candidates applying for the position of Associate or Full Chair in the Italian Academia. The reform was contested. In 2012, the first round of *abilitazioni* sparked a wave of protests. Approximately 60,000 candidates submitted their applications; of which almost 24,000 attained the *abilitazione* as Associate and/or Full Chair. But it is estimated that about 8,000 appeals were submitted to TAR (*Tribunale Amministrativo Regionale*), the Administrative Court, which deals with proceedings in which individuals consider themselves wronged. A further review of policy by the Ministry was requested. In November 2015, while this entry was being written, a new scandal came

to light (ROARS 2015). It was alleged that a baron asked university staff members to recruit colleagues as reviewers for the *Quacquarelli Symonds* (QS). This body, founded in 1990, has been responsible for providing the rankings of higher education institutions globally since 2004. It was apparent that the colleagues (who would be fully aware of the importance of rankings for universities) would unfairly review the university in a positive light.

*Baronia* as a system is self-reinforcing and self-sustaining, but it is not an all-encompassing system in which knowing and working with 'strong' barons can ensure the survival of the system itself. Numerous studies have found that the system is one of the main reasons why many researchers leave Italy (Morano-Foadi 2006). Examples of incidents provided by Nicola Gardini (2009) included intentionally being given the wrong timetable and venue for his teaching, as well as observations of low mobility and competitiveness (Verzillo 2013). Caciagli has noted that the *baronia* system has its roots in a code of 'deference, which makes sense in a social context and from collective experiences' (Caciagli 2006). One of the main goals of the Gelmini reform was the renewal of the Italian academic system in the hope that it would produce honest, enthusiastic and brilliant scholars and researchers who would have sufficient confidence to oppose the *baronia* system in the future.

### 3.20 **Keiretsu** (Japan)

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*Keiretsu* consists of two *kanji* (Chinese) characters, *kei* meaning 'series' and *retsu* meaning 'line'. It denotes a type of informal business group and may be translated as 'cluster of interlinked firms' (Lincoln and Gerlach 2004: 1). A multi-layered concept, *keiretsu* is rooted in traditional Japanese society's tendency to build business partnerships on the basis of family or clan. In the Edo period (1603–1868), it became common for employees who had served a merchant family over a long period to be granted ownership of their own businesses while remaining within the structure of the family. This practice is known in Japan as *norenwake*; a comparable English concept is a franchised business. *Norenwake* is still practised in Japan and is common in small businesses; a typical example is a *ramen* noodle chain.

The Meiji Revolution of 1868, which propelled Japan into the modern era, saw the rise of powerful family-controlled business conglomerates known as *zaibatsu* (family-owned corporate groups in which there

are strong capital and human ties between member companies). Typical examples of *keiretsu* in the years preceding the Second World War, the *zaibatsu* dominated the Japanese economy until the war and influenced both foreign and domestic policy.

In pre-war Japan, the Mitsubishi, Mitsui and Sumitomo conglomerates were known as the 'Big Three' (*sandai*) *zaibatsu*. They controlled companies in a wide range of activities including the mining and chemical industries as well as banking and finance. Comparable family-controlled conglomerates known as *chaebol* were found in Korea (e.g. Samsung and Hyundai) and India (e.g. Tata and Birla).

In the late 1940s, during the Allied occupation of Japan, the *zaibatsu* were dismantled as part of the Allied Powers' occupation policy. However, many *zaibatsu* reorganised themselves by means of share purchases to form horizontally integrated *kigyo-shudan*, or horizontal *keiretsu*. The big three *zaibatsu* companies plus the Fuyo, Daiichi-kangin and Sanwa corporations, became known as the 'Big Six' (*rokudai*) *kigyo-shudan*. There was no longer an overall controlling company, but member companies remained connected by means of cross-shareholdings. Horizontal *keiretsu* contributed to the development of large companies during the post-war economic miracle that saw Japan grow into the world's second largest economy (after the USA) by the 1960s. Researchers sometimes use the degree of cross-shareholding as an indicator of group ties in horizontal *keiretsu*, but the practice of cross-shareholding has been reduced since the economic bubble burst in Japan in the early 1990s and, as a result, the practice of horizontal *keiretsu* in Japan has weakened.

Another form of *keiretsu*, known as vertical *keiretsu*, is seen as a key characteristic of the Japanese automotive industry. It resembles a supply-chain management system in which an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) draws on collaborative, long-standing relations with dozens of key suppliers. There is no well-accepted definition of this practice; indeed, it can be difficult to define the border between *keiretsu* and non-*keiretsu* firms. For example, OEMs' supplier associations, *kyoryoku-kai*, are considered one of *keiretsu*'s key characteristics, but these associations usually include companies that supply parts to multiple OEMs and thus cannot be considered *keiretsu* firms. In vertical *keiretsu*, an OEM holds a certain percentage of shares in some of its suppliers. However, Japanese OEMs have collaborative, long-standing relationships with suppliers whose shares are not owned by the OEM. Therefore, capital ties are not a sufficient condition for the existence of vertical *keiretsu*.

Some researchers analyse the role of *keiretsu* by means of transaction-cost economics. Vertical *keiretsu* allows an OEM to reduce costs arising from market failure by establishing collaborative relations with suppliers; it also helps to reduce costs arising from organisational failure through sharing the development and production burden with suppliers. Others highlight the way in which vertical *keiretsu* enhances the competitiveness of the Japanese automotive industry by developing mutual trust between OEMs and their suppliers. Unlike the arm's-length OEM-supplier relationship found in the West, Japanese suppliers often offer to provide OEMs with high-quality parts at cheaper prices. At the same time, these suppliers can receive various forms of support from the OEMs, such as expert advice on improving production or training and education opportunities. Such collaboration contributes to ongoing improvement, or *kaizen*, in Japanese OEMs' production systems, their supply chains included.

Toyota's supply chain is a typical example of vertical *keiretsu*. Toyota's supplier association, Kyohokai, had 224 members in 2015. These suppliers have differing degrees of closeness to Toyota. Thirteen of them belong to the Toyota Group and Toyota holds at least 20 per cent of the shares of these companies. Toyota transfers corporate executives to posts on the boards of these companies. Their presidents and Toyota's head meet on a monthly basis. Then there are another 30 companies that do not belong to the Toyota Group, but of whose shares more than 20 per cent are held by Toyota; Toyota also transfers corporate executives to serve on their boards. Of the remaining Kyohokai member companies, 180 do not have capital ties with Toyota. However some companies, such as Kojima Press Kogyo, are exclusively dedicated to Toyota, and are believed to have strong loyalty to Toyota. Kyohokai's activities include (Kyohokai website 2015):

1. *General assembly*: an annual meeting of member-companies.
2. *Meetings of the Board of Directors*: held three times a year.
3. *Executive round-table*: representatives of member-companies meet with Toyota's executives to promote mutual communication.
4. *Business management and special interest lectures*: lecturers and Toyota executives provide insights on topical management issues to member-companies.
5. *Social events*: various events aimed at fostering close relations and effective communication between Toyota and member-companies.
6. *Theme-specific research groups*: joint research activities on topics such as safety and human resource development.

7. *Body- and unit-part sectional meetings*: a variety of activities aimed at promoting two-way communication between Toyota and member-companies and developing a common understanding of the issues affecting the automotive industry.

During the period of Japan's rapid economic growth (which came to an end with the bursting of the Japanese asset price bubble in 1991), most of the Japanese automotive OEMs depended heavily on their *keiretsu* suppliers for parts-purchasing. However, the vertical *keiretsu* in the Japanese automotive industry in general has weakened since the bubble burst. This was particularly the case with Mazda, Mitsubishi and Nissan, which formed capital ties with overseas OEMs. In the case of Nissan, which formed an alliance with Renault in 1999, one of the executives, Carlos Ghosn, clearly stated that Nissan's *keiretsu* system had not functioned well. Nissan subsequently launched the Nissan Revival Plan and tasked its suppliers with reducing their prices by 20 per cent over three years. Toyota also initiated a competitive purchasing strategy in 2000, 'Construction of Cost Competitiveness for the 21st Century', the aim of which was to reduce purchasing costs by 30 per cent over three years. However, Toyota did not use this scheme to terminate its dealings with uncompetitive suppliers. Rather, it provided support to help existing suppliers improve their competitiveness. In the mid-2000s, Nissan again began to stress the importance of collaborative, long-term relationships with suppliers, and initiated new supplier-support activities.

The cases of Toyota and Nissan suggest that vertical *keiretsu* continues to operate in the Japanese automotive industry. However, today's *keiretsu* differs from that which existed before the 1990s. It may be said that vertical *keiretsu* has developed by incorporating competitive aspects, and formed a hybrid style between the Japanese collaborative style and Western competitive ways.

### 3.21 ***Kanonieri qurdebi*** (Georgia)

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*Kanonieri qurdebi* is best translated in English as 'thieves-professing-the-code', but is usually translated literally, as 'thieves-in-law' (in Russian *vory-v-zakone*). 'Thieves-in-law' refers to leaders of organised crime groups in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Eurasia. They have been

defined as ‘networking criminal leaders who engage collectively in mafia activities’ (Slade 2013: 17), and senior criminal figures who ‘maintain, interpret and enforce the thieves’ code’ (Galeotti 1998: 429). Like Sicilian mafia godfathers, *qurdebi* operate within a defined honour code and maintain strict secrecy. This code is often referred to as ‘understandings’ (*gageba*) – that is, ‘a set of preserved, ritualised practices and status markers guided by a well-articulated, codified yet fluctuating body of rules’ (Slade 2013: 17).

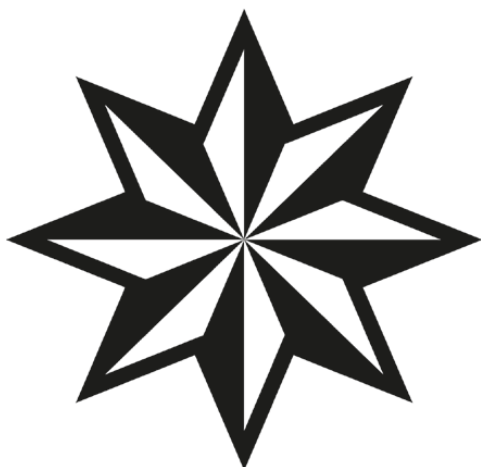
The fraternity of *qurdebi* became known as ‘thieves’ world’ (*qurduli samkaro*). Formally, all *qurdebi* are equal in status. However, there are significant differences in terms of influence within and beyond the network depending on the resources an individual *qurdi* has access to. There are three different factions within the network named after three Georgian cities: the Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Sukhumi networks. These networks have been mostly competing over the resources and influence in Georgia as well as in other countries where Georgian organised crime has been successfully transplanted (Russia, Spain, Austria and France among others). Despite being in competition with each other, the factions also coordinate activities through meetings or thieves’ courts (*skhodka*), where intra and inter-factional conflicts are discussed and new recruits are initiated through ‘baptising’ (‘crowning the candidate’). *Qurdebi* collectively pool resources to an administrative and trading body and common fund (*obshchak*, see 5.22 Volume 2) based on voluntary and involuntary (extortion) contributions from various sources both in and outside of the prisons (Varese 2001). *Qurdebi* manage the expenditure of the *obshchak* and supervise the inflow of income through ‘overseers’ (*makureblebi*), the representatives of the *qurdebi* in a particular prison or in a given territory.

Most scholarship on the topic finds that ‘thieves-in-law’ originated in the Soviet gulag labour camps in the 1930s (Chalidze 1977; Applebaum 2003). However, the archival evidence from the Caucasian State Okhranka (Tsarist secret service) contained in Georgia suggests that *kanonieri qurdebi* predated the Soviet Union. A secret letter from an Okhranka officer dated 1908 speaks about the ‘thieves’ slang’ (*vorovskoy zhargon*) in the Tbilisi city prison. In the same period the Okhranka confiscated a letter from an inmate that complained about thieves’ extortion and their control of the prisons in Tbilisi. *Qurdebi* emerged as an influential power structure in the Soviet gulags because they were empowered by the Soviet authorities to control the gulag population (Montefiore 2007; Shelley 2007). Because the gulag was their birthplace, the impact of *qurdebi* has been most consistent in prisons, despite their fading influence over politics and the economy towards the end of the 1990s.



In Georgia *qurdebi* have capitalised on some romanticism attached to the peasant outlaws *abragi*. One of the most celebrated pieces in contemporary Georgian literature is *Data Tutashkhia* (1975) by Chabua Amirejibi, which paints a heroic image of a Georgian *abragi* fighting Russian imperial injustice. The resistance to colonialism coupled with the opportunities provided by crime turned many of the ‘freedom fighters’ into outlaws. Originally, the *abragi* were men who escaped blood feuds after committing a crime by taking to the mountains. After the Russian Empire came to the South Caucasus in the early nineteenth century, *abragi* denoted those resisting the Russians. These circumstances cultivated romanticism towards criminality, which then served as the basis for similar attitudes towards the *qurdebi*. Another celebrated Georgian author Nodar Dumbadze chronicles the life of a just, pious and moral *qurdi* in his 1973 novel *White Flags* (Godson et al. 2004).

Georgia contributed disproportionately to the world of the Soviet thieves-in-law. This small nation, comprising 2 per cent of the overall population of the Soviet Union, contributed 31.6 per cent of the professional criminals active in the Soviet Union. In comparison, the much larger Russian population provided 33.1 per cent (Serio and Razinkin 1995: 77). Some researchers have explained this disproportionality in terms of cultural traits of Georgians, manifested in risk-taking, honour-based trust and eagerness to use violence (Mars and Altman 1983). However, the most plausible explanation lies in the strong informal



**Figure 3.21.1** One of the most famous tattoos of ‘thieves-in-law’.  
Source: Author.

economy that thrived due to the near monopoly of sub-tropical Georgia on the supply of wine, fruit, tobacco and tea to the closed Soviet market. Georgian criminals gathered extensive resources through what amounted to a de facto 'tax' imposed on the domestic shadow economy (Shelley 2007; Scott 2015). The commercialisation of *qurduli samkaro* was not commensurate with original 'understandings' that forbade any link with state representatives and owning private property (Afanasyev 1994: 438; Glonti and Lobjanidze 2004). However, in the 1970s and 1980s some of the rules changed or were discarded, and *qurdebi* have jumped on the burgeoning opportunities generated by legal and illegal markets.

In the 1990s the newly independent post-Soviet Georgia was substantially weakened by lack of public trust in its institutions, and their failure to provide basic public goods such as protection of property rights. This created major demand for the services of *kanonieri qurdebi*, who stepped in to fill the void and provide the services of protection, dispute resolution and debt collection (Volkov 2002; Slade 2013). Businesses and citizens were reluctant to turn to the inefficient and corrupt courts and instead sought justice through *qurdebi*. Ironically, government officials and even policemen would be frequently found among those turning to *qurdebi* for help. *Qurdebi* also headed groups involved in wide-ranging semi-legal and illegal activities including gambling, human kidnapping for ransom, drug smuggling, robberies and car theft. Throughout the post-Soviet period *qurdebi* evolved into influential power wielders enjoying extensive links with officials of law enforcement structures and politicians, and sometimes running joint businesses with them, for example, wholesale markets or petrol stations (Slade 2013).

*Qurdebi* were also successful in generating popular legitimacy and would often engage in charitable works, especially through the widely popular Georgian Orthodox Church. Due to their lavish lifestyle and displays of power, *qurdebi* became role models among the youth – in 1995 more than 25 per cent of school children surveyed said that they aspired to become a *qurdi* (Serio and Razinkin 1995: 76).

Due to the large number of thieves, Georgia differed from other post-Soviet republics in terms of impact of this type of organised crime on politics and the economy. In Central Asia, Russia and Ukraine, for example, thieves initially focused more on racketeering and extortion and only later developed political ties, while in Georgia *qurdebi* penetrated politics immediately after the Soviet break-up. Jaba Ioseliani, *qurdi* and leader of the paramilitary group Mkhedrioni, became President Eduard

Shevardnadze's deputy in the early 1990s. In the rest of the former Soviet Union thieves can be distinguished from other types of criminal groups that developed outside of the thieves' world, for example gangs of sportsmen (in particular specialists of martial arts) that moved to organised crime after the abundant Soviet funding for sports had dried up (Volkov 2002). In Georgia most of the groups representing sportsmen were subordinate to the thieves' influence. For example, a group of wrestlers arrested in 2005 were operational leaders of an organised crime group with international connections. The group was headed by influential *kanonieri qurdebi* and also had a former police official (a former head of an anti-corruption unit of Ministry of Internal Affairs) in its ranks. The group was engaged in kidnapping, robberies and selling illegally trafficked cars from Europe in Georgia (Ministry of Internal Affairs Special Operations Department 2005).

Towards the end of the 1990s thieves were caught up in violent conflicts with competing criminals and faced an increasingly repressive state that had been investing in its coercive capacity (Varese 2001). As a consequence thieves have gradually lost their influence on politics and the economy, although still maintained their grip over the prisons. In Georgia *qurdebi* showed the most resilience, through manipulating their links with law enforcement officials and politicians, and dominated illicit markets until the early 2000s (Shelley 2007; Kupatadze 2012). Their dominance has been undermined only since the 2003 Rose Revolution, the protest movement that resulted in regime change in Georgia. The Rose Revolution is often described as a popular uprising against rampant corruption and unpunished crime. The state response to *qurdebi* has changed from tolerance to antagonism in the aftermath of the Revolution, and the new reformist government has integrated the campaign against organised crime into its state-building project. Targeted by policies of zero-tolerance to crime and the legislation modelled on American and Italian anti-mafia laws, *qurdebi* have lost most of their business assets and their links with the state have been undermined. However, in the penal institutions informal criminal hierarchies have perpetuated, albeit in increasing subordination to the formal authorities (Kupatadze 2012). Escaping the domestic crackdown, most *qurdebi* have moved to Russia or Europe. A number of law enforcement operations in various European countries in 2005–13 have targeted large criminal gangs headed by Georgian 'thieves-in-law', which have been involved in robberies, theft, money laundering and smuggling.

### 3.22 *Silovye Gruppirovki* (Bulgaria)

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The Bulgarian term *silovye gruppirovki* can be literally translated as violent groups. The term, which is widely known in Bulgaria, can also be understood as a pun; in Bulgarian *sila* means both power and violence (Langenscheidts 2005: 180). The term is also commonly translated in English as ‘violent entrepreneurship’ and is used to describe a form of organised crime that developed in Bulgaria during the transition period of the 1990s (CSD 2009: 3).

The members of these violent groups are known as *mutri*, meaning ‘thug’, ‘bully’ or ‘gorilla’ (Carvajal and Castle 2008; Bagasheva and Pencheva 2009: 455; Bulanova-Hristova 2011: 342). Vadim Volkov described the Russian equivalent of *silovye gruppirovki* as racketeers, who produced ‘both, the danger and, at a price, the shield against it’. They were – and to some extent still are – ‘violent entrepreneurs’ who ‘convert organized force (or organized violence) into money’ (Volkov 2000: 710, 725). In the 1990s members of the *silovye gruppirovki* groups in Bulgaria were responsible for an increasingly insecure environment and thereby they created a demand for their services from both business and members of the public who sought a guarantee of personal security. The rates they offered to their clients were two to three times cheaper than the cost of hiring police officers (Dzhekova and Rusev 2015: 32f.).

The noticeable success of the *silovye gruppirovki* resulted from the specific social and political circumstances prevalent in post-communist Bulgaria. First, the collapse of the centralised Bulgarian communist system in 1989 left immense resources, which had to be transformed from state assets to private property (Bulanova 2008: 57). Second, during the period of the chaotic privatisation process in Bulgaria, communist elites, who were fully cognisant of the extent and value of the resources, sought to accumulate wealth by buying and selling them (Ganev 2007: 186; Bulanova 2008: 57). This personal accumulation of wealth was facilitated by the ‘gradual loss of statehood’ during the transition period – characterised by legal chaos, lack of institutional and judicial regulation, as well as widespread insecurity (Bulanova 2008: 66). Under these circumstances, the post-communist Bulgarian state failed to guarantee either property rights or contract compliance. Therefore the absence of state power created, among other things, the demand for private security services.

A further contributory factor to the growth of the security service sector was that it was particularly appealing to former wrestlers who lost their jobs with the collapse of the communist system. In the People's Republic of Bulgaria, wrestling had been a popular sport in which the Communist Party had invested a substantial amount of money establishing sporting facilities and organising tournaments. Bulgarian wrestlers were successful on the international stage and thus considered to enhance the reputation of the Republic in the world. In return for their perceived contribution to the country's international status, the sportsmen were compensated with a comfortable lifestyle, guaranteed by the state (Appelius 2006: 169; Bulanova-Hristova 2011: 341). After the sudden cessation of the totalitarian state control in November 1989 and during the first years of the transition, the sportsmen were deprived of their privileges. The former wrestlers found themselves in urgent need of alternative employment. A large number of these wrestlers decided to use their physical strength, together with their connections to former communist elites, to fill the gap in the supply of security services. Businesses with security services – sourced through either private security companies or so-called 'insurance companies' – became the main source of income for the former wrestlers. Serving their own monetary interests, the former wrestlers organised in gangs and became 'violent entrepreneurs' – the so-called *silovye gruppirovki*. The gangs were registered as official companies offering a variety of security services. These 'problem-solving services' ranged from violent 'persuasion' of private persons, often contract partners on behalf of their clients (Volkov 1999: 750; Appelius 2006: 169; Bulanova-Hristova 2011: 342–4), to vandalism, kidnapping and assassinations (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 81).

Crucial elements within the social networks of the former wrestlers were a number of dismissed employees from the former communist security service Darshavna Sigurnost (DS), as well as former employees of the interior ministry of the People's Republic of Bulgaria (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 81; Bulanova-Hristova 2011: 342f). The use of personal networks – which may be regarded as the Bulgarian version of *blat* (Ledeneva 2011: 720) – involving former state employees, was exceptionally valuable for the violent entrepreneurs, thanks to the former employees' specific knowledge of Bulgarian politics and economy, as well as their durable international networks, established during the communist era. Accordingly, the former employees of Darshavna Sigurnost are considered to have presided over and been the main initiators of the culture of 'violent entrepreneurship' (Bulanova-Hristova 2011: 343).



**Figure 3.22.1** Some notorious underground bosses, who were involved in racketeering, became widely known in Bulgaria. This picture shows a selection of biographies of some famous criminal figures sold at a Bulgarian petrol station.

Source: <https://flic.kr/p/8wDeiL>. © Jonathan Baker-Bates, 2010.

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The racketeering business, however, was not the only source of income for the *silovye gruppировки*. While the Bulgarian state officially boycotted Serbia in the Bosnian war (1992–5), the criminal gangs ensured

the supply of goods such as fuel to the Serbian regime (Appelius 2006: 170f.; Carvajal and Castle 2008). In brief, the political and economic networks of the *silovye gruppировki* facilitated their impunity and thereby paved the way for the continuous undermining of the state's monopoly on the control of security (Outhwaite and Ray 2005: 81f.; Bulanova 2008: 54–7; Carvajal and Castle 2008; Bilefsky 2010; Bulanova-Hristova 2011: 343f.; Dzhekova and Rusev 2015: 32f.).

Between 1990 and 1994 the private security companies were essentially unregulated. In this environment, the *silovye gruppировki* were able to launder money earned through other illegal businesses, which included trade in stolen cars, the supply of drugs and arms, and earnings gained from prostitution (Bulanova-Hristova 2011: 344; Dzhekova and Rusev 2015: 32f.). Yet the high visibility of the *silovye gruppировki* increased the pressure on state institutions to react. From 1994 onwards, an increasing number of investigations and enhanced law enforcement measures saw a decline in the number of so-called security companies. As a result of institutional pressure, it became harder to receive a licence to start a security company and licences were denied to companies where the founders or employees of the company were under investigation. As a consequence, between 1994 and 1997, a number of private security companies repositioned themselves as insurance companies. In practice these so-called insurance companies were able to continue their semi-legal businesses simply by adopting a new name (Dzhekova and Rusev 2015: 33). One of the biggest and most notorious of those security companies was Vasil Illiev Security (VIS); registered in 1992 it changed its name to VIS2 in 1994 (Appelius 2006: 170).

Since 1995, much of the illegal money brutally earned by the *silovye gruppировki* has been invested in legal and increasingly prosperous sectors, such as in Bulgarian tourism. Former gang members invested in hotels and in the fruit trade on the Black sea coast in Varna and Burgas; additionally money was laundered through waste disposal companies (Appelius 2006: 171). Some rich gang members even bought soccer clubs, attracted by the possibility of a scenario 'where money can be laundered through huge fees paid for transfers of players' (Carvajal and Castle 2008). Since 2007 the process has continued. In recent times the well-established system of money laundering saw investment in real estate in the Bulgarian capital Sofia. It enabled several former leading gang members to successfully transform their image into that of well-respected businessmen (Appelius 2006: 176). A World Bank Enterprise Survey in 2013 found that nearly 75 per cent of Bulgarian private companies pay for security – a much higher percentage than in most other

East European countries (Carvajal and Castle 2008; Dzhekova and Rusev 2015: 42).

According to Bulgarian police sources, the majority of security and insurance companies are no longer involved in extortion or racketeering. Exceptions, however, are found within the agriculture sector in the Bulgarian provinces and in low-grade nightclubs where a culture of 'protection' is still evident (Dzhekova and Rusev 2015: 53f). Actors involved in the shadow economy are found to be implicated in violent 'debt collection' in the aforementioned sectors. Since the end of the 1990s, the re-establishment of state power and the increasing re-enforcement of the rule of law by the Bulgarian state have succeeded in marginalising the *silovye gruppировki*. Yet analysts of the security sector agree that informal contacts between the political class and the heads of private security and insurance companies, which replaced the *silovye gruppировki*, still persist (Dzhekova and Rusev 2015).

### 3.23 **Omertà** (*Italy*)

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*Omertà* denotes a code of honour that requires a person to maintain silence about crimes or other illegal actions that they either witnessed or came to know about, whether directly or indirectly. The individual is obliged to protect the identity of the perpetrator and must not reveal any information that might draw the perpetrator to the attention of the authorities. This is the case even when the individual was themselves the victim of the crime. The term is used almost exclusively in connection with crimes committed by mafia-type organisations. It enables such organisations to rely on the *omertà* of entire communities as protection against investigation and/or prosecution by state law enforcement agencies.

The origin of the word *omertà* is contested. One of the earliest explanations was that proposed by Giuseppe Pitré, an ethnologist from Palermo who linked the term to the Italian word *uomo* (man), thereby associating it with 'manhood' or 'virility' (Lupo 2011). In this sense, *omertà* is the attribute of a man who is essentially responsible for himself and who remains independent of the law and the state. This meaning has been criticised from a moral standpoint since it can be seen to link the idea of manhood with disrespect for collective values. Indeed, it might condone behaviours outside the law, including vendettas and vigilantism. Another suggestion traces the origin of the word to the Italian



word *umiltà*, meaning ‘humbleness’ but, in certain areas of Southern Italy, denoting ‘discretion’ or ‘privacy’. In the Sicilian dialect, the word is pronounced *umirtà*, which might explain the derivation of *omertà* (Alongi 1977/1886). This explanation has also been criticised on the grounds that it justifies silence and non-cooperation as acts of discretion rather than as attempts to pervert the course of justice (Deaglio 1993). As a result, the precise origin of the word remains unclear. In its current usage, the word appears to borrow from both etymologies. The idea that if someone minds their own business and does not get involved in things that do not directly pertain to them is seen, in many cultures prevalent in Southern Italy, as a sign of ‘manhood’.

In English, the word *omertà* is often written without the stress on the final ‘a’ – *omerta*. It is usually translated as ‘code of silence’ or ‘conspiracy of silence’ and is used almost exclusively in relation to the behaviour of mafia members and external supporters (Albanese 1996). When used in the English-speaking world, the term often has a very specific connotation, deriving from the fight by the US authorities against Italian–American Cosa Nostra families. From the Italian viewpoint, the way the term is used abroad gives rise to considerable confusion. It seems that *omertà* in these circumstances is used to define a specific affiliation to mafia organisations that results in mafia members and their families or supporters refusing to cooperate with the authorities and behaving, instead, as a secret society.

It may appear, when the term *omertà* is translated, that the behaviour it encapsulates is specifically Italian. This is not, however, the case. On the contrary: it may be argued that refusing, out of a sense of privacy and of honour, to cooperate with the authorities is a much more widespread phenomenon. It is found in every secret and/or criminal organisation in the world, from youth gangs to drug-trafficking networks. It is, however, true, as Schneider and Schneider (2005) have argued, that the essential features of *omertà* – the element of choice of this behaviour rather than its coercion, paired with its collective dimension – are peculiar to certain enclave cultures, not just in Italy but everywhere in the world where small, geographically isolated communities are found.

There is, moreover, a darker meaning to the word *omertà* as it is used today in Italy. While in Southern Italy the word has long been essentially associated with mafia-type organisations, this has recently become increasingly the case in the north of the country too. In its common usage, *omertà* denotes ‘the categorical prohibition of cooperation with state authorities or reliance on its [the state’s] services, even when one has been victim of a crime’ (Paoli 2003: 109). Violation of this prohibition



**Figure 3.23.1** Cultural practices in Southern Italy.

Source: <https://flic.kr/p/fuNSLT>. © jesuscm, 2013.

can result in the murder of an individual who shares information with the authorities, since snitchers are not welcome in any secret and/or criminal organisation. With this more structured meaning, the term has entered the law in Italy, whereby article 416-bis of the Italian Penal Code identifies behaviour motivated by *omertà* as one of the characteristic elements of the mafia clans. The criminalisation of membership of mafia associations in Italy is, as a result, based on the criminalisation of a set of behaviours (Sergi 2014) that manifest themselves through social harm. *Omertà* is a red flag for communities and individuals, warning them of the danger of such social harm.

One problem behind the definition of *omertà* is the difficulty of capturing what it essentially is, how it manifests itself, and how it can be measured and/or assessed. Often no formal or explicit prohibition is placed on the act of talking to the authorities. Rather, the behaviour that is demanded is one of voluntary omission, dependent on the choice and judgement of a particular individual within a given community. It follows that it is at times very difficult to distinguish between *omertà* and the silence originating from discretion and privacy. It is not uncommon – particularly though not exclusively in small communities – to consider silence the best practice when it comes to business unrelated to oneself or one’s family. Except when silence becomes criminal conduct – lying to

the authorities, for example, especially cases relating to mafia crimes – many local communities actively promote the principle of silence. In many southern Italian villages, for example, one sees posters in local dialects whose message translates as, ‘Whoever minds their own business will live a hundred years and will live a better life’. This attitude, entrenched as it is in popular culture, may or may not have anything to do with mafia protection rackets and/or a low sense of civic duty.

Clearly, however, *omertà* is not a positive practice. The opposite is the case. Civic engagement is a crucial factor in the fight against organised crime (Cayli 2013). This is especially true in those regions where law-enforcement agencies struggle to penetrate the dense networks of mafia engagement. If the fight against mafias is to succeed, it will be essential for local populations to actively reject mafia influence and dominance (Arlacchi 1986; Dickie 2007; La Spina 2014). At the same time, however, *omertà* should not be considered simply as a clear-cut code of (mafia) (dis)honour to which people from certain areas and certain cultures subscribe. *Omertà* can be found in many forms and in many communities around the world, but it goes under different names and is not always commonly recognised for what it is.

### 3.24 *Nash chelovek* (Russia)

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*Nash chelovek* is one of the most common concepts reflecting informality in Russia (plural: *nashi lyudi*, or the closely related *svoi lyudi* literally translated as ‘our people’). In some contexts a better rendering of *nash chelovek* is ‘one of ours’ or ‘one of us’, though the term is all too often translated as ‘our man’. Despite the commonality of the concept, an online search, using both Latin and Cyrillic script, reveals that very little has been published on it. Such searches do however indicate that the phrase often makes it into the titles of movies and books, some of which will be familiar to Anglophone readers (e.g. the Russian title for Graham Greene’s *Our Man in Havana*), or in videos on Soviet leaders. A Russian play by Aleksandr Ostrovskii, *Svoi Lyudi – Sochtemsy* (usually translated as *It’s a Family Affair – We’ll Settle It Ourselves*, but referring to the code of a social circle) has been popular in Russia since 1849.

Linguistically, the use of *svoi* is more restricted than that of *nashi*, and similarly the circle of *svoi lyudi* is narrower in comparison to that of *nashi lyudi*. *Svoi* connotes belonging (as opposed to ‘stranger’, ‘foreigner’ or ‘outsider’ (*chuzhoi*), whereas *nash* implies solidarity (the opposite of ‘alien’ or ‘extraneous’ (*chuzhdyi*) (personal communication with Svetlana McMillin)). The words can however be used interchangeably. The divisive meaning of both *nash chelovek* and *svoi lyudi* points to the ever-shifting and thus hard-to-pin-down borderline between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The confrontation between ‘one of us’ and ‘not one of us’ appeared in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s novel *The Karamazov Brothers* (2007 [1880]). Following an altercation with his second son (Ivan), the father of the three Karamazov brothers, Fyodor Pavlovich, tells his youngest son (Alyosha) that rationalist Ivan ‘is not one of us in soul ... Ivan is not one of us. People like Ivan are not our sort, my boy’ (*Ibid.*: 190).

In Soviet times, *nash chelovek* was most often used pejoratively with the word ‘not’ in front of it, usually meaning someone who does not share the same view of the world and emphasising certain ideological connotations. The frequency of negative usage may be interpreted as an expression of Russian ‘negative identity’, defined by what it is *not* rather than standing for its own set of values (Gudkov 2004). The intricacies of crossing the ‘us versus them’ border are depicted in an early film by Nikita Mikhalkov, *Svoi Sredi Chuzhikh, Chuzhoi Sredi Svoikh* (1974; the title is usually translated into English as *At Home Among Strangers*, though a more literal translation would be *One’s Own Among Strangers, A Stranger Among One’s Own*). In the post-Soviet context, and particularly in contemporary Russia, understanding of continuity and change in the usage of the term presents a challenge: what does it mean to Russians nowadays; how do people view divisions between ‘us’ and ‘them’; and do their perceptions reflect on the private/public division, the ‘Russian idea’ in Putin’s Russia, or wider societal tendencies?

Using an original dataset on legal culture, corruption and law-enforcement in Russia, funded by the Norwegian Research Council, we have distinguished several types of discourse on ‘*nash chelovek*’ (Grødeland and Holmes, in progress). In 2013, 18 focus groups, each of 8 persons, in various parts of Russia, both urban and rural, were asked to discuss practical usages of the term *nash chelovek*; the data collected were subsequently analysed using N-Vivo software. The discussions identified the following range of meanings and concentric circles of belonging: from trusted persons and those sharing less formal, subjectively formulated identifiers (similar interests, shared professional experience, values, class or way of thinking) to those pointing to objective forms of

identity (the same country, region or place) or emphasising a mix of the above.

According to the frequency of responses, the significance of sharing (similar interests, views and so on) predominated over trustworthiness and compatriotism. The most revealing result, however, was the overall predominance of other meanings, among them 'close to one's family', 'someone with whom you'd go drinking', 'someone who helps us' and 'someone you respect', thereby pointing to the ambiguity of the term *nash chelovek*. Such ambiguity expresses essential features of the sense of belonging: defined by context and hard to pin down in a general way. While you can be one of us in one context, you can be excluded in others. The moving boundaries between us and them and the context-bound nature of *nash chelovek* can thus be regarded as part of its conceptualisation.

The most identifiable meaning of *nash chelovek* relates to sharing, that is someone who has 'common views', thinks 'in the same manner' or 'shares the same interests' as the others. Such circles of people share the same values, engage in the same type of behaviour, 'understand' one another and are considered 'reliable'. It is therefore possible to depend on them and to 'reach an agreement' with them. Here are some of the typical responses: 'a person who thinks in the same way' (Focus Group [FG]10, Maksharip); 'this is a person with my interests' (FG13, Sergei); 'a person with our views and emotions' (FG15, Anna); 'a person who is convenient, useful; there are some common interests and goals' (FG2, Lyudmila).

While the concept is generally context-bound, certain contexts such as sports or professional experience invoke particular understanding of sharing, close to solidarity: 'I think that if a supporter of the [Moscow] football club Spartak said "our man," then another supporter would also call him "our man"' (FG12, Musa); 'a person who does sports, who does not drink or smoke' (FG7, Tolya); 'this is professionalism' (FG16, Yuri).

While some focus group participants confined *nash chelovek* to personalised trust, meaning 'someone who can be trusted/is trusted' or 'can be relied upon' – '*nash chelovek* is like me ... someone on whom one can rely' (FG17, Tatyana) – others opted for more general contexts, such as politics – '(a person) with a red banner' (FG1, Igor) – or someone who also enjoys a drink: 'he drinks (like us) – *nash chelovek*' (FG1, Dimitrii). Thus, *nash chelovek* may be an 'acquaintance' or a 'close person', such as a member of one's family or one's own circle, but it can also refer to President Vladimir Putin, as well as to unspecified 'nationalists': 'Putin is our man' (FG13, Nina); 'nationalists' (FG16, Chechen). It should be noted in this context that Putin's Presidential Administration sponsored

the establishment of the youth organisation *Nashi* ('Ours', established 2005), which was seen by some as having nationalist tendencies and was compared with the Soviet-era youth movement the *Komsomol*, and even with the Hitler Youth (Whipple 2006; Young 2007). Such comparisons and *Nashi*'s reputation for thuggery began to embarrass Putin in his third term (Stanovaya 2013), and the organisation has since been replaced by less confrontational groups such as '*Set*' ('network'; Nemtsova 2014).

The divisiveness of cohesion, implicit in the term, may be illustrated by diverging views on whether the term essentially refers to belonging to one's own ethnic group and/or to living in one's own country or local community ('locals' (FG8, Vera)); occasionally it may refer to belonging to 'a workers' collective' (FG17, Julia), or be more generally associated with 'Russians' (FG5, Nikolai), 'our people abroad' (FG2, Vladimir) or 'a patriot' (FG7, Vova).

The patriotic connotations of *nash chelovek* are somewhat wider than those of the more exclusive and pragmatic-sounding *svoi chelovek*. Exploring the instrumental connotations of *nash chelovek* was aimed at establishing whether or not this term is used to describe people who pull strings, use connections, or go between. Some participants noted that *nash chelovek* is someone who can effectively do this. *Nash chelovek* can promote the interests of a locality or group of people, defend someone or 'fight for the truth'. Further, and more importantly, he or she is influential and thus able to achieve something, including resolving problems. Sometimes *nash chelovek* is able to achieve something that, in principle, is not feasible. But he or she might also be 'dishonest', 'break the law' or 'engage in corruption': 'someone who does something for our local area' (FG17, Aleksandr); 'someone who promotes the interests of the masses' (FG10, Nadezhda); 'an influential person' (FG12, Makka); 'someone working in the police or who works somewhere, you have an acquaintance. Aha – "*nash chelovek*"' (FG17, Elena); 'some problems may be settled through him/her' (FG17, Sergei); 'from the depths of corruption, *nash chelovek* is the one bought by me' (FG15, Alevtina); 'corrupted people' (FG16, Petr); 'it is something dishonest' (FG1, Natalia); '*nash chelovek* will most likely violate the rules and laws' (FG9, Aleksei); 'someone who steals together (with someone)' (FG15, Sergei).

Those who were uncertain how to define *nash chelovek* noted that the term has 'different', 'dual' or 'broad' meanings, is context-dependent, and is used essentially as a slang word. According to our original findings, then, there is a significant degree of ambiguity in

the practical usage of the term *nash chelovek* in Russia today. However, the views of those who committed to a clear response and highlighted consensus that emerged around the idea of sharing – predominantly, sharing similar views and values – were not essentially different from the connotations of *nash chelovek* in the Soviet era. Specific meanings are context-bound and, in those contexts where *nash chelovek* can be ‘appropriated’ for pursuing certain interests, its meaning is closest to ‘*svoi chelovek*’.

What is clear even from the small sample of responses cited here is that, whereas some Russians will turn to ‘one of us’ to obtain something or to resolve a problem through unofficial channels and means, others are critical of *nash chelovek* precisely because their understanding of informality precludes bending the rules too much. What is also clear is that it is unsurprising that outside observers find it so difficult to pin down the concept of *nash chelovek*; other cultures can be rather opaque to external analysts, especially when the locals themselves are divided about the meaning of an ambiguous term (for further examples from other post-communist societies see Miller et al. 2001).

## Modern and youth solidarities

### 3.25 *Birzha* (Georgia)

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*Birzha* refers to a group of male teenagers or young men who meet regularly in open spaces (squares, courtyards, basements), mostly in urban areas. In standard Russian language the term literally means ‘stock exchange’. However, the *Dictionary of Georgian Slang* (Bregadze 2005) defines an alternative meaning of *birzha* as ‘an outdoor gathering of idle youth’. The reference to the financial world is somewhat ironic as the participants are generally economically inactive; on the other hand, valuable exchange does take place in *birzha*, but of social capital rather than financial capital. In Russian language another slang extension to the meaning of the term *birzha* dates back to the nineteenth century, and refers to a place where people wait for a temporary job (Dal’ 1955, in Zakharova 2010). Ethnographic research on post-Soviet Lithuania also reports that a group of men waiting in the street for informal short-term employment is defined as ‘*darbo birzha*’, which is the formal term for ‘unemployment agency’ (Knudsen 2015).

As a fundamental space of socialisation for young males, *birzha* is thought to be a specifically Georgian phenomenon. The author's fieldwork has revealed that young people from several neighbouring post-Soviet countries (Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan) define local understandings of the word *birzha* through the meaning of 'stock exchange', with no reference to street youth.

Research on *birzha* is linked to sociological and anthropological analyses of 'street corner societies', mainly based on ethnographies of American ethnically defined urban areas (most often inhabited by Afro- and Latino-American communities) and 'Mediterranean cultures' (Whyte 1943; Anderson 1999). As in Tbilisi's neighbourhoods, in the Mediterranean model 'the street' is an essential function of identification and rootedness within local communities (Garot 2007). Conversely, in the American context belonging to 'street corner society' entails social and economic marginalisation (Zakharova 2010). Similarities (especially regarding masculinity and reliance on social networks) can also be found with American 'good old boys' (Farr 1988).

Every neighbourhood (*ubani, kvartali*) has its *birzha*, regardless of the social and economic prestige of the area. Similarly, the right to be part of *birzha* is given by birth to all males, regardless of differences in ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status. *Birzha* is considered as the principal school of masculinity, as well as an essential stage in the transition from teenage to manhood. Children become increasingly involved in *birzha* up to the end of school. However, this time can be extended, especially for young men struggling to find an occupation (working or studying).

Every male is expected to be familiar with the set of norms regulating street life. Such norms, whose key points are honour, honesty, manly attitudes and respect for the elderly, are framed and enacted within a strict hierarchy of roles and identities. The top of the hierarchy is constituted by the 'old boy' (*dzveli bichi*) – the most important figures in street communities and the main source of authority in *birzha*. *Dzveli bichi* are teenagers or young men, who typically are aiming for a career in the criminal world (Finckenauer and Kelly 1992). Key features of *dzveli bichi* are: utter disregard for official rules and authorities; mastery of street norms; proneness to solve conflicts through violent means; prison experience. *Dzveli bichi* status is regarded as the first step in a criminal hierarchy culminating with the figure of *vor v zakone* (in Georgian *kanonieri qurdebi*, 'thief-in-law', see 3.21 in this volume; see also Frisby 1998; Slade 2014). *Birzha* members rely upon each other through ties of unquestioned trust and mutual respect. They refer to each other as *dzmakatsi*; *dzma*,



‘brother’, and *katsi*, ‘man’, which indicates a stronger and manlier relationship than the neutral ‘friend’, *megobari* (Frederiksen 2012, 2013). The duty of *dzmakatsi* is to always be at each other’s side, offering unconditional support, especially in conflict situations with a potentially violent outcome.

As the financial origin of the term suggests, *birzha* is underpinned by reciprocal exchange and the ongoing interaction of individuals. Social networks arising from *birzha* provide people with long-lasting human connections, which are a source of informal social and economic support. Deals of various sizes and legality are conducted within *birzha*: from the purchase and exchange of goods such as clothes, accessories, cigarettes, mobile phones, to the offering of ‘favours of access’ (short-term informal working positions, introduction to potentially useful individuals and so on). The latter use of *birzha* can be compared to the Soviet phenomenon of *blat*, the ‘use of informal contacts and personal networks to obtain goods and services in short supply’ (Ledeneva 1998: 4).

*Birzha* is also related to the ubiquitous practice of Georgian hospitality. Both phenomena are underpinned by exchange networks of relatives, friends and neighbours. Moreover, *birzha* itself is often structured as a hospitable event. *Birzha* is shaped by everyday activities such as sharing a bottle of vodka in the street while nibbling smoked fish and sunflower seeds, or drinking homemade wine in a basement or a courtyard. The traditional path of more formal hospitable events (*supra*) are followed, reproducing speech, gestures and attitudes, especially with regard to the structured process of toasting and drinking. For this reason, *birzha* can be considered a veritable expression of ‘street hospitality’ in Georgian urban areas.

Research shows that the main reasons underpinning young people’s participation in *birzha* are unemployment and, most importantly, protest against the state (Finckenauer and Kelly 1992; Zakharova 2010). *Birzha* is a form of socialisation alternative to, and conflicting with, official institutions. *Birzha* provides young Georgians with moral and social norms that are radically different to those gained from school, the Church and even the family. During the period of Soviet communist rule, being actively involved in *birzha* was incompatible with being a member of official organisations such as the Komsomol (Young Communist League). Moreover, as the potential first rung of an ascending criminal career, *birzha* is the embryonic stage of informal dynamics, which both compete with and threaten official public institutions and the rule of law.

During his decade in power (2003–13), President Saakashvili’s initiatives against organised crime, corruption, and informal practices

in general, included efforts to tackle juvenile delinquency and youth street communities (Shelley et al. 2007). In their official discourse, the Georgian authorities drew clear links between organised crime and the shadow economy on the one hand, and street groups on the other (Slade 2012). Through tighter laws, harsh punishments (including jail sentences) and stricter control on *ubani* and schools, the government has reduced the practice of *birzha* to some extent (Zakharova 2010).

In recent years, *birzha* has begun to decline in social significance. Belonging to street communities is viewed as less important than before by many Georgians, who look to other values (politics, family, career, consumerism), often regarding *birzha* as a backward heritage from the chaotic period of the late 1980s and 1990s. Geographical and social mobility has increased, displacing individuals from native neighbourhoods (Zakharova 2010). This is particularly true for the new upper and middle classes, which are emerging as a result of growing social and economic inequality (Roberts and Pollock 2009). Thus, *birzha* is now increasingly becoming limited to disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Curro 2015).

### 3.26 ***Dizelaši*** (Serbia)

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*Dizelaši* is a slang expression that may be translated as ‘Diesel Boys’. It refers to the members of a youth male subculture that emerged in Serbia in the turbulent socio-political environment of the early 1990s. The break-up of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992 plunged the region into war. As violence escalated, Serbia became mired in deep economic crisis. United Nations (UN) sanctions imposed in 1992 provoked soaring inflation and shortages of such key products as fuel. Economic turmoil saw rogue traders and members of criminal gangs grow extremely wealthy very quickly, and some *nouveaux riches* groups used fashion to express their new-found status (Gordy 2000: 6).

The word *dizelaši* is thought to derive from the fashion brand Diesel, Diesel jeans being one of the most prized fashion items among young males in Serbia at this time (Gerzić 2002: 60). However, it may also refer to the smuggling of diesel fuel, one of the illegal activities in which the *dizelaši* were allegedly involved (Subcultureslist.com 2015). The physical appearance of the *dizelaši* reinforced their reputation as tough and criminally oriented. Typically shaven-headed, muscular and robust, they devoted much time to exercising in the gym and paid particular

attention to their clothing. As a sign of group identity, their dress code included sporty attire consisting of a tracksuit or jeans (the upper part of the tracksuit tucked into the trousers) and Nike Air Max or Reebok trainers (Klajn 2010: 366). They wore conspicuously thick gold chains around their necks (Subcultureslist.com 2015). Female members of the subculture, known as *dizelašice* or *sponzoruše* (diggers), were known by their fondness for glamorous lifestyles. They wore heavy make-up, short skirts, high heels, long, usually blonde hair and extravagant jewellery (Subcultureslist.com 2015).

‘The videos of artists such as Snezana Babic and Dragana Mirkovic were filled with gold jewellery, luxury cars and huge new houses; they depicted young women in knock-off Versace living it up in the mirrored bars and casinos of Belgrade’s luxury hotels – the Intercontinental, the Hyatt and the Metropolitan’ (Higginbotham 2004). This embrace of branded clothing, ostentatious fashion accessories and expensive motor-cars was seen as a means used by the young *nouveaux riches* to distance themselves from social and financial instability.

The *dizelaši* were ardent fans of turbo-folk, a new musical genre that emerged in the 1990s and that glorified the luxurious lifestyle. The term was coined by rock musician Rambo Amadeus as an ironic reference to the genre’s hybridity since it blended traditional Serbian folk music with hip-hop, rock ‘n’ roll and dance. In his song ‘Turbo-folk’, Amadeus explained that the term encompasses more than just a particular music style: ‘Folk refers to people, turbo refers to speedy fuel injection under pressure. Thus, turbo-folk refers to combustion of people. Anything leading to this combustion can be called turbo-folk’ (Higginbotham 2004). Petar Popovic, director of Serbia’s state-run record company, followed the same line of argument when he said that turbo-folk ‘is the sound of the war and everything that the war brought to this country. It represents everything that has happened to this country over the past few years’ (Higginbotham 2004).

Turbo-folk gained popularity largely thanks to its promotion by state-controlled and private TV stations. State-sponsored TV Pink and TV Palma, for example, supported the regime of Serbian President Slobodan Milošević not only through their news-reporting but also by focusing in their entertainment programmes on turbo-folk and by avoiding any reference to the rich pop and rock scene that had existed in Yugoslavia before the 1990s. According to Amadeus, ‘rock ‘n’ roll in Serbia died the moment that Milosevic came to power’ in 1989 (Gordi 2001: 129). Turbo-folk with its kitschy, flashy videos and lyrics popularising the glamorous lifestyle provided an escape from the realities of poverty, sanctions, ethnic

conflict and war. On the one hand there was rock 'n' roll, underground and rebellion; on the other there was turbo-folk, *dizelaši* and crime; this cultural divide reflected the social and political orientations that characterised Serbian society in the 1990s (Gordi 2001: 116). *Dizelaši* embraced the aesthetic of 'war chic' (Kronja 2006: 92) and discriminated against other, usually Western-inspired subcultures such as Metalheads or Punks (Subcultureslist.com 2015).

While the *dizelaši* subculture was closely linked to the specific socio-economic conditions of 1990s Serbia, similar subcultures were found in other countries that underwent social and economic turmoil at the turn of the century. For example, *gopniki* describes members of the youth subculture found in Russia and other post-Soviet states in the 1980s (Subcultureslist 2015). It too attracted young males, comparable to 'chavs' or 'neds' in Great Britain, characterised by aggressive behaviour, a predilection for criminal activity, and alcohol abuse. Like the *dizelaši*, *gopniki* followed a dress code featuring tracksuits and leather jackets.

The *dizelaši* phenomenon was propagated in popular culture through films such as *To the Bone* (*Do koske*), *Wounds* (*Rane*) and *See You in the Obituary* (*Vidimo se u čitulji*). Nowadays the phenomenon persists through the subculture *neodizelaši*, whose members follow the same dress code as the *dizelaši* and listen to music from the 1990s. The *neodizelaši* are not however nearly as prominent or widespread as their predecessors were. Indeed, today, the term *dizelaši* is mostly used pejoratively to refer to a people with poor taste in clothing and music. However, the subculture of *dizelaši* also survives through a 'Silicone valley' subculture that emerged in the late 1990s and persists to this day (Kronja 2006: 92). Female members of the subculture are known for their use of silicone implants – hence the term.

### 3.27 ***Normalnye patsany*** (Russia)

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*Normalnye patsany* are members of street groups that can be found in many Russian urban areas, particularly in the peripheries of big cities, as well as in small and medium-sized towns (Golovin and Lurie 2008). Street groups and street cultures, in which children and young people, mainly boys, spend time outside adult control – playing together, fighting with their peers from other areas and engaging in petty crime – are a feature of urban life in many countries around the world (Thrasher 1927;

Whyte 1943; Kintrea et al. 2011; Pearson 2011). In Russia, members of these groups are commonly known as *gopniks*, a derogatory name similar in its connotations to English ‘chavs’, that is, low- and working-class young men, presumed to have bad taste, vulgar manners and aggressive dispositions towards the outside world (Hayward and Majid 2006; Nayak 2006; Jones 2011). Their clothes (often cheap tracksuits), their use of slang (borrowing heavily from criminal culture), and their general demeanour (including, for example, their manner of walking the streets in groups or ‘aggressively’ occupying street corners) are seen as signifying their social and cultural inferiority. The *gopniks*’ parochial stubbornness seems to represent resistance to late modernity, and to an increasingly individualised, diverse and consumer-orientated way of life.

Research conducted with *patsany*, however, shows that they see themselves as ‘normal lads’, and the core reputational group in the territory. They have strong local identities and see themselves as, far from delinquents, the backbone of the local community (Pilkington et al. 2002; Stephenson 2012). While members of the groups may engage in episodic acts of delinquency and crime (theft, shoplifting, joyriding), their key practices are those of local sociability and territorial defence. They spend their time out of school on the streets, policing their turf. The cultural imperative to be in control of the local territory is expressed through an obsessive search for the ‘Other’, typically members of ethnic minority groups, or the so-called *neformaly* (members of youth subcultures, for example, punks or goths), young people from other territories and, increasingly, young men from exclusive residential developments built on the territory of the *patsany*.

While violence constitutes one of the key practices of the *normalnye patsany*, they place a high emphasis on collective rules of ‘honourable’ conduct (Gromov and Stephenson 2008). Seeing themselves as members of a territorial elite (Collins 2008), they follow honour rules that limit violence or channel it into ritualised forms. For example, it is not considered proper for youths to fight with women or children, for 10 youths to attack one, or to start a fight with non-street local young men, the so-called ‘botanists’ (*botaniki*) who cannot be seen as equals. If, however, a non-street young man looks or talks in a wrong way, or does anything that can be construed as a lack of respect to a *patsan*, it is permissible physically to ‘punish’ him and take away whatever the *patsan* wants (usually a mobile phone, a watch or money).

A key cultural practice of the *patsany* is the ‘arranged combat’ (*strelka*) – a ritual whereby members of different territorial groups meet to stage a fight under specific conditions and limitations. *Strelki* are used

by different street groups to test their strength, settle disputes or confirm territorial boundaries. These fights tend to take place in neutral areas or (in a trope reminiscent of medieval culture) on a bridge over a river separating two areas, or in winter on the frozen river itself (Golovin and Lurie 2005). These practices can be traced to the traditions of village fights, which were a feature of most European peasant societies (Tilly 1974; Ploux 2007), often coinciding with weddings and other celebratory events. In Europe and in Russia they were used to test the strength of adversaries and reinforced the solidarity of the male peer groups (Kabanov 1928; Bernshtam 1988; Shchepanskaia 2001; Morozov and Sleptsova 2004). The relatively late urbanisation of Russia may account for the longevity of these practices.

The *patsany* agree in advance on the approximate number of fighters and whether weapons (such as chains, clubs or knuckledusters, but never guns or knives) may be used. They make formations with the strongest at the front. Sometimes a fight is started by the group leader challenging the enemy leader to a battle. If a group is defeated, the reputation of the territory suffers. This is why fights can lead to an escalation of violence. If the youngsters lose, older comrades may try to repair the territorial reputation by fighting themselves. Alternatively, they may tell the youngest to arrange another revenge fight. There may be lengthy cycles of arranged fights, in which neighbourhood groups build alliances to help each other out. The favours done by one group to another are returned, and it is not uncommon to offer 'payment' for extra fighters (usually a couple of crates of beer). Respectable adult figures in the local community (often ex-criminals, seen as experts in the use of violence or former members of the street group) may help the youngsters to mobilise additional fighters.

*Normalnye patsany* are often heavily influenced by criminal culture (Kosterina 2008). Some groups collect money to send to inmates in prisons and penal colonies. A small minority of so-called 'initiative-takers' (*initsiativshchiki*) actively seek to join criminal groups, liaising with former convicts and members of organised crime groups in their areas, and building their criminal reputations through small-scale racketeering, burglary and other forms of acquisitive crime. These *patsany* seek to become *real'nye patsany* (real lads), members of criminal gangs. But usually *normalnye patsany* aspire to mainstream careers, seeing their street pursuits as a necessary stage for a boy to learn how to be a real man through street camaraderie and violence. Their practices of territorial violence are not entirely oppositional to the mainstream culture. In their assertion of dominant masculinity, they reflect and amplify the

norms that are prevalent in wider Russian society and are celebrated in mass culture and political behaviour (Stephenson 2015).

In recent years the street as a key place of male socialisation and a locus of territorial control has begun to lose its significance. This may be attributed to a growing privatisation of public space and the relocation of leisure activities into the space of the home. Street groups still exist in social and spatial periphery, making their members even more vulnerable to cultural stigmatisation by the urban middle classes.

### 3.28 *Futbolna frakcia* (Bulgaria)

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*Futbolna frakcia* refers to an informal society of football supporters in Bulgaria with their own symbols, rules and behaviours. The synonym *futbolna grupirovka* is equally used. A *futbolna frakcia* roughly corresponds to the meaning of a football 'firm' in English. The *frakcia* is part of the so-called *agitka* – a term used to define the whole group of active supporters of a football team, who are engaged in loud and fanatical support of their club. Thus, all the *futbolni frakcii* of a given football club collectively form the *agitka*.

In Bulgaria, *futbolni frakcii* are typically comprised of a mixture of British-style football hooligans and the Italian model of *ultras* groups. In Western football culture the terms 'hooligans' and '*ultras*' have specific meanings. Hooligans display a wide range of aggressive behaviours, including physical aggression against supporters of other teams. The *ultra* movement also features aggressive behaviour, but in a less extreme way. *Ultras* are more closely associated with visual and audio performances involving the display of banners, throwing smoke bombs, shouting, chanting and the staging of special choreography during the football match. In Bulgaria, however, hooligans and *ultras* identify as part of the same movement, whose common objective is to support their chosen club.

The appearance of the first *futbolni frakcii* in Bulgaria cannot be precisely dated. However, it is known that they emerged later than in most other European countries and even than in most Soviet republics. Before the fall of the socialist regime, football fan culture was not widespread, arguably because the Soviet authorities actively opposed such movements. In 1989, the ruling Communist Party allowed multi-party

elections to take place in Bulgaria, which in turn, after the fall of the Soviet Union, led to Bulgaria's transition to democracy. Henceforth there has been a growth in *ultra* and hooligan culture, which has led to increasing concern within the country. The main driver of this growth was the new freedom of expression permitted in the media and new sources like the Internet, which not only made it possible for fans to watch games at home on television, but also allowed football fan culture to be articulated and publicised.

By the mid-1990s *futbolni frakcii* had become increasingly sophisticated in their cohesiveness and organisation. Usually *frakcii* are divided into rival *territorial* groups according to the city of origin and districts (*rayoni*), neighbourhoods and estates (*kvartali*). They display strong territorial identity, which is easily revealed in the names of the *frakcii* themselves. Examples include *North Side* (FC CSKA), *Lulin boys* (FC CSKA) and *Sofia West* (FC Levski). At present some of these *frakcii* are split between groups whose fans display behaviour more associated with *ultras*, and those that are more closely associated with football hooliganism. There are *frakcii* that are further divided by fans' ideological and political views. In Bulgaria, the majority of football clubs and their fans are renowned for their support of right-wing political parties. For example, the *agitka* of FC Levski is associated with the far right, thanks to the influence of the club's largest *frakcia*, *Sofia West*. *Sofia West* members are closely allied with the fans of the Italian club S.S. Lazio, who are widely known for their far right fascist views. This link with the far right is not universal, however, and other subdivisions of groups exist. Some of the groups, for instance, are formed specifically according to age – the 'Drinking hools veterans', a supporters' group of *FC Lokomotiv Sofia*, is comprised solely of adults in their forties. Some *frakcii* have fixed rules: they have agreed membership fees, which are strictly controlled, as well as a well-established hierarchy within the organisational structure. There are also informal *frakcii* who do not follow any specific rules and where hierarchy is not considered necessary.

In Bulgaria (as in other European countries) each member of the *frakcia* has his own role so that necessary activities are well controlled and tasks carried out efficiently. The most active and authoritative fans (usually three or four members) are responsible for match-day activities. Each member has his own tasks: some of them sell tickets; others arrange the travel or sale of club merchandise and membership. Some members coordinate the choreography; others deal with club finances or coordinate appointments with other organisations and arrange many other activities (Del Lago and De Biasi 1994).



One of the main features defining the collective identity is the feeling of solidarity that exists between members of the various *futbolni frakcii*. This solidarity is understood as group support for individual cases of need, with all members of the *frakcia* relying on each other. The mutual trust between members can be compared with the mutual trust experienced within a family. Participants in the community have to respect each other as members of one family so the group remains always cohesive. This idea of informal family is reflected in the language members use to conceptualise their in-group relationships, which is typically expressed in the form of fictive kinship. Members often use the terms ‘brother’ or ‘brotherhood’ when expressing their relationship with other fans in the *frakcia*.

Each *frakcia* has its own leader, whose main function is to manage the group. Leadership requires important personality traits, such as charisma, authority and the ability to carry out all necessary activities and contacts with other groups. The leader must have the necessary social contacts, which include contacts with members of the other *frakcii* as well as the local police authorities and different state institutions. Another important person is the so-called *tartor* of the *agitka*. A *tartor* is the Bulgarian equivalent of the Italian *capo*, the equivalent of a cheerleader. The *tartor*’s main task is to set the tone for chants in the fan sector, using a megaphone or microphone. He has to inspire fellow supporters in the stadium to engage with both visual and auditory performances, such as displaying and waving banners, throwing smoke bombs, shouting, chanting and taking part in special choreographed movements. A third important person is the guardian of the flag, which is the distinguishing symbol of every *frakcia*. It must be guarded carefully because a captured flag destroys not only the authority of the *frakcia*, but that of the *agitka* as a whole. Stealing scarves, flags or other equipment from opposition supporters shows dominance over them and subjects them to symbolic public disgrace.

In common with large European and Latin American supporters’ groups, the practice of incorporating some of the fan base into criminal organisations has been observed in Bulgaria. Some of the most notorious drug lords in the country are known to conduct their business through *futbolni frakcii*. In Bulgaria, many football supporters’ groups are linked to other criminal activities as well, including blackmail, violence, robberies and abductions (Spaaij 2006). For example, the supporters’ club of *Sofia West* is associated with drug distribution, contract robberies, beatings and alleged murder and they have repeatedly been the object of police control and arrests (Benatova 2012).

As well as crime bosses, it is also common for politicians and political parties to use the *frakcii* for their own ends. Over the last 10 years many football supporters have taken part in political campaigns and protests in return for payment. Benefitting from the strong level of group identity, some *frakcii* leaders try to manipulate the fans to participate in paid activities (Teodosieva 2013). Almost all the author's respondents reported knowing *frakcia* members who participate in protests, either as provocateurs or simply to increase the number of people on the protest. However, it is important to emphasise that a small minority of *frakcii* are involved in such activities; the majority of fans do not support this behaviour.

## **Conclusion: organic solidarity and informality – two irreconcilable concepts?**

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For social sciences' mainstream theoretic paradigms, informality – together with its specific coalitions, networks and personalised relationships – has a questionable, if not notorious, reputation. These aspects are often regarded as pre-modern, dysfunctional or indeed anomic (Durkheim 1893) because they foster or are the foundation of social phenomena such as friend's favouritism, nepotism, cronyism, patronage and corruption.

In this conclusion we argue that, in principle, so-called modern societies, according to social sciences' mainstream theoretic paradigms, should essentially be founded on Emile Durkheim's organic solidarity, thus on formal structures. We shall bring to the fore how in many societies that are considered modern – and thus characterised by formal organisational structures and based on *organic solidarity* – these structures are infiltrated or replaced by a vast phenomena of informality, which the actors themselves consider meaningful, and thus legitimate, though often illegal and rationally suitable for specific situations.

Among the fundamental concepts of the social sciences, that of *solidarity* dates back to the beginnings of sociological thought in the late nineteenth century. In fact, sociological reflection on forms of *solidarity* may be attributed to Durkheim along with Ferdinand Tönnies, Georg Simmel and finally Max Weber, though these last three did not use the term *solidarity* as systematically as Durkheim did. Simmel spoke exclusively of a solidarity already rooted in pre-Christian religiosity, thus calling into question the idea that solidarity is solely a product of Christianity (Simmel 1908: 556–7). Unlike Tönnies, Weber and Durkheim, however, Simmel

never attempted to develop a *core dichotomy* (Jenks 1998). In fact, though Tönnies (1912) and Weber (1956) used different notions, on closer analysis several analogies can be detected. Tönnies is well known for his distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, whereas Weber, indirectly inspired by Tönnies, speaks correspondingly of *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*. By *Gemeinschaft* and *Vergemeinschaftung* these two authors identify archaic, traditional, thus pre-modern forms of society, or types of social cohesion or social relations. *Gesellschaft* and *Vergesellschaftung* are the exact opposite of the first two, that is, they are typified by their rationality in terms of values (*Wertrationalität*) and goals (*Zweckrationalität*), and therefore correspond to more advanced forms of society based on types of solidarity ascribable to modernity.

However, it was Durkheim who devised the classic *core sociological dichotomy* between *mechanical* and *organic* solidarity. Durkheim points out that *mechanical solidarity* emerges and develops in situations of proximity, where the various actors maintain strongly personalised relationships and live in relatively small communities. This form of solidarity is founded on an affinity of roles and behaviours, and division of labour is therefore scarcely developed (Durkheim 1893). Accordingly, *mechanical solidarity* is based on similarity and is generally prevalent in small groups such as family, kin, village and tribe. These small collectivities, where highly personalised relationships are prevalent, are far more important than the single individual. Ultimately, according to Durkheim, *mechanical solidarity* is a social characteristic of archaic, primitive, backward and traditional societies as well as of tribal, pastoral or rural ones. One cannot fail to notice, however, that Durkheim's representation of *mechanical solidarity* mirrors that of societies under colonial regimes or possibly the *France profonde* peasant communities of his times.

*Organic solidarity* emerges in societies characterised by marked social differentiation, thus with a highly differentiated system of social division of labour, which generates a considerable complexity of social roles and positions. Accordingly, societies based on *organic solidarity* have a high degree of specialisation, which may be regarded as a true guarantee of social cohesion since everyone is dependent on everyone else's labour. *Organic solidarity*, therefore, is rooted in the certainty of reciprocal dependence between people who have a specific function or exercise an activity within society. Consequently, unlike societies based on mechanical solidarity, they do not have a strong collective consciousness, but rather an individual awareness that the division of labour safeguards the existence of the members of these societies. This promotes an allegiance not as much to persons, but rather to public institutions as well as to the

collectivity's laws, norms, rules and customs. The formal legal system based on the law of restitution and contractual practices thus finds its legitimacy. Finally, given their specific social structure, these are modern societies with a great number of members and are characterised by considerable social complexity.

In all these dichotomous conceptions put forth by Tönnies and Weber, and especially in the pair *mechanical solidarity/organic solidarity* formulated by Durkheim, an implicit value judgement, perhaps involuntary, spontaneous and possibly unconscious, comes to the fore. Essentially, societies based on *organic solidarity* are deemed more advanced, thus also more modern, since even the subtitle of Durkheim's book (1893) in a so-to-speak spontaneous manner mentions the concept of *sociétés supérieures*. Undeniably, in Durkheim's book societies characterised by *mechanical solidarity*, in the words of Edward B. Tylor (1871), are *survivals*, that is, a residual category or, better yet, a relic of the past. Thus, *mechanical solidarity* is a phenomenon heading towards extinction, whereas *organic solidarity* – that is, modernity – is the present and above all represents the future. Even an insightful observer such as Durkheim lapses into a number of clichés typical of a specific evolutionism of his times.

In the wake of Durkheim in particular, many representatives of the social sciences developed similar, albeit not identical, theoretic approaches, though not all of them drew direct inspiration from his work. We are referring in the first place to the so-called modernisation theories that postulate a more or less required and above all advisable transition from the traditional (tribal or rural) stage to that of modernity (urbanity) where, to paraphrase Durkheim, *organic solidarity* is prevalent. Ultimately, the vast majority of modernisation theories, still very popular despite criticisms especially in discussions about social strategies and development policies, also regard these societies, rightly or not, as traditional or, due to specific socio-cultural characteristics, pre-modern. Thus these societies are viewed as deficient socio-cultural aggregations; consequently, they are the negative reference of Western modern societies and are considered backward. According to these theories and discourses of social development policies, these socially and culturally lagging societies must be helped to achieve modernisation by copying or at least drawing inspiration from the Western model.

In essence, Western societies are beyond dispute the reference model to pursue. Clearly, all theories of development to a greater or lesser extent smack of ethnocentrism, which tends to belittle and at times even censure the social representations and practices of societies

that are not founded on *organic solidarity*. Yet, a social organisation in line with the principles of *organic solidarity* implies living and acting in a society where formal organisations as well as the consequent social practices should, in theory, be by far predominant, if not indeed generalised. In principle, informality is banned from the public sector, yet tolerated and regarded as normal in the strictly private sphere or, better yet, especially among people linked by intimate relationships, for example, family members or close friends entertaining strictly emotional relationships. Informality, particularly in the public sphere, is frowned upon since it is deemed dangerous because of the dysfunctionality it may trigger in public institutions.

Yet, the phenomenon of informality in *organic solidarity societies* remains important and cannot be interpreted via simplistic theories on the individual actor's socialisation deviance or deficit or the persistence of specific bygone cultural models. We ought to bear in mind, instead, that informality with its various forms and its complex array of dyadic relationships, coalitions and personalised networks, such as ritual or symbolic family relationships, instrumental friendships, *blat* and similar phenomena, clientelist networks, coalitions and mafia-like associations, is not evidence of social inferiority or deviant behaviour. Therefore, Durkheim appears to be too inflexible with his overly idealistic or maximalist conception of *organic solidarity* and his markedly critical and somewhat arrogant view of *mechanical solidarity*.

In order to grasp the significance of informality in modern societies, and also therefore the meaning it is attributed by the actors themselves, social sciences need to perform a *reversal of perspective*, in Nietzsche's words (Nietzsche 1892). This methodological procedure, which in social sciences has been endorsed particularly by Weber and Clifford Geertz (Weber 1956; Geertz 1973, 1980), allows the observation that, contrary to many theoretic approaches still widespread in the social sciences, informality weakens neither the state nor its public institutions in general. Quite the opposite: it is their *longue durée* (Braudel 1958: 725 et seq.), nonfulfilment and resulting permanent legal arbitrariness, thus also their inconsistent institutional legitimacy that trigger citizens' rational reaction. The latter, logically enough, opt for the most efficient and less conspicuous route offered by various types of informality in order to neutralise the actions of the public sector, which is perceived as legal, yet is also viewed as illegitimate. The nearly generalised diffusion of a feeling of mistrust in the public sector, and especially in anything perceived as pertaining to the state, generates a permanent informalisation of anything formal. We need to point out, however, that public mistrust is not

an irrational attitude, but rather an instrumentally rational social knowledge that is deeply rooted in complex societies and is based on actual and likewise *longue durée* historical experiences.

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## *Kinship lock-in*

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## Conclusion: organic solidarity and informality – two irreconcilable concepts?

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## 4

# The unlocking power of non-conformity: cultural resistance vs political opposition

## **Introduction: the grey zones between cultural and political**

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In the political context, the term ‘opposition’ might appear a synonym for ‘resistance’, but there is an important distinction. Opposition involves counterbalanced or conflicting forces: action and reaction, left and right, yes and no, black and white. These forces engage in tug-of-war, a zero-sum game where the advantage of one comes at the disadvantage of the other. Not only does opposition involve dichotomies or binary forces, it tends to assume formal or even official shape. Democratically elected governments confront an officially recognised opposition seated in the halls of power. Resistance, by contrast, does not operate through such clear dynamics: it is multivalent and poly-directional, and its forms of organisation are often complex or informal. Resistance does not simply confront the structures of power head on, but may seek paths or detours around those structures, often seeping into the cracks and fissures in the barriers, or inhabiting spaces that have been deemed outside of or irrelevant to the shape of the discourse. Resistance to a single regime or practice can encompass a magnificent variety of beliefs, simultaneously incompatible yet united. And when resistance is victorious, it need not necessarily oust or eliminate what it resisted, but often simply replaces the dynamic of opposed forces with a less structured, more complex swirl of possibilities.

What this means is that resistance (as opposed to political opposition) has a particular affinity for the cultural realm. Or more accurately,



resistance occupies a grey zone in between categories such as ‘political’, ‘social’ and ‘cultural’. When ‘opposition’ takes cultural form, the result is generally didacticism: a novel, painting, song or film communicating a particular message as forcefully and clearly as possible. The aesthetic limitations of such ‘message art’ are fairly obvious. Resistance, by contrast, generally takes forms more subtle than such explicit messages. A novel may constitute political resistance simply because of the way it is written. (Take the Stalinist association of ‘experimental’ prose with Western ‘decadence’, for example, rejected in favour of didactically conceived Socialist Realism.) Informality and ambiguity – the structure of ‘both-and’ or ‘neither-nor’ – are thus not simply a common tactic that resistance uses to express itself: they constitute its very essence.

Such features were embodied in almost comically literal form in Poland in the early 1980s, under Martial Law: electrical resistors – miniature, multi-coloured electronic components – were often worn, pinned to a sweater or the lapel of a jacket, as a small symbol of resistance to the governing authorities. Several facts stand out in the present context. First, this disarmingly humble gesture reveals that resistance has a tendency to seek out symbolic forms. Even in situations where the luxury exists of expressing resistance openly and explicitly (and historically such luxury has been rare) resistance cannot resist redoubling its message through simple symbols: the peace sign (in 1960s counterculture), the improvised shantytown put up in the sight of the privileged (in international protests against apartheid in the 1980s), the jingling of keys (in demonstrations in Czechoslovakia in 1989). Often the events associated with resistance movements assume, almost despite themselves, shocking or triumphant symbolic significance, such as when a peaceful march is prevented through violence from crossing a bridge, or when a concrete wall dividing a city is torn down. In short, even when resistance is understood in the first instance as a social or political category, it is drawn inexorably into semiotic systems that bring it into traffic with cultural expression. It is no coincidence that resistance movements so often produce iconic music, rhetorical performances, and literature.

Second, resistance involves a paradox: even when it harbours a clear message, it commonly works through ambiguity. Is that strange little object pinned to people’s jackets an emblem of specific political demands, the expression of a general attitude, or simply a curious fashion trend? One needs to read the symbol or interpret the allegory – and even then the ambiguity may linger intentionally: harassing or arresting people on the basis of a clothing accessory or a hairstyle, after all, draws authority unwittingly into the realm of absurdity. The same, unprepossessing little

object will be nearly invisible to people unaware of its significance, but will stand out immediately to the initiated, an emblem either of solidarity or of provocation.

Third, resistance often seeks out informal forms. This can take the shape of recuperating linguistic or cultural patterns widely rejected as vulgar (see *materit'sya*, 4.5 in this volume). Or sometimes the mere act of reading literature or listening to music that has no political resonance at all becomes a form of resistance: a refusal to engage, a resistance even of resistance, an insistence that life exists outside the imposed discourse. An archetypal example of this is the so-called 'music underground' in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s, the most famous protagonist of which is the band The Plastic People of the Universe. The Plastic People embody informal resistance on a number of levels. First is that their music, their performances and their lifestyle embraced what could be called an aesthetics of informality. Their music flaunts a rough, unpolished edge that remains jarring and unsettling even today, and was fully intentional. Second, 'the underground' was characterised not by a particular musical style or fashion – in addition to the hard-edged eccentricities of the Plastic People, it handily encompassed, for example, folk singers and jazz musicians – but by an attitude that, by definition, defied definition: in the words of Ivan Martin Jirous, artistic director of The Plastic People and an extremely influential poet, art theorist, and essayist, the underground was 'a movement that has created, outside of a corrupt society, its own independent world with a different charge of inner energy, a different aesthetic and, as a result, a different ethic' (Jirous 1975/2006: 12). Concerts and related performances generated the atmosphere of 'events' that united the participants as much through an unarticulated sense of shared intensity as through any particular shared interests. Often these performances took on a sort of legendary status (especially since many ended in police raids). Thus, in a manner inverse to the strategy of artistic repossession used in the Soviet Union, the underground aimed to act as far as possible as if the oppressive Czechoslovak regime simply did not exist, and to pursue what Jirous termed an informal 'second culture' completely set off from 'the establishment' (understood not simply as the communist authorities but as modern commercial society more generally) and eschewing all formal structures of support or distribution. That this revolt against and resistance to the establishment inevitably meant conflict with the authorities of Normalisation-era Czechoslovakia was clear to all and, especially by the mid-1970s, brought with it significant risk of political persecution and police brutality. Yet that lifestyle did not necessarily involve political 'opposition' per se.

In September 1976, those same Czechoslovak authorities put several representatives of the underground on trial, including Jirous and Vratislav Brabenec, saxophonist for The Plastic People. The trial ended with jail sentences ranging from eight to eighteen months. This trial had unintended consequences for the authorities, however, largely due to the written account produced by one observer sympathetic to the defendants: the banned playwright and essayist Václav Havel. Havel's account – bearing the Kafkaesque title 'The Trial' (see Havel 1991 [1976]) – and what subsequently came to be known as 'The Trial of the Plastics' have widely been viewed as a central impetus for the drafting and distribution of Charter 77 a few months later. Charter 77, one of the most celebrated documents of late twentieth-century European dissent, explicitly challenged the Czechoslovak government to uphold the human rights set forth in the 1975 Helsinki Accords, rights the government formally acknowledged but routinely violated. The core formulators and spokespeople for the Charter were intellectuals – writers, philosophers and out-of-favour politicians, thus people trained in presenting arguments eloquently and persuasively – and Charter 77 represented an explicitly political challenge to the regime. So the temptation arises to view this episode as embodying a shift from informal, non-political resistance (The Plastic People and the underground) to formal, politicised opposition (Charter 77). Yet, as Jonathan Bolton (see Bolton 2012) and other commentators have argued, such an understanding is reductive. For one thing, though the underground aimed to ignore rather than actively undermine 'the establishment', there was no question that it hoped 'their work and attitudes' would ultimately 'destroy the establishment' (Jirous 1975/2006: 30). For another, much of the activity unleashed by Charter 77 took the form of cultural endeavours that often refused express political postures. In short, the distinction with which this essay began – between clear-cut opposition and multivalent resistance – should not be taken as absolute. This distinction is itself multivalent, and it is necessary to understand the terms as designating the endpoints on a sliding scale rather than clearly discrete categories.

#### 4.1 **Artistic repossession** (general)

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'Artistic repossession' is a theoretical term used to describe a range of creative strategies developed by artists working under the constraints of strict ideological control and censorship within the context of an

authoritarian dictatorship such as the Soviet Union. The term focuses on the enabling power of constraints by analysing ways in which artists turned pressure into creativity, responding to the ideological constraints by finding increasingly creative ways of artistic self-expression. Just as the owner of a house who was dispossessed might aim to repossess his property, artists working under the pressure of censorship and ideological control tend to seek ways to repossess their house of cultural production (Ezrahi 2012: 7).

'Artistic repossession' looks at deep structures of resistance and systemic subversion by identifying tactics that operate within the system but seek to use the system to promote goals alien to it. Artists in the Soviet Union had no choice but to accept the political organisational structures and ideological frames imposed on cultural production, but they learnt to creatively adapt and redefine the rules imposed on them, and to even exploit them for their own artistic ends in a way that had nothing to do with the regime's goals or the values of the structures and ideological concepts they were supposed to promote (Ezrahi 2012: 7). Thus 'artistic repossession' does not describe informal practices such as *samizdat* (self-publishing) that explicitly rejected and challenged the official system of Soviet cultural production. The term looks at more subconscious ways of subverting the system from within by artists who endeavoured to forge their own destinies within the system's parameters. An interesting structural parallel can be found in Michel de Certeau's study of indigenous peoples of the Americas who subconsciously subverted Spanish colonisation from within (de Certeau 1984: xiii):

submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often *made of* the rituals, representations, and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind; they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept.

The term 'artistic repossession' originated from a study of choreographers and dancers at the Kirov and Bolshoi Ballet companies, which analysed the way in which they exploited the ambiguity inherent in the system to develop strategies that allowed them to reclaim some artistic autonomy during the period of the cultural thaw in the Soviet Union in the 1950s and early 1960s (Ezrahi 2012). One strategy it revealed was that the companies used political patronage for purely

artistic purposes. For example, in 1956, the young choreographer Yuri Grigorovich was entrusted with choreographing Sergei Prokofiev's ballet *The Stone Flower* for the Kirov Ballet. Overtly, Grigorovich stayed within the boundaries set by the officially sanctioned dramatic paradigm for Soviet ballet: the ballet had a narrative plot based on a story from Pavel Bazhov's folkloristic fairy tale collection *The Malachite Casket* and was told in the language of classical dance. Beneath the surface, however, Grigorovich challenged the established dogmas of late Stalinist ballet by modernising the language of his choreography, by including quasi-abstract divertissements of pure dance, and by working with a set designer, Simon Virsaladze, whose aesthetics strayed from socialist realism. A fight between the Kirov Ballet's 'old guard' and its young challenger ensued. In order to overcome resistance from within the company and to ensure proper working conditions, Grigorovich and his team declared the ballet a 'youth production' and dedicated it to the Sixth International Youth Festival, to be held in Moscow and Leningrad in 1957. This enabled them to enlist the help of the theatre's Komsomol (Youth) organisation, which counted some of the main dancers involved in the production among its members. At this point *The Stone Flower* metamorphosed into an initiative of the theatre's Komsomol organisation and enabled the young, innovative choreographer to secure the Soviet government's support and thus to counter his conservative opponents within the theatre. An order issued by the Minister of Culture of the USSR commanded the Kirov Theatre to ensure that the ballet would be completed in time for the festival. Instead of increasing political awareness and instilling communist values, the Kirov Theatre's Komsomol organisation had unwittingly used its influence to support the artistic goal of challenging the existing aesthetics of Soviet ballet (Ezrahi 2012: 118–28).

Throughout the Soviet period, the Kirov and Bolshoi Ballet companies continuously struggled to meet the government's demand for ballets on Soviet themes. In the 1950s and 1960s, some of the most daring challenges to Soviet ballet aesthetics found an audience simply because they helped theatres fulfil official quotas for new ballets based on contemporary Soviet themes. Further examples of the successful use of this strategy are found in the work of the choreographer Igor Belsky, whose ballets on Soviet themes were attacked as dangerously abstract in their execution, and by the *enfant terrible* of Soviet ballet, Leonid Yakobson, who staged ballets on contemporary Soviet themes using an idiosyncratic movement vocabulary that was far removed from classical dance (Ezrahi 2012: 129–36, 169–200).

Ultimately, art is an inherently resistant medium because it is impossible to completely control either the artist's intention behind the creation of a piece of art, or its subsequent interpretation by a performer and/or an audience. In 1968, Yuri Grigorovich created the Soviet ballet blockbuster *Spartacus* for the Bolshoi Ballet within the context of the fiftieth anniversary commemorations of the revolution. Despite the ballet's hordes of goose-stepping Roman soldiers and its propagandistic plot about Spartacus, leader of a slave revolt in ancient Rome, its strength as a theatrical production showed that choreography could become resistance. The choreography, the dancers' charisma and the spectacle of the production engaged the audience in the power of the performance, making them forget the ballet's ideological subtext, and allowing them to interpret it in their own way. In the production, Maris Liepa, who created the part of Crassus, leader of the Roman army, portrayed himself not as the evil anti-hero and oppressor of slaves, but as the defender of an ancient civilisation against a barbarian revolution. The ballet outlived the political context of its creation and continues to be a signature piece of the Bolshoi Ballet in the post-Soviet period (Ezrahi 2012: 201–31).

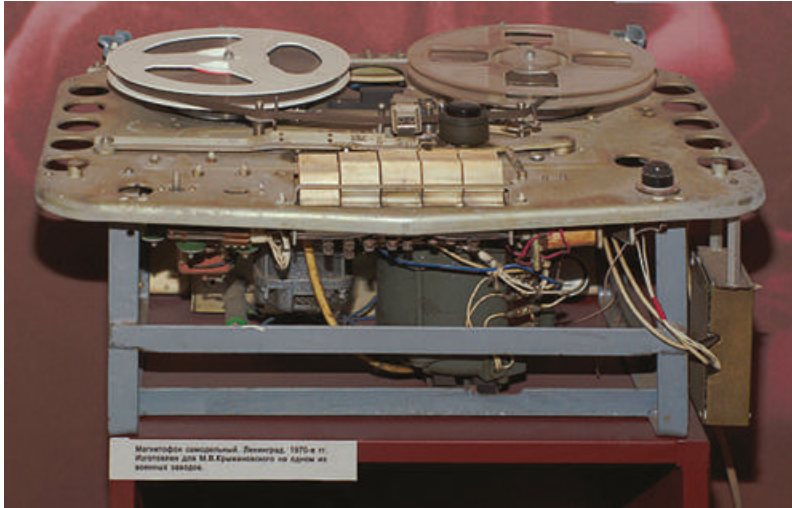
#### 4.2 ***Magnitizdat*** (Russia)

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*Magnitizdat* was the unofficial practice of (re-)recording uncensored music or speech onto cassette tapes, which were then distributed throughout the Soviet Union. The term *magnitizdat* is etymologically composed of two words – *magnit* (derived from Russian *magnitifon* (tape-recorder)) and *izdat* (meaning 'to publish') – and was exploited in the 1950s onwards to record poetic songs by bards (*avtorskaia pesnia*) and later, rock music. Alongside the growing consumerist culture and technological developments within the Soviet Union, *magnitizdat* became the natural replacement of *roentgenizdat* – the adequately cheap X-ray discs and temporary solution to unofficial post-war music recording (see *Roentgenizdat*, 4.3 in this volume). As Kolya Vasin remembered, 'enterprising young guys ran around the streets of our town with show boxes filled with recordings "on the bones", but their time would not last long [...] the era of tape recorders began' (Vasin 1990: 31).

The first magnetic tape recorders (the El'fa-6, the Dnepr-3 and the Spais) arrived in the late 1950s, but their production was limited to a few thousand units (Ryback 1990: 44). Nevertheless, the Soviet Union



**Figure 4.2.1** Magnet recorder, self-made at one of St Petersburg's industrial plants in the 1970s.

Source: Wikimedia Commons. © George Shuklin, 2008. Licensed under CC BY-SA 1.0.

was steadily increasing the production of tape recorders throughout the 1960s: 128,000 cassette recorders were in circulation by 1960, which had risen to 4.7 million by 1985 (Yurchak 1999: 82–8). While an estimated 50 million citizens bought these Soviet-made tape recorders, many thousands of Japanese recorders were smuggled into the Soviet Union by Soviet sailors and were either sold in second-hand shops or passed on through informal networks (Yurchak 1999: 82–8). Along with the increase of tape recorder sales and the influx of foreign tourists, there was also an explosion in practices of re-recording and spreading unofficial Western music records or songs by Soviet bards (singer-songwriters such as Aleksandr Galich, Bulat Okudzhava, Vladimir Vysotskii and others, who merged poetry and music with political commentary). Just as present-day YouTube has allowed artists and other amateur enthusiasts to become more accessible to a larger audience, magnetic tape recorders allowed the content, initially restricted to small numbers at private apartment gatherings, to be circulated via informal networks to an increasing number of listeners. As Timothy Ryback stated (Ryback 1990: 45):

A vast underground culture developed around *magnitizdat*. Tapes were collected, recorded, and passed on. Although sound quality

dissipated with each re-taping, the recordings evoked what one observer called the ‘romance of the forbidden’. Through the hiss of surface noise, one heard not only the voice of the singer but also the presence of the audience: chairs scraping across the floor, a bottle knocking against glasses, muted laughter or quiet applause, the rattle of a tram on the street below ... From these underground recordings, legends emerged, faceless legends, recognisable only by their voices, their music, and their lyrics.

Regarding the reproduction of imported Western music, experts point out financial advantages of the re-recording practices. Vinyl recordings were extremely expensive and the further one went away from Moscow, the more expensive the discs became to consumers. Indeed, a vinyl in the Urals could cost around 200 roubles, which can be contextualised to an engineer’s monthly wage of 120 to 150 roubles a month (Aksenov 2012). In this respect, tape recordings often appeared to fill a gap in the market for affordable and accessible music. The Russian journalist Andrei Logutkov indicated that he bought a tape recording of a Beatles track (Sgt. Pepper) in the Russian city of Orlov, from a friend for just 60 kopecks (Aksenov 2012). In the same way, music critic Artemy Troitsky wrote that a ‘tape recording of an LP cost three roubles, while the album itself would fetch 20 or 30 roubles’ (Troitsky 1987: 25). It is clear that the economic advantage of cassette re-recording was that popular music could be distributed to a wider and less-affluent audience, something that perhaps resonated with a socialist mentality of sharing and subverting private property rights.

As with the earlier possession of *roentgenizdat* music, magnetic tape recorders conferred ‘significant symbolic capital upon its owner’ (Daughtry 2006: 25) and strengthened the demand for them. The economy of shortage alongside the weakened ideological constraints on imported music (as well as other Western goods) ensured that, by the start of the 1980s, *magnitizdat* was being exploited for recording rock music on a mass scale. It has been argued that this phenomenon caused a decline in attendance figures at official concerts and the reduction of album sales, which eventually helped provoke the state concert organisation (*Goskontsert*) to promote the unofficial Soviet rock group *Mashina vremeni* (Time Machine) to ‘professional status’ (Easton 1989: 52–3). Nevertheless, rock fans could surpass the official system through use of informal suppliers (known as the *fartsovshchiki*), who were well known in closed circles for providing unofficial tape records and Westernised



clothing (e.g. blue jeans). Hanging around Western-tourist holiday hotels and popular tourist destinations, the *fartsovshchiki* would barter with tourists for marketable goods, which could then be passed on and sold through informal networks.

*Magnitizdat* was similarly highly evasive. The Soviet press attacked the cassette tape recordings for, as quoted in the newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossia* on 9 June 1968, ‘spreading faster than a flu virus’ (Ryback 1990: 46). Buying, selling or owning unofficial music tapes still carried up to a three-year prison sentence (Sargent 2015). The Soviet militia (police) attempted to wage war against the *fartsovshchiki*, but their attempts were futile as countless numbers continued to ‘ply the trade’ (Ryback 1990: 109–10). One Soviet musicologist, Vladimir Frumkin, on 20 March 1974 attempted to fly from Leningrad to the United States with a selection of cassette tape recordings of his bard-friend Bulat Okudzhava. The tapes were ‘verified’ by Soviet customs officials and then handed back to him, but upon arriving in the United States Frumkin discovered that his magnetic tape recordings had all been ‘demagnetised’ (Daughtry 2006: 2). Although these recordings had been erased, they were probably not fully checked; it was often the case that *avtorskaia pesnia* could be secreted among ‘other less provocative songs’ (Sargent 2015). Despite such efforts of containment by the authorities, thousands of recordings were already in unofficial circulation, locked into personal and private distribution networks.

*Magnitizdat* was neither an exclusively urban phenomenon nor a practice specific to Russia, but had parallels across central Eastern Europe. For example, in Hungary, the artist György Galántai, who had bought a Sony tape recorder through his relatives in Vienna, began experimenting with ‘mail art’ (sending cassette tapes through the postal system) in the early 1980s. These tapes, described as ‘cassette-radio, radio work’ and entitled ‘Radio Artpool’, contained a mixture of ‘interviews, music, ambient recordings ... improvisations, sound art, found sounds [and] spoken words’ (Hagen and Denora 2012: 452–3). In Czechoslovakia, which also had a shortage of Western LPs, the *magnitizdat* labels S.C.T.V (samizdat cassette tapes [and] videos, founded by Petr Cibulka) and Fist Records (founded by Mikoláš Chadima) were both initiated as small-scale projects in their owners’ respective home apartments. In 1976, Cibulka was credited with producing the first tapes of the numerous imprisoned bands of the Czech Underground (Hagen and Denora 2012: 453). The Prague rock group Plastic People of the Universe (PPU) was an example of this underground culture: often performing privately in friends’ houses, or sometimes at ‘second culture’ music festivals such as in Postupice (1974)

and Bojanovice (1976), their music would be recorded and distributed via these *magnitizdat* tape recordings (Horne 2013: 186–7). While taping and re-recording would be carried out by both Cibulka and Chadima, *magnitizdat* tapes would then be traded and exchanged through friends and acquaintances, but also through *samizdat* magazines such as *Vokno* and other such underground literature.

As a phenomenon, *magnitizdat* shared many qualities with *roentgenizdat*, primarily as both practices helped to overcome and subvert the state constraints on the non-authorized music distribution channels. The core difference was that while *roentgenizdat* provided a cheap imitation of vinyl discs in short supply, *magnitizdat* used authentically produced magnetic tapes that eventually made X-ray discs technologically redundant; the cassette tapes had a longer duration and better audio quality. These tape recorders and self-produced tapes were legal to possess in every household, compared to the strictly illegal paper-copying devices of *samizdat*, and could therefore be distributed with less risk of being arrested. According to Daughtry, the ‘Frumkin’ case cited above, for example, highlighted the ‘difference in the regime’s attitudes towards *magnitizdat* and *samizdat*’ (Daughtry 2006: 3). The fact that Frumkin had considered it worthwhile to attempt to emigrate with several *magnitizdat* tapes, unthinkable for the case of the forbidden works of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, is perhaps testament to the ambivalence of state policy on cassette tapes. Therefore, just as *roentgenizdat* became the medium for unofficial jazz music, *magnitizdat* became the medium for unofficial *avtorskaia pesnia* and later rock music. Breaking the Soviet government’s monopoly on information and music, *magnitizdat* as a practice certainly helped return consumer choice to the masses at a time of shortage.

#### 4.3 ***Roentgenizdat*** (Russia)

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*Roentgenizdat* (also known as ‘music on ribs’ or ‘music on bones’) was the unofficial practice of cheaply reproducing and disseminating discarded and reprogrammed X-ray photographs as music records in the Soviet Union. The term *roentgenizdat* is etymologically composed of two words – *roentgen* (the Russian word for X-ray, named after Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen, the German physicist who discovered electromagnetic radiation in wavelengths), and *izdat* (from Russian meaning ‘to publish’). *Roentgenizdat* was the first self-made mechanism for reproducing music

recordings in the Soviet era, a time of prohibition of musical styles and material shortage. The practice thus became the metaphorical ersatz-bread, satisfying the post-war musical hunger of the masses.

*Roentgenizdat* originated in Leningrad in 1946, in a studio situated at house no. 75 on Nevsky Prospect, named Audio Message (*Zvukovoe pis'mo*). Its founder, Stanislav Filon, used a redesigned German Telefunken music re-writer to replicate music recordings from the original vinyl to cheaply reinvented, imitation X-ray material. The price of one X-ray copy was between 5 to 15 roubles; however, individual orders would be more expensive (Bogdanova 2009: 1). The studio would typically remain open throughout the night, recording unofficial performances onto X-ray material where opaque X-ray images of skulls and ribs were still clearly visible. The process became so successful that another underground studio, named Golden Dog (*Zolotaia sobaka*), was established the following year. Boris Pavlinov, one of the founders of Golden Dog, recalled that the most popular recordings were of jazz music from the West and songs in the style of the tango, foxtrot and romances – all non-sanctioned styles within the Soviet Union (Kitaev 2009: 9). From these underground studios, thousands of X-ray copies were being sold on the black market and by the late 1950s millions of these X-ray records were in circulation, becoming ‘the common currency of the Soviet-bloc’ (Ryback 1990: 32).

The support and agency of the *stiliagi* (commonly referred to as the ‘hipsters’ in Western literature) was primarily responsible for the increasing demand of *roentgenizdat*. Part of a subculture in the Soviet Union from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, the *stiliagi* represented a rejection of official Soviet musical styles, fashion and behaviour, and became the advocates of a new Westernised model. They sported suits with striped silk shirts, multi-coloured and patterned ties, complemented with waxed quiffs and comb-over hairstyles comparable to John Travolta in the film *Grease* (Dotsenko 2005). Dance also became a key mode of their expression, rejecting the ‘approved’ dances (waltz, polka and quadrille) for the frowned upon alternatives (the tango, foxtrot, boogie-woogie and jitterbug) (Troitsky 1987: 13). X-ray discs would be obtained via the ‘second economy’ (underground studios or *blat* networks, see 1.1 in this volume) and disseminated at the *stiliagi*’s main ‘hang out’ meeting points (known as Broadway or ‘Brod’ for short) – Gorky Street (Moscow) and Nevsky Prospect (St Petersburg), and private dance hall parties (Fürst 2010: 222). According to Juliane Fürst, the *stiliagi* culturally confronted the system on a ‘new, unfamiliar and *non-textual*’ level, which left the Communist Party struggling to deal with the phenomenon (Fürst 2010: 233). These artistic and non-verbal

forms of dance, Westernised clothing and jazz music ‘on bones’ all played an exceptional role in the *stiliagi* subculture.

A number of structural developments helped cement the position of *roentgenizdat* as an underground informal practice. One cause was the Soviet ban and subsequent clampdown on jazz music. In August 1946, articles denouncing jazz concerts appeared in the official Soviet newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestia*: Andrei Zhdanov (director of post-war cultural policy) voiced his concern with the dangers of ‘high culture’ and ‘foreign influence’ in art, and ruled that anything other than mass song or folk-styled socialist realist composition was ‘ideological diversion’ (Pilkington 1994: 65–6). By the end of the decade, many jazz musicians such as Eddie Rosner, Igor Piatigorskii (a jazz band leader) and A. G. Alekseev (a Moscow-based jazz musician) were either imprisoned or sent to Siberian prison camps (gulags) (Ryback 1990: 11). The official Soviet press, through their attacks on the *stiliagi*, also helped reinforce the position of *roentgenizdat* as a subversive informal practice. The term *stiliagi* appeared for the first time in the Soviet satirical magazine *Krokodil* in 1948, and consistently satirised the movement for their supposed bad taste in fashion. On 10 March 1949, *Krokodil* declared that ‘the most important part of their [*stiliagi*] style of clothing is not to resemble normal people’ (Yurchak 1999: 89) and in another article by *Pravda*, the *stiliagi* were described as a mixture of ‘parasitism, hooliganism and banditism’ (Johnson 2011: 201). It also became common practice to compare the *stiliagi* with monkeys or other wild animals, seemingly because they resembled the style of Johnny Weissmuller in the *Tarzan* films (Johnson 2011: 201).

Finally, the emergence of *roentgenizdat* can be seen as a consequence of the growing consumerist culture forming within the post-war Soviet Union. The hegemony of American mass consumption culture was rapidly being transmitted through the Iron Curtain, which proved surprisingly porous with respect to socio-cultural trends. The production of radios, cameras and sewing machines tripled between the years 1953–63, and production of domestic appliances such as refrigerators, washing machines and vacuum cleaners increased at similar rates (Reid 2009: 146). Cultural products such as trophy films (e.g. *Stagecoach* (1939), *Sun Valley Serenade* (1941), *The Girl of My Dreams* (1934)), American radio (Radio Liberty, Voice of America – the jazz programme Music USA hosted by Willis Conover was first broadcast in January 1955) and American magazines (e.g. *Amerika*) were also available in the Soviet Union, all of which were designed to impress the Soviet consumer (Avramov 2012: 127–207). This is evident in the case of the *stiliagi*



**Figure 4.3.1** ‘Music on the bones’ (X-rays used for recording).

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rock\\_on\\_Bones2.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rock_on_Bones2.jpg). © Dmitry Rozhkov, 2008. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0.

(many of whom self-defined as *shtatniki* – worshippers of American culture), who closely observed the clothes and styles of Western foreigners. This was a ‘well-known practice’, even down to imitating the language with Americanised jargon such as *trauzera* (trousers), *khetok* (hat), and *shuzina* (shoes) (Fürst 2010: 222–5). Obtaining Westernised music was therefore just another part of developing a Westernised identity. However, the American influence is often overstated, as Hilary Pilkington argued, the new Soviet teenager was a product of the new domestic society, which was characterised by fewer working hours (the working day reduced from eight to six hours for 16–18 year olds in July 1956), increased leisure time and expanding leisure industry, higher disposable income, and the extension of adolescence through more opportunities in higher education (Pilkington 1994: 18, 67). The new teenage consumer, rebelling against the styles and modes of the previous generations, therefore sought out an original way of expressing their self-identity through consumption – a need that was in part met through *roentgenizdat*.

To conclude, while it was the activity of the underground recording studio networks and the *stiliagi* that enabled the production and circulation of X-ray discs, there were a number of structural developments that increased demand for this underground product. These included the jazz ban, satirising of the *stiliagi* in the official press, and the emerging Soviet consumerist culture. Nevertheless, *roentgenizdat* was born out of a desire, not specifically to subvert the official institutions and censors of artistic expression, but to help obtain an individual style in the new era of Soviet consumerism. By the 1960s, just as rock music replaced jazz music and the *stiliagi* became ‘ clichéd and outmoded’ (Johnson 2011: 204), *roentgenizdat* was replaced by a more technologically advanced phenomenon – *magnitizdat*, the unofficial practice of (re-)recording uncensored music or speech onto cassette tapes.

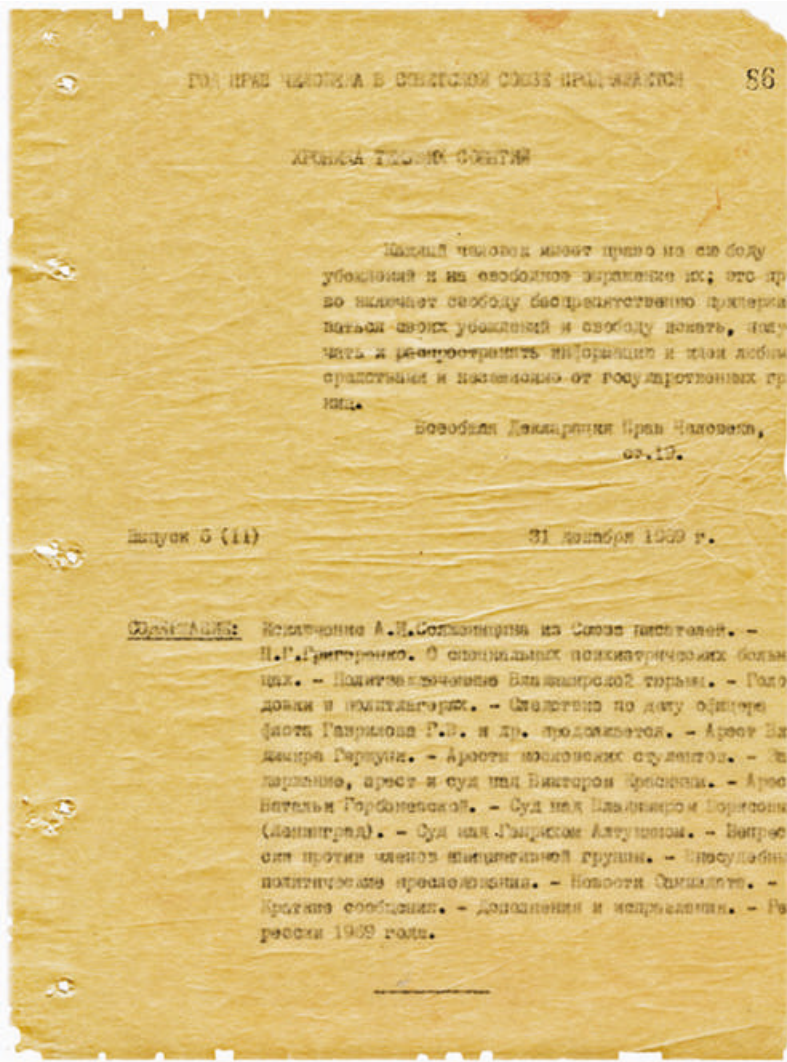
#### 4.4 **Samizdat** (USSR)

Jillian Forsyth

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*Samizdat* is a specific textual culture that existed in the Soviet Union from the late 1950s to the mid-1980s. Through the production and circulation of texts outside of official institutional frameworks, the practice of *samizdat* challenged dominant values and positions and created a space for alternative cultural production and communication. The word *samizdat* can be translated as ‘self-publication’. Etymologically, the word comes from the Russian *sam*, meaning ‘self, or by oneself’ and *-izdat*, an abbreviation of the word *izdatel'stvo*, which means ‘publishing house’. Well-known dissident Vladimir Bukovsky summarised the *samizdat* process as follows: ‘I write myself, edit myself, censor myself, publish myself, distribute myself, go to jail for it myself’ (Bukovsky 1979: 141).

*Samizdat* emerged out of the space of relative cultural liberalisation created by the Thaw. A growing aversion to tired ideology and a desire to reassert literary autonomy led to resistance within the cultural field (Komaromi 2015: 38). This quest for greater cultural autonomy is key to the emergence of *samizdat*. The *samizdat* of the late 1950s primarily consisted of the unofficial circulation of banned, suppressed and otherwise un-publishable literature and literary journals. Access to such literature in *samizdat* allowed authors and readers to explore language and conceptions of self and society in a critical way. Examples include the works of Pasternak, Akhmatova, Mandelstam and Tsvetaeva and poetry journals such as *Feniks and Sintaksis* (Alexeyeva and Goldberg 1990: 98). In the second half of the 1960s, *samizdat* activity intensified



**Figure 4.4.1** Cover page of the *Chronicle of Current Events* 6(11) 31 December 1969.

Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Chronicle\\_of\\_the\\_Current\\_Events.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Chronicle_of_the_Current_Events.jpg)

and became inextricably linked with dissidence. After the 1965–6 trial of writers Andrei Siniavskii and Yuli Daniel and the repressions that followed, *samizdat* not only functioned as a means of artistic and literary expression, but also played a crucial role in dissident communication and

activism. Various groups and individuals, representing such interests as human rights, religious freedoms and national self-determination, produced and circulated petitions, appeals, periodicals, open letters and trial transcripts in *samizdat*. While those involved in the production and dissemination of *samizdat* material faced severe repressions from the state (incarceration, exile and confinement to psychiatric wards), *samizdat* activity endured until the advent of *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

The most common way to produce *samizdat* was by typewriter (though handwritten, mimeograph and later Photostat copies of *samizdat* texts were also in circulation). *Samizdat* authors would usually type their texts using four or five carbons and then distribute the copies to people they knew. If a recipient found value or was interested in the text, he or she would copy it and pass it along to others in a similar manner (Alexeyeva 1985: 12). These informal text-sharing networks were essential to the production and dissemination of *samizdat*. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, such groups were mostly comprised of Moscow and Leningrad intelligentsia, however, as these networks grew and *samizdat* activity increased, *samizdat* texts could be found across the Soviet Union. In the words of veteran dissident Ludmilla Alexeyeva, *samizdat* spread across the country like ‘mushroom spores’, connecting people through unofficial networks (Alexeyeva 1985: 284).

The status of *samizdat* texts was reinforced by the practice of *tamizdat*, which was the smuggling of texts to the West for publication. Once published, the texts would often be smuggled back into the Soviet Union and circulated in *samizdat*, as was the case with Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago* (Lovell 2000: 112). Indeed, the development of *samizdat* was in many ways supported by audiences abroad and Western publishing opportunities (Komaromi 2015: 133). Some groups, such as human rights defenders and Jewish *refuseniks*, relied on *tamizdat* to help garner international support for their cause and bring political pressure to bear on Soviet leaders. Another practice closely connected to *samizdat* was *magnitizdat* (see 4.2 in this volume), which involved the production and circulation of audiotapes. The tapes were often amateur recordings of live performances of cult musicians such as Alexander Galich, Bulat Okudzhava’ and Vladimir Vysotskii (Steiner 2008: 622).

One bulletin that particularly demonstrates the scope and significance of *samizdat* is the Chronicle of Current Events (*Chronicle*). The *Chronicle* was published in *samizdat* from 1968 to 1983 and its editors and contributors were human rights activists who were involved in the founding of several major human rights organisations. The *Chronicle*’s mission



was to provide regular and accurate information about human rights violations in the Soviet Union and report on the activity of human rights groups. The *Chronicle* played a coordinating role within the entire Soviet human rights movement. *Samizdat* bulletins such as *Ukrainian Herald*, *Exodus*, *The Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church* and the *Herald of the Evangelical Christian Baptists* can be seen as direct offshoots of the *Chronicle*. *Chronicle* editors encouraged readers who wanted to contribute information about rights violations and abuses to pass the information along to the person from whom they received a copy, a process that would be repeated until the information reached the editors. This system of information transfer exemplifies the trust-based networks and chains of reproduction and transmission that typified *samizdat*. Additionally, as the *Chronicle* grew, its geographical dissemination widened. In the beginning, the *Chronicle* primarily reported on issues in Moscow, Leningrad and the Ukraine. However, later issues would include increasingly more information about the provinces and national republics. Not only does this reveal the multidirectional character of information exchange, but it also demonstrates *samizdat's* capacity to connect geographically isolated segments of society.

The unofficial circulation of texts that began in the late 1950s served as a forum for the development of alternative culture and transformed relations among Soviet citizens. Artistic, literary and socio-political *samizdat* made otherwise inaccessible texts available and made discussion of experiences repressed from official culture possible. In addition, *samizdat* created significant informal social links; *samizdat* networks connected citizens across the Soviet Union, as well as across international borders.

#### 4.5 ***Materit'sya*** (Russia)

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*Mat* describes a type of obscene language commonly used in Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union. Its lexicon consists of only a handful of words (though they have multiple variants), which are generally regarded as highly offensive. The act of using *mat* is described in Russian by the expressions *rugat'sya matom* ('to swear using *mat*'), *matom vyrazhat'sya* ('to express oneself in *mat*') or simply *materit'sya* (to use *mat*).

*Materit'sya* is central to day-to-day communication in several subcultures. Its social functions are associated with practices of cultural

resistance (the Soviet underground, *Mit'ki* (see *padonki* language, 4.6 in this volume)), self-expression (graffiti and other forms of wall-inscription, see 4.9 in this volume) and the general violation of social taboos, as well as the power of expression and the effectiveness of communication, rendering *mat* instrumental in crisis communication. *Mat* is not, however, normally used in formal contexts. *Mat* is mostly an oral tradition, used at moments of anger but also in jokes, songs, limericks (*chastushka*) and tales, and could be used to satirise the government. Under the Soviet regime, *mat* became the language of dissent associated with the Gulag penal system and with counterculture, adopted by the intelligentsia to dissociate itself from hegemonic discourses. In 2014, a law was brought into force in Russia that forbade the use of obscene language in films, television broadcasts, books and public performances (*Rossiiskaia gazeta* 2014).

Recent research has disproved the popular belief that *mat* entered the Russian language as a result of the Mongol domination of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries (Ermakova 2001; Kovalev 2005; Popova 2009: 48; Baranov 2014). *Mat* has been found in several documents dating from much earlier than the Mongol invasion. One of the earliest is a letter dating from the early twelfth century that was found during an archaeological excavation in Russia's Veliky Novgorod (Novgorod the Great) (Mokienko and Nikitina 2008: 7). A woman wrote to scold a friend for not paying back a loan. Another letter found in a nearby region and dating from the same period contains brotherly business advice and makes creative use of the verb *ebat'* (to fuck) (Mokienko and Nikitina 2008: 8).

*Ebat'* is to this day one of the most popular swear words in the Russian language and serves as the base for countless words and expressions. Similar verbs can be found in other Slavic languages such as Serbian (*jebati*), Slovak (*jebat'*) and Polish (*jebac*) among others. Linguists point to a common proto-Slavic form of the word – *jebati/jebti* – meaning to hit or to lie to someone (Kovalev 2005). Philologists today believe that the word probably comes from the Indo-European root *jeb*, originally meaning 'to hit' but later acquiring the meaning 'to copulate' (Kovalev 2005; Mokienko and Nikitina 2008: 75). Likewise, the verb 'to fuck' in English is believed originally to have meant 'to strike' or 'to thrust' (Sheidlower 1995). The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) gives the word's etymology as 'Early 16th century: of Germanic origin (compare Swedish dialect *focka* and Dutch dialect *fokkelen*); possibly from an Indo-European root meaning "strike", shared by Latin *pugnus* "fist"'.

The etymology of the word *mat* can be traced back to the Indo-European word *mater* and is related to the Russian word *mat'* (mother).

To use *mat* is thus to ‘swear by one’s mother’ (Erofeyev 2003; Plutser-Sarno 2005; Popova 2009: 48). Similarly, in other civilisations, invoking the name of a god or another supernatural force was intended to add weight to what the speaker was saying, and to indicate that what was being said was the truth (Mohr 2013: 57). In Ancient Greece and Rome, for example, it was common to swear ‘by Hercules!’ or ‘by Jupiter!’ while obscene language of a sexual character was commonly used in religious rituals and festivities (Hultin 2008:12; Ljung 2011:49–50). In ancient Russia, or Rus’, *mat* was used during pagan rituals, and it may be that the Christianisation of Rus’ at the end of the tenth century contributed to rendering that type of language taboo (Uspenskii 1994: 57).

Today, the commonest *mat* expression is *yob tvoyu mat’* (‘fuck your mother’), though the form of the verb *ebat’* in this instance is not an imperative, but rather the third-person singular of the past tense, meaning ‘[someone] fucked your mother’ (Ljung 2011: 40). Other dictionaries suggest a range of equally taboo subjects of intercourse: ‘a dog fucked your mother’ (Uspenskii 1994: 109–26; Kovalev 2005). Supporters of this theory link it to the end of matriarchy in Russia during the twelfth century, when the man who lay with the mother of the house would become the master of the home (Kovalev 2005). To say *yob tvoyu mat’* to someone was accordingly to assert one’s own superior power, which may be interpreted as seniority: ‘I am now your father (or father-figure) and have authority over you’, or ‘Everything you owned is now mine’ (Kovalev 2005). Moreover, questioning the reputation of a mother implied that her children were bastards, perhaps leading to the expression *sukin syn* (‘son of a bitch’) (Kovalev 2005). References to the mother are taboo in many languages, notably Spanish, Italian and the Nordic languages, because of the strong bond between the mother and her child (Harbeck 2015). Some writers have suggested that the ‘insult by mother’ may be rooted in the Oedipus complex, that is, a son’s desire to replace his father in his relationship with his mother (Harbeck 2015).

Another interpretation of the origin of the word *mat* links it to ‘a loud voice’ or ‘a scream’, and suggests that it may refer to the sounds that animals make during the mating season (*ma, mia, meh*) (Trubachev 1974; Plutser-Sarno 2005; Anikina 2012). Such an animalist context would make it obscene for humans (Plutser-Sarno 2005).

Because of its obscenity, the *mat* lexicon is rarely included in standard dictionaries. However, several dictionaries of *mat* have been published in Russia. Most of these include the main *mat* words related to genitals and their sexual use: *ebat’* (‘to fuck’), *blyad’* (‘whore’), *pizda* (‘cunt’) and *khuj* (‘dick’) (Ilyasov 1994). Other dictionaries add the



**Figure 4.5.1** The swear word '*khui*' carved into a birch tree, one of the most common and symbolic trees in Russia.

Source: <https://flic.kr/p/6UVPwq>. © Maurycy Gomulicki, 2009.

words *suka* ('bitch'), *manda* ('cunt'), *mudak* ('asshole'), *zhopa* ('ass') and *govno* ('shit').

It might at first seem that the Russian swearing vocabulary is rather poor, consisting as it does of only a handful of words. However, the particularity of swearing in Russian is that it is highly malleable and the words listed above can be worked into an almost infinite number of nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs (Dreizin and Priestly 1982: 233–4; Smith 1998: 172). It is noteworthy that, of the *mat* words listed above, use of the first four in films, television broadcasts and public performances is banned under legislation introduced in 2014, while copies of books, DVDs or CDs that contain such words must be sealed and labelled as containing obscene language before being put on sale (*Rossiiskaya gazeta* 2014). The legislation was controversial, with critics seeing it as marking the return of censorship into official discourse and art forms (though parents may have welcomed the fact that their children would be sheltered from foul language). The legislation was so vaguely worded, however, that it has so far been applied only in a very inconsistent manner.

Paradoxically, while swear words may build social barriers, they may also help to dismantle them. When not formulated as a direct insult

to someone, swearing can work as an icebreaker and create a bonding experience. Since swear words are not generally accepted in public, when an obscenity slips through in a small group it may be seen as an indication that the atmosphere is relaxed and sufficiently comfortable for the speaker to use familiar language. According to Elistratov (2001), the use of obscene language during a conversation can create a sense of intimacy, and help set up a relationship of trust and confidence.

*Mat* can play an important role in politics precisely since it can act as an instrument of bonding, becoming the language of ‘insiders’ but also adding veracity and authenticity to what the speaker is saying. Erofeyev (2003) has claimed that Russian President Vladimir Putin engages in ‘demonstrative swearing’ with his subordinates in order to reinforce his position in the hierarchy. Putin has been known publicly to use jargon associated with criminal argot, notably in his vow of 1999 to ‘wipe the terrorists out in the outhouse’ (*mochit’ ikh v sortire*). It might seem hypocritical for Putin’s regime to launch a campaign against *mat* even as its members indulge in swearing behind closed doors. Such doublethink is not, however, uncommon in Russia.

In contemporary Russia, too, *mat* is consistently used as a language of crisis communication. When an individual needs to signal to others that he or she is sick or in danger and needs immediate attention, the surest way to convey the extraordinary nature of the situation is to switch to *mat*. The same goes the other way: a sure way of knocking someone else off balance is to switch to *mat*. This has led some commentators to describe *mat* as a management tool. Coercive leadership is quite common in Russia, and from that perspective *mat* might be considered a leadership tool (Fey and Shekshnia 2011). *Mat* can produce remarkable results when used in a measured way, however, if leaders use it constantly their followers are likely to become used to it and cease to take it seriously.

#### 4.6 ***Padonki* language** (Russia)

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The *padonki language* or *Padonkaffsky jargon* after the phonetised version of the word *podonok* for scumbag, or riffraff, is a specific linguistic practice on the Russian Internet, usually understood as cyber slang. It is also known as the Olbanian/Albanian language (Russian: *albanskii* or *olbanskii jazik*). The characteristic features of the practice include the use of erroneous spelling (mostly based on phonetics); obscene lexicon

(*mat*) (normally judged not to be printable); wordplay; and a set of non-standard words and phrases.

The terms *padonki* language and *Padonkaffsky* jargon most likely originated from the self-definition of Internet users as ‘*padonki*’ rebelling against cultural norms in language use. The term *Olbanian* first appeared in 2004 without any connection to the Albanian language and owes its origin to an incident in LiveJournal, when an English-speaking user didn’t understand a post written in Russian Internet jargon and was told that the language was Albanian. The posts that followed included an imperative: ‘Learn Albanian!’ (now written as *Olbanian*), that since has become an Internet meme and gave an alternative, and commonly used, name to the *padonki* language.

Based on play on words and spelling, this Russian online practice of orthographic distortions is somewhat similar to other Internet language phenomena such as English Leet or Romanised Cypriot Greek (see French *verlan*, 4.7 in this volume). The difference is that the *padonki* language has its own original structure, its own sources, as well as a specific position in the socio-cultural environment.

Deliberate misspellings and puns were first developed by the Russian FidoNet in-group in the late 1990s. A massive Internet users’ movement ‘for spelling mistakes, against automatic spell-checking’, a denial of the social taboo of using *mat* publicly, has spread across the Russian Internet since 1999. Their main goal, manifested on [www.fuck.ru](http://www.fuck.ru) (currently defunct), was to question language correctness as a marker of social status (Andreev 1999). Andreev’s manifest of anti-literacy proclaims the right to make grammatical errors and propagandises phonetic spelling.

The Manifest of Anti-Literacy states, ‘We are principally against the so-called spelling correctness on the Net! ... all masters of the Russian word should challenge the killing of our live language by soulless automatons!’

The declared ‘freedom’ from orthography (‘I write as I speak’) and resistance to the culturally prevalent linguistic norms have proven extremely attractive for hundreds of thousands of Russian Internet users, and not only youths – dozens of counterculture-oriented websites have started practising the *padonki* language (e.g. [padonki.org](http://padonki.org), [fackru.net](http://fackru.net), [down.ru](http://down.ru), [udaff.com](http://udaff.com) and others). The followers of this countercultural practice online have formed an Internet subculture by maintaining an internal cohesion and group distinction mainly due to the play with orthography and a demonstrative use of obscene lexicon. The in-group

cohesion rested upon the adherence to their linguistic norms, display of intolerance, and ostracising the non-observers.

Since its inception, the *padonki* language has been used in all types of computer-mediated communication (ICQ chat rooms, social networks, Internet forums, blogs, Twitter, etc.). Websites of *padonki* Internet community, practising wrong spelling and *mat* (such as *udaff.com* and *padonki.org*), provide a place where *padonki* authors can publish online their original short stories (called *kreatiffy*) for readers to rate and share. The potential of the ‘anti-literacy *padonki*-movement’ when it comes to its influence on online communication is shown by impressive statistics: the average number of *udaf.com* visitors (the most popular resource practising the *padonki* language) during years 2003–10 has been around 1 million people a month, according to the open statistics on the site (since the access to visitor statistics on *udaf.com* closed in 2011, the web information company *liveinternet.ru* reports 140,000 to 180,000 visitors a month in 2015).

The main distinction of the *padonki* language as a linguistic phenomenon is the deliberate use of misspellings. The misspellings should be systematically observed and modelled on the phonetic corrections of Russian normative orthography. Such corrections include the reduction of unstressed vowels, voicing and devoicing of consonants (e.g. *afftar*, instead of *avtor* (author); *ashibka* instead of *oshibka* (error)). Other principles of the *padonki* language include the grammatical rules reversal. For example,

- where the rule suggests to write *-жи*, ‘-zhi’ and *-ши*, ‘-shi’ with ‘u’, ‘i’, the *padonki* norm suggests otherwise: *жызьнь*, ‘zhyzn’ instead of *жизнь*, ‘zhizn’ (life);
- after *ч-*, ‘ch-’ and *шч-*, ‘shch-’ letters *я*, ‘ja’ and *ю*, ‘ju’ are used instead of *а* and *у*, ‘u’: *чюство*, ‘chjustvo’ instead of *чувство*, ‘chuvstvo’ (feeling);
- letter substitution and hypercorrection are used for transforming the words: for example, *сч-*, ‘sch-’ instead of *шч-*, ‘shch-’: *обсчие*, ‘obschie’ instead of *общие*, ‘obshchie’ (common); *помасчь*, ‘pomasch’ instead of *помощь*, ‘pomoshch’ (help);
- letters *е*, *о* instead of *и*, *і*, and *а*: *пеші*, ‘peshi’ instead of *пиши*, ‘pishi’ (write), *сотона*, ‘sotona’ instead of *сатана*, ‘satana’ (Satan).

The use of reversal for a number of morphemes that break with their traditional literate appearance plays a particular role in *padonki* language. For example, endings *-ца/-цца*, ‘-tsa/-ttsa’ or *-цо/-ццо*, ‘-tso/-tstso’ are used

instead of verb endings *-тся/-ться*, ‘-tsja/-t’sja’: *кончацца*, ‘konchatsta’ instead of *кончается*, ‘konchaetsja’ (ends); *жыницицо*, ‘zhynitstso’, instead of *жениться*, ‘zhenit’sja’ (to get married). The rules of ‘creative’ orthography also apply to the Russian obscene language (*mat*) and its numerous derivatives. Thus, *padonki*-movement fans would use *унацца*, ‘ipatsta’ (meaning to fuck), and *бисписды*, ‘bispisdy’ (literally, no cunt) that somewhat softens the look and the sound of *mat*.

The *padonki* lexicon includes slang words and phrases which have come into use as Internet memes. The longevity of these lexical innovations depends on different factors, including their communicative function, possible linguistic parallels, associations with particular lingua-cultural paradigm, connections to some actual social or political context, as well as their originality and attractiveness of appearance. Below is a short glossary of the most durable *padonki* lexical units (variation in spelling occurs):

An expression of approval: *зачот*, ‘zachot’ from correct *зачет*, ‘zachet’ (pass, as in exams).

An expression of disapproval: *аутой*, ‘atstoi’, from correct *отмой*, ‘otstoi’ (sediment).

An expression of highest approval: *аффтар жжот*, ‘afttar zhzhot’, from correct *автор жжет*, ‘avtor zhzheth’ (the author burns).

An expression of approval: *пешы исчо*, ‘peshy ischo’, from correct *пиши ещё*, ‘pishi eshchjo’ (write more).

A popular Russian meme for greeting: *привед*, ‘preved’, from correct *привет*, ‘privet’ (‘Hi’). It originates in a cartoon, widely posted on the Internet, where a bear comes out of the woods and cries out ‘Surprise!’ to a couple having intercourse. In the Russian version, the bear exclaims ‘Preved!’.

Since the mid-2000s, many *padonki* words spread from their home Internet sites into all types of advertisements, headlines, outdoor banners, names of business entities and social events (see [Figure 4.6.1](#)).

Elements of the *padonki* language rules have widely penetrated computer-mediated communication, the erroneous spellings have stabilised. The reason for the popularity of distorted orthography is linked to the lack of expressivity of the virtual ‘written talk’. Deliberate erroneous spellings, exposed and repeated in various contexts for a long time, have proven themselves capable of denoting expressivity in ‘low’ keys (irony, sarcasm, etc.). Thus *padonki* language enhances the communicative creativity of the Russian computer-mediated communication in general. The new appearances of the *padonki* words have added expressivity, yet with





**Figure 4.6.1** A cafe in St Petersburg, name misspelt on purpose ('bufed' instead of 'bufet'/cupboard).

Source: Author. © <http://www.naroozhka.ru/tag/вывески/page/4>.

time this lexical innovation gradually loses its counterculture character. The linguistic subculture can only remain deviant and limited in scale, if not incorporated into the orthographically correct mainstream.

The increasing scale of *padonki* spelling practices has caused 'fear for the fate of the Russian language' and stimulated a counter-movement in academic and educational circles. Advocacy campaigns for 'a clean Russian' prevail in public discussions on the websites and in the traditional mass media. Although no official restrictions were imposed on the public use of *padonki* misspellings, this practice has been strongly discouraged by the administration of many Russian-speaking websites. 'I can speak Russian!' became a popular slogan in forums, blogs and personal web-pages in the late 2000s.

To date, the *padonki* movement has not reached its declared goal and has not transformed the Russian Internet communication into a zone free from social and cultural norms in language use. Since the 2010s, the popularity of the *padonki* language has gradually declined, and its frequency of use on the Internet sites is diminishing. Nevertheless the decade of the *padonki* language 'fashion' has had a significant impact

upon the use of slang at large and upon people's linguistic awareness. This phenomenon has shown that dramatic societal changes and technological shifts provoke powerful 'linguistic' responses. The case of the *padonki* language raises the challenging question of how marginal sub-cultural communication practices can develop and have much wider socio-cultural implications. As such it presents fruitful possibilities for future sociolinguistic research.

#### 4.7 **Verlan** (France)

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*Verlan* is a form of French slang featuring the inversion of syllables to create new words and was originally used by the first generation of children born in France to North African immigrants as an in-group or secret language. Its proliferation in the housing projects in the outer suburbs of Paris became an exhaustive area of study in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Bachmann and Basier 1984; Méla 1991). *Verlan* quickly gained notoriety as a method of disguising criminal activity in the city outskirts (*banlieues*) from the police. These days, *Verlan* appears to be used much less maliciously and by a wider social spectrum, although some of the original prejudices against its use still remain.

In Europe in particular there is a plethora of slang lexicons, such as *Rotwelsch* in German, *furbesco* in Italian and of course *argot* in French (Burke and Porter 1995). It would appear that *Verlan* has its roots in the French slang of *argot*, which François-Geiger (1991) splits into two main categories; first, its original intended use was as a cryptolect by various gangs in nineteenth-century France as a means of concealing criminal activity; and second, the *parlers branchés* (this could be translated as 'trendy speech') were employed within different areas of culture as a means of both identification and to disguise meaning. In some ways, *Verlan* can be viewed as a revival of the traditional functions of *argot*; a fundamentally oral phenomenon, it is particularly prevalent in large urban conurbations and in some cases has similar functions, the most important of which is as a means of masking certain topics of conversation from outsiders (François-Geiger 1991). With its use of syllabic inversion, *Verlan* falls into the category of 'reversal luddlings' (Bagemihl 1995), present in Europe in the forms of Pig Latin (Treiman 1989) and some aspects of *Cant* or *Shelta* (Kirk and Ó Baoill 2002). However, it is perhaps the Balkan slang *Šatrovački* that is the most similar to *Verlan*, given its popularity among young immigrant populations, its function of disguising criminal activity

and the choice of words it incorporates into its lexicon, which tend to be drug- or crime-based (Rizzolo 2004; Rios 2009). Rizzolo gives as examples the Serbo-Croat words *džok*, meaning 'joint', which becomes *kadžo*, and *nož* ('knife') which turns into *žano* (2004: 276–7).

In Chomskyan terms, *Verlan* is not a grammatical practice but a social one (Azra and Cheneau 1994), regardless of the morphological processes a word must undergo to become *verlanised*. In Peters' words, '*Verlan* serves primarily as an identity marker, not as a semantic addition to a sentence' (2007: 3). Spoken as a means of rebellion against the purity of the French language, which is more strictly regulated than most by the *Académie Française*, it is often seen as a means of association and solidarity with a very particular social group. In its early incarnations, the offspring of immigrants from former French colonies and Muslim countries such as Algeria, Morocco and Turkey, who as first-generation French citizens struggled to fit in with both their parents' and French culture, employed *Verlan* (itself an inversion of the word *l'envers*, literally 'back to front') as a way of self-identification. This section of society was, and still is, disproportionately socially excluded, often confined to high-rise developments on the outskirts of large cities such as Paris and Marseilles. As a result they created for themselves a kind of underground society within which *Verlan* was the primary means of excluding the uninitiated.

*Verlan* is not only a means of inclusion, but as with many other in-group languages, a way to 'scramble' a word or message to hide criminal or dubious activity, for example, *teshi* from *le shit* (a French slang term for cannabis) and *keuf* for *flic*, a rather derogatory name for a police officer (Méla 1991). It is also extremely prevalent in the lexical fields of sex and relationships, the body, ethnicity, drugs and violence. This can be accredited to the fact that a *Verlan* term may be 'softer', less brash and without the connotations and taboos of the original word; take the very common *beur* used in place of *arabe*, or *caillera*, the inversion of *racaille*, a word that president Nicolas Sarkozy used in 2005, akin to the English word 'scum', to describe delinquent members of society.

These days, many French people use some degree of *Verlan* regardless of race, age, gender or social class (Méla 1997). As would be expected, different varieties of *Verlan* have developed over time, almost certainly from diatopic (from experience, Lyonnais *Verlan* is quite different to the Parisian variety) and diastratic points of view. As has been noted 'it can ... distinguish yuppies from street kids' (Peters 2007: 9). Lefkowitz (1991) claims that some members of the bourgeoisie may try to show empathy or awareness of social problems by using *Verlan*. Indeed even at Presidential levels there is evidence of deliberately using *Verlan*

to be current. As Azra and Cheneau report: ‘*On se souviendra de Mitterand* [François, the former French president] *répondant à un journaliste lui demandant ce que signifie chébran*; “*Ça veut dire branché*” [‘We remember Mitterand responding to a journalist who had asked him what *chébran* meant; “It means trendy”] (1994: 149).

One of the most telling indicators that *Verlan* is not just a passing fad has been its diffusion across French media. A mode of speech that was once only heard on news reports from the Parisian *banlieues* is now omnipresent in the French film and music industry. Isabelle Marc Martínez’s book, *Le rap français. Esthétique et poétique des textes (1990–1995)* gives an in-depth account of the use of *Verlan* in popular music, and specifically rap music, which in France tends to be produced and listened to by the *maghrébin* population (Martínez 2008). It would appear that when *Verlan* is used in rap music, it is not used as cryptically, but instead allows the listener to feel part of the movement as well as emphasising the message of the music. As Martínez puts it: ‘[*Verlan*] *n’a pas pour fonction de brouiller le message, mais, au contraire, de l’intensifier par l’accumulation de synonymes*’ [‘*Verlan*] does not seek to scramble the message; but rather to intensify it through the accumulation of synonyms’] (2008: 271).

However, it is also important to consider the roots of French hip-hop. Mitchell (2000) maintains that rappers and hip-hop artists have always looked to their ethnic backgrounds for inspiration and have used this to forge a strong identity; although he does not explicitly mention *Verlan*, it can clearly be considered an important feature of this identity.

Hip-hop music has also created for itself a sub-lexicon of *Verlan*, in which the most important words within the realm of rap music are almost better known in this form (Martínez 2008); examples include the word *rappeur* itself, *verlanised* into *peura*, and the name of the well-known artist MC Solaar, also known as *Laarso*. Unlike the previously discussed ‘common’ *verlanisations* of slang words, the rapper Ministère A.M.E.R. has branched out into inverting everyday words (i.e. those not considered to be *argotique* or slang) namely *maneci* (cinéma) and *naisco* (*connais*) (Martínez 2008: 271), thus giving strength to the argument that *Verlan* is no longer restricted to a cryptic form of usage.

The cultural importance of *Verlan* is highlighted in the 1995 film *La Haine*, in which the director Matthieu Kassowitz draws on French society’s understanding of the slang. The film’s events take place against the backdrop of a Parisian council estate, focusing on the frustrations of residents of *la zone* (the ‘slum belt’). Kassowitz appears to have made

it as ‘viewer-friendly’ as possible while also conveying the message that the characters’ speech is different from that of the more bourgeois society that they encounter in central Paris. Peters sums this up well: ‘The characters speak *Verlan* only amongst themselves, never to adults inside or outside the *banlieues* [suburbs] ... they use *Verlan* for drug vocabulary and employ many of the better-known terms: *keuf*, from *flic*, (meaning cop or pig) ... *téci*, from *cit  * (ghetto)’ (2007: 15). Furthermore, although the characters never use more than a few words of *Verlan* at a time (presumably to facilitate the comprehension of the viewer), what is considered to be the most important word in the sentence is usually the one that is *verlanised*, giving that word some kind of emphatic quality (Black and Sloutsky 2010).

#### 4.8 **Avos’** (Russia)

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*Avos’* is a Russian word used in both economic and non-economic contexts to refer to a ‘lackadaisical’ attitude to chance in the world. It expresses the idea that ‘things might work out for me’ (albeit with a low degree of probability). A typical usage might be ‘Relying on chance, I drove into the oncoming lane in order to get round the traffic jam’ (*‘Nadeyas’ na avos’, ya reshil vyekhat’ na vstrechnuyu polosu, chtoby ob’ekhat’ probku’*).

In an economic context, *avos’* is often evoked to blame people for engaging in risky deals or popular speculation and for then falling prey to cheats and scams. Contemporary Russian writing tends to portray *avos’* as an age-old Russian habit of mind, a regrettable lapse into folkways that has somehow survived despite the advent of more ‘progressive’ kinds of economic thinking, such as striving to achieve socialist production targets, rational administrative planning, responsible management of a household economy or hard-headed capitalist calculation.

The concept of *avos’* is a response to unpredictability and has deep roots in a cosmological vision of how the world works. Although advocates of modernity express the view that it must sooner or later disappear, in fact *avos’* springs into view as soon as the economy experiences one of its abrupt upswings or downturns, and hence it is widely evident in twenty-first-century Russia.

It is worth briefly considering the history of the idea. There is an ageless proverb (‘The Russian god is chance (*avos’*), probably, and yes, somehow’ (*Russkiy Bog – avos’, nebos’ da kak-nibud’*)), which has been extolled, lamented and satirised by Russian writers from Alexander

Pushkin onwards. In the nineteenth century the notion that *avos'* was somehow like a god for the common folk was used, for example, by the novelist Pavel Mel'nikov-Pechersky when he was contemplating the secrets of the economic success of the Old Believers (dissenters who broke away from the Russian Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century). He wrote that what separates the upstanding, prudent, hard-working Old Believers from the lazy peasants belonging to the mainstream Orthodox Church is that they have escaped from the fatalism of 'the primordial law of the Russian person, "the Russian god – *avos*". The Old Believers are virtually all active and efficient, he wrote, and therefore prosperous, whereas the Orthodox peasants, prey to *avos'*, are an inert, slack and reckless lot only too happy to 'eat at others' expense' (Mel'nikov-Pechersky 1868).

It might seem that the passivity of *avos'* would imply an idea like Providence, a viewpoint *sub specie aeternitatis*, the viewpoint of God's eye – except that in fact *avos'* is devoid of Christian connotations and refers instead to wild, untamed happenstance. So, with *avos'*, it is not by the will of the Christian God that an opportunity comes to be. Rather, *avos'* suggests an alternative chanciness – not as inexorable as Fate nor as deity-like as Fortuna, even if Russian writers refer to it sarcastically as a deity – which is just the way the unfathomable world seems to work. Latching on to *avos'* implies unreflective immediacy. The great Russian dictionary of Vladimir Dal' explains the etymology of *avos'* as a shortening of '*A vot seychas!*' (Oh, there it is, right now!) (Dal' 1863–6).

*Avos'* is associated with informal, off-the-cuff practices. For example, an *avos'ka* was the string bag that people used to carry in Soviet times just in case they came across something good to buy on their way to work. In post-Soviet times it is assumed that the days of the *avos'ka* are over ('You'll find it in a museum!') and, with its peasant associations, people today rarely use the word *avos'* to describe their own actions – even if in fact they act in exactly this way. On the other hand, they are all too ready to apply the word to others. This contrast is apparent in the following statements, collected during the author's fieldwork in Vladivostok in 2015, concerning Russia's highly risky real estate business. A young man who had paid in advance for an apartment that, as it transpired, was never built, and having lost all his money, recounted:

I didn't think of checking the reputation of the firm. You can't call it rational. I knew it was risky. I understood that the firm had been set up more or less on the principle of a pyramid but – ha, ha, I hoped that the firm would collapse only after I received my flat.

Another man, when asked why he had been so idiotic as to put down his entire life savings for a flat in similarly uninsured and legally dodgy circumstances, replied: 'Well, it was there – on my way to work. There was the house going up. There was the sales office. And inside, there was the contract. So I signed'. Commenting on such occurrences, the director of an estate agency said, rather pompously,

It is common to find sad cases of *avos'*. When buying flats with obviously suspect documents but a price well below the market rate, a considerable proportion of our citizens continue with arrangements, even though any foreigner would have long ago fled from such fishy schemes. Sometimes when searching for a flat for clients I have to push them away almost by force from dubious offers that seem to them extremely profitable.

(*RIA Nedvizhimost'* 2013)

*Avos'* is one among various ideas of luck and fortune, hope, speculation and anticipation found in societies across the world (Da Col and Humphrey 2008). Such ideas are used contextually, including in seemingly completely rationalised financial markets (Miyazaki 2007). Yet the history of anthropology shows that some indigenous concepts have themselves become theoretical terms of wider import. According to David Graeber, concepts such as '*mana, sakti, baraka* and *orenda*' might best be considered as 'grappling with the same ambiguities and antinomies of temporal existence that all humans, even social theorists, have to confront in one form or another' (Graeber 2012: 25). *Avos'* has not yet reached the limelight in this respect; but it can be compared with the idea of *kairos*, named after the Greek god Kairos, the deity of seizing the moment – an idea that has been expanded and recast to capture ideas of event, revolution, or effective business action in numerous theoretical writings of the twentieth century (Boer 2013). Writing about the US boxing business, for example, Loic Wacquant uses this idea to explain how an experienced matchmaker becomes successful by his ability to choose exactly the right time to strike the best deal for his fighters (Wacquant 1998: 16). Yet *avos'* differs from *kairos*. The latter in its ancient Greek version implies selecting the right place and time, duly measured, appropriate and opportune, and is an aristocratic practice; the unbalanced, untimely, out-of-place and vulgar are outside the zone of *kairos* (Boer 2013). With *avos'*, by contrast, conceptions of harmony and due measure are absent. So is the notion of judicious choice. *Avos'* is chance that seems rather to *happen to* the actor, on the wing, and all he or she has to do is to notice it.

In an economic context, despite seeming similarities, the ‘spotting a break’ and the ‘letting things happen’ of *avos*’ are very different from the *laissez-faire* attitude of the model capitalist entrepreneur described by Friedrich Hayek (2002). The latter is an opportunist, flitting here and there, navigating by intuition and grazing on lucky breaks; but he or she still takes account of the rules of the game and the laws of the state, and must peg an operation to the calculated choices of the multitude of economic actors. *Avos*’ on the other hand supposes a proper cosmic chaos. It does not expect there to be rules or statistical regularities – none, at any rate, that the actor can discern. Practice by *avos*’ mirrors such an unpredictable world: sly, yet inconsistent and happening according to whim. Thus it operates beyond any strategies of circumscription by means of rules, laws or governmental techniques. The more the economic environment does indeed manifest itself as arbitrary, unreliable and beyond the law, the more attractive and appropriate does acting by *avos*’ become.

#### 4.9 **Graffiti** (general)

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The word graffiti is the plural of *graffito*, which in the history of art refers to a drawing or writing scratched on a wall or other surface. It is derived from the Italian word *graffito*, which literally means a scratch. However, in its more widespread modern usage, graffiti refers to ‘words or images marked (illegally) in a public place, esp. using aerosol paint’ (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2016). Graffiti first began to be practised in this modern sense in the 1960s and has continually been evolving and developing since.

In many countries worldwide graffiti is regarded in law as vandalism. Graffiti’s status of illegality is at the heart of the debate as to whether it constitutes a valid art form. In 2004 the Keep Britain Tidy campaign issued a statement signed by 122 MPs, including the then-prime minister, Tony Blair, which read: ‘Graffiti is not art, it’s crime. On behalf of my constituents, I will do all I can to rid our community of this problem’ (*Guardian* 2004). This contested nature of the social and artistic value of graffiti can lead to conflicting approaches in how the authorities ‘manage’ it when it is spontaneously created.

In its contemporary practice graffiti has several forms and usages. One of the most common forms of graffiti is the ‘tag’, which can be



defined as ‘a stylised signature of a graffiti writer’s pseudonym’ (Gottlieb 2008: 35). In this form it exists simply as a means for the artist to indicate his presence. Tagging is primarily associated with gangs and crime; it is a form of communicating and marking territory. Often associated with graffiti on trains, the ‘tag’ developed into a more mature art form and was found on bridges and buildings, often displayed with unique styles and colouring. By the 1980s graffiti had become intertwined with the ‘hip hop’ culture of the African American and Latino youths of the South Bronx in New York (Gottlieb 2008: 6–7). In time, the designs became bigger and brighter and developed into large-scale murals, intended to enhance the community. These murals were much more complex and required hours of work, undertaken usually at night in order to avoid detection from the authorities.

The association of street art with gangs and crime led to graffiti being used primarily as an instrument of communication and rebellion. Many graffiti artists used their art as a method to express their emotions and to indicate political views, which could not otherwise be voiced. The subculture of graffiti artists, by definition, rebelled against authority and the power of the mass media. One of the most influential and prominent examples of this is the Bristol-born street artist Banksy, whose works have dealt with an array of political and social themes, including anti-war, anti-capitalism, anti-fascism, anti-imperialism, anti-authoritarianism, anarchism, nihilism and existentialism. His works have addressed such components of the human condition as greed, poverty, hypocrisy, boredom, despair, absurdity and alienation. In the West Bank, he memorably painted a hole revealing blue sky on the Palestinian side of the barrier erected by Israel (Byrne 2007). In December 2015, as the European Union faced a ‘migrant crisis’ caused by conflicts in Syria among others, Banksy created a work depicting the late Steve Jobs, the Apple Company founder, on a wall of a refugee camp in Calais known as ‘the Jungle’. He painted Jobs with a black bin bag over one shoulder and an Apple computer in one hand. Unusually on this occasion Banksy also made a public statement regarding attitudes to refugees, in which he said (Ellis-Petersen 2015):

We’re often led to believe migration is a drain on the country’s resources but Steve Jobs was the son of a Syrian migrant. Apple is the world’s most profitable company, it pays over \$7bn (£4.6bn) a year in taxes – and it only exists because they allowed in a young man from Homs.

The use of graffiti for political ends can be observed worldwide. One of the most interesting recent examples of graffiti as a tool of spontaneous political expression took place in Egypt. The Egyptian Ministry of Culture rigidly controlled all public expression in Egypt and until 2011 protest art was hard to find (Parshley 2011). However, in January 2011 protesters used walls across the Egyptian capital as the canvas for an open letter to the regime, demanding the ousting of President Mubarak. Cairo's protest street art highlighted the fury of the demonstrators and demonstrated their resilience and determination to topple President Mubarak's regime. The demonstrators were successful in forcing the resignation of the despotic president and for a brief period thereafter succeeded in bringing new freedoms, which included the right to make art (Parshley 2011). In June 2012, Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood became Egypt's first democratically elected president. A few months later, the authorities had the revolutionary graffiti erased. However, graffiti artists mocked the government's whitewashing by spraying slogans such as 'erase one more time', and 'congratulations on the new paint', over the covered murals, and most protest graffiti re-appeared within hours (*Huffington Post* 2014).

In recent times, graffiti has started to be embraced by the establishment in some countries. It has moved away from its illegal display on public or private property to be more generally accepted as an art form in its own right. Graffiti is no longer necessarily orchestrated for rebellious or criminal reasons, but rather to challenge people to accept aesthetic pleasure from a unique form whose development has not been constrained by traditional and institutional demands. As an art form it has become sufficiently accepted in popular culture to be adopted by multinational companies such as Nike, who have incorporated the aesthetic aspects of graffiti into their products and advertising.

In March 2009, the Brazilian Government passed a law decriminalising graffiti. Street art was legalised provided that the works were undertaken with the consent of the owners of the property on which it was placed (Untapped Cities 2012). The policy was adopted as a result of the development of Brazilian street art, which is considered to be one of the most advanced and active of global street art movements.

In Brazil, artists differentiate between tagging, which is known as *pichachao*, and *grafite*, which is a specific type of street art particular to Brazil. The term *pichacho*, also known as 'wall writings', comes from the Portuguese word *piche*, meaning tar, which was stolen from construction sites and used by early taggers to create their art. *Pichachao* emerged as an art form in the 1940s, and was used to make a political statement.

It disappeared in the 1970s, only to reappear in the 1980s, adopted at this time by gangs as a means of marking territory. Today, the differences between *pichachao* and *grafite* are very distinct. *Pichachao* is negatively connoted, whereas *grafite* has been viewed positively since the 1990s and is welcomed and encouraged by both communities and Government (Untapped Cities 2012).

The contrast between the perception of street art in the United Kingdom and in Brazil could not be starker. It appears that where laws exist banning such a practice, street art will always be negatively connoted. However, where the law actively supports the form, not only does it have the possibility to both personalise and beautify a city, it also has the possibility of engaging with disaffected youth, channeling their emotions positively and thus changing the negative desire to break the law.

#### 4.10 **Hactivism** (general)

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*Hactivism* is a portmanteau word of hacking and activism. It builds on the notion of the hacker as a creative tinkerer and disruptor of technology (Rheingold 2000). The definition rose to prominence in the early 2000s. In an influential book chapter, Dorothy Denning defined hactivism as ‘the marriage of hacking and activism. It covers operations that use hacking techniques against a target’s Internet site with the intent of disrupting normal operations but not causing serious damage. Examples are web sit-ins and virtual blockades, automated email bombs, web hacks, computer break-ins, and computer viruses and worms’ (Denning 2001: 241). This definition has since been rendered somewhat obsolete, due to the proliferation of electronically mediated communications and the changes in velocity and volume of such communicated acts (Castells 2006).

Mediatisation theory looks at the institutionalised changes that media enacts as it becomes embedded in actions of everyday life (Couldry and Hepp 2013). Politics and political participation is at the forefront of such changes. A process that can be traced to the early era of mass communication and the formation of public opinion (Anderson 1983), it has profoundly changed the ways of political participation in the digital age. Hactivism is the logical application of mediatised political action to the world of participatory social media and ‘always-on’ connectivity: a way to engage and challenge political and commercial institutions through toolsets and practices corresponding with users’ habitual web activities.

Media institutions and media activities become entangled with other spheres of life, in a way that reciprocally alters both (Schulz 2004). Popular examples are the change in length and structure of political speeches to accommodate the televised political spectacle; the focus on the personal over the professional; the idea of political consumerism, where life choices and ideologies are wrapped together with certain purchasing habits, as in buying free-range food, or boycotting products associated with organisations or values one dislikes (Brants and Voltmer 2011; De Beus 2011). Simultaneously, a record low level of trust in traditional political and economic institutions is registered, prompting citizens to look for new forms of participation and expression. These alternative actions can, for instance, be seen in the creation of crypto-currencies and the Occupy movement. The resulting space of expressive political consumerism is the breeding ground for hacktivism in its current form.

The Anonymous collective has popularised the term and many associated practices. Born from the '4Chan' image boards website – and specifically the infamous '/b/ thread' (Herwig 2011) – Anonymous resists definitions. Even the name itself is tongue-in-cheek, reflecting the default mode of displaying messages on the boards; no registration or sign-in is possible, and thus each post is defaulted to an 'Anonymous' user. Consistent self-identification is discouraged and even frowned upon and thus the majority of communication occurs between unknown numbers of users lacking any identifying signs.

This somewhat schizophrenic form of non-identification lies at the foundation of Anonymous as political actors and hacktivists. The movement claims to be leaderless and non-hierarchical, where everyone can join by simply proclaiming himself or herself part of Anonymous. Ethnographer Gabriela Coleman notes how such decentralised ethos of action is also rooted in the technological platforms they use for hacktivism (Coleman 2014). Hacktivism is thus an inherently tiered phenomenon, encompassing a wide variety of potential actions and skills (Fuchs 2014). As with many terms associated with Anonymous, the precise meaning and the extent of the actions that fall under the term are disputed.

At the lower technical end of the spectrum, activists use social media to pressure or 'shame' public figures and institutions. Often this is done by way of subversion, highlighting the clumsiness of traditional institutions when attempting to engage with the widely open contemporary media platforms. In a famous example, the New York Police Department asked the public to share images on Twitter under the #myNYPD hashtag in order to highlight the community work undertaken by the police in the city. Instead, several activists led a 'hashtag hijacking', posting images of

police violence towards protesters and minorities, which resulted in ever more citizens posting unflattering images of the police (BBC Technology 2014). Other similar actions that can be roughly grouped in this category include subscribing the target to unwanted mailing lists, or filling the target's social media presence with obscene or distracting material. The unifying characteristic of these actions is the lack of reliance on technical prowess (thus rendering the 'hack' prefix somewhat oxymoronic). All it takes to achieve these actions is a loose consensus on the target's identity and the ability to coordinate (Coleman 2014).

A more demanding technical practice is the coordinated attack and defamation of a target's website and/or social media profile including publishing personal information about the target (a practice known as *doxing*). The most common example of this is the Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack, where multiple computers bombard the target's IP(s) with non-stop traffic, causing it to slow down or to become completely unavailable. Anonymous has popularised DDoS attacks through the release of such tools as the 'Low Orbit Ion Canon' (LOIC), which allows a user to subscribe their computer to an ongoing attack without any prior technical knowledge (Gallagher 2012). Like many other hacktivist tools and techniques associated with Anonymous, LOIC's name is drawn from popular Internet culture, thus giving the somewhat banal act of using basic disruption technique an aura of grandeur and adventure. This spirit of ludic (playful) political engagement is a characteristic of hacktivist collectives, who draw their inspiration from groups such as the Dadaist, the Yes Man, Spaßguerilla and the Flux collectives (Fuchs 2014), famous for using absurdist and carnivalesque methods for political action.

At the highest technical tier of hacktivist activities, actual hacking (as in unauthorised access of privileged computer data) takes place. These techniques are not different technologically from any other computer hacking. The tools and skills used to hack a cache of credit card data is the same, regardless of whether it is done by Anonymous or a criminal organisation. The difference is in the motivation; the intent of hacktivists most commonly is to publicly release the data in order to embarrass or pressure their target. Even in this environment, the playful and mocking tone often remains. For example, LulzSec was a small group of hackers, loosely affiliated with the Anonymous brand, who were responsible for a few high-profile ideologically motivated attacks on corporate websites and databases, such as defacing the US Public Broadcast Service (PBS) website in response to an unfavourable documentary about WikiLeaks (Poulsen 2011). However, since such types of

activities require coordination between a small group of highly skilled individuals, it is far easier for the authorities to understand and circumvent through traditional law enforcement than mass distributed low-skill action (Lee 2011). Thus, although the high-profile hacks of major organisations attract attention, the hacktivists carrying out the action are often caught and prosecuted, as occurred in the cases of LulzSec and its offspring AntiSec (Coleman 2014).

Overall, hacktivism proves that despite the participatory promises of some new media evangelists, the skills levels and technological proficiencies of users still very much limit their possible roles in constitutive political action. The difficulty of defining the scope of hacktivism and defining what kinds of actions it includes creates issues for both researchers and activists. For instance, the oft-repeated critique of ‘slacktivism’ accuses web activists of low-effort, low-risk type of undertakings that rarely result in actual change. Yet, as can be seen in the brief typology drawn above, some types of hacktivist action is successful in spite of the minimal demands of individual members, simply by virtue of mass coordination; whereas in other cases, activists pay a heavy personal price for their actions. As the (mobile) web increasingly integrates into the daily lives of millions, resulting in a hybrid reality of the physical and digital entwined (de Souza e Silva 2006), we can expect hacktivism to become an even more potent tool in the activists’ playbook.

## **Conclusion: ambiguities of accommodation, resistance and rebellion**

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People do not challenge political systems that they do not accept or that they want to see reformed as often as might be expected. Accommodating quiescence prevails most of the time, open rebellions are infrequent, though various forms of resistance are more common. Does quiescence signal acceptance, resistance mere annoyance and desire for minor changes, and is only rebellion a sign of outright rejection of unwanted authority? Is there a linear escalation from accommodation (quiescence) through resistance to rebellion? The answers to these questions are negative. It has been amply documented that people’s relations with the authorities are full of ambiguities and complex twists and turns (Scott 1985, 1990; Ortner 1995; Wedeen 1999).

Zygmunt Bauman (concluding remarks to this volume) sees the proclivity to divide ourselves into 'us' versus 'them' as 'the thousands-of-years-old, deeply ingrained human mode of being-in-the-world'. As he correctly observes, this proclivity has serious, often tragic, consequences, as humans engage in protracted and utterly devastating conflicts based on binary classifications (religious, national, ethnic or racial) with frightful regularity. A clearly articulated dichotomisation ('us' versus 'them') may be detrimental and undesired but, on the other hand, it helps to build solidarity and cohesion, without which an effective rebellion would be hard to imagine.

There exists, however, another mode of being-in-the-world, equally ingrained, that comes to the fore when humans try to avoid confrontation and instead seek accommodation, for example, with powerful authorities. This requires blurring the boundaries (also between 'us' and 'them'), muddling clear moral distinctions, blunting categorical classifications, and developing an ability to live with the resulting ambiguity. In this case the choice that is forgone is not between 'us' and 'them', but between 'good' and 'bad'. Here again a sharp (moral) dichotomisation is undesired, although for different reasons. It 'disturbs the peace', in Vaclav Havel's felicitous phrase (1991). Choosing the peace of accommodation is an existentially savvy, if morally dubious, move. Telling the truth and thus 'disturbing the peace' is morally ennobling, but often its costs may be fatally high.

Throughout history, many people have asked how to live, earn a living, raise a family and yet preserve a minimum of integrity under a political system that is 'alien', imposed, unaccepted. Is it possible to live in a secluded bubble, in total isolation from the public sphere that has been imposed by conquerors or autocrats? There have been individuals or small communities, here and there, that have managed to achieve such isolation. And there have been periods of resistance or, from time to time, outbursts of rebellion or revolution against unwanted systems. But most of the time and in most places the vast majority of people have chosen a strategy of accommodation based on an illicit compromise that results in at least some degree of 'co-optation' by the unaccepted regime.

The extent of such accommodation/co-optation and its consequences, both for individuals and for political systems, are matters of great interest to both social scientists and ethicists. The study of these issues is driven by several questions: Where are the boundaries of 'decency' and 'selling out'? Where is the line separating shrewd simulation of obedience from unwitting opportunism? What level of compromise can one's conscience tolerate? What kinds of trade-off are acceptable, and how often is one ready to commit? Those are the questions countless

people throughout history have faced and answered in many different ways. And often they have inherited or chosen a mode of existence that does not require answers to such questions. Avoidance allows leading life in a state of inherited or calculated inchoateness that offers existential security while suppressing or minimising the possibility of asking potentially disturbing ethical questions. The question 'Am I right?' can be posed only when existential and moral ambiguity has been overcome, when the choice is articulated and becomes a nagging ethical dilemma.

But why do some people choose heroic stances, guided by clear moral distinctions, while most choose silent obedience? From Max Weber through Michel Foucault to modern feminists and scholars of subalternity, this question has been central to many inquiries of social order and power. The subaltern are the people at the bottom of the class structure, subjected to indoctrination aimed at legitimising their subjugation, yet still possessing enough autonomy to harbour their own understanding of their situation. Their position is thus inherently ambiguous: they are controlled, but they do not internalise – at least not fully – the legitimacy of this control. But they may not be able to find a language in which to articulate and challenge their subjugation; they may not be able to 'speak' (Spivak 1988).

The nagging question, then, is 'Where does the proclivity to accommodate, to accept – even if superficially – the subservient position, come from?' Is it simply a result of fear and resignation, a strategic choice underpinning simulation, or an effect of indoctrination that has produced an obedient (authoritarian) personality? This is the question that drives the debate between James Scott, armed with the concept of the 'weapons of the weak', and proponents of the strong hegemony thesis. According to this thesis, the rulers (controllers of the message) can mould the minds of the ruled to such a degree that the image of the reality that the latter hold legitimates the former's power. When this happens the rulers achieve hegemony in Gramscian terms. The power of the rulers is 'naturalised', often as a result of 'symbolic violence', and becomes a part of the taken-for-granted common sense, a part of 'doxa' in Pierre Bourdieu's terminology (Bourdieu 1991). Scott objected to this idea, arguing that the 'weak' are rarely if ever so thoroughly indoctrinated and often only simulate their acceptance of the prevailing order, the authority structures supporting it, and the narratives legitimising it. There exists, however, the third possibility when people, particularly over longer periods, vacillate between accepting and challenging the status quo, tolerating the ensuing ambiguity. 'The peasants of Central Luzon ... were psychologically uncomfortable with both acts of resistance and acts of collaboration',



Brian Fegan observed (quoted in Ortner 1995:176). They saw collaboration with the powerful as distasteful and yet they engaged in it, for their primary concern was to protect and provide for their families.

Scott's concept of everyday resistance is so innovative because it alerts us to the possibility that acquiescence may be simulated and that hegemony may therefore be only imagined. While in their behaviours and statements (official transcripts in Scott's terminology) produced for the rulers' benefit, 'the weak' pretend to accept the rulers' power, they challenge this power off-stage, where they are able to feel secure communicating among themselves. Through more or less subtle ridicule, people dilute the solemnity of hegemonic discourses (Wedeen 1999). They do so by whispering at their kitchen tables, winking to one another while faking obedience, sharing parables that delegitimise the power of the powerful, or faking compliance in ambivalently performed rituals. These 'hidden transcripts' are the currency of everyday resistance and potential precursors of open resistance and rebellion.

As many commentators have observed (Ho 2011), 'everyday resistance' can be understood psychologically, as a decision or predilection of an individual. The resisters, on this view, have not been indoctrinated. They possess an 'authentic psyche' and thus retain some capacity to remain sovereign, at least in some areas of life. But everyday resistance, or rather a capacity to engage in it, can be also construed as a feature of a cultural system. Individuals may or may not have access to cultures and languages – Scott's 'little traditions' – that provide them with conceptual tools of resistance.

By and large, 'little traditions' provide people with repertoires of scripts, some of which are useful for simulating obedience, some for expressing mild forms of displeasure, and some for engaging in acts of resistance. There is, however, a fundamental ambiguity in the idea of everyday resistance. When is a pickpocket a thief, and when does he or she (also) become a resister? Should we look for an answer in individual intentions (not easy to reconstruct), or rather in cultural scripts, providing 'cultural intentions' and thus legitimising pickpocketing as an act of resistance? The point is, then, that resistance must be defined as such in the actor's culture of reference. However, cultures are often full of ambiguities, to say nothing of contradictions, which means that finding a clear-cut categorisation of a given (type) of action is often impossible.

When people engage in rebellion, many but not all of these ambiguities disappear. What is 'really' the goal that drove individuals to join often risky causes? Are they always driven by the noble aim of disposing of unwanted autocrats? Or do they, at least sometimes, engage in resistance

politics in order to vie for power inside the group, settle personal accounts, or take care of particularistic interests, as Ortner argues (1995)? There is a strong tendency to romanticise rebellion that is hard to resist.

There is no straightforward, linear progression from oblivion or discomfort of quiescence through inconsistency of everyday resistance to the moral clarity of rebellion. Each of these forms of engagement with the world controlled by others has its own grey zones of ambiguity; each can be as equivocal as human existence itself.

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## Conclusion: ambiguities of accommodation, resistance and rebellion

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# Concluding remarks to Volume 1: what is old and what is new in the dialectic of 'us' and 'them'?

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The division of humans into 'us' and 'them' – their juxtaposition and antagonism – has played an essential role in human existence throughout history of the human species. 'Us' and 'them' are as related as heads and tails – two faces of the same coin (and a coin with but one face is a contradiction in terms). The history of *Homo sapiens* may be written as the story of successive extensions of the volume of 'us' – integrated human groups – from the primitive horde of hunter-gatherers that would have included in the notion of 'us' no more than 150 members, to the 'imagined community' of the modern nation-state. It may also be written – and so far, indeed, has been written – as the story of 'them' against whomever groups, of whatever size, consolidate. Indeed, the idea of being 'one of us' derives its meaning primarily from 'not being one of them', and only secondarily from being 'unlike them'.

As the great Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth convincingly argued (Barth 1969), borders are not drawn in order to separate differences. Rather, differences are searched for, found or invented in order to legitimise and fortify (preferably to the point of non-permeability) borders that have already been drawn or that are intended to be drawn. The snag is that in most and perhaps all such cases, fully and truly airtight, leak-proof and impassable non-porous borders are both logically and practically unachievable. Borders create not only 'us' and 'them', but also bring into being, well-nigh inevitably, a cognitive and behavioural 'grey zone' of conceptual ambiguity and ethical/axiological ambivalence; an area reminiscent of the territories marked on ancient maps as '*hic sunt leones*' – a sphere of the unknown that is not only dangerous but also,

for that reason, incommunicable. As Ludwig Wittgenstein put it, 'If lions could speak, we wouldn't understand them' (Wittgenstein 1953).

As for the residents of (or exiles to) the grey frontier zones, the condition of 'being unknown and therefore menacing' is the effect of their inherent or imputed resistance to and eluding of assignment to any of the cognitive categories that serve as building blocks of 'order' and 'normality'. Their cardinal sin or unforgivable crime consists of being the cause of the mental and pragmatic incapacitation that follows the behavioural confusion that they cannot but generate (Wittgenstein defined understanding as 'knowing how to go on' (Wittgenstein 1980)).

Moreover, that sin or crime presents formidable obstacles to redemption, given the stout refusal of 'us' to engage with 'them' in a dialogue aimed at defying and mitigating the initial impossibility of understanding them. The assignment to a grey zone is a self-propelling and self-intensifying process that is set in motion and driven not so much by a breakdown of communication but rather by an a priori refusal to communicate. Raising the difficulty of understanding to the rank of a moral injunction and duty predetermined by God or history is, after all, the prime cause of and paramount stimulus to drawing and fortifying, mostly (though not exclusively) along religious or ethnic lines, borders separating 'us' from 'them'. As the interface between 'us' and 'them', the grey zone of ambiguity and ambivalence inevitably constitutes the main, and all too often the only, territory on which the implacable hostilities between 'us' and 'them' are played out and the battles are fought.

As described so far, the 'us' versus 'them' dialectic is a constant of the human condition. However, it also contains historical, time-bound variables as the game of self-identification and separation (or, to be precise, the game of separation *because* of self-identification and the game of self-identification *through* separation) confronts new issues and challenges posed by changing techniques of domination and technologies of social action.

One such challenge has been the need to shape a replica of the orthodox, territorial form of separation inside cyberspace. The Internet is notorious for creating the freedom to ignore border posts and to cross frontiers. This challenge has been met: contrary to many a hopeful prognosis, the near-universal 24/7 availability of access to instant communication regardless of geographical distance has not abolished limits and off-bounds information. On the contrary, it has facilitated mental separation and non-communication to a degree unattainable either in off-line parts of the universe or in the *Lebenswelte* (the world 'as lived') that is shaped by the experience of a world deprived of the online sector.

Research into the practices deployed by a great majority of Internet users – the DIY ‘comfort zones’, ‘echo chambers’ or ‘mirror halls’ easily constructed online by the simple expedient of nipping communication in its bud – finds that they are more effective at creating and sustaining separation than even the most refined technologies of ‘gated communities’, state-installed frontier walls, barbed wire and heavily armed border patrols.

The challenge of the online version of separation described here acquires yet graver importance from its coincidence with another challenge – arguably the most seminal and hardest to meet in the long history of the human species. That challenge is an unprecedented link in the long chain of expansions in the volume and reach of socio-political integration (and so, in effect, of the segments of humanity included in the idea of ‘us’). It is unprecedented because all previous levels of integration – from the primitive horde to the nation-state – were reached through the use of the same interplay of inclusion and exclusion: integration of ‘us’ coupled with separation from a shared enemy, the resented and assumedly hostile ‘them’.

The next leap in the history of expanding integration will – if indeed it ever happens – have to take place *without* the clutch of a shared enemy, of new divisions, new separations and new walls needed to accommodate (indeed, to give meaning to) the unity of an expanded ‘us’. In our globalised world of universal interdependence we are all already cast, as Ulrich Beck insisted, in a ‘cosmopolitan situation’ (Beck 2006). However, we have not as yet embarked in earnest on the long and rocky road leading to the acquisition of its essential complement: cosmopolitan consciousness, awareness and mindset. And no wonder: those prospective ‘us’ embracing, as they must, for the first time in human history, the *whole* of humanity, will need to acquire such consciousness without help from our enemy: a *shared* enemy, legitimising and demanding the solidarity of all of ‘us’. Is this, with its concomitants such as an end to the grey zone of ambiguity and ambivalence, at all possible? Is it, indeed, conceivable? To become a realistic proposition, this will require no less than a renegotiation and replacement of the thousands-of-years-old, deeply ingrained human mode of being-in-the-world.

That incompatibility of means and ends is arguably the gravest, most intractable and potentially the most menacing manifestation of the present-day ‘instrumental crisis’, justifying the view of the current planetary condition as one of ‘interregnum’, defined by Antonio Gramsci as a state of affairs in which the inherited and extant instruments of

collective action have stopped working properly, while new ones, adequate to the changed conditions, are at best still on the drawing board (Gramsci 1971).

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## Glossary

*Adat* (North Caucasus, Russia): system of Chechen customary laws and norms practised in the North Caucasus among ethnic *Vainakh* and the diaspora.

*Agashka* (Kazakhstan): an influential figure with strong personal connections; a patron.

*Aidagara* (Japan): social networks in Japan.

*Alga aploksnē* (Latvia): lit. ‘salary in an envelope’, arrangement whereby an employee receives the legal minimum salary officially, and the remainder in cash, enabling the employer to avoid social insurance contributions.

*Allegados* (Chile): poor families who live in a single room in a relative’s house without paying rent.

*Amici, amigos* (Mediterranean and Latin America): social actors involved in a relationship of instrumental friendship.

*Aploksne/aploksnīte* (Latvia): lit. ‘envelope’, unofficial payments made to doctors and (less frequently) public officials for services they are required to provide by law.

*Artistic repossession* (general – totalitarian regimes): artists ‘reclaiming’ control over their work in totalitarian regimes by manipulating the restrictions imposed on them by the state.

*Astroturfing* (USA, UK): the attempt to create an impression of widespread grassroots support for a policy, individual or product, where little such support exists.

*Avos’* (Russia): a ‘lackadaisical’ attitude to chance in the world, used in both economic and non-economic contexts.

*Azganvan popokhutyun* (Armenian diaspora): surname change by ethnic Armenians living in Georgia, usually for reasons of ethnic identity.

*Baksheesh* (Middle East, North Africa and sub-continental Asia): facilitation payment made to officials, etc.

*Bapakism* (Indonesia): Javanese culture of patriarchy; refers to being the head of a family and/or head of a formal or informal organisation.

- Barakholka* (Kazakhstan): pejorative term for an outdoor, open-air flea market where second-hand goods are bought and sold.
- Barone universitario* (Italy): literally ‘barons’, academics holding powerful positions who influence decisions in universities, especially with regard to academic appointments.
- Benāmi* (India): in Hindu law, a transaction or property made or held under a fictitious name or that of a third party, who acts as a ‘front’ owner on behalf of the real owner.
- Biombo* (Costa Rica): an illegal payment made to a medical professional in exchange for providing preferential treatment to a patient or a patient’s family within the state-funded health care system.
- Birzha* (Georgia): group of male teenagers or young men who meet regularly in open spaces (squares, courtyards, street corners).
- Bitcoin* (general): peer-to-peer electronic currency system.
- Blat* (Romania): fee-dodging, match-fixing, illicit activity.
- Blat* (Russia and former Soviet Union): getting things done through personal contacts, ‘pulling strings’ or the exchange of favours.
- Boda-boda taxis* (Uganda): informal motorcycle taxis.
- Brodiazhnichestvo* (Russia): term for vagrancy used to legislate against persons engaging in dissent, forbidden trades, private entrepreneurial activity or speculation in the Soviet Union.
- Brokerage* (general): flow of valued resources from one actor to another via an intermediary.
- Budženje* (Serbia): jerry-building, cobbling together, jury-rigging or bodging carried out on houses, cars and household and electrical objects.
- Buôn có bạn, bán có phường* (Vietnam): informal vendors’ associations in Vietnam.
- Bustarella* (Italy): lit. ‘little envelope’, euphemism for a bribe.
- Caffè sospeso* (Naples, Italy): lit. ‘suspended coffee,’ forward paying for a cup of coffee for a future customer.
- Campamento* (Chile): informal urban settlements which typically lack at least one of the three basic services (electricity, drinking water and sewage system).
- Cash for access* (UK): British politicians/political parties receiving payment to provide access to influential individuals, usually with the aim of lobbying.
- Cash in hand* (general): a business taking payment for goods or services by cash, usually for a lower price than other forms of payment, so that the transaction remains ‘off the books’ and thus avoids taxes.

*Character assassination* (general): deliberate and sustained effort to damage the reputation or credibility of an individual.

*Chelnoki* (Russia and former Soviet Union): small traders who resell goods purchased abroad, normally in China.

*Chernukha* (Russia): use of the public media instrumentally in order to damage an opponent's reputation.

*Chir* (Chechnya, Igushetia): blood feud/blood revenge.

*Chợ cóc* (Vietnam): lit. 'toad markets'; informal markets in socialist Vietnam.

*Chorizo* (Latin America): lit. 'sausage', euphemism for corruption/corrupt acts by government officials.

*Coima* (Argentina): euphemism for a petty bribe.

*Compadrazgo* (Chile): system of exchanges of favours within an ideology of friendship.

*Cyberattacks by semi state actors* (general): attacks on political opponents using semi-state actors to exploit computer systems and disrupt data, hosts or networks.

*Dacha* (Russia): out-of-town dwelling and plot of land for intermittent use by urbanites.

*Dalali* (India): brokerage.

*Dangou/Dango* (Japan): bid-fixing in supposedly competitive tenders.

*Dash* (Nigeria and other West African countries): ubiquitous tip that can also serve as a facilitation payment to a public servant.

*Deryban* (Ukraine and Russia): the expropriation and informal sharing of state property among private actors.

*Dirt book* (UK): record of compromising information on Members of Parliament (MPs) held by party whips to ensure voting discipline.

*Dizelaši* (Serbia): 1990s' youth subculture also involved in fuel smuggling resulting from the wartime fuel shortage.

*Dzhinsa* (Russia): media article or report, often paid, which is staged or created on purpose in order to promote a certain idea, individual or company.

*Egunje* (Nigeria): involuntary 'gift' extorted from the giver by a corrupt official.

*Esusu* (Nigeria): informal community-based savings scheme.

*Externe Personen* (Germany): private sector individuals working in the German civil service.

*Fakelaki* (Greece): infamous envelopes of money given for such diverse things as hospital treatment, university degrees and at baptisms and weddings.

- Favela* (Brazil): slum in urban Brazil.
- Fimi media* (Croatia): siphoning off state funds, embezzlement.
- Flipping* (UK): British Members of Parliament (MPs) manipulating the classification of their 'second home' to maximise expenses claims.
- Futbolna frakcia* (Bulgaria): gangs of football supporters that have their own symbols, rituals, etc.
- Gap* (Uzbekistan): informal get-togethers over dinner by groups of people, usually of the same age, enabling them to socialise and share information, and sometimes also operating a rotating savings fund.
- Gestión* (Mexico): negotiating access to public goods or services in a private manner.
- Goudui* and *yingchou* (China): ways entrepreneurs form informal ties with state officials – through banqueting, karaoke, brothels, etc.
- Graffiti* (general): street art, unsolicited markings on property not owned by oneself, usually in a public space.
- Guanxi* (China): personal or social connections to get things done, acquire a scarce commodity, or gain access to an opportunity.
- Hactivism* (general): the commission of computer crimes to further political or social ends.
- Hawala* (Middle East, India and Pakistan): informal system of money exchange prevalent throughout South Asia and the Middle East.
- Hongbao* (China): handing over informal payments disguised as a gift.
- Hyvä Veli* (Finland): interpersonal network associated with favouritism.
- Informal mining* (general): 'off-the-books' mining around the world.
- Inmaek* (South Korea): lit. 'people entangled like a vine', network of social ties and relationships developed in the course of one's life.
- Insider trading* (general): trading of shares, bonds, etc. by individuals with access to non-public information about companies related to the sale.
- Jaan-pehchaan* (India): facilitation of business by exchange of favours.
- Jangmadang* (North Korea): unofficial markets in North Korea, from physical markets with small-time traders to *de facto* private businesses run by state officials, operating under the guise and licences of state-socialism.
- Janteloven/Jantelagen* (Scandinavia): set of norms embodied in informal practices that confer negative attitudes towards individuality, individual self-expression and measures of success.
- Jeitinho* (Brazil): seeking personal favours by cajoling, sweet-talking and rule-bending to solve problems.



- Jinmyaku* (Japan): personal connections of vital importance in business, politics and aspects of day-to-day life.
- Jugaad* (India): ways of solving problems with limited resources or by getting a round formal constraints.
- Kalym* (Russia) moonlighting and/or using company tools or vehicles to undertake private work.
- Kanonieri qurdebi* (Georgia): ‘thieves-in-law’, professional criminals who have elite status in the organised crime environment.
- Kastom* (Solomon Islands and Melanesia): the assertion of traditional values and cultural practices in a modern context.
- Keiretsu* (Japan): Japanese system of corporate governance in which firms are interlinked.
- Khokkeynaya diplomatiya* (Russia): utilising amateur ice hockey for the development of personal, business and government relationships.
- Klüngel* (Cologne, Germany): the exchange of favours among friends and acquaintances in political and business settings in Cologne.
- Kolesiostwo* (Poland): a non-market exchange of favours between friends and colleagues restricted to the professional sphere.
- Kombinacja* (Poland): bending rules to access resources, scheming to earn money and acquire opportunities.
- Kompromat* (Russia): compromising materials used to control or exert power over others.
- Korapsen* (Papua New Guinea): euphemism for corruption in Papua New Guinea, but with distinctive local connotations.
- Kormlenie* (Russian Empire): lit. ‘feeding’, the practice in pre-modern Russia of maintaining local officials at the expense of those they governed.
- Kraken* (The Netherlands): living in – or using otherwise – a dwelling without the consent of its owner.
- Krugovaia poruka* (Russia and Europe): collective responsibility or irresponsibility (cover-up).
- Krysha* (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus): lit. ‘roof’, individuals or organisations providing a range of services, predominantly illicit, ranging from protection and patronage to enforcement of contracts and settlement of disputes.
- Kula* (Tanzania): lit. ‘eating’, gaining access to resources to satisfy needs, often a euphemism for corruption.
- Kumoterstwo* (Poland): mutual exchange of favours, especially for relatives, friends or colleagues.
- Kumstvo* (Montenegro and Balkans): godparenthood; an informal connection based on made-up kinship, used to enhance friendly

- relations and useful contacts for parents and improve life chances for the newborn.
- Kupona* (Kosovo): non-registration of transactions or not printing receipts for the purpose of tax avoidance.
- Kuratory* (Russia, Ukraine): representatives of political power in a corporate setting.
- L'argent du carburant* (sub-Saharan Africa): a metaphor designating a small sum of money given to customs officials.
- Loteria / Lloteria* (Albania): private lottery scheme/collective savings scheme.
- Mafia Raj* (India): criminal power networks.
- Magharich'* (Armenia): traditional gift-giving practice in Armenian culture, which in more modern times has also become a euphemism for a bribe.
- Magnitizdat* (USSR): re-recording and distributing uncensored speeches or music on cassette tapes in the USSR.
- Mahallah* (Uzbekistan): Islamic local governance groupings; also community-based, informal economic and welfare practices.
- Materit'sya* (Russia): category of obscene language.
- Mateship* (Australia): friendship links/loyalty to friends (generally male).
- Mita* (Gabor Roma, Romania): a multifunctional cash gift among the Gabor Roma.
- Mordida* (Mexico): lit. 'to bite', euphemism for a bribe or backhander.
- Mukhayyam* (OPT): informal dwelling – refugee camps in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.
- Nachbarschaftshilfe* (Germany and German-speaking countries): lit. 'neighbourhood watch' acts of mutual assistance and support in times of crisis usually involving no payment; cover for illegal earnings.
- Nash chelovek* (Russia): 'our person', one of us.
- Natsnoboba* (Georgia): informal contacts and networks.
- No-entry* (India): a deed of sale of land, which has been signed by a notary, but without paying tax or being registered by the Land authorities.
- Normalnye patsany* (Russia): members of urban street gangs.
- Obshchak* (Russia): informal welfare system in penal and criminal communities.
- Okurimono no shûkan* (Japan): socially required gift-giving practices in Japanese society.

- Old-boy network* (UK): members of a network arising from membership of the alumni of a prestigious school or college.
- Old corruption* (UK): system of sinecures in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British political system.
- Omertà* (Italy): unwritten code of keeping silent about crimes or deviant acts, particularly those perpetrated by mafia groups.
- Otkat* (Russia): diversion of part of the money allocated for a purchase to the person responsible for the purchase; equivalent of the English term 'kickback'.
- Paid favours* (UK): acts of one-to-one material help within wider kinship, friendship and neighbourly networks that are reimbursed with money.
- Pabrčiti/Pabirčenje* (Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina): gleaning, collection of grains that are left over in the field after harvest.
- Padonki* (Russia): Slang Internet language used by Russian speakers.
- Padrino system/balimbing* (Philippines): network of symbiotic relationships between a patron (godfather or godmother) and a client (godchild) within the context of Catholic values and interpersonal bonds.
- Pantouflage* (France): practice of leaving a civil service position, typically on secondment, to obtain work in the private sector.
- Parteibuchwirtschaft'* (Austria and Germany): informal distribution of jobs, material goods and distinctions based on memberships or links to a particular political party.
- Pituto* (Chile): use of connections to gain some advantage (commonly a job), regardless of merit.
- Political machinery* (USA): informal means of organising political parties in urban centres in the USA in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- Pomochi* (Russia): an occasion of collective helping, for free, of a member of a Russian village to complete a large task.
- Pork barrelling* (USA): in politics, securing preferential funds for a local project paid for out of the national budget.
- Potemkin villages* (USSR): a façade built to deceive or to hide an undesirable fact or condition.
- Pozornost'/d'akovné/Všimné* (Slovakia): expressing gratitude for official or unofficial services, typically by means of a small gift or sum of money; can also be a euphemism for a bribe.
- Pripiski* (USSR): false accounting in order to give the impression that a target has been met.

- Psikhushka* (USSR and Russian Federation): use of psychiatric services as means of controlling and repressing political opponents.
- Pulling strings* (UK/USA): using useful connections to secure preferential treatment or access to services/information.
- Pyramid schemes* (general): operators recruiting unsuspecting investors with promise of high returns.
- Quàn jiǔ* (China): toasting people as a means of building relationships.
- Raccomandazione* (Italy): lit. 'recommendation' or 'reference', the use of social connections in order to get things done, especially in the context of patron–client relations.
- Rad na crno* (Serbia): lit. 'black labour', payment for jobs that are not officially registered or that are only partially reported to the state authorities.
- Reiderstvo* (Russia and former Soviet Union): corporate raiding by illegal, semi-legal or unethical means.
- Repetitorstvo* (Russia and FSU): supplementary private tutoring.
- Rod-re* (Thailand): mobile street vendors in Bangkok.
- Roentgenizdat* (USSR): unofficial production of records on discarded X-rays.
- Rushlydyq* (Kazakhstan): loyalty to and use of extended kinship ties; 'clanism'.
- S vrutka* (Bulgaria): lit. 'with a twist', practice of bending the rules and pulling strings in order to achieve a goal.
- Sadghegrdzelo* (Georgia): Georgian word for 'toast', which follows a generally uniform, yet not entirely fixed, structure at a festive meal (*supra*).
- Salam credit* (Afghanistan): informal agricultural credit system for poppy farmers.
- Samizdat* (USSR): reproduction of censored and underground publications by hand, passed from reader to reader.
- Samogonovarenie* (Russia): the distilling of homemade spirits (*samogon*).
- Schwarzwohnen* (GDR): lit. 'black living', the illegal occupation of accommodation in the German Democratic Republic.
- Seilschaft* (Germany): lit. 'rope alliances', cronyism in career promotion in business and politics.
- Shebeen* (South Africa): illicit establishment serving alcohol, particularly to black Africans under apartheid.
- Shpargalka* (Russia): crib sheets to cheat in an examination, often tolerated by examiners.
- Silovye gruppировки* (Bulgaria): violent groups involved in violent entrepreneurship or organised crime.

- Sitwa* (Poland): informal networks within public authorities; ‘amoral familism’.
- Skipping* (general): urban foraging technique involving collecting objects or food items from the waste.
- Small-scale smuggling* (general): bending or subverting the rules of goods transportation across national borders.
- Smotryashchie/alt. kuratory* (Russia, Ukraine): functionaries looking after certain interests (state, oligarchic or regional).
- Sociolismo* (Cuba): the use of social networks to obtain goods and services in short supply to circumvent state rationing and the inefficiencies of the command economy.
- Songbun* (North Korea): socio-political classification system, according to which every North Korean citizen is assigned a class status on the basis of their perceived loyalty to the regime.
- Songli* (China): gift-giving as a form of social exchange and developing network relations.
- Sosyudad* (Philippines): informal savings and lending scheme.
- Spaza* (South Africa): small informal grocery shop operated from residential premises in townships.
- Squatting* (general): informally settling on vacant land or occupying abandoned buildings.
- Štela* (Bosnia and Herzegovina): use of contacts/informal connections to obtain goods or services.
- Stoyanshik* (Georgia): person that watches over cars parked in public spaces; an informal parking attendant/guard.
- Stróman* (Hungary): someone acting on behalf of someone else, such as a ‘front’ owner or chief executive officer (CEO) of a company.
- Švercovanje* (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro): fare-dodging on public transport.
- Tal/alt. taljenje, taliti, utaliti, rastaliti* (Serbia and countries of former Yugoslavia): an agreement between parties to combine their resources for financial gain, often via illegal means.
- Tamozhennye l'goty* (Russia): excise privileges for the importation of alcohol and tobacco excise-free, extracted from the state by charitable foundations in the 1990s.
- Tandas and Cundinas* (Mexico and South-Western USA): rotating credit associations.
- Tangentopoli* (Italy): system of political corruption in Italy based on kickbacks, which culminated in a judicial investigation leading to the demise of the so-called First Republic.
- Tanish-bilish* (Uzbekistan): acquaintance networks used to access resources.

- Tapş* (Azerbaijan): obtaining favours on behalf of others, typically through network connections.
- Tazkia* (Iraqi Kurdistan): letter of support based on party political membership, which grants members exclusive access to positions within the public service sector.
- Telefonnoe pravo* (Russia): oral commands, informal influence and pressure of the executive on judiciary.
- Torpil* (Turkey): use of connections to find private solutions to the problems faced when dealing with bureaucracy.
- Trafika* (Czech Republic): assigning a fellow politician to an office in a state-owned company in return for their support.
- Tsartsaani nüüdel* (Mongolia): a distinctly Mongolian type of population movement that is arranged before an election in order to influence its outcome.
- Uhljeb* (Croatia): person who became a public administration employee through a nepotistic relationship or a political party affiliation and does not usually possess the required qualifications for that position.
- Uruuchuluk* (Kyrgyzstan): lineage-based identity that shapes how the Kyrgyz construe their social world and the extent and quality of their relations with others.
- Vay mữøn* (Vietnam): form of informal loan.
- Verlan* (France): French slang formed by changing the order of syllables.
- Vertical crowdsourcing* (Russia): digital technologies harnessed by the state to create semblance of openness, while in practice neutralising citizens' activity and exerting control.
- Vetterliwirtschaft/Copinage* (Switzerland): lit. network of little cousins, providing mutual favours or preferential treatment.
- Veza* (Serbia): lit. 'connection', the use of informal contacts in order to obtain access to opportunities that are not available through formal channels.
- Vitamin B* (Germany): use of networks to obtain benefits, enabling favouritism.
- Vrski* (Macedonia): use of personal connections to obtain goods and services.
- Vruzki* (Bulgaria): connections or ties used for social exchange of favours, similar to pulling strings.
- Vzaimozachety* (Russia): Russian term meaning 'mutual exchange in kind', and referring to a specific type of inter-firm transactions, whereby a commodity transferred to a partner is paid for by non-monetary means.

- Vzyatkoemkost'* (Russia): in a narrow sense, the potential of a piece of legislation to create opportunities for bribery; in a broader sense, a legal framework that grants state officials discretionary power to extort bribes, obedience or other forms of benefits.
- Wantoks* (Solomon Islands, Melanesia): informal clan-based expectations of welfare and monetary support resulting in overheads for businesses and nepotism in politics.
- Wastā* (Middle East, North Africa): the deployment of intermediation on behalf of an individual or a group to secure some benefit that would be otherwise unobtainable or too burdensome.
- Window dressing* (general): the deliberately misleading manipulation of a company's income statement and balance sheet in order to create a falsely attractive image and thereby conceal poor performance or monetary losses.
- Yingchou* (China): making informal ties in business through banqueting, karaoke, brothels, etc.
- Yongo* (South Korea): personal or network connections resulting from strong particularistic ties based on kin, educational institution, and region.
- Yonjul* (South Korea): informal ties between people who are members of a social network oriented towards a certain goal.
- Zakaznoe bankrotstvo* (Russia): lit. 'bankruptcy to order', use of loopholes in bankruptcy law to launch hostile takeover.
- Zalatwianie* (Poland): getting something done in an easier way, a euphemism describing a range of informal behaviours carried out mostly to obtain benefits by avoiding the use of arduous legal activities or formal rules.
- Zarobitchanstvo* (Ukraine): earnings made through labour migration, both internal and external.
- Zersetzung* (GDR): term used by the East German secret police to denote a range of covert methods to produce distrust towards and between political opponents.

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