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THE 'FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION' AS A NEVER-ENDING AND SELF-LEGITIMIZING PROCESS

The article is an analysis of various unintended consequences of the contemporary fight against corruption. The author employs a social constructionist approach to argue that recent anti-corruption developments show that the 'fight against corruption' will never stop regardless of how effective it may be. Moreover, the anti-corruption crusade can be characterized as a self-legitimizing process because it creates new areas for anti-corruption actions by constructing new forms of corruption, thereby justifying the continuation of anti-corruption efforts. As a point of departure, the author analyses corruption as a socially constructed phenomenon in order to remind us that because of its inherent features, corruption is an irremovable part of the public sphere, thus making anti-corruption actions never-ending. Then certain paradoxes and developments in contemporary anti-corruption efforts are presented to further explain the never-ending and self-legitimizing nature of fighting corruption. The penultimate part highlights various new definitions of corruption proposed by social scientists and the questions raised by these conceptual undertakings. In the concluding section, the problems resulting from anti-corruption dynamics are presented.

Key words: corruption; anti-corruption; social constructionism; self-legitimacy.

Introduction: corruption as a problem that must be fought

The 'fight against corruption' is an increasingly widespread idea in the contemporary world, being commonly and unquestionably treated as lofty, necessary, and practical, since corruption has been labelled one of the major obstacles to global development (Myrdal 2005; Mauro 2005; Kaufman and Wei Shang-Jin 1998). Since the beginning of the 1990s, we have seen the issue of corruption become institutionalized, with the intensification of anti-corruption efforts worldwide (Tanzi 1998). As Mlada Bukovansky has pointed out, the global anti-corruption regime emerged at the end of the 1990s and has its institutional basis in organizations like the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, and Transparency International. These organizations commonly

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share and promote the normative assumption that 'corruption is bad', and the fight against it should be one of the priorities of global politics (Bukovansky 2002).

Currently, the majority of us will agree that corruption should be fought. Most of us will also regard all the anti-corruption efforts positively, at least as long as these efforts do not have a direct impact on our interests (including our freedom, which can be threatened as a result of tough anti-corruption measures). But at the same time, in the heat of this anti-corruption campaign, we fail to grasp the long-term unintended consequences of the fight against corruption. Some specific aspects of this fight, including the setting within which it is performed and, last but not least, the peculiar nature of corruption, are very often overlooked when the anti-corruption campaign and its efficiency are considered.

Theoretical reflection on the unintended consequences of anti-corruption measures is not new. It has already been pointed out that anti-corruption campaigns may be a threat to democracy – because they generate disillusion among voters and thus create conditions conducive to populist parties (Anderson, Heywood 2008) – and that the contemporary anti-corruption industry is a complex of resources and organizational interests which now 'lead an existence independent of the actual phenomenon of corruption itself' (Sampson 2010: 262). It is also argued that liberalization, as a part of anti-corruption strategy within the peace-building agenda, may even foster new patterns of corruption. This process can occur when democratization leads to a negotiation-based distribution of spoils, unregulated privatization of state assets, and markets being opened for new bribe-payers (Le Billon 2008). In this paper, I add my own theoretical reflections to the discussion by employing social constructionist theory (Berger, Luckmann 1966; Granovetter 2007; Cohen 2011; Tänzler et al. 2012) to explore the never-ending and self-legitimizing nature of the contemporary fight against corruption.

I should clarify that the term 'fight against corruption' instead of 'anti-corruption policy' is used deliberately. This is because the term is broad enough to cover not only well-planned and organized anti-corruption strategies, but also various chaotic, unpredictable, and sometimes solely rhetorical, anti-corruption actions. I deem the nature of global anti-corruption efforts to be better captured as a 'fight against corruption' than as an anti-corruption policy, given that the latter suggests a rather comprehensive, systemic, and knowledge-based strategy to curb corruption. When it comes to the definition of corruption, I do not want to adhere to one concept of this phenomenon, because the problem of defining corruption is in itself a part of explaining my point. The commonly used definition of corruption as the 'misuse of public resources by public officials, for private gain' (Andvig et al. 2000:11), or the 'misuse of public power for private gain' (Lambsdorff 2007:16), has met with some criticism and attempts at redefinition

by social scientists, who propose their own alternatives. These attempts lead me to reflect on the role of social scientists in the fight against corruption; therefore in this article I will also focus on their conceptual propositions and the questions these propositions raise.

I argue that the very nature of corrupt phenomena and some characteristics of recent anti-corruption developments suggest that the contemporary fight against corruption, which is the fight we have been observing since establishment of the 'anti-corruption industry' in the 1990s (Sampson 2010), has become a never-ending and self-legitimizing process.[1] The concepts 'never-ending' and 'self-legitimizing' need some further explanation in this place. When I use the term 'never-ending' I do not imply that we cannot fight various forms of corruption effectively and that anti-corruption actions are futile. There are well-known 'success stories' in the battle against corruption, such as in Sweden (Rothstein 2007; Bågenholm 2013), Denmark (Mungiu-Pippidi 2011; Frisk Jensen 2013) and, more recently, Hong Kong (Lo Kwok-Chung 2009) and Singapore (Quah 2001). My point and first hypothesis is that no matter how efficient the fight against corruption may be, it will never stop because there will be always a reason for it, even if the global anti-corruption effort and its domestic extensions lead to a significant reduction of corruption in its different forms. The second part of my argument is the hypothesis that the contemporary fight against corruption is a 'self-legitimizing' process. These two hypotheses are strongly connected. The contemporary fight against corruption is not only a never-ending process but also legitimates itself (which is partly why it never ends) by constructing new forms of corruption and thereby justifying new areas for anti-corruption actions. The concept of 'self-legitimacy' in this article means that one of the unintended consequences of global anti-corruption efforts is the construction of corruption by attributing 'corruptness' to practices previously not seen as corrupt. This does not mean, however – and it is not my intention to claim or suggest – that at the same time anti-corruption efforts do not lead to the elimination of some forms of corruption.[2] But I think that the process is accompanied by an unintended re-definition of activities from non-corrupt to corrupt. As a result, eliminating some forms of corruption is intertwined with creating new areas of corruption.

I will develop my argument by applying the social constructionist approach to phenomena of corruption and anti-corruption. What is important here is that understanding corruption as a social construct is not only a theoretical perspective,

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[1] I do not assert that there are no other forces and reasons behind the existence of anti-corruption efforts, but I think that one of the forces behind the growth of the contemporary anti-corruption movement is its self-legitimacy.

[2] Another example is Georgia, where police corruption was successfully eradicated after the reforms of the 2004 Rose Revolution (Engvall 2012).

but is the very essence of my explanation. The ontology of corruption being postulated by constructivism makes it a fluid, elastic, and 'stretchable' phenomenon. I believe that this ontological distinctiveness of corruption is a primary cause – the foundation – of the fight against corruption's being a never-ending and self-legitimizing process. Thus, in this case, the theory serves not only as a general perspective but contains some ontological assumptions about the facts that can be used to support my hypotheses. However, I will not only analyze the distinctiveness of corruption, but I will also present some examples from contemporary anti-corruption efforts. The text is arranged as follows: Firstly, I will focus on corruption as a socially constructed phenomenon to show that, because of its inherent features, it is an irremovable part of the public sphere and thus that anti-corruption actions are never-ending. Secondly, I will elaborate on this argument by presenting various paradoxes and developments in contemporary anti-corruption undertakings to indicate the self-legitimizing aspect of anti-corruption efforts. Thirdly, I will focus on new[3] definitions of corruption proposed and recommended by social scientists and on questions concerning anti-corruption dynamics raised by these conceptual propositions. In the concluding section, I will present a short summary of my arguments, a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of my approach, the problems that need to be tackled as a result of anti-corruption dynamics, and some fundamental questions which should be posed when considering the fight against corruption.

Corruption as a socially constructed concept

Understanding the nature of corruption is crucial for a proper outlook on contemporary anti-corruption discourse as a never-ending and self-legitimizing process. However, many persons who oppose corruption do not treat certain important features of corruption as integral and significant components of the fight they support or in which they engage. The features of corruption are treated as a rather separate issue, only the first step in the long battle against corruption and not important enough to be considered as an inherent dimension of anti-corruption efforts. It is argued that the debate over the definition of corruption 'tends to absorb much of the energy that is desperately needed elsewhere' (Lambsdorff 2007: 15). The problem of defining corruption

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[3] When I write about the 'new' definitions of corruption, I mean an alternative to the typical usage of this concept where corruption is the 'misuse of public power for private gain' (Lambsdorff 2007:16). It must be also observed that some of these are not exactly new, because they are similar to definitions of corruption peculiar to the political thought of Western classical antiquity and late medieval Europe.

is avoided by suggesting that this phenomenon is 'like an elephant, even though it may be difficult to describe, it is generally not difficult to recognize when observed' (Tanzi 1998: 8). A similar opinion can be found on the U4 Anti-Corruption Centre website in 'The Basics of Anti-Corruption': 'Much thought has been devoted to developing different definitions of corruption but, despite its complex nature, most people can recognize a corrupt act when they see it' (U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre). The problem is that very often it is difficult to recognize clear-cut corruption. Many people are engaged in actions which they do not regard as corrupt but which are recognized as corrupt by other people and organizations. In the above statements, the question of the socially determined nature of corruption has been neglected. This problem has already been articulated by anthropologists (Shore, Haller 2005); however, the socially constructed nature of corruption should be clearly linked with anti-corruption dynamics as it gives better insight into the possibilities and limits of the contemporary fight against corruption.

From the perspective of social constructionism, corruption is seen as a phenomenon that 'depends on cognitive assumptions and social conditions that are not universal but historical' (Tänzler et al. 2012: 1). What is labelled 'corrupt' is a result of interactions between meaning-producing social actors. The ontology of corruption lacks an objective existence independent from the social actors' performances and interpretations. Instead, corruption appears to be rooted in a wider, inter-subjectively created normative framework, determined by the subjects located in different parts of the social structure (Granovetter 2007). This ontological feature of corruption makes it a changeable and fluid concept – it can shrink, but it can also stretch, thereby renaming what is corrupt and what is not. Moreover, the ontology of corruption entails its polymorphism – corruption has many different forms because different historical and social contexts produce a whole variety of practices perceived as corrupt. We have different corruption-related terms to describe this diversity: petty bribery, grand corruption, nepotism, cronyism, clientelism, state capture, the influence of money on politics, fraud, and embezzlement. Additionally, the same forms of corruption, depending on the type of society in which they occur, may be perceived as black, grey, or white – colours expressing different degrees of 'corruptness'(Heidenheimer 2004). This complexity tells us that thinking about the level of corruption in dichotomous, one-dimensional terms as low or high does not correspond with reality. The polymorphism of corruption makes the measurement of corruption and international comparisons of its level a very difficult task (Philp 2006). Therefore, when we hear or read (in this article as well) about the reduction of corruption and about the least corrupt countries, we should remember that this means only that some forms of corruption have been reduced or almost totally eradicated (for example, bureaucratic bribery), while

others may remain untouched or may even have increased[4], partly because the concept of corruption can be 'stretched'.

When we look at the history of the concept of corruption we can trace this fluidity and polymorphism, as the term itself has had many different meanings (Heidenheimer 1978). The definition of corruption is historically variable – what had been perceived as non-corrupt or even proper in pre-modern Europe may now be defined as corruption, and the other way around. For a long time, Western political thought – starting from antiquity, through the medieval era, and ending with Machiavelli's writings – depicted corruption as a decay or degeneration of the political community, accompanied by an erosion of moral virtue among its citizens (Buchan 2012). In modern Europe, the concept of corruption has been narrowed – corruption as a form of decay of the whole political order has been replaced mainly by 'public-office-centred' definitions (Heidenheimer 1978: 4). In European absolutist monarchies, to give another example, the sale of public offices was once quite widespread – yet the proceeds from this sale went into the public treasury and the practice was not treated as corruption (Friedrich 2002). In the contemporary world, the sale of public offices is clear-cut corruption, at least in the context of Western administrative culture, which, as various scholars have pointed out (Andvig et al. 2000), has been strongly influenced by Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy with its legal-rational and meritocratic spirit.

This radical shift in defining what is corrupt and what is not has been caused by multidimensional macrostructural changes, including the institutionaliza-tion of the norm of universalism, which threw new light on the particularism of pre-modern societies (Mungiu-Pippidi 2006). The norm of universalism caused a slow erosion of the cultural underpinnings of the pre-modern political order, affecting the taken-for-granted legitimacy of particularism – the type of legiti-macy that is the 'most subtle and the most powerful' as it is based on a collective presumption that the political order is 'granted' and 'alternatives become un-thinkable' (Suchman 1995: 583). In pre-modern European states based on par-ticularisms and characterized by common privileges and partiality, unequal and unfair treatment was generally accepted by the subjects. This changed with the modernization of the Western European state, when the idea of equality before the law and meritocratic bureaucracy affected collective attitudes and expecta-tions regarding public officials (Mungiu-Pippidi 2006). In this context, Shore and Haller have pointed out that 'paradoxically the rule of law and legal rational

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[4] For instance, for a long time Iceland was at the top of Transparency International's Corrup-tion Perception Index (CPI) as one of the 'least corrupt countries in the world', but the collapse of the Icelandic banking system in 2008 revealed that Iceland had forms of corruption not grasped by the CPI's methodology. These were excessive informal relations between political, administrative, and economic elites, leading to cronyism and nepotism – one of the reasons behind the economic collapse (Vaiman et al. 2011; Wade 2009; Gylfason 2009).

bureaucracy are what give rise to the concept of corruption in the first place' (Shore and Haller 2005: 7). I believe that if we consider the pre-modern (or classic) understanding of corruption, the assertion would be more accurate in regard to the new concepts of corruption than to the concept of corruption as such. Thus, political modernization can breed new forms of corruption because it creates a new evaluative framework (Huntington 1978). Of importance to us here is that some forms of social/political actions have started to be perceived as corrupt because of profound normative changes in the social/political order. From this perspective, different forms of corruption can rise or fall not because of the changing frequencies and scopes of given types of behaviour but as an effect of redefining them as corrupt, which is possible because of the fluid nature of the concept of corruption.

Since corruption is a socially constructed phenomenon, the significance of corruption as a public problem can be determined by different social forces. The research on Norwegian media shows the role of media texts in making corruption scandalous and institutionalizing it as an important part of the public agenda (Breit 2011). A similar pattern was found in Sweden, where an explosion of interest in the corruption issue, and its mediatization, was triggered by the 2003 Systembolaget scandal – a shift accompanied by easiness in labelling almost everything a form of corruption (Lennerfors 2009). Corruption can become a public issue because of the pressure of global anti-corruption organizations. In Poland, through the first ten years of the transition after 1989, corruption was not considered a serious public problem, despite the widespread occurrence of behaviours constituting corruption from the viewpoint of the growing international anti-corruption regime. But over the course of a few years preceding Poland's accession to the EU in 2004 the perception changed and these behaviours were redefined and politicized as a dangerous problem. This change was mainly brought about by institutional and normative pressure by the leading organizations in the global anti-corruption industry (Makowski 2008). The role of international 'integrity warriors' as exporters of a new global ethics, part of which is the ideology of 'anti-corruptionism', has also been stressed in the case of the Balkan states (Sampson 2005). Although we can specify the social forces engaged in defining and redefining corruption, it is difficult to identify the main controller of the discourse. The position of such a controller has been attributed to anti-corruption agencies in Eastern Europe, which have been presented as instruments in the hands of governments seeking to control the anti-corruption discourse and to win votes on the basis of anti-corruption politics (Smilov, 2010).

Surprisingly, little attention has been given to social scientists, who may participate in creating the anti-corruption discourse by providing new definitions of corruption. It must be noted that the problem of changes in definitions of corruption and of stretching the definitions into new areas of social life was indicated

by Steven Sampson, who argues that corruption 'has now become abuse of any and all kinds of power in any and all ways' (Sampson 2015: 439). Nevertheless, when he refers to this inflation of the corruption concept, he does not address the role of social scientists and the questions raised by their conceptual proposals. The role of social scientists in shaping the anti-corruption discourse has been accentuated by Grzegorz Makowski, who depicts experts as those 'technicizing' the concept of corruption, thereby providing not only operational background for anti-corruption intervention but also legitimizing the governmental fight against corruption. Makowski also refers to the expansion of the definition of corruption into new areas; however, he does not provide any clear examples of 'stretched' definitions of corruption (Makowski 2004). Thus I will elaborate later on the point of stretching definitions of corruption as I think it leads to some important questions concerning the possible unintended consequences of such conceptual efforts.

The self-legitimizing dynamics of the fight against corruption

First of all, we need to recognize that corruption is a normal social fact that will exist as long as societies hold an idea of public good and public duty.[5] Paradoxically, corruption can occur and does occur because there is some public morality to be violated. This idea is parallel to a similar notion of Emile Durkheim, who made the following observations on crime as a normal and necessary fact for any society:

Crime, as we have shown elsewhere, consists of an action which offends certain collective feelings which are especially strong and clear-cut. In any society, for actions regarded as criminal to cease, the feelings that they offend would need to be found in each individual consciousness without exception and in the degree of strength requisite to counteract the opposing feelings. Even supposing that this condition could effectively be fulfilled, crime would not thereby disappear; it would merely change in form (…) Imagine a community of saints in an exemplary and perfect monastery. In it crime as such will be unknown, but faults that appear venial to the ordinary person will arouse the same scandal as does normal crime in ordinary consciences. If therefore that community has the power to judge and punish, it will term such acts criminal and deal with them as such. It is for the same reason that

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[5] It must be stipulated that this sentence should not be interpreted as rationalization for corruption. The common-sense wisdom according to which 'corruption has always been and forever will be a part of public life' is too often accompanied by a fatalistic attitude about the pointlessness of any anti-corruption efforts and is employed to rationalize participation in corruption. This is not my intention. I agree that corruption will be with us for as long as an idea of the public good remains, but the fact that we have witnessed successes in elimination of some forms of corruption proves that corruption can be brought under decent control.

the completely honourable man judges his slightest moral failings with a severity that the mass of people reserves for acts that are truly criminal. (Durkheim 1982: 99–100)

As long as a given society holds some moral values, the possibility of crime is present, because there is an axiological area that is a source of the collective definition of crime. Durkheim's remarks remain valid when applied to corruption as well. As long as the idea of public good and public duty exist, or the idea of some moral order held by members of a particular community, deeds offending these ideals will occur. Therefore, it is not the structure of incentives, the distorted institutional setting, or low integrity that makes corruption possible in the first place, but something much deeper and taken for granted – the mere axiology and structure of public life as such. Even in a setting with the highest standards of integrity (for example, countries labelled the least corrupt in the world), there is some space for violations of integrity, because some individuals, the so-called rotten apples, will not comply with the generally respected rules. The very existence of the structure of power within which different people hold different positions (with the remits and resources attached to these positions) creates opportunities for corruption, therefore making anti-corruption a sensible undertaking.

Moreover, when we combine this order of things with the ontological features of corruption, its fluidity and polymorphism, we move to the very heart of self-legitimizing and thereby to the never-ending nature of anti-corruption efforts. Along with the elimination of some forms of corruption, which is accompanied by the moral development of power structures (exemplified by strengthening democratic institutions, good governance, and human rights), new definitions of corruption emerge, enabling us to call various phenomena forms of corruption. Thus, even if some forms of corruption disappear, at the same time the concept is stretched onto new practices, legitimizing the need to maintain the anti-corruption fight. The moral development of public life does not lead to the total eradication of corruption, but to a shift in the forms and incidence of corruption. Certainly, the elimination of systemic corruption makes corruption less harmful for society, but some corruption and opportunities for corruption stay with us anyway. Thus the fight needs to be maintained[6] because even minor cases of

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[6] An illustrative example of this line of thinking is a comment on the recent EU anti-corruption report posted by the director of the TI EU Office: 'Taken in the round, it's a very sobering read. It's a stark warning that much more needs to be done by all Member States, both 'new' and 'old' (that includes you too Sweden, Denmark and Finland!). It confirms our findings from two years ago that across the EU there are systematic corruption risks and governance failings in such areas as party financing and whistleblower protection'(Dolan 2014). As we read, high standards of integrity are no excuse to stop anti-corruption actions ('that includes you too Sweden, Denmark and Finland!'), because the mere risk of corruption justifies strong anti-corruption measures.

corruption are scandalous to a public with the highest standards of integrity (as in the case of the 'completely honourable man' pictured by Durkheim).

Obviously this line of argumentation may be interpreted as trivial, but I am nevertheless convinced that such an argument can and should be proposed, because those who are engaged in the anti-corruption crusade, and those who observe it, expecting successful results, seem to assume that there is a point in the future when corruption will be totally eradicated. As noted by Kalin Ivanov, 'the global campaign against corruption has raised enormous, and yet, unfulfilled, expectations for catharsis' (Ivanov 2007: 39). The corruption-free society is an ideal, and the idea is presented as if it were possible to eliminate corruption once and for all. It is not solely international organizations that propose such a vision (see, for example, Transparency International's vision), but politicians as well promise a 'liquidation of corruption' (see the example in the next paragraphs). I find this problematic because such anti-corruption rhetoric, with its implicit generous and hopeful promise, can too easily be interpreted as empty talk doomed to fail, especially when corruption scandals are one of the main themes in the mass media and the battle against corruption is underway. The unintended consequence of an anti-corruption campaign aimed at 'rooting out' corruption may be a rise in hopes and expectations in regard to the moral standards of public officials – and high hopes are easily broken, causing anger and lack of trust in the sincerity of anti-corruption declarations. This point leads me to another argument in favour of my first hypothesis. Not only the very structure of public life makes the fight against corruption unending but also the dynamics of anti-corruption campaigns.

The fight against corruption is a frequently politicized phenomenon, being an instrument of political competition and used to exercise political power. The form in which politics is exercised – with honesty, integrity, and transparency – is becoming as important as the very matter of politics (Bågenholm 2009). Thus, the fight against corruption has become an integral part of political life, or at least of political life that is aspiring to be democratic. Those politicians who neglect quality-of-government issues risk their careers, because reliability, honesty, and trustworthiness have become crucial components of a political image. There is pressure to become part of the anti-corruption discourse in order to stay in public office.

The promise of a corruption-free society can sometimes be accompanied by an exaggeration of corruption, leading to moral panic. The concept of moral panic refers to a situation where certain phenomena, events, persons, or groups are presented as a serious threat to socially important values and interests. The image of the threat is constructed by various claim-makers such as politicians, moral authorities, experts, and all 'right-thinking people', with a crucial role being played by the mass media as the agenda-setting controller

and claim-maker itself (Cohen 2011: 1). A 'moral panic' can be spoken of when certain conditions are met. The source of the threat should cause general social concern and the consensus that 'there is a problem'. The threat should be labelled and perceived with hostility. Another crucial feature is that the threat should be exaggerated, which means that in objective, measurable terms it is not as serious as it is presented to be. A further characteristic of a moral panic is its volatility, in the sense that it can appear and disappear unpredictably (Zielińska 2004: 162–164).

Poland in the years 2000–2007 might serve as an example of an emerging moral panic over corruption: at that time, corruption was a hotly debated issue among the political parties and in the media despite lack of clear evidence of a rise in corrupt practices (Makowski 2008; Bachman 2011). In the 2005 electoral campaign the fight against corruption was one of the leading issues, bringing eventual victory to the one of opposition parties, which formed a coalition government with a strong anti-corruption agenda and was criticized for misusing the fight against corruption as a tool for political gain (Gadowska 2010). In 2007, snap elections were held, with the governing party making 'liquidation of corruption' one of the most important slogans and issues of the campaign. At that time, corruption in Poland was depicted by the prime minister as the country's largest problem and obstacle to economic development (Gazeta.pl 2007).

However, if we look at the data concerning annual growth of GDP at the time, we can see that Poland was performing better than it had for a long time, as annual growth in GDP in 2006 and 2007 was respectively 6.2% and 7.2%. Such a high rate of economic growth had previously been noted in 1996 and 1997, with 6.3% and 7% GDP growth for each year (OECD 2016). As to corruption risk, it had been reduced by anti-corruption measures implemented in the years 1998–2005 as part of Poland's EU accession obligations. Throughout the years 1996–2010 the World Wide Governance Indicators rated corruption risk in Poland as moderately low, within the range of 60–70 points (on a scale of 0–100 where 100 is the best possible score), with the scoring visibly influenced by the so-called Rywin Affair in 2002 (Gadowska 2010; Kobylińsa et al. 2012: 24–32). At the same time, public opinion polls for the years 2000–2013 showed that each year more than 85% of respondents found corruption to be a 'very large problem' or a 'rather large problem', with the high point for such opinions coming in 2001–2006 when they were held by between 90–95% of persons (Koryś, Trutkowski 2014:72). Thus despite economic growth and significant institutional reforms aimed at reducing corruption risk, corruption can be still defined as a serious threat causing general concern and an atmosphere in which it is difficult to present a balanced position on the issue. If 95% of respondents claim that corruption is a serious problem in their country, it is difficult to

suggest that the problem is possibly exaggerated – it is always serious, at least when one is asked about it publicly[7].

Moreover, corruption scandals very often are wrongly interpreted as evidence of the pervasiveness of corruption and the ineffectiveness of the anti-corruption policy. But the cases of corruption that have been revealed and publicized should not necessarily be treated as an indicator of such ineffectiveness. They could also be interpreted as the success of anti-corruption institutions, because corruption has been detected and publicized. Usually, however, these successes are defined as proof of the system's corruption. Piotr Sztompka's conception of the paradoxical aspects of democracy and trust (Sztompka 1998) sheds light on the unintended consequences of anti-corruption activity. As Sztompka puts it, for democratic mechanisms of accountability to be effective in creating a culture of trust they should be used sparingly. As long as the corrective activity of institutions such as courts, the ombudsman, anti-corruption agencies, or the media does not exceed a certain threshold, the culture of trust prevails. Hyperactivity of these institutions may create a widespread belief that the 'system' is in a state of decay. Hence excessive actualization of the potential of accountability mechanisms can breed widespread institutional and generalized distrust. This paradox, when applied to anti-corruption activity, may lead to the collective conviction that 'all of them out there are corrupt'. We can also add that an unintended consequence of intensive anti-corruption activity is greater distrust in the public sphere – a distrust which, according to some research (Letki 2006; Uslaner 2005; Rothstein, Uslaner 2005), constitutes conditions conducive to corruption and dishonesty. Various anti-corruption success stories (such as arrests of corrupt officials, the resolution of corruption cases, or the revelations of investigative journalism) paradoxically generate the need for even greater intensity in the fight against corruption (as they prove that there is a problem with it) in order to meet the expectations of the most important actors inside and outside of the political system, such as the media, international organizations, foreign aid donors, voters, the opposition, civil society organizations, and governments of countries interested in curbing corruption.

The arguments presented above are not new. The obsession with corruption in post-communist societies has already been described by Ivan Krastev, who argued that even if anti-corruption policy is successful in reducing different forms of corruption, we cannot expect that the general perception of corruption will

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[7] I am not trying to suggest that nothing more should be done in regard to Poland's national integrity system and that corruption should be neglected. Different recommendations have been proposed in this area (see, for example, Kobylińska et al. 2012; Poland 2014). My point is that it should be done in a balanced way, while taking into consideration the limits, problems, and postulates presented in this article.

change (Krastev 2001). He wrote about countries in transition where generally many people believe that 'the system' is corrupt. Yet some interesting arguments for the never-ending and self-legitimizing nature of anti-corruption can also be found in Denmark and Finland, countries that for a number of years have been at the top of the Corruption Perception Index (for a critique of the perception-based measurement: Miller 2006; Søreide 2006). From the viewpoint of certain international anti-corruption bodies, a low incidence of corruption also poses a risk of corruption. For example, in 2002, the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), the body established by the Council of Europe to monitor anti-corruption standards, published an evaluation report on Denmark. In spite of the very high general assessment, this analysis of Denmark's anti-corruption safeguards contains a few recommendations for the government. One is the need to raise anti-corruption awareness, justified by the 'very low rate of corruption cases':

The GET (the GRECO Evaluation Team – B.C.) was concerned that the very low rate of corruption cases in Denmark in conjunction with the attitude throughout Danish society that corruption is not a problem, may lead to a situation in which there is a low awareness of the dangers of corruption and possibly a low level of alertness to indications of corruption. If it has not already, this could lead to a lowered reporting to authorities of instances of suspicious dealings, thereby foreclosing law enforcement from pursuing investigative leads that could unearth corrupt activity, etc. Moreover, the GET was concerned that as Danish society becomes less homogeneous, as its commercial enterprises compete with those that do not share the same values etc, the social deterrents to corruption which it now apparently enjoys may be less important in the future. As a result, and despite the fact that corruption is not now, and will not be for some time, any serious threat to Danish society, it might nevertheless be advisable to refrain from a perception that corruption only exists outside Denmark. (GRECO 2002: 21)

As we read above, the low level of corruption and treating corruption as a non-problem creates a risk of corruption because of the possible lack of social vigilance. A similar problem has been indicated in the evaluation report for Finland:

In spite of this generally favourable conclusion (conclusion concerning the quality of anti-corruption in Finland – B.C.), the GET observed that the general confidence in the Finnish system could weaken the general awareness about the danger of corruption, which could also affect a country like Finland fully integrated in the global economy. Officials employed in sectors vulnerable or likely to be in contact with corrupt acts, are neither warned nor trained to the need to actively look for corrupt practices, detect acts of corruption, report suspicions and cooperate with law-enforcement authorities (…) In view of the above, the GRECO addressed the following recommendations to Finland: i) to raise the awareness of public officials, particularly among those more likely to be in contact with corrupt practices, about the need to remain vigilant, report serious suspicions of corruption in accordance with agreed procedures and contribute to the efforts of law enforcement authorities aimed at the detection of corruption offences. (GRECO 2001: 19)

The philosophy of anti-corruption presented in these quotations shows that the campaign to raise corruption awareness is a sensible undertaking even if a given society is perceived as generally 'clean'. One of the anti-corruption portals vividly illustrates that corruption, no matter how widespread and harmful it is or is not, should be defined as a problem regardless:

> It has been fifteen years of awareness raising, a joint effort by World Bank and Transparency International (TI), plus a score of other NGOs and journalists. And it worked. A 2011 Eurobarometer survey shows that even Finns in nearly corruption-free Finland have now come to think that corruption is a problem. (Civil Society Against Corruption 2012)

I am not trying to discredit the anti-corruption movement and its awareness-raising campaigns. It cannot be denied that the risk of corruption is a permanent state. Corruption that has been controlled to a low level of equilibrium can always surge if the control stops[8]. What I would like to indicate is that we are at the stage of the anti-corruption crusade in which it is easy to overlook latent functions (in the Mertonian sense) of this fight. The contemporary fight against corruption is operated by the global 'anti-corruption industry', as was pointed out by the anthropologist Steven Sampson (Sampson 2010). The 'industry' consists of the knowledge, people, money, and symbols that create a global anti-corruption discourse influential enough to impact governmental anti-corruption policy and the international reputation of countries (ibid.). This 'anti-corruption industry' has been growing since the beginning of the 1990s and will probably continue to grow as an integral part of the post-2015 Development Agenda of the United Nations (Transparency International 2013). The fight against corruption has become globally institutionalized, an autonomous activity, having its own dynamic and interests, not only following and responding to the phenomenon of corruption, but also actively shaping (constructing) this phenomenon. For instance, the Corruption Perception Index, a famous product of Transparency International, not only measures the perception of corruption but, according to some researchers, also stigmatizes countries as 'dirty' in the global imagination, thereby lowering their rate of foreign direct investments and, in this way, contributing to higher rates of corruption (Warren, Laufer 2009).

Another interesting example is the emergence of the corruption issue in Finland, triggered by the campaign finance scandal of 2008. Certain facts allow us to believe that this was a period when various widespread practices started to be defined as corrupt, partly because of the new normative framework provided by GRECO. In 2007 GRECO published an evaluation report on the transparency of party funding in Finland, pointing to inefficient regulations which 'may

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[8] The concept and risk of re-corruption were analysed by Phyllis Dininio (Dininio 2005).

open up possibilities for abuse and do not provide sufficient tools to effectively detect and unveil potential instances of improper influence in political financing' (GRECO 2007:19). This report was referred to in 2008 after a member of parliament, Timo Kali, admitted that he had not revealed financial contributions from donors – his statement triggered a scandal, in which it was revealed that such secrecy and informal relations with business people were quite common practice for many Finnish politicians (Helsingin Sanomat 2008). Thus the problem of the 'old boy network' – an informal network within which services and favours are exchanged between cronies, without the presence of any clear-cut, 'envelope-style' bribery – was defined as corruption (Luoma-Aho 2009).

Informality and close relations between representatives of the political and business sector had been common in Finland for a long time; it had not, however, been defined as corruption. According to research on the Finnish power elite conducted by IIkka Ruostetsaari in the beginning of the 1990s, it is clear that there were close informal relations between different, functionally distinguished elites. Ruostetsaari indicates that 'more than nine out of ten members of the power elite subscribe to the view that informal personal contacts have a major impact in the exercise of social power' (Ruostetsaari 1993: 328). The conclusion of the study was that Finland had a power elite, in line with C. Wright Mills's sense of the term, that was exclusive, internally cohesive, consensual, and based on informal networks – but not a single word was said about corruption. The order of things was not found to be corrupt. The term 'corruption' does not appear in the said text. Admittedly, some researchers into governance and corruption in Finland discerned the potential for corruption hidden in the informal and consensus-based relations of the power elite, but they agreed that this was still only a potential – not corruption as such (Tiihonen 2003; Zook 2009).

Currently, the issue of informality has been redefined as a problem of the 'old boy network'. The 2008 survey on 'integrity violation' in Finland's public administration showed that the 'old boy network' is the most common form of such violation, with 60% of respondents pointing it out as occurring 'very often' or 'often' (Salminen, Ikola-Norrbacka, 2009). According to the 2012 National Integrity System Assessment for Finland, a study based on TI's methodology, 'the old boy network appears to be the most widespread form of unethical activity in Finland' (Transparency Suomi-Finland 2012)[9]. I believe that the case of Finland

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[9] I think that these studies in themselves are part of the process of redefining informality – from being morally neutral (or even positive when interpreted as a form of social capital) to corruption-related 'integrity violations' or 'widespread unethical activity'. The old boy network is a problematic phenomenon. On the one hand, decisions are made on political and non-meritocratic grounds. On the other hand, this phenomenon is defined as belonging to the 'grey zone of corruption' since it is difficult to consider it within the already-constructed definition of corruption, which assumes a link between misuse of entrusted power and private profit (Luoma-

is a good example of a new moral status being attributed to practices that have long been morally acceptable but that have been redefined as corrupt because of the anti-corruption drive. Matti Vanhanaen, the Finnish Prime Minister at the time of the 2008 campaign finance scandal, is reported to have said that he 'cannot take any blame for decades-old, established practices' (Helsingin Sanomat 2009). Nevertheless, in the light of a new evaluative framework, the 'decades-old, established practice' becomes campaign-finance corruption or at least a morally questionable issue. This normative shift was clearly indicated by the head of the Finnish chapter of Transparency International in his text entitled 'Finland's Hidden Corruption':

In all, the attitudes towards decision-making are changing. Today, the need for transparency is taken much more seriously than earlier. Even practices that previously have been presented as strengths of the Finnish decision-making system, for example, the ability for parties at the local and national level to work together to build a consensus platform, are now under criticism. From Transparency Finland's viewpoint, this is a very positive development. Finally, we find that the discussion on transparency and corruption is taken seriously and put in context of our national structures and traditions (Laukkanen 2012).

The quotation above is actually a brief description of the process of constructing corruption in the Finnish public discourse. The Finnish case – since it shows that the fight against corruption legitimizes itself by constructing new forms of corruption – brings us to the new definitions of corruption provided by various social scientists[10].

Stretching the concept of corruption

Even seemingly objective theories about social reality can impact this reality just through description (Andreski 1972). Thus, if we name some phenomenon as corrupt, we can affect the reality being described because we implicitly postulate a need for change in accordance with some normative frames. The description of the reality as corrupt is at the same time an evaluative process through which an ideological design of the expected social order is being projected onto reality. In the literature of the subject, we can find several proposals for redefining corruption accompanied by an emphasis on the need to use new definitions of this

-Aho 2009). My point is that 'corruptness' is starting to be attributed to phenomena previously free from the feature of 'corruptness'.

[10] However, this does not mean that social scientists cannot act as a conservative force which preserves the status quo. Actually, the case of Finland may be interpreted in this way as I have shown that some researchers were unlikely to use the term 'corruption' when referring to informality in public life.

phenomenon. This poses the question about the role of social scientists within anti-corruption dynamics. Stanley Cohen, referring to different modes of constructing social problems, writes about a 'quiet construction', when those who make claims about social problems are 'professionals, experts or bureaucrats, working in organizations and with no public or mass media exposure' (Cohen 2011: XXVIII). Can social scientists be regarded as 'quiet constructors' of new forms of corruption, thereby legitimizing new areas of anti-corruption? First of all, some examples.

The political scientist Mark Warren criticizes the definition of corruption in which it is the abuse of public office for private gain. In his opinion, this 'office-based', 'administrative' definition focuses mainly on the norms and duties of public office in the administrative sector and is not sensitive enough to those forms of corruption that are most harmful to democratic processes and institutions:

> But the office-based conception does little to identify and clarify common intuitions into the corruption of democratic institutions and practices. The reason is that the concept is not *political* enough. And not being political enough, it lacks sensitivity to the kinds of corruption that plague democracies – the most political of all regime types. We need, I shall argue here, a conception that identifies corruption as a set of specific harms to democratic processes and institutions. I offer such a conception, which I shall call *political corruption as duplicitous exclusion.* (Warren 2006: 803)

According to Warren, corruption as duplicitous exclusion consists in breaking the link between decision-making by public bodies and the power of ordinary people, which is derived from their right to influence decisions having an impact on their lives. Thus the democratic system is corrupted when people are excluded from decision-making that affects them, despite the fact that in the light of the normative theory of democracy they should have an opportunity to influence such decisions. The exclusion is duplicitous because it constitutes an unjustifiable violation of officially professed norms and thereby harms democratic processes and institutions. The very fact of exclusion and its duplicity constitutes the corruption of democracy 'whether or not specific harms can be identified' (Warren 2006: 804).

Another proposition comes from Icelandic researchers, who appealed for a redefinition of previous concepts of corruption (for example the OECD's 'abuse of public or private office for personal gain') as not being applicable to the distinctive forms of corruption that contributed to the collapse of the Icelandic banking system in 2008. As they put it, 'Plato, Aristotle and Machiavelli would possibly have given a more useful warning about the risks of corruption in Iceland by focusing on the moral health of the entire society rather than individual actions of officials and their motives' (Vaiman et al.

2010: 371). They argue that the current definitions of corruption, which focus on individual behaviour, are not able to 'touch' the real level of corruption, considered from the macro-structural perspective – the corruption of the whole political system. The Icelandic scholars propose to define corruption as a mechanism of social domination, specifically a state where 'one or more sectors dominates other sectors of the society and abuses that position in the organization of resources, public goods, or to exercise undue influence' (Vaiman et al. 2011: 271).

The limitations of the current understanding of corruption as a 'property of specific action, process, person, or group' has been elucidated by Michael Johnston (2006:810), who claims that this line of thinking can be replaced by the classic concept of corruption as a 'collective state of being' when the 'morality of an entire political order is called into question' (Ibid.). Johnston refers to democracy in the United States, where public opinion polls indicate that a high percentage of the population questions the political and moral order of the state and many persons strongly believe that Congress has been captured by influential interest groups. This collective perception and dissatisfaction with the political system can be treated as a form of corruption in the above-mentioned 'classic' usage of the term (Ibid.).

Another example is Daniel Kaufman's conception of legal corruption as having the form of 'privatization of public policy' by the undue influence of private vested interests (Kaufman 2004: 90). Kaufman appeals for a widening of the understanding of corruption because its traditional notion as the abuse of public office for private gain 'has often been interpreted in a legal sense to mean committing an illegal act' (Ibid.). This ignores a form of corruption which is legal, regardless of how counter to the public good: interference with decision-making (for instance, the influence of money on politics). The proposed definition is especially useful when analyzing corruption in OECD countries, which are characterized by corrupt phenomena not covered by biased, office-centred, and 'illegalistic' definitions (Ibid.).

Lastly, a remarkable book titled *Corruption*: *Expanding the Focus* (Barcham et al. 2012) provides a conceptual history of corruption. The editors, building on historical arguments, aim at expanding the contemporary understanding of corruption. The history of the concept of corruption in Western political thought displays a shift from the structural and political view of corruption to the economistic, market-based view characterizing the contemporary discourse on corruption. It is argued that this narrow understanding of corruption should be widened by reviving classic thinking about corruption as a 'disease of the body politics'. For example, factionalism in political life, which currently is rarely part of the discourse on corruption, could be interpreted as corruption in the classic sense (Hindess 2012:19–21).

The definitions presented above depict as corruption conditions that had not previously been labelled with this word. What had been named a 'democratic deficit', 'weak participation', 'political exclusion', a 'crisis of legitimacy', or 'political hegemony' is now redefined as 'corruption'. The wide scope of these definitions allows us to treat almost all cases of disturbance within the homeostatic and participatory democratic state as corruption. Since of corruption has become a highly democratic concept, every authoritarian regime is a priori corrupt. As a result of such thinking, corruption can be identified almost everywhere, and subsequently the fight against corruption should seemingly be maintained and extended to new areas of unjustified, duplicitous domination and exclusion[11].

It is not clear whether these definitions are just conceptual responses to the evolving morality of public life or are also unintended contributions to the moral crusade against corruption. The nature of reality being studied makes it difficult to separate moral judgments from a description of social facts. It is also not easy to determine the real impact of these conceptual proposals on the ideas about corruption held by other participants in the anti-corruption discourse[12]. Therefore, when I ask whether various social scientists could be 'quiet constructors' of the new forms of corruption, I do not have a definite answer. My intention is mainly to stress the need to discuss the current tendency to widen the concept of corruption and the possible risks thereof. Are we not losing the descriptive value of the concept by stretching it excessively? Are we not superseding other analytically useful and less emotionally charged concepts when describing democratic dysfunctions? Are we not providing fuel for collective distrust and disappointment with democracy by this easiness (eagerness?) in applying the concept of corruption? Are we not contributing to a possible moral panic over corruption? These

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[11] Actually, a rather similar remark has been already made by Thomas Lennerfors, who writes about 'exaggerating corruption'. He points out that 'there is specifically much corruption to be found if one defines corruption as any transgression between the public and the private' and therefore we 'should not be surprised to find that everything we do is corrupt'. It must be added that some of his observations correspond with the basic points of my text, specifically his opinion that the war on corruption seems to be endless. (Lennerfors 2008: 407).

[12] An example of such possible influence may be traced in the academic discourse on the relation between the finances of political parties and political corruption. Until the late 1950s, scholars, when analyzing European party systems, 'usually did not significantly employ corruption-related concepts in their analysis of the play of the interest groups and parties' (Heidenheimer 2002: 763). This changed during the 1960s with the establishment of the Research Committee on Political Finance and Political Corruption by the International Political Science Association, when some academics started to investigate links between political corruption and party finance. Nevertheless, at the time many of them still maintained party finances and political corruption as separate fields (Ibid.). Currently, party finance and its proper regulation are a requisite part of anti-corruption efforts (De Sausa 2005).

questions should be addressed in the debate on anti-corruption, as it seems that the role of persons who describe corruption and the possible unintended consequences of their efforts are very often overlooked.

Conclusions

The objective of this article is not to discredit the fight against corruption but to reflect on its unintended consequences and point out the resulting problems that must be tackled within the anti-corruption dynamic. I have presented the hypotheses that the contemporary anti-corruption fight has become never-ending and self-legitimizing. These hypotheses should not be treated separately because they concern interdependent dimensions of the anti-corruption campaign. The point of departure in my argumentation was the theory of social constructionism applied to corruption. This theory provided not only the general theoretical background but also the ontological argument to support my concept of the never-ending and self-legitimizing anti-corruption fight.

My first argument was that the mere axiology of public life makes corruption a phenomenon which can never be entirely eliminated, thus justifying eternal anti-corruption efforts. This seemingly trivial argument must be evaluated in relation to the promises and growing expectations that a 'corruption-free' society will be created (and the possible social consequences of not fulfilling such ideals). I expanded the argument by linking the axiology of public life with the ontological features of corruption, mainly its fluidity and polymorphism. I have argued that even if some forms of corruption are eliminated because of the moral development of public life, new forms of corruption will emerge as new definitions of corruption emerge, thus self-legitimizing the fight against corruption and making it a never-ending task. Therefore, the moral development of public life does not lead to the total eradication of corruption, but to a shift in the forms and incidence of corruption (and probably its harmfulness for society). Additionally, some arguments in favour of my hypotheses have been derived from an analysis of the paradoxes of contemporary developments in the anti-corruption fight. The basic paradox is that the efficiency of anti-corruption mechanisms triggers a need for more anti-corruption efforts because the wrongdoings revealed are interpreted as proof of the system's corruption. Another paradox is that sometimes even a low incidence of corruption may be defined as a risk of corruption, justifying the need for anti-corruption undertakings. Furthermore, the pressure of the global anti-corruption industry may be 'corrupting' in the sense of exporting new evaluative standards that rename old established practices as corrupt. Last, but not least, I have presented some examples of 'stretching' the concept of corruption by

social scientists in order to pose a question about their role within self-legitimizing anti-corruption dynamics.

When applied to corruption, social constructionism gives an interesting and illuminating insight into anti-corruption efforts as it shows that these efforts have the power not only to curb but also unintentionally to construct corruption. It moreover provides various arguments for more reasonable expectations in regard to anti-corruption undertakings, since some degree of corruption simply cannot be eliminated. We are trapped in the constructivist nature of corruption. Of course there are some weaknesses in the approach presented above. The basic one is that I am also trapped in the social constructivist nature of corruption and anti-corruption. Throughout the article, I have tried to avoid thinking in terms of one definition of corruption – the one that I have internalized – in order to be in line with my assumptions when analyzing corruption as a whole. The phrase 'different forms of corruption' used at times in this text when writing about reducing corruption, enables me to highlight the polymorphic and multi-dimensional nature of corruption phenomena. However, my own definition is still hidden somewhere between the lines as a point of reference – for example, when I write about 'stretching' the concept of corruption by social scientists, there is an implicit construct of corruption 'before stretching'. Another point is that I may also be one of the persons co-creating new definitions of corruption because I disseminate and analyze such definitions in this paper. An additional weakness is that my theoretical reflections are based on selected examples taken mainly from the experience of anti-corruption efforts in democratic European states. Thus more systematic data needs to be provided to confirm or falsify this theoretical conception on appropriate empirical grounds.

I would like to reiterate that the idea of the never-ending and self-legitimizing nature of the fight against corruption does not mean that these efforts are futile or that we cannot and we should not tackle corruption in its different forms. What I wanted to show are the problems that must be addressed as a result of the unintended consequences of anti-corruption dynamics. The basic problem is how we can fight corruption effectively without simultaneously eroding general and institutional trust. The issue is one of communicating with the general public about anti-corruption efforts. Fighting corruption and the promised results should be presented with a balanced picture of what can be done in optimal terms. There is a need for anti-corruption awareness campaigning where problematizing corruption is balanced by educating the public about the negative, and very often unintended, consequences of anti-corruption undertakings. In other words, society also needs to be informed about the social and political costs of anti-corruption efforts so citizens know which promises can be considered credible, practicable, and reasonable. It seems that one of the most important sources of information about corruption is the media, where it is difficult to find a complex explanation

of an anti-corruption dynamic. Considering this mediatization, I reason that anti-corruption education should have a strong component of media education, giving the recipients of anti-corruption campaigns and the consumers of corruption scandals a critical tool for understanding and interpreting media coverage, including its multidimensional impact.

A balanced picture of anti-corruption might help us to address the problem of the dual-faced political will to fight corruption as it gives us a better perspective to make a difference between the two 'faces' of this will. The first face is a 'screaming' one, embodied by a mediatized, populist anti-corruption campaign focused on certain individuals/institutions, without real long-term institutional and educational solutions but with short-term political profit, as it reaches mass-media users and satisfies their taste for justice. The second is a 'calm' face, with anti-corruption efforts being focused on reforming the institutional setting and using mass media for anti-corruption education based on a balanced picture of the possibilities and limits of anti-corruption policy – which is not necessarily politically profitable but in the long run will build stronger institutions and maintain general trust.

The expectations and promises of the creation of a corruption-free society should always be confronted with the aforementioned characteristics of anti-corruption efforts. Certain fundamental questions should always be asked when anti-corruption promises are encountered. Is it only about reducing corruption? What are the possible unintended consequences of the fight against corruption in my country? Should exposing corruption be interpreted as proof of the pervasiveness of corruption or rather as a demonstration of anti-corruption effectiveness? Can we expect corruption to be totally eradicated? How should we judge the agendas of those politicians and organizations who promise they will eliminate corruption once and for all?

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corruption once and for all?

„Walka z korupcją" jako niekończący i autolegitymizujący się proces

Streszczenie

Artykuł jest analizą niektórych niezamierzonych rezultatów współczesnej „walki z korupcją". Autor wykorzystuje podejście społecznego konstruktywizmu, aby pokazać dlaczego współczesne tendencje antykorupcyjne, niezależnie od efektywność walki z korupcją, pozwalają uznać, że ta walka nigdy się nie skończy. Ponadto, krucjata przeciwko korupcji została scharakteryzowana jako autolegitymizujący się proces, ponieważ poprzez konstruowanie nowych form korupcji prowadzi do kreowania nowych obszarów działań antykorupcyjnych, w ten sposób uzasadniając konieczność jej kontynuowania. Punktem wyjścia jest analiza korupcji jako zjawiska konstruowanego społecznie mająca na celu wskazanie, że ze względu na konstytutywne właściwości korupcji jest ona nieusuwalną częścią przestrzeni publicznej, dlatego też działania antykorupcyjne nigdy się nie kończą. Następnie, aby dogłębniej wyjaśnić niekończącą się oraz autolegitymizującą specyfikę walki z korupcją, opisane są paradoksy i wybrane przykłady z obszaru współczesnych działań antykorupcyjnych. Ostatnia część artykułu koncentruje się na nowych definicjach korupcji proponowanych przez przedstawicieli nauk społecznych i prowadzi do postawienia pytań, do jakich skłaniają te konceptualne propozycje. W ramach konkluzji przedstawiono problemy wynikające z opisanej dynamiki antykorupcyjnej, z którymi należy się zmierzyć.

Główne pojęcia: korupcja, antykorupcja, społeczny konstruktywizm, autolegitymizacja