SABINA CHAUDHARY

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COMPLEXITY OF INFORMAL PRACTICES

VOLUME 1

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New Delhi-110009, India

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Sabina Chaudhary
ISBN: 978-93-5590-346-4

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Understanding the Ambivalence of Informality

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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

Informality	*Formality*
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, (1) 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 *vruzki* 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

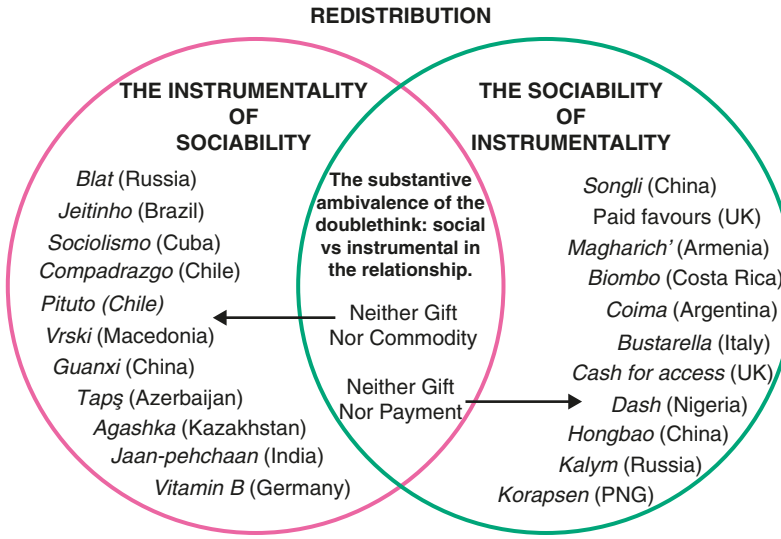

Figure 0.1 Substantive ambivalence.

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

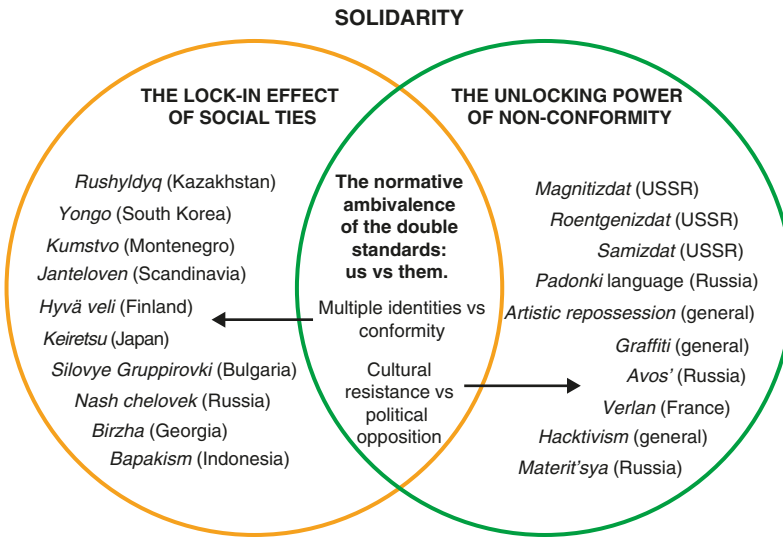

Figure 0.2 Normative ambivalence.

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

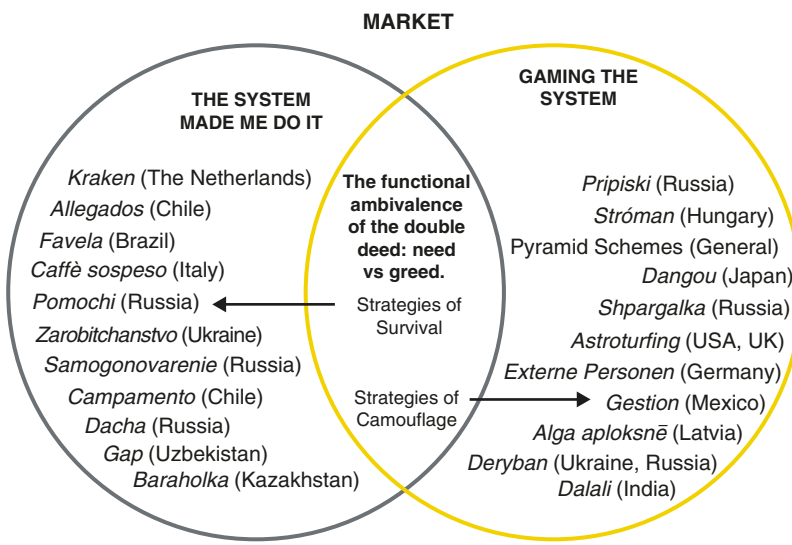

Figure 0.3 Functional ambivalence.

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

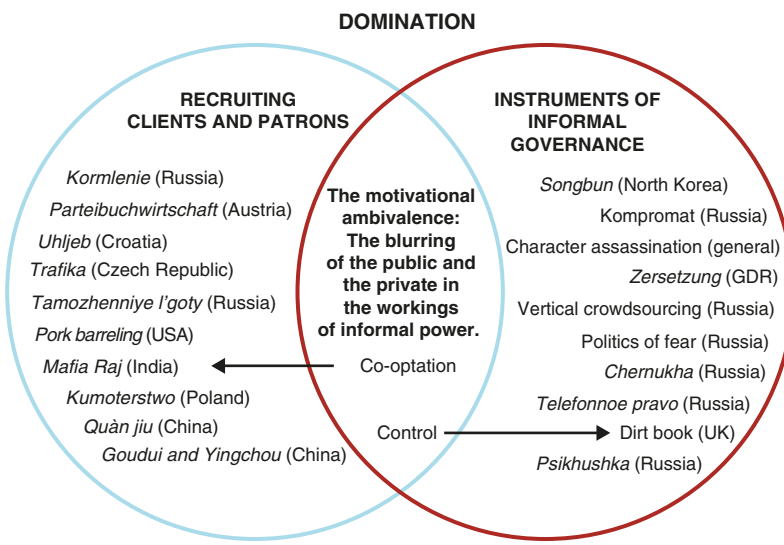

Figure 0.4 Motivational ambivalence.

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

Types of ambivalence of informal practices	*Modus operandi*	*Implications for analysing complexity*	*The continuum that proved useful in understanding grey zones and blurred boundaries*	*Associated concepts*
Substantive ambivalence	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
Normative ambivalence	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
Functional ambivalence	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
Motivational ambivalence	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 Borommean 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 – re-distribution – 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 Makovicky 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-taboos 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

Assumptions	*Counterintuitive implications for policy*
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 kaleidoscope 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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Part I

The Blurred Boundaries: Sociable and Instrumental in Relationships

The substantive ambivalence: relationships vs use of relationships

Preface

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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 comradery, 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.

Path Models of the Relationships of Instrumentality and Various Practices

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 Kurkchiyan 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*, *kombinacja*, *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/ © 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 Ibañez (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 štele*', meaning 'she got a job through a *štela*'); or a pervading system of exchange ('*tamo ide sve preko štele*', 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; Vetters 2014).

Table 1.6.1 Usefulness of *štela* for getting …

How useful is štela *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

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 (Mojić 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, distributers 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 (Stanojevic 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 *vrska* (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 (връзкар)*, 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 redistributional 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 milieus 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 (CRRC) 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 Kyrgiz, *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*). *Paydanalanish* 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 clientalism. 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

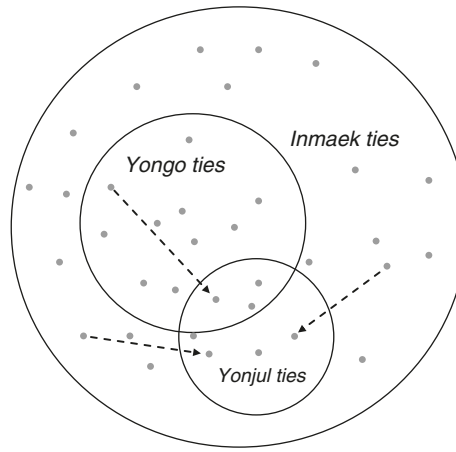

Figure 1.13.1 *Inmaek, yongo, yonjul* – interrelatedness and possible tie development.
Source: Horak 2014.

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 *tapşırmaq*, 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 Cunninghan 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* transaction 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 Kazımzade 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*, *pahċān*, *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 contextuals or relational actors in methodological contextualism. Contextuals, in contrast to individuals, cannot exist without their relationship with another actor, because the relationship is a part of his or her self. Furthermore, contextuals 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 contextuals 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 contextuals 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 *aidaraga* 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 Jörgensen 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:

> favors 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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The Sociability of Instrumentality and Vernaculars of Informality

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 (*hörmət*) is inter-changeable with the word for respect. An official requesting a bribe (*hörmətimi 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' (*załatwić 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' (*kenöpénz*) 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 became 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' (*kapříci*) 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 Messino 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 shûkan* 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 shûkan* (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 prepaid 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 though *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 an other 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', *gworo*, 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. *Gworo* (*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 crises 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 subcontinental 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 barbarrayin 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; *Jamanakakic hajoc lezvi bats'atrakan 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 *maḫārīğ*, 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 magarichej net u dontsa i rechej'*), 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 *kalym* (Morris 2011: 626).

Fundamentally, like other forms of undeclared work, *kalym* 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 *kalym* 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 (Precupeţu 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' – *Ŕomani 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 (*ărămajandîko* 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, Slovnik 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' (Slovnik 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; Gézciová 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 *ďakovné*, *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 *ďakovné*, *pozornosť* and *všimné* remain underresearched. 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*, *kukulitis*).

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 *aploksne* 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 *aploksne* – 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).

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 quintessentially 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 kickbacks 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 kickbacks 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 shûkan* 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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Conclusion: 'interested' vs 'disinterested' giving: defining extortion, reciprocity and pure gifts in the connected worlds
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