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**Corruption: an ethical and political approach**

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## **Abstract**

Corruption raises questions of morality and is connected to the way a polity is constructed, both features that are often connected to specific cultural contexts. This paper shows that in every society there exist separate 'moral spaces' that are sustained by immediacy and emotional needs, rather than tradition; in any case, they are not doomed to act against the public interest unless they are challenged by an unfair access to resources that creates a sense of domination. This feeling of subordination is created within clientelist structures that emerge from specific historical conditions; despite appearances, they do not guarantee a fair power-sharing and social equality. Patronage is sustained by the use of symbolic language and urges the individual to make use of alternative means in order to ensure his survival. Friends, family and any kind of formal or informal group that one enters voluntarily satisfy the sense of belonging and the need for identity; their inclusiveness and autonomy however are the key-factors that make for a vital civil society and contribute to the development of a democratic community. Only when these conditions are met can a culture of trust be produced 'from below', making the unlawful pursuit of private regarding less necessary and thus less likely to occur.

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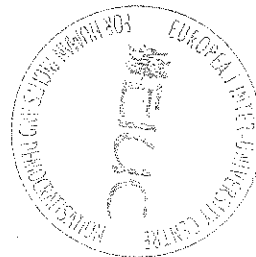
## Preface

Studying corruption is a very challenging endeavor. It has given me the opportunity to discover how morality is shaped in different cultural and political contexts. Throughout the long journey to finish this paper, it has given me new angles of how to think about democracy, political ideology and culture.

Many persons have supported these efforts. My first debt is to my two supervisors and the coordinator of the programme. Steven Sampson has given me invaluable inspiration, comments and directions of how to approach my subject. His immediate responses and disposal to help me out from situations of frustration were necessary for me to feel that I am not alone in my intellectual pains. Birgitte Sørensen posed to me questions that played a major role in structuring my argumentation and linking it to my general point of view. Along with Kirsten Hastrup, they believed in my commitment to my work and the potential to produce interesting results.

My fellow student, Douglas, shared with me my agonies and difficulties in understanding complex social problems and their interconnections. Marco and Elodie helped to restore my hope and to cheer me up in moments when morals were down. Other students from the Anthropology department, with whom we spent countless hours studying together, were disposed to discuss with me and to give me their own input. In addition, the great deal of patience shown by my flatmate and support and understanding by friends and family in Greece contributed to the completion of my work.

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## A. 1. Introduction: Research Question

Anthropological research has shown us that practices legally defined as corrupt are deeply intertwined with “everyday relationships of exchange” (gift giving, patronage and the reciprocities of kinship and friendship). As such, they can be traced in every society, regardless of whether they are classified as ‘informal sector’ in the cities of the Third World, ‘black’ or ‘underground’ economy in the First World and the ‘second’ economy to be found in socialist states, the now defunct Second World.

In Greece, corruption allegations have become a major topic for discussions in recent years. Print media and independent television have been unraveling cases of bribery and suspicious friendships linking political authorities and large business corporations. As a result, strict regulations on the disclosure of income of politicians were put down and the political parties, unable to bear the costs of defamation, imposed ‘high’ discipline to any members of the party that were suspected of being involved in corruption. Similar developments took place in other European states at the same time or the years before. What was characteristic to Greece, however, was that corruption allegations did not only target the country’s political life, a common argument made by those accused. The most exceptional aspect was that Greek people were seemingly not suffering only from political corruption, as most industrialized countries did, but also from its counterpart, bureaucratic corruption.

According to the 2001 evaluation report<sup>1</sup>, prepared by the Group of States Against Corruption, a Council of Europe-based monitoring body, the public sectors particularly affected are hospitals and the tax department, as well as all those involved in the allocation of EU funds. Other departments mentioned included those of general administration, police and justice and the providers of services (telecommunications, water, electricity). Newspapers’ articles additionally mention the construction business including architects, builders and town planning authorities and the issuing of driving licenses<sup>2</sup>. Opinion polls also show high indexes of corruption perception among the citizens. In the 2004 Corruption Perceptions Index, prepared by Transparency International (TI), Greece was ranked 50<sup>th</sup> out of 133 countries with a raw score of 4.3 (on a 1 to 10 scale), by far the most corrupt of any state within the

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.greco.coe.int/evaluations/cycle1/GrecoEval1Rep\(2001\)15E-Greece.pdf](http://www.greco.coe.int/evaluations/cycle1/GrecoEval1Rep(2001)15E-Greece.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> ATHENS NEWS, 10/01/2003, [www.helleniccomserve.com/biteoutofcorruption.html](http://www.helleniccomserve.com/biteoutofcorruption.html), E\_IKAI\_A, 29/07/2003, [http://www.explo.gr/qu\\_article/030729002/darticle](http://www.explo.gr/qu_article/030729002/darticle), TA NEA, 30/10/2003, [http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr/neaweb/nsearch.print\\_unique?entypo=A&f=17778&m=N11&aa=3](http://ta-nea.dolnet.gr/neaweb/nsearch.print_unique?entypo=A&f=17778&m=N11&aa=3)

EU. The next two highest within the EU were Hungary which was ranked 40<sup>th</sup> with a raw score of 4.8 and Italy which was ranked 35<sup>th</sup> with a raw score of 5.3 (TI 2004).

In the light of these data, one might well wonder *why* is it that Greece came to be perceived so corrupt a country? Drawn by the Mediterranean (and Balkan) legacy, which time and again has been deployed to dismiss those societies as 'amoral' or 'backward' altogether, the next question to ask is if there truly exist any *socio-cultural factors* that can be related to the pattern of corruption in Greece. If yes, what are they? How do they function? How are they maintained? Who helps them propagate? In what ways? Why? To answer these questions, it is necessary to have a look into the historical conditions that create patterns of behavior and propagate mentalities towards the state and the others.

## **2. Research pattern and organization of the paper**

Corruption raises certainly questions of morality. Based on two case studies and in order to explore the culturally 'embedded' moral universe that can provide the incentives or justifications for corruption, we follow the moral reasoning of the actors that are involved in the transactions.

Our first case describes the way in which low-level corruption functions. We will first discuss how an individual is tempted or pushed to engage in a corrupt deal. Further on, we set out to explore how the actors of a corrupt transaction perceive and do away with the moral costs of cheating. This will help us understand how separate 'moral spaces' are articulated parallel to the official structure and help as legitimizing factors to run against it. We will then describe how this is achieved through the symbolism of state ideology, along with specific distributive policies.

The second case is illustrative of how low level corruption can be a direct consequence of 'high level' corruption. It also shows the existence of less traditional 'moral spaces', which appear in the form of intimate personal relations. As a result, we discuss the importance of informal groups in providing the assurance needed to challenge the formal setting. This leads us to reflect on the role of civil society and its relation to the state. The coexistence of corruption and democracy is due to the way political and civil society are related, thus we go on discussing the interconnections between clientelism and corruption. Finally, we summarize our findings about

corruption, in the context of the moral spaces that sustain it and the political conditions that help propagating it.

## **B. Theoretical framework**

### ***1. Overview of the disciplines***

An inquiry into the relevant literature shows that corruption is by its very nature an interdisciplinary subject, spanning at the very least the fields of public administration, political science, law, economics, history, sociology and anthropology prove how complex and multifaceted a phenomenon corruption is. It has troubled social scientists for many years and its popularity has risen recently resulting in the production of an enormous amount of thematic literature, which is almost impossible to manage. Thus, some recent efforts to sample together the existing literature (Andvig 2001). The engagement in corruption research of scholars from various disciplines has in turn generated further complexity in understanding corruption and a lack of consensus over its definition, approach and nature. At this point, it seems necessary to make a short analysis of the different approaches in order to identify the sources of our own theoretical framework.

#### **The economic approach**

Economists and political scientists have taken the lead in recent research on corruption worldwide. The research conducted with the support of various International Financial Institutions (the World Bank, IMF etc.), Transparency International and national development agencies is focused on the economic dimension of corruption and the economic costs associated to it (Rose-Ackerman 1999). Corruption is seen as an impediment to development, which in turn is assessed mainly in terms of economic growth. Human development however, as defined by UNDP, is about “expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value” and is thus about much more than economic growth.

Hindess argues that the economic understanding of corruption includes some disguised value judgments that do not always apply in different social and political settings (Hindess 2001). The economists' approach to corruption presumes that corruption is always about the pursuit of financial gain and that local practices of corruption do not fit to the conditions of the 'modern' world (Rose-Ackerman 1999: 2-5). These implicit value statements make too strict a distinction between corruption in developing countries and in industrially developed states. They also disregard the moral costs and the non-financial sources of power that are not only 'side-effects', but often determining factors in a corrupt relation.

### The legal approach

Corruption has also been a concern for lawyers and criminologists, much more previously than in the last years. A legal approach however presumes that there exist efficient enforcement mechanisms (police and judiciary) to ensure the enactment of legislation, which in corrupt environments is not always the case. It is also dependent on the legislator's intentions and is therefore not always a reliable tool to assess and control corruption in political life.

Moreover, law can express an over-ambitious ideal of the relationship between citizens and the state and, as such, it can often be part of the problem of corruption. "Too many laws, excessive formalism, and vexatious procedures help create corruption - by forcing people to get round them - and weaken attempts to control it" (Levi 1997: 42). Since not always the strictly legal is received as moral and legitimate in the wider society and legislation, by obeying the moral orientations of an elite, has often a character of imposition of norms (Pardo 2000), a better understanding of corruption requires a look away from formal norms and toward implicit codes that determine social behavior.

### The public administration approach

Studies of public administration are primarily concerned with organizational aspects of state bureaucracy. Their public-centered and descriptive character provides



us with useful data, which however designate only part of the phenomenon. By addressing the problem from the point of view of state governance only, issues such as the responsibility of business companies, self-employed and other private actors remain too much out of the picture.

#### The combined political science and anthropology approach

As stated above, much research on corruption has been done by political scientists. They have tried to analyze corruption as a functional or system-related factor or, more recently, in the light of theories of social networks (Warburton 2001). But, there too, there is a strong tendency to include the concept of culture as part of the explanation (see Miller 2001). In contrast to rational choice theory, political culture theory has been gaining ground among political scientists over the past decade (Mishler 2003: 237). 'Thick' and 'thin' culture approaches influence the understanding of societies accordingly, leading often to different assumptions and methods. This has led to the introduction in political science of the so-called 'neo-cultural' approach, according to which culture is a multifaceted phenomenon that "varies both across and within societies in different contexts, under different circumstances and, perhaps, at different times" (p.245-246). The growing preoccupation among political scientists and sociologists with cultural variables or 'soft' moral bonds has opened the door to anthropologists to make their own contribution.

In order to go further in depth and to explore how corruption informs the dialectics between the state and the citizen, we will look into corruption from a political science and socio-anthropological point of view (for more on this combined approach see Cohen 1969), based on a qualitative analysis of empirically collected data. Since anthropology incorporates symbolic interpretations and historical knowledge and does so in a critical way, we hope that our analysis, based on the contributions from these two disciplines, will suffice to understand the *rationale* of corruption in particular social contexts. Of course, there is no reason to discard the invaluable input made by the whole range of social sciences on the subject; our main interest however being to explore the socio-ethical aspects of the separation between

formal and informal structures, we shall try to develop an approach based on the moral values that inform human action.

## **2. Methodological considerations**

According to a sociologist, “(to study) the phenomenon of corruption (the researcher) has to be fully conversant with the history, the culture, the language and the circumstances of at least one complex instance from which he can derive his data and test his theories” (Alatas 1968: 1). Other social scientists have argued that police reports, court decisions and media accusations can only cover part of the phenomenon for they are also subject to determinants such as the efficiency of public administration and the extent of the freedom of the press (Blundo 2000: 25-28).

The measurement of public perceptions are considered to be a much more reliable source and this principle has been endorsed by most research on corruption. We mentioned already Greece’s raw score in the *Corruption Perceptions Index* composed by Lambsdorff for Transparency International (TI). In recent years the CPI has become the most referenced source in corruption literature regarding quantitative data. Although it uses not one but multiple samples, it is mostly based on perception of corruption among business people and staff of international organizations. In addition, as an attitudinal survey it does not take into account the different perceptions of the interviewees on what corruption actually is. As a concept with a strong moral component, corruption has generated a ‘battle of definitions’ within research scholarship itself. It is therefore unrealistic to expect from people to have a homogenous idea of what corruption is. In addition, the surveys do not distinguish between various forms of corruption or different levels of the political and administrative system where corruption is perceived to exist.

As stressed in a recent report on the state of art in corruption research, the ideal way to collect data about corruption is through *direct and first-hand observations* of corrupt transactions made by unbiased observers who are familiar with the rules and routines in the sector under scrutiny (Andvig 2001: 24). Hence the examination of two specific cases collected through empirical observation should provide a more comprehensible framework for understanding the persistence of corruption as deriving from dynamic social interactions and within a specific

ethnographic context. They are drawn from personal experience and supported by anecdotal accounts and partly through newspapers articles and committee reports. This ethnographic basis of our methods and concepts should counter the generalized, non-empirical view of the phenomenon by telling us more about the real *loci* of corruption and the moral reasoning underlying human action.

### **3. Conceptual considerations**

For international actors in the anti-corruption scene, such as the World Bank, the working definition of corruption is '*the abuse of public power for private gain*'. On the other hand, Transparency International, a major anticorruption organization, regards corruption as '*the abuse of entrusted power for private gain*'. This second definition seems much more relevant for it includes corruption that might take place in the private sector (business community), in the wider public sector (intergovernmental organizations) or in such spheres that lie between the public and the private, notably NGO's and other civil society institutions. A more analytical definition is the one given by Nye:

"Corruption is behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private cliques) pecuniary or status gains: or violates against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence. This includes such behavior as bribery (use of a reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of ascriptive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private-regarding uses)" (Nye, as cited by Sampson 1983: 69)

Hence, corruption is not only the abuse of public power for private gain, but also the abuse of private power for public 'gain'. It cannot be viewed strictly as the violation of legal norms, for this holds true only if relevant laws and regulations exist. Even in this case, legal standards are not sufficient determinants of corrupt behavior for its conception is related to moral standards and norms that do not always correspond to established laws. Both the active and the passive actor in a corrupt

transaction are equally responsible for it. In the case of bribery for example, both the bribed and the briber abuse some sort of power to achieve private gain: the power of making an important decision or of giving away valuable information the former and the power of money the latter. We usually assume that the person who receives the bribe has more power than the one who pays. This however is not always the case. The economic and psychological power of the person who gives the bribe or asks for a 'favor' should not be undermined.

Another common distinction is between political or *grand* corruption and bureaucratic or *petty* corruption. The first is related to white-collar crime, where large business interests interfere with political decision-making. The second involves 'street-level bureaucracy' and strategies of the lower social classes to circumvent legislation. This distinction between 'high' and 'low' level corruption applies to both public and private sector, corruption can be traced at various levels either within state bureaucracies or in business enterprises. To explore some aspects of petty corruption, we shall now pass to the examination of our first case.

## **C. Family, religion and a case of *petty* corruption**

### ***1. Kyriaki's story***

A young student I shall call Kyriaki was interested in issuing a driving-license. As most of the Greek citizens, she was well aware that this could be a complicated undertaking, since there were strong rumors that the issuing of driving-licenses was one of the most corrupt-plagued sectors on a national level. But since the government had recently revised the related procedures by making them stricter, she hoped that bribery might also have ceased or at least decreased among the actors involved in this business.

Her next thought, typical for every consumer, was to compare the prices between different driving schools. She thus entered one driving school by chance and found out the prices for the theory lessons, as well as those for each driving class. The compulsory driving lessons were ten. She asked if ten lessons would suffice and if she could rely on that to calculate the final price. The answer was rather ambiguous, she could almost certainly not rely on these as final prices. For 'various reasons' (e.g. if she would not pass the test) the first price rarely remained the final sum to pay.

The next person she asked about the prices was someone from her work. He was a professional driver himself and had a friend who owned a driving school. He told her a price that was higher than the first one. This was the 'real' price, the bribe to the driving examiners

included. When she asked if she could avoid paying the bribe, she was told that it was very hard, almost impossible, to pass the exams the regular way. She asked what would happen if she brought a charge against those who 'asked' for a bribery. She was told that, in this case, she would never get her driving-license, because the driving examiners had a well-established network which spread all over the country, the news about her charge would disseminate and as a revenge any potential next examiner would make sure that she would fail her test.

These news were extremely intimidating and, therefore, Kyriaki chose to take the lessons with her friend's friend, whom she would be able to trust a bit more. She also could pay a lower, 'friendly', price for the lessons, although the prices seemed to be extremely dependent upon circumstances and therefore not possible to define how much 'lower' they really were. Revenues are also not a common practice among driving instructors.

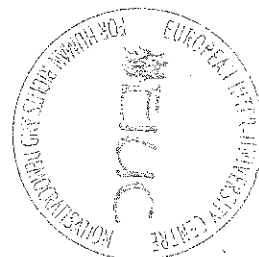
After passing the theory test with no problem, Kyriaki was preparing for her final driving test. At the last lesson, she asked for details about the exam. Along with the explanations, she was told that the outcome of the exam depended on the particular examiner and on his or her 'mood'. 'Unfortunately', her instructor did not 'yet' know who the examiner would be. Those in the relevant public office were anyway all 'out of their minds', 'cannibals' and not trustworthy people. The advice was to better bring some cash along. Of course, some of them were 'mean' and did *not* accept bribes. All in all, the exam was presented as extremely difficult to pass, this was blamed on the examiners and bribery was illustrated as a good way out.

At the day of the exams, the turnout of candidates was massive and the coordination extremely disorganized. Kyriaki failed the test without knowing whether her instructor had paid the bribe or not (he did not) and whether she failed because of that. The explanation that she later received was that many examiners, for fear of police controls, did temporarily (?) not accept bribes and, as a 'revenge' they had become too strict. Kyriaki started to feel a victim of everyone: the bureaucrats (who became too strict), the state (who was responsible for that) and the instructor (with whom it was compulsory to repeat -and repay- 50% of the lessons). The learning procedure was completely distorted for she could not evaluate the extent of her own responsibility for failing the exam. The second time, she was 'lucky' to have 'good' examiners. At the beginning of the test, the instructor passed them over Kyriaki's documents. Inside the papers was the bribe. Kyriaki passed the exam.

## **2. Reflections on corruption networks**

### **a) Sharing the responsibilities**

Corruption (*diaftora*) is very much a matter of where the observer is situated in relation to events. Therefore, for the student (client), the primary responsible for her engagement in bribery was the driving instructor (broker), a self-employed private



actor. For the broker, the source of corruption was the patron, the holder of bureaucratic power, who accepts money before making a decision. For the public employee (patron), it was the client, who paid a bribe to obtain the decision and did not rely on his own personal merit to obtain the desired result. Each one of the actors shifts the moral responsibility to one of his counterparts, appeasing in this way the consequences of his or her instrumental reasoning.

Potentially, everyone holds some kind of power, which can be co-opted and corrupted. Depending on the situation, everyone has the possibility to function as a broker, a client and a patron in different contexts. Apparently, this holds true for every member of a micro-social organization that exists and reaffirms itself through norms of reciprocity and of mutual dependency. Corruption however does not always imply a vertical relation of power. Interpersonal transactions are most times horizontal and one's place in the field, whether he or she is an active briber or a passive bribee, does not necessarily lessen the responsibility for participating in the deal. All the actors involved pursue their private interest while at the same time violating the formal rules of procedure, which serve at protecting the public interest.

To engage in a corrupt deal one has to bear the moral costs of cheating. These costs are normally shared by both parts of the transaction. The shame is divided in two or, as the saying goes, 'half shame yours, and half shame mine' (*misi ntropi diki sou, misi ntropi diki mou*). To be sure however that the shame is going to be shared, one has to know about the others availability to do so. Or else, for a corrupt agreement to proceed successfully, one first needs to know that the other agrees to cheat along.

#### **b) 'Advertising' corruption**

The role of the driving instructor in sustaining corruption in the particular system is crucial. Without his advocacy, the candidate might well have gone through the whole procedure without paying any bribe. The instructor's constant defamation of the examiners had an intimidating effect that helped diminishing and actively blurring away the moral costs of bribing. By disseminating the information, stimulating and mitigating the transaction, the instructor acted as a 'broker'. He did not hold the power of granting the license himself, but through a discursive element he was, consciously or not, propagating this power, thereby expanding and enacting it.

In addition he invited the client to pay the bribe by secretly communicating the message about the potential alternatives. As a corruption investigator suggests "corrupt approaches are usually made in face to face meetings where as much non verbal information can be conveyed and received in what is highly complex social interaction" (Warburton 2001: 225).

The broker is essential to enact this secret communication. His role, however, becomes easier due to a general circulation of the news. In Greece, the discourse about corruption has been going on for more than a decade. It has become a central topic of public discussions in recent years, when some investigative journalism has brought out cases of tax evasion and corruption in various public sectors -the construction sector, police, hospitals and the car and driving-licenses directorate. Apart from the positive role these revelations have played in raising public awareness against corruption, they were also deemed to have a negative side-effect. Along with the information that some sectors are corrupt-plagued, comes the message that in those specific sectors 'bribes (are) accepted'. The knowledge about preexisting alternative ways to, say, issue a building permit can also function as an invitation to use them. In any case, it attenuates the individual's responsibility of refraining from bribing; corruption in the relevant sector becomes a 'collective sin', individual prosecution, if likely at all, is perceived as unfair and suspiciously targeted. Widespread knowledge about corruption in a specific sector, if not accompanied by paradigmatic punishment, leaves the potential briber with the impression that bribery is the rule there and non-bribery a deviation from the rule.

Economic growth and modernization can diffuse the control of resources and, as a result, the power of patrons is declining. But instead of wiping out, dependency relations are in reality only transforming from traditional face-to-face patronage to organizational brokerage (Boissevain 1977: 82-90), where influential mediators take on the lead in creating links and ensuring the advancements of individual interests. By creating a point of access to the network that actually holds the decision-making power, the brokers habituate this power and wield it to the client, even in case the latter does not ask for it. Hence, Gellner's 'suspicion' that patronage is avoidable when relations are anonymous and specific, in a mass society, (Gellner 1977: 6) did not come true. The brokers are there to ensure immediacy and intimacy with both the patron and the client. Establishing the connection is the first crucial step in making corruption work.

### *3. Bribing as spoiling and the family-state divide*

With regard to the young student, not having economic independence, she was receiving the money for the driving lessons from her parents. As a result, she asked *them* whether to pay the bribe or not. The moral responsibility was thus shifted to the ones holding the economic capital. This draws our attention to the fact that economic power is accompanied by an attribution of other forms of power. If someone has achieved to accumulate a certain amount of money, that authorizes him to take decisions determining his social life. Since social life requires taking moral decisions in many stages, independent socio-economic actors are regarded as independent moral agents. Besides, their independency makes them immune to external criticism. If they are able to earn money, then they have at least the right to decide how to spend it.

Following the instructor's advice, the parents estimated that paying the bribe would be their contribution to their child's success. From an economic point of view, corruption can be seen as a means through which the individual seeks to maximize utility. Since parents care about their children and judge their children's utility as if it were their own, they try to educate them in a manner that will guarantee their survival in a given society. On these grounds, Hauk and Marti provide a model of 'intergenerational transmission of values' (Hauk 1999: 1) that stresses the importance of education as a key element in reducing corruption successfully.

Parents' attitudes with regard to 'social survival' result from their own knowledge and their appraisal of societal structure. Their own experiences from their encounters with the state form their attitudes towards corruption, which they value appropriate to transmit to their children in order to facilitate their social life. In Greece, many people especially among the older generations tend to remember their childhood as connected to a state of poverty and many recall their life in the village where they had 'no shoes'. The state on the other hand is perceived as being 'rich' and, therefore it has to 'compensate' them for their poor childhoods (Glick 1998). There is a widespread conception of the state as an external source of power against which one has to struggle instead of conforming.

According to one sociologist, however, corruption should be regarded as "a negotiated classification of behavior rather than as an inherent quality of behavior" (Chibnall 1977), which means that the value judgments of a potential corrupt actor are not defined in advance, but change according to the situation. Whatever their role in



transmitting values with regard to corruption, in our case the parents are relevant rather as actors that are prompted to directly approve of corruption thus assuming the moral responsibility in order to protect the child's interests. This is possible as long as the child is economically dependent on them.

Children trust their parents, not only because of their financial support, but also because they care for their interests and they usually also trust them. Trust, solidarity and loyalty are the three vectors that delineate the specific 'moral space' in which each individual is situated (Sztompka 1999: 5). The strong bonds of loyalty, duty and reciprocity to parents and family in contrast to the state as characteristic among modern Greeks is outlined in a survey based on focus group discussions (Glick 1998). There, we extract two characteristic accounts that are descriptive of this loyalty:

"I like to consider myself unique, my parents taught me to feel like this and in many respects I am unique. I owe much to my parents for the way they brought me up and I am indebted to pay that back to them by caring for them when they are in need exactly as they have cared for me. And of course I owe to care for my children in the same way. Therefore I have to do many things, most of which are related to the state (e.g. public services, hospitals etc.). But the state makes me feel small and unimportant, therefore I have to find ways to impose my strength (and my uniqueness), otherwise I will be useless". [Translated from Greek]

"My parents invested in me their hopes, their care and their time, so that they could give me a good starting point in my life. But in modern society there aren't any chances. I was educated to become something and to make them proud and I am unemployed. I hate the situation in which I am, but I don't have other choices but to ask for favors, to form patron-client relations and to render the services people do to me". [Translated from Greek]

From the above statements, we can deduce clear sentiments of a strong bond to the family and the self, based on loyalty and honor, along with a perception of the state as unfriendly and powerful.

As part of our 'moral space', parents bear a strong legitimacy as moral advisors. If bribery comprises an ethical dilemma, then our moral advisors have definitely a saying on our decision. When parents accept to bribe on behalf of the children, the moral costs for the children are automatically obliterated. According to the driving instructor, most of the people that were taking driving lessons were between 18 and 25. The majority of them received funding by their parents. And if the

parents have a perception of the state as strict and non-cooperative, especially due to their personal experiences, they will not mind circumventing formal procedures if they know there is a possibility to do so.

Paying the bribe for the child to pass the exams is however different than paying it to ensure one's own benefit. Rather than a manifestation of excessive self-interest, it becomes *a means of expressing affection and support*. It is an additional form of sacrifice to show not that parents do not trust the child's competency to pass the exams, but, on the contrary, that their trust is over and above the trust in the system. The examiner, who is state-employed, is not to be trusted for her objectivity. Too strict an imposition of evaluation criteria goes against the interest of the candidate, whose skills and efforts are preeminently eligible in the parents' eyes. And, if it is widely known that the criteria might be anyway distorted because no bribe has been paid, the trust to the committee vanishes completely. The up-coming dilemma is whether to sustain from 'pushing' in order to give a moral lesson to the child (to try harder, not to question the evaluation procedures, not to use alternative means in his transactions etc.) or to pay the bribe, thus showing their material and emotional support.

In the second case, the moral costs for the parents are additionally weakened by the fact that, within the given framework, bribery is already an established practice. Not to pay the bribe would break the informally established rules and undermine the spirit of 'solidarity', shared with the rest of fellow citizens that have also bribed. Indeed, this identification with them derives from a collective victimization due to an emotional sense of commonality and national allegiance that exists secretly and separately from the state. This 'secret pride' (*kryfo kamari*) that everyone knows about, in turn, highlights the generosity of a forgiving state, to which emotional devotion overbalances and displaces rational conformity. This limited criticism of the acts of fellow citizens is due to what Raiser calls 'ascribed trust' attributed to family, ethnic and other specific characteristics (Raiser 1999: 4).

The parent who chooses to support the child over showing confidence to the state-employed committee makes a clear statement that the preservation of intimate relations matters more than the respect of imposed rules. Besides, who can assure us that the rules are fair and their implementation correct? Doubts create uncertainty and our intimate relations are not to put on risk for the sake of a 'foolish' bureaucrat. Rationality and large-scale organization that came with modernity have not only not

undermined the importance of emotional attachment, but on the contrary they have enforced it. Parents use all the means at their disposal in order to protect the private space of the family and excessive provisions to their children function as a mechanism of maintaining their loyalty and trust. Through their efforts to increase the children's sense of indebtedness, as well as their opportunities for economic and social success, spoiling becomes an inevitable option.

#### **a) System-related factors**

The 'care' and efforts that Greek children receive by their family is very much connected to economic support. The scarcity of nursery schools, especially in rural areas, urges parents to appeal to grandmothers, to pay old women or to undertake nursing themselves. In the latter case, one of the parents stays at home and remains unemployed. The 'time' spent with children can be translated in money not earned because one of the parents, usually the mother, refrains from working. At a later stage, given that all parents want to give to their children 'a better future' and since the university entrance examinations are highly competitive, they pay private tutors or afternoon schools (*frontistiria*) to increase their chances. If they make it to the university, sustaining their university studies involves further costs, despite that higher education is public and free. All in all, the costs of child-raising in Greece are high, as they are elsewhere.

What is particular to Greece, however, is that most parents support their children from their own budget until a late age, around 25 or 26. In countries like Denmark or Sweden, where students receive a regular wage by the state and make petty jobs –known as 'student jobs'– to complement it, they tend to acquire economic independence from their parents in a much earlier stage. As a result, in their early adulthood they tend to take a distance from them and do not develop the feeling of indebtedness that we traced in our stories. Although the Greek State does support students in other ways (no university fees, free study material etc.), the costs of their living is bared entirely by them and the majority of them receives funding by the family. The 'strong personal bonds with the family' are thereby maintained and 'reminded' to the student each time he receives his pocket-money out of his or her parents' pockets. Economic dependence perpetuates devotion, trust and loyalty.

This offers also part of the explanation for the strong homogeneity of political affiliation within families. Especially until the children reach an age of economic independence, there are implicit norms that predefine the 'inheritance' of a political ideology. Not until they become tax-payers are they authorized to judge economic and social policies on their own and form their personal political opinions accordingly.

#### b) Symbolic factors

Such tendencies have lead to notions such as 'amoral familism' as a characteristic of Southern countries, accounts that by all means reveal a strong cultural and racial prejudice. Kin-based forms of interest have been generally dismissed as founded on a morality contrary to the rationality of common interest that characterizes 'modern' societies (Banfield 1958). Such progressivist interpretations assume that certain 'Mediterranean' values exclude the possibility of alternative loyalties and fall far behind from the ideal types of social order. However, a more historical view of how the symbolic language of ethnocentric rationalism has influenced social practice restores the moral defenses of family and other 'amoral' interests (Herzfeld 1992: 36). In his careful analysis, Herzfeld outlines the use of kin-based terminology as a permanent feature of every nationalist ideology, which thereby sustains the legitimacy of placing the private regarding over the public. In other words,

"[T]he converse of the state's cooptation of the idiom of social solidarity to define a cultural unity is the citizen's equally selective assumption of fictive kinship for subverting that formal sense of common identity. Such devices effectively challenge the state's cooptation of kinship as culture. In the place of official harmony and homogeneity, they suggest a more fractious reading of social and cultural experience; in the place of individualism as national character, they serve self-interest and pragmatic coalitions." (Herzfeld 1992: 76)

In other words, just as the state uses the concept of family to enforce national identity, so do the citizens perceive as legitimate to support their family even if this



goes against the general social interest. The legitimacy is drawn out of the commitment to a common nationhood.

Kinship, as Herzfeld puts it, is the principal vehicle of the larger national community. "It is the bridge between body and polity, the locus of that spectacular conversion which all successful nationalisms effect between "blood" and "culture". Nationalist ideologies make great play with a range of relevant metaphors –blood, lineage, family, motherland/fatherland- in order to legitimate the reification of culture". And he continues, "[i]f people can imagine a community of like-minded individuals all dedicated to the common culture, they can also imagine select groups capable of discovering mutual advantage in the state's inability to suppress the value of kinship without fatally endangering its own interests" (Herzfeld 1992: 76-78). Since the nation-state fails to provide a natural ethical shell in itself, it borrows the emotional thesaurus produced in the family in order to propagate the idea of a common shared identity thus ensuring the loyalty of the citizens.

With regard to nationalistic discourse, a similar point is raised by Hutchinson, who attempts to incorporate anthropological thinking by distinguishing between political and cultural nationalism (and undertaking in this way today's debate about 'civic' and 'ethnic' nationalism). He sees cultural nationalism as a "movement of moral regeneration" (Hutchinson 1994: 14), which uses historical memory and *cultural* symbols to construct "an integrated distinctive and autonomous community, capable of competing in the modern world" (p. 34). The split between state and society which modernity opens up is then attempted to be bridged through the historicism of nationalism that seeks to redefine the unique cultural nation as the political nation of citizens (Breuilly 1993: 64). The celebration of community and of 'cultural intimacy' that every nation-state revives, makes nationalism so intrusive and cogent an ideology.

Cherishing the state as the invaluable object of nationalistic pride does not classify it as a trustful moral entity. On the contrary, too much patriotic love channeled towards the state raises the demands from it, for our emotional devotion must somehow be equilibrated. Citizens resume their nationalistic feelings as a pay-back for what the state provides to them and can be possessed by a constant sense of dissatisfaction from the returns. Within this unregulated exchange, civic obligations toward the state tend to fade away under the legacy of patriotism. The rhetoric of national-community allegiance does not effectively address the quest for harmony

between the private lives and obligations of individuals and families, on the one hand, and the state's wishes for manageability, on the other, for the contract between state and citizens is overshadowed by an emotional attachment propagated through symbolic language.

In addition, the usage of familial idioms grants a paternalistic character to the state that along with the qualities also assumes the flaws of family life. Like parents who spoil their children, states can also *spoil* their citizens. Providing excessive public goods without controlling that distribution takes place as programmed is doomed to undermine respect for the goods provided and to generate higher demands. An example would be the free distribution of books to Greek students, without the registration of names, courses and titles in a general database. As a result, the majority of students register for as many courses as possible in order to receive more books or register twice to the same course so that she can resell the second copy or give it to a friend as a gift. The lack of control allows the picturing of the state as a 'milking cow', over-generous and therefore possible to exploit. Of course, strict surveillance is not a cure-all safeguard of state-citizen transactions, but off-handedness is also not the answer. Hence, if the state is spoiling its citizens, then why should parents feel guilty of spoiling their own children?

### c) Moral factors

The symbolic, moral and practical significance of the family has been acknowledged and debated by many contemporary scholars (e.g. Althusser, Foucault). The tension between 'familial obligation and civic attachment' is due to the absence of a moral and ethical symmetry between family and community (Shapiro 2001: 22). Communities are created, as Anderson has suggested, through cultivated imagination rather than social immediacy (Anderson 1983), but imagination does not create moral spaces as much as social (and economic) immediacy does.

The financial and emotional support received by the family renders moral decisions taken with the consultation of family members more valid than the moral imperatives of the State. According to Shapiro, family space, however changeable serves as a critical locus of "enunciation", a space from which diverse family *personae* challenge the relationships and historical narratives that support dominant

structures of power and authority and offer ways to renegotiate "the political" (Shapiro 2001).

Accordingly, Bauman stresses on the 'diversifying effects of the social administration of moral capacity', which he believes that have created a myth rather than a reality of a humankind-wide moral unity. (Bauman 1993: 11). Centralizing the domain of political powers bears ethical pretensions, for in reality the gap between centre and periphery makes the defense of particular cultural readings especially crucial for the survival of marginalized political entities (Herzfeld 1997: 92). In this respect, the rise of nationalism as a reaction to globalization reproduces still larger power structures, exactly as the strengthening of familism occurs as a reaction to state policies. The larger the scale of integration, the more fragmented the moral spaces where the individual is situated and seeks his identity.

Weber explains that modernity began with the separation between the family household and the business enterprise, thus making up a useful distinction between the criteria of efficiency and profitability, which are right and proper for business, and the moral standards of sharing and caring, which are right and proper for emotionally charged family life. However, life has continued to be charged with moral meaning *as a whole* and whatever area of life has continued to matter morally (Weber, as cited by Bauman 1993: 5). According to Bauman, this contradiction

"faithfully reflects the genuine clash between equally powerful tendencies of modern society; a society which is 'modern' in as far as it constantly but vainly tries to 'embrace the unembraceable', to replace diversity with uniformity and ambivalence with coherent and transparent order –and while trying to do this turns out unstoppably more divisions, diversity and ambivalence than it has managed to get rid of." (Bauman 1993: 5)

The state can hardly create a single 'moral space' for the required components –trust, solidarity, loyalty- do not seem possible to achieve on such a scale without some degree of coercion. National affiliation does certainly provide a sense of commonality, but if we try to give a more concrete form to the relation between the individual and the state the situation becomes more complex. A 'personalization' of the state is partly possible with regard to the government and the other political authorities. The most frequent way in which a citizen 'meets' the state in person



however is through state bureaucracy; eventually, every bureaucrat creates a symbolical representation of the state in the citizen's mind and helps shaping its image. But how can there ever be any full-sensed intimacy between a citizen and a bureaucrat?

The behavior of those who represent institutions in daily contact with the citizens is a crucial factor for shaping the attitude of the citizenry toward the system. They should be kind, helpful, understanding and cooperative, for all of them operate as 'access points' to the systems (Giddens 1990: 90). On the other hand, any bad experiences at 'access points' create a feeling of distrust. "Attitudes of trust, or lack of trust, toward specific abstract systems are liable to be strongly influenced by experiences at access points ... Bad experiences at access points may lead either to a sort of resigned cynicism or, where it is possible, to disengagement from the system altogether" (Ibid. 90-91). Indeed, the lack of trust in the system a very favorable condition for corruption.

To sum up, we contend that practical, symbolic and moral factors explain why in certain circumstances the protection of family interests is placed above the general public interest. Indeed, the moral 'autonomy' of the family, symbolically supported by nationalist rhetoric, can provide a strong justification of the decision to circumvent state authority. If spoiling children is allowed, then bribing as a side-effect of spoiling seems but a natural consequence of caring for one's offspring, which is by large an unquestioned moral attitude. Corruption in the issuing of driving-licenses and in other activities where young people who are economically supported by their parents encounter rigid or corrupt bureaucratic performance is to a large extent sustained through the spoiling effects of parenthood, in their effort to maintain a distinct space, where the individual is recognized in a quid pro quo relationship.

#### ***4. Religion, ethics and religious ethics***

Now we shall turn to the second of the two active actors in the bribery, the driving instructor. His most distinctive characteristic was his strong religious affiliation. He was constantly listening to the Orthodox Church's radio station and his best man was a priest. He was trying to talk about his devotion to religion in every



occasion and was often using religious maxims. Every time they passed in front of a church he crossed himself. Since modern Greece is becoming more and more a widely secular state, not many people are regular churchgoers. Hence, the instructor extracted an exceptional value by being himself one of the few still keeping strong his religious beliefs.

The spirituality of the church does mark it with a separate moral quality. Its endurance through time, the metaphysical belief in the special care God extends to his faithful and again the metaphors of family applied in the domain of religion (Holy Father, sisters in faith) make the church a trustful entity. The more ethical impasses one faces, the more liable he becomes to seek answers and moral 'purity' within the realm of religion. Religiousness grants us with a moral self-assurance, i.e. of doing the right thing or of being on the 'good' side, and with an image of integrity in the eyes of the others. Endorsing religious values, and doing so overtly, means identifying with a moral principle, which leaves little room to be questioned or scrutinized especially by the non-initiated.

Hence, religiousness is utilized not only to underpin our moral self-appreciation. It also becomes a tool of assuring respect and appreciation by the others. Scruple-free individualism and pragmatism are triumphantly marking our era and reaching moral ideals has become far from a popular enterprise. Against this tendency for moral uniformity raises the individual's effort to diversify himself, which in a 'knowledge-based- society' can be achieved by giving out an image of sophistication. The case of an unemployed young man I met, who used to read books of classical philosophy without understanding anything -as he was saying himself- in order to gain appreciation by his friends is characteristic. It underlines how the removal of discourses about morality has elevated those same discourses into a highly praised, absolute value.

Weber pointed out that the development of religion toward the conception of a transcendental deity increases the problem of "how the extraordinary power of such a god may be reconciled with the imperfection of the world that he has created and rules over" (Weber 1963: 138-139). The more universal power we attribute to god, the more we cannot understand how our daily experience carries so much evil. Inversely, the more we experience the 'imperfection of the world', the more we are encouraged to get closer to religion -or to other institutions capable of giving meaning to our being. Expressive recourse to religion can provide an ethical counterbalance for not

fully exercising our civic responsibilities and even for engaging in illegal activities. If bribery involves a moral judgment, the costs for choosing 'wrong' are borne only by the secular self and compensated by a strong religious consciousness.

Through the study of various sacred texts of major religious and cultural traditions however, Osborne provides an account of how each of them describes and condemns bribery. He points out that in the Hebrew, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, Platonist, Christian and Muslim traditions, the writings make explicit references to bribery illustrating it as wrong, because its effects are unjust and unfair (Osborne 1997: 14). No religion prompts its believers to circumvent the formal rules set to regulate socio-economic relations and to seek favorable treatment through alternative means.

However, the extent to which traditional ethics inform national cultures and private morals today varies among countries and individuals alike. Postmodern theorists (e.g. Lipovetsky, Bauman) have tried to outline some of the factors that command ethics in the post-industrial world –freedom, uncertainty, universality, solitude etc. What lies in the core of ethical thinking is contradiction. 'The majority of moral choices are made between contradictory impulses' (Bauman 1993: 11). Corruption is also subject to moral reasoning for it takes the form of 'a contradictory dual function, undertaken by both the giver and receiver of the bribe or its equivalent' (Alatas 1990: 1).

It is generally a common ground that moral standards are filtered through societal changes. As Platteau has pointed out, devotion to old norm systems does not guarantee conformity to official rules and abstinence from corruption (Platteau 1994). 'Actual' moral norms are constantly evolving and reshaping in combination to societal changes. Sticking to values that have been informing social practices in a distant time and space is much more probable to lead to fundamentalist behavior, with an illusionary component of moral conformity and correctness. A constant cognitive appraisal of structural constraints is shaping patterns of generally approved behavior, which diminishes the moral costs of choices that under different circumstances would be considered as 'wrong'. As a result, paying a bribe is not perceived as bad if for instance we think that everyone does it.

Modern societies tend to prize instrumental values, such as efficiency and productivity over the pursuit of moral integrity. And religious people are not immune from these 'modern' values. They too take their moral decisions estimating

circumstances in the way everyone does. Contrary to cynicism, religiousness tries to mediate the moral costs of our *faux pas* by acknowledging remorse and expressing a deep concern of how to deal with it. Ineptitudes, like sins, obtain a superfluous meaning as part of transitional, necessary ordeals that lead to holiness. Religiousness represents an ethical absolute, so much so that he who follows the rule of law in an exemplary fashion is considered as moving on "with the cross in hand" (*me to stavro sto cheri*). Religious symbols are used to express the 'structural nostalgia' of an ideal, almost unattainable, conformity to official rules, i.e. state regulations vested by the ethical imperatives of the church.

Anthropologists have already noted parallels between patron-clients relations and the practice of pleading with saints for their intercession with God (Boissevain 1977: 90-94). As Boissevain remarks, based on his evidence from Malta, the increasing range of communication and the reduction of power differentials in the wider society led to the downgrading of the saints and the greater sharing of power within the church. Along with the social change that transformed the role of mortal patrons and clients, a congruent religious change occurred. The Church started to stress on community participation, parallel to the nation-state's call for a community of like-minded individuals.

In Greece too, the Church has evolved parallel to the State. The majority of the country's population (approx. 97%) is followers of the established Orthodox Church. Orthodox religion has been emblematic of Greek national identity (Chrysoloras 2003), extracting its legitimacy from a historical reading that leans back to the Byzantine grandeur and the church-lead resistance during the Ottoman times culminating at the National War of Independence (1821). However, the moral cargo of the Church has been lying in the core of its competitive positioning towards the State and recent evolutions in Greece have shown how electrical the relations between the two can become<sup>3</sup>. Just as the family, the Church can offer both, a formal sense of common identity employed by the state to advance the national allegiance and ethical consolation for pursuing self-interest. As a result, loyalty to the church expressed through the manifestation of strong religious beliefs can 'compensate' for betraying the loyalty towards the state and its laws. The moralism, with which religious

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<sup>3</sup> In year 2000, a dispute between church and state started in Greece over the content of federal identity cards. The government's decision to scrap the religious affiliation data generated a strong opposition from the Church of Greece that engaged in rallies and petition drives against the proposed reform. Source [www.religioustolerance.org/chr\\_orthi.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/chr_orthi.htm)

propaganda is usually vested, does not only express the necessity of imposing laws, but can equally serve as a justification to resist them.

To sum up, religion can be 'employed' by both the state and the individual to achieve different and sometimes opposing goals. The introduction of moral norms drawn from the state's official religion is not sufficient to create social trust and respect for the law. It can act as a separate political and moral space that 'protects' the individual from the intrusion of the state in his private space. It provides the feeling of community that the nation-state co-opts for its own purposes, but at the same time it can function separately from the state and serve at undermining it.

In Greece, family and religion are both very strong ethnic symbols. They constitute moral 'warehouses' that can compensate for the lack of civic consciousness and conformity to state rules. Thus nationalism is related to corruption in that it accounts for the ethical deficit of the nation-state. As long as the state's authorities use consciously or unconsciously idioms drawn from other, more intimate spaces of social life, they assume the state's moral subordination to those separate orders. This moral weakness of the state is balanced by the fact that it remains the centre of redistribution of resources. Hence, once corruption is 'advertised', the citizen enters an ethical dilemma driven by an evaluation of his powerless positioning towards the state. But why does the citizen feel trapped by the state at first place? What makes him feel that he or she has no choice than to circumvent official regulations and pursue his goals in alternative ways? What is it that undermines trust to the state and gives rise to a general culture of distrust? Before trying to answer these questions, we shall go through another case of corruption, which will further reveal the existence of a third separate 'moral space'.

## **D. Friends and the links between *petty* and *grand* corruption**

### ***1. Andreas' story***

Our second case study is illustrative of the fact that corruption does not only occur within the public sector. Contrary to the generally accepted definition of corruption as the abuse of public power for private gain, we claim that corruption can equally occur within the private sector. Again, the moral justifications of the actors

involved will help understanding the reasons why corruption takes place under particular circumstances. Since this case involves 'high' corruption, it will be the basis for our discussion about the political factors that lead to or facilitate corruption within a given society.<sup>4</sup>

A young student I shall call Andreas was looking for a summer job to complement the pocket money he was receiving from his parents to study in Thessaloniki, Greece. Through his Italian language teacher, he was introduced to the owner of a local tourist agency, which was organizing regular bus trips to Italy, especially during the summer months. On July, he was sent on his first trip as a trainee, assisting his teacher who was an occasional tourist group leader himself. During this first trip, he was introduced both in the behavioral norms and practices that would help him move within the structures of the tourist business. The basic doctrine was one: "You should not trust anyone".

Andreas noticed that the person he would spend most time together, his closest coworker, was the bus-driver. He was either hired on a free-lance basis, like the tourist group leaders, or employed on a contract with a steady monthly salary. Together they shared the 'small earnings' that came up during the trip. At the first restaurant they had to stop for launch, the owner gave them a small amount of money as a 'gift', but always proportionate to how much the group had consumed. Andreas was told that *he* should be the one 'reminding' the restaurant owners of the 'bill' they had to pay him. But, even in the cases where he forgot to ask or voluntarily neglected it, the restaurant owner would send one of his waiters to deliver it to him, just at the moment the bus was about to leave. In this way, the owner made sure that the group leader and the bus driver, with whom the pay-off was to be shared, would stop again at the same restaurant, on their next trip or in their way back. The restaurant prices were usually high, since the profit was to be shared with the bus-drivers and the group-leaders.

The restaurant owners were extremely friendly to their collaborators. They would offer them whatever food they liked and they sometimes insisted for them to take extra salads, sweets and drinks, even when they did not want to. In case they insisted to make a small order, they acted suspiciously and seemed to be insulted. Usually, they would sit with them at the table and ask how things were going at work, how the trip was and about the schedule of their next trips. They acted in a spirit of generosity, which would give a character of personal hospitality to what could be also seen as a profit-oriented partnership. But, as Mauss (1969) taught us, hospitality also imposes obligations of eventual reciprocity and the acknowledgement of moral indebtedness on the recipient. It forms the basis of the connection that binds patron to client, by reversing the imbalance between the power of the guest (who could come back with the next tourist-group or not) and the host (who is dependent on the guest's decision).

<sup>4</sup> In order to give a complete insight, we have integrated in the presentation of the case some comments regarding the attitudes of the actors and the articulation of trust at various levels of corrupt transactions.



The group's trust of the group-leaders' choices varied according to the origin of the group. Groups coming from small provincial towns tended to demonstrate more trust for the group-leader's choices (e.g. where and when to make bus-stops), which was glossed into a language of affection; people from rural areas addressed the group-leader as 'our boy', hence offering him a sense of belonging to the group and sharing its identity. At the end of the trip, they considered it highly appropriate to demonstrate their gratitude by raising a tip offered from the group as a whole, assuring him that he is at any time welcome in their town and wishing him good luck for his personal and professional future. In this way, the relation with the agency, which was the actual trip-provider, was *personalized* through the group leader, who was actually present and whom they had come to know so far. This personalization of the transaction between tourists and tourist agency builded trust between the two traders, but it left an open space for the intermediary who did not trust his employer himself to cheat both parts of the transaction.

Those small pay-offs were always a matter of dispute with the bus-driver. Andreas would always share the 'earnings' equally with them, but they never trusted him and either wanted a bigger share or were not satisfied by the amount of earnings. If they felt tricked out (*rigmeni*, lit. overthrown), they would adopt an aggressive attitude and would engage in mud-slinging to the clients about the X restaurant's food, the Y shop's products or the group leader himself. They would pull a long face, try to be rude and not collaborate willingly. Andreas mentioned for example the case of a driver who refused to drive to the spot where he would end his walking tour with the group, but demanded to meet them in another place, which was more convenient to him. Andreas would be subject in a permanent process of intimidation until the sharing of the next 'earnings', where he had the possibility to prove his 'honesty'.

This behavior was not particular for the bus-drivers only. Most group leaders were also primarily concerned with the extra-earnings made from each trip. Complaints about the 'deceitful' attitude of some restaurant owners who did not pay the bribe (*miza*) were a permanent topic for discussion among colleagues. The way they managed to trick them out was a feature they were proud of. The way they managed to make their illegal transactions without catching the clients' attention was an additional feature of cleverness.

The group leaders, who had different class backgrounds (they were students, civil servants, elementary and high school teachers or language professors) had various excuses for accepting bribes and gifts. One was that the various perks (*tychera*) and presents they would get from the shop-owners were destined to their friends and family. Andreas was sometimes pressed by the bus-drivers to give them more because *they* had a family to 'breed', whereas *he* had only himself. A most characteristic incidence was when one of the group leaders, after a strong argument with a shop-owner on the amount that her clients spent and on how much a reward she deserved, instead of feeling embarrassed or humiliated about it, regained her self-assurance by claiming that the 'gift' that she received was actually destined to her friends back home.

A second excuse deployed by the group leaders concerned the fact that their wage and working rights were not guaranteed by the employing agency. The wages were not fixed and there was no insurance covered. The appointments for trips were conditional not upon performance as much as on personal ties with the agency owners, whereas the number of trips that the tourist agency was able to organize were conditional upon the turnout of clients. The group leader's trade union was trying to get the profession recognized by setting up a school that would train group leaders and would issue a valid certificate, which would grant the graduates a specific social status and working rights. But their lawyer's efforts did not succeed and the law that provided for the establishment of the training school did not pass, because the tourist agency owners intensively lobbied some members of the parliament not to vote for it<sup>5</sup>.

Among the group leaders and given the circumstances there was absolutely no cooperation spirit. The rules guaranteeing fair competition being absent, they would lie to each other on almost anything (on the amount of their official and unofficial earnings, on whether they were lobbying with the agency to go on trips, on the number of trips they had been on, on the success or not of the trips etc.). Whoever made the mistake to tell the truth, was considered as 'naïve' and 'dumb'. The lack of mutual trust made it almost impossible to build up a social network based on class solidarity. The turnout at the group leaders' union annual meeting was extremely low, around 20-30 people. No one agreed on a strike: the agencies would just replace them with young students who would be unaware of the situation. They seemed not to care about whether the new group leaders would do a good job, which was highly probable because they lacked experience. Besides, the old leaders were also not trustworthy as regards the success of the trips. As mentioned, usually their only goal was to earn more extra-money from each trip.

The tourist agent's excuse was that they also had to secure their interests. The tourist business was a highly irregular business and too insecure an area to invest. Not establishing a legitimate relation to their employees, however, as we saw, allowed the latter to legitimize their own smaller corruption networks. In this way, the corrupt relation between the tourist agencies and the politicians was reproduced in the corrupt practices between the group leaders and *their* 'business-partners'.

The latter influenced the group leader's attitude towards the clients, since performing became secondary to earning and making short-term profit more important than providing the best facilities to the clients. Whether the food in restaurant X was of bad quality was not important to the leader since he would get his money 'under-the-table'. However, his gains being illegal and his attitude towards the clients deceitful, he was related to them in a most ambiguous fashion. In fact, most group leaders were alienated from the group, even after spending seven or ten days with them; the group did not trust nor liked them any more. As a result, the clients might not choose to travel with the same tourist agency again both because

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<sup>5</sup> As stated by the chairman of the Greek Tourist Guide & Group Leader Association in the annual trade union meeting in Thessaloniki, 07/02/2003

of the bad food in restaurant X and because of the leader's attitude. This in turn can be a loss to the agency and further on a loss in taxes for the state.

As stated above, the lobby of the tourist agency owners used its well-established links with politicians in order to prevent passing a law that provided for the clarification of the professional status of the group leaders. They preferred to keep those employees undeclared, as this left much room for personal negotiation regarding trip appointments, payments, working conditions etc. This complete lack of regulation left both sides with a persistent feeling of exploitation by the other side. The uncertainty that governed their relation was strongly influencing their attitude towards each other.

For example, this is what happened to Andreas, when he returned back from his first trip and went to the tourist office to get paid. The owner was constantly talking on the phone and Andreas had to wait for long before he was addressed to. And when this finally happened, the boss claimed that he did not have any money at the office at that point and that he should come back after three days. When Andreas returned as agreed, the owner told him that he just came back from the bank so he had no cash left to pay him, he should come back again another time. Andreas' colleagues told him that these delays were the agency's strategy to keep its free-lance employees 'under control'. As a result, Andreas could not possibly identify with the agency's interests, since the agency, by not paying him on time, did not meet his own interests. The days until he finally received his wage, he would survive on the money from his illegal gains.

## ***2. Drawing on friends***

The moral justifications that group leaders and bus-drivers alike used in order to purify their corrupt engagements are key-elements for understanding the ideology that nourishes the aspirations of individuals with regard to social life. There is no need to discuss again the role of the family as a political entity that functions both as the foundation stone and as an anti-structure in relation to the nation-state. Enough evidence has been provided already in the analysis of the first case. The new interesting element here is the invocation of gift-giving and friendship as an excuse for making additional gains out of the duty. A kickback received in kind automatically justified the bribery act by being nominated a present for a friend.

According to Mauss, gift giving is a way in which enduring social relations are established and maintained (Mauss 1969). Such social relations are based on reciprocity and interdependence that engenders regard for the other as a necessity for their preservation. Of course, the numerous interpersonal relations that develop within



'modern' societies differ in scope and nature and can range from friendship to mere acquaintanceship. "In open market or else universalistic societies, the private spheres come to be considered as an essential part of social life" (Eisenstadt 1984: 283). Indeed, there is a paradoxical public recognition of the legitimacy of searching for privacy 'for something beyond the glare of public life' through friendships (p.284). The private sphere becomes the realm where institutional obligations are lessened or even overridden and, accordingly, friendships are characterized by relatively little formalization and institutionalization.

It is interesting to notice that the person who invoked her friendships as a justification for engaging in illegal transactions was a self-employed woman in her thirties, divorced, with a son living in Australia and herself in Thessaloniki. A young woman living in a large urban centre has for various reasons transferred the focus of social essentialism outside the familial context. Friendship becomes the 'moral space' that replaces family, when the latter is missing. In a state of economic independence, when the 'old family' has perished or lives far away and the 'new family' does not exist or is not present, friends tend to take over various social tasks, duties and functions from family and kin, thus becoming our 'adopted family'. In fact, friendships have been regarded as the key type of relationship in the post-industrial transformation, where interpersonal relationships of trust are growing more important (Misztal 1996).

### ***3. The moral aspects of friendship***

But what is it that makes us trust friends as moral agents and friendships as capable to eliminate our immoral acts? Drawing on Aristotle's *Nicomachen Ethics*, Pahl notices that virtuous friends 'enlarge and extend each other's moral experience' (Pahl 2000: 22). "The friends are bound together as they recognize each other's moral excellence. Each can be said to provide a mirror in which the other may see himself" (p.71). What distinguishes friendships from other social relations is their 'illusionary' disconnection from any utilitarian context. True friendship, based on virtue, can have material benefits, but does not seek them, they are not part of our intention when we develop a friendship. For the friend's interest is put before our own and we always try to give more than we receive. Mutuality keeps the relation in balance. In contrast,

relations in which we engage with a clear focus on our own interest are only ironically given the label 'friendships'.

As one commentator argues, the rules of commercial society have replaced much previous instrumental friendships of the industrializing era, allowing for the "free expression of a new morally superior friendship based on 'natural sympathy', unconstrained by necessity. These new, freely chosen relationships reflected the new universalism emerging in civil society. The well-regulated market frees the classic Aristotelian friendship of virtue from friendship of utility. Commercial society requires 'authentically indifferent co-citizens' rather than potential enemies or allies." (Pahl 2000: 57). At this point, it is important to notice that friendships, as voluntary informal and personal relationships, still operate within the constraints of class, gender, age, ethnicity, geography (Allan 1989).

The emotional attachment to our friends -the development and expression of altruistic emotions of sympathy and care- both generates and incorporates the vision of community. Friendship 'from the heart' (*kardiaki*) becomes through corporate metaphors the outcry for the development of bonding networks based on the norms of sharing and caring. Or else, "the imagery of trust and pristine values tends ... to be focused around the reconstruction of the societal centers and the establishment of a new institutional order in terms of such pristine values" (Eisenstadt 1984: 288).

Along with family, kinship relations and small informal groups, they represent each individual's 'small life world' by forming a subjectively meaningful communicative environment, based on personal relations that are not merely instrumental. On the other hand, the relations developed as part of our exposure to the public (politicians, business-partners, colleagues at the workplace) have usually a more utilitarian character. Our relation to our friends is perceived as innocuous and driven by benevolent intentions, whereas our 'public self' is expected to be more rational and profit-oriented. Colleagues at work can fall in either of these spheres, since increasing competition means that they might become potential rivals and unlikely to become our friends.

In connection to that, any exchanges within the private sphere of intimacy are perceived as a 'moral absolute', that can absorb the immorality of other exchanges. Hence, the ethical substance of friendship that serves as an enrichment of our personal integrity can counter-balance the low ethical value of illegal exchanges and legitimize them -as the group leader did- by converting the illegally gained product into a gift

destined to a friend. Similarly, instances of nepotism and favoritism can be consciously disconnected from any context of immorality as efforts to protect our emotional investments and to create communal spheres that are more valuable for our personal happiness. Companionship –or else ‘social support’- that is realized through family solidarity and friendship is the main contributing factor to subjective well-being in market democracies, where people rise above the poverty level (Lane 2000: 77). In this respect, certain modes of corruption such as favoritism and nepotism can be viewed as a demonstration of altruism, which is more possible to express in small life worlds or ‘intimate face-to-face associations’.

#### **4. Reassessing privatism**

The value of small life worlds as a force informing and transforming the political landscape is discernible in the experience of postcommunist transition. In these societies, scholars have widely referred to the existence of “an old and new unpolitical privatism that is not favourable for the growth of communitarian orientations and participation in a civil society” (Meyer 2003: 174). But, as Meyer remarks, this privatism had also a positive type for it nourished a *private counter-culture* striving for the preservation of identity, for more freedom and reforms in politics and society. He goes on stressing that

“In this ‘protected’ private sphere, with its rather uncontrolled communication, grew and crystallized that socio-cultural capital and prudent readiness to act in public which made possible the peaceful revolutions of 1989/1990. This capital, fed by political discontent and with perhaps only vague ideas for a better future, contributed substantially to the breakdown of the Communist regimes first by inner erosion and semi-public criticism, and finally by the mobilization of thousands of protesters and reformers before or after the peaceful transitions to democracy were negotiated at Round Tables.” (Meyer 2003: 175)

Hence, social and civic competence is developed not only through the *quantity of social relations*, but also through their specific *quality*, which is defined by “human

closeness and unpretending equality; time for each other ... and intensive communication; helpfulness and sometimes remarkable solidarity; self-assertion and the courage to use small rooms of maneuvering, or even to show civic courage and resistance" (Ibid.).

There is a certain gap however between the protection of one's sphere of privacy and its superimposition on the institutional order. Having friends does not necessarily enforce us to circumvent our duties in order to serve them. In this respect, it is useful to reflect on some remarks based on historical thinking:

"Such oppositionary orientations and tendencies tend particularly to develop, in the modern universalistic societies, in historical situations in which there emerge clearly defined and striking contradictions between the universalistic premises of these societies and the actual access to the centre, or in situations in which there is very marked discord between different groups aspiring to the reconstruction of the centre, especially the secondary elite groups, and the actual holders of positions at the centre" (Eisenstadt 1984: 292).

In other words, the use of friends and personal networks to gain access to political and other resources takes place when these resources are otherwise not accessible. When the institutional spheres are structured according to different principles, recourse to pristine values that are being denied becomes part of the effort to transcend the institutional order. A backlash in the realm of private relations occurs as a reaction to unequal distribution of rights and opportunities. The human values that accompany them are invoked in order to challenge the political and cultural centre, but also to reclaim the possibility to determine one's own socio-economic destiny.

With regard to our case study, the persistent denial of a professional identity and of precisely defined working rights, gave rise to the use of morally charged concepts and relations in order to legitimize the informal strategies of coping with uncertainty and difficulties. The ideology of friendship functioned as an anti-structure because the official structure denied a regularization of the professional status and a normalization of all transactions occurring within the occupational framework.

The employer used his political connections -his access to the centre- to keep the employees' professional status unrecognized; in fact, all of them were illegally

employed. The group leaders complemented their unstable earnings through acts of petty corruption. The vestment of their actions with the moral value of friendship combined their opposition to the state with an imagery of societal spheres built upon non-utilitarian norms that hold a community together through interpersonal relations of trust and solidarity.

Accordingly, friendship does not lose its moral excellence by serving instrumental purposes. Invoking our friendly bonds, and our intention to maintain them, in order to justify acts that go against the general good signal not an ethical decay as much as the need for a fair distribution of rights and responsibilities. The infringement of the duty, 'moralized' through its association with generally accepted human values, hints to the very need for regulating this duty by virtue of an honest contract that takes into account all the relative variables.

However, friendships can take the form of a 'closed' social network, which can have negative effects. They can reproduce a non-conformist stance that can reach levels of organized criminal activity, based on domestic authoritarianism and the exclusion of others. Nonetheless, 'non-conformity' lies in the core of small life worlds. Privacy is by definition informal and therefore households have a relative autonomy from the state. Since, as we shall explore below, more organized forms of civil society run different dangers concerning their autonomy, the importance of small life worlds as political entities that can challenge the state at every time should not be undermined.

If the moral costs of corruption are lessened by invoking the importance of small life worlds, there is a need to have a closer look on how these social spheres coexist with the public sphere, sometimes in a co-operative manner and other times in a more opposing way. It is generally a common view that social capital, however essential as a structural component of society, can have negative and positive effects on corruption. But what is social capital? And under which circumstances is it a beneficial or not for a society?

## **E. Socio-structural explanations**

### **1. Social capital**

The concept of social capital has a long intellectual history in the social sciences (Platteau 1994). Officially, it was (re)introduced by Pierre Bourdieu (1980), who described social capital as the individual's investment in social networks, which can be converted to cultural or 'symbolic' capital thus signaling social status. It takes the form of a private good that enriches or impoverishes one's power in the society.

Expanding this definition, Coleman defines social capital as "a set of inherent in the social organization social-structural resources ... such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action" (Coleman 1990: 300-302). He regards it as the sum of 'relational' capital several individuals hold and is governed by norms of reciprocity, which are enforced by peer pressure, gain or loss in reputation, and the like. The power inherent in interpersonal relations is thus considered beneficial not only to the individual, but to the whole social network, which can act as a unified political body and relate to other similar networks. Thus, Coleman's definition lies somewhere between public and private good.

For Putnam (1993) on the other hand, the 'owner' of social capital is a whole society, which has specific cultural traits and a historical past. He examined features such as 'trust, norms and networks' (p.167) and suggested that their peculiar correlations explains the bulk of difference regarding governance and corruption levels between Northern and Southern Italy. He concludes that social capital reflects the civic mindedness of members of a society, the existence of social norms promoting collective action and the degree of trust in public institutions. For Putnam, the significance of social capital lies in the effects it can have on public life. He suggests that voluntary organizations of civic society are crucial for making democracies work, because they support social interest instead of personal profit thus promoting such habits as tolerance, co-operation and reciprocity (Putnam 2000). In this respect, they constitute porous and socially inclusive - 'bridging' as opposed to 'bonding' - networks that promote interactions between people from heterogeneous social groups with different backgrounds.

These three approaches should not be seen as contradictory to each other. Their difference lies with the focus of attention from the individual to the community. They all underline the importance of social networks for advancing the individual's life quality and for shaping the social landscape of a given polity. The added value of Putnam's study is that it emphasizes the importance of voluntary participation in associational life as a determinant factor for a vibrant liberal community to flourish. The bulk of research on social capital that has been produced the last years has taken different directions. Woolcock and Narayan (2000) categorize it into four distinct perspectives: the communitarian view, the networks, the institutional view and the synergy view. From those, the last one gives a most useful description of social capital by pointing to the synergy of both the state and society as the key element in facilitating the accumulation of social capital (p.235). In other words, the creation of social capital is a 'bottom-up' and 'top-bottom' endeavor at the same time.

Social capital enhances coordination and mutual benefit and is thus by definition regarded as positive for a community's economic growth, political stability and general well-being. The accumulation of social capital promotes a sense of generalized trust, which is fundamental for the creation of 'high trust' societies, where corruption and cynicism versus the state are unlikely to appear. Generalized trust is defined as trust in anonymous others and in abstract systems or organizations (legal framework, state institutions and civil society) (Tonoyan 2003: 3). This 'collectivistic' type of trust, which is neither person-specific, nor situation-specific, as opposed to 'particularized' trust (i.e. trust in family, friends and kins) has been postulated as a negative factor for corruption (Ibid.). It follows that to counter corruption in a given society, efforts should be directed towards the creation, the increase, or else the accumulation of social capital.

We could say that, following Putnam's theoretical approach, civil society and political participation are the best indicators for 'measuring' social capital, those norms and networks that facilitate coordinated action for *mutual* benefit. In this respect, the empowerment of civil society appears as a necessary remedy to counter corruption, underdevelopment and other social flaws.



## 2. Civil society

It is commonly agreed that healthy democracies need a vibrant, free and lively civil society in order to be enduring (Linz and Stepan 1996; Diamond 1994). According to political scientists, "civil society is that arena of polity where self-organizing and relatively autonomous groups, movements and individuals attempt to articulate values, to create associations and solidarities and to advance their interests" (Linz and Stepan 1996: 17). This definition is wide enough to include various types and forms of civil engagement, but it entails some unclear points with regard to the extent of autonomy and of pursuit of interest that these groups might exert. For example, the solidarity developed within a certain civic group can be unilaterally deployed to promote its interests at the expense of other groups. In this respect, a first problem is raised when the excessive regarding of self-interest from a group might render it exclusive, antagonistic and even hostile to other groups (e.g. fascist groups or fundamentalist religious groups).

Anthropologists propose a more inclusive, universal, definition that regards civil society as "social organizations occupying the space between the household and the state that enable people to co-ordinate their management of resources and activities" (Layton 2004: 3). The history of such social organizations can be traced back to the Middle Ages, when Swiss villagers started to set up autonomous and self-regulating agricultural corporations (p.10).

From the above definition, it becomes clear that the most characteristic aspect of civil society is its positioning between the public and the private sphere. There is an inherent problem however with regard to which of the two domains will be served mostly. Civil society groups are generally perceived as bottom-up endeavors. Their commitment to the forces that form them is most relevant to maintain their legitimacy as social mechanisms mitigating between the state and non-state actors who do not hold any kind of official power to govern the community they represent. Yet, it is this kind of power that civil society tries to control or incorporate and from this perspective a very active civil society can be a sign that the central power is too much alienated from the particular interests of a certain group or that the distribution of rights and opportunities is not equal between various social groups. Nevertheless, an active civil society remains highly important as a bridge between *household* and the *state*.

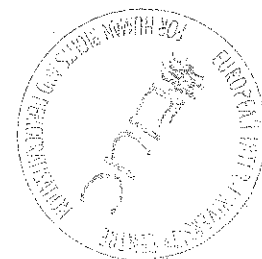


It appears that social interest is more genuinely represented by groups that are formed voluntarily, for it is the pursuit of this common interest or values that brings them together. NGO's and other value-oriented civic institutions are a most characteristic example. In light of the synergy approach, the support of the state is necessary for their establishment. Their legal recognition is a first step towards cooperation between the two, receiving funding a second and designing and implementing state policies a third one. The apparent danger emerges as to how civic institutions are going to keep the balance between the state and the citizens. As 'flex organizations' "that switch their status situationally –from state to private- back and forth, strategically maneuvering their statuses so as to best access state, business, and sometimes international resources" (Wedel 2002: 3). As such, Wedel argues, they can deny responsibility to deliver their services as acclaimed. And as evidenced in Eastern Europe, NGO's can become more accountable to international donors and supporters than to their own communities and function as a channel of elite interests and ideologies. This alienates them from the 'household', whose interests are the reason why they came to be established at first place.

Civil society is not a new enterprise, but its institutionalization and especially its professionalization is. As a form of political association, it serves at providing ideological and human resources to the state. It is not unusual to see trade union leaders and NGO activists running and being elected as 'real' politicians. To feature one example, in the late 1990's one of the leaders of the old environmentalist movement became a deputy minister for the environment in one of the government's Cabinet (Sotiropoulos 2004a: 23). Today's NGO professionals are part of a new social class that provides feedback to the political elites. In modern societies with a high division of labor, politics become more and more professionalized and need to draw upon expertise.

Civil society is seen as the most positive version of social capital for it uses social networking to promote civic competence and sets out to do so while ideally keeping its autonomy from the state. This quasi-political elite of NGO professionals aims at gaining access to ideological and political power by virtue of its values and attested civic competence. It therefore aspires at diminishing party clientelism, which makes access to political power conditional upon different criteria, loyalty to the party and strategic networking deprived of any common devotion to social interest. In one way or another, social networking is essential for the establishment and running of

political organizations (Hedin 2001) and it remains an open question how engagement in these networks, albeit necessary, will leave future politicians unaffected by particular interests and devoted to the general public good.



### **3. Clientelism and the 'colonization' of civil society**

Despite the presumably benevolent character of voluntary participation, not all civil associations contribute to the same degree to the advancement of community life and democratic ideals. Various xenophobic, extreme-right or sectarian groups coexist with others that have a more emancipating or humanitarian agenda. Participation in social movements can disguise more humble goals, as evidenced by the extended shop-lifting during anti-globalization and other large public demonstrations. And, as we mentioned, NGO's can become more accountable to international donors than to their own communities.

Similarly, trade unions and labor movements can be controlled by political party factions and serve as an organ of party-targeted political opposition or as a silencer of real government scrutiny. In countries like Greece, where party clientelism has been a dominating form of governance for the last three decades, civil society has only to a low degree developed into formal institutions<sup>6</sup>. Since the transition from the authoritarian rule of the colonels lasting from 1967 until 1974, to a democratic rule, political power has been mainly divided between the two traditional parties of the Right and the Left, both sustained through a clientelistic structure that left little room for autonomous civil engagement. As Mouzelis and Pagoulatos (2002) observe, *partitocracy*, in the form of favoritism (*rousfeti*) and plutocracy –the accumulation of economic power-, in the form of intermeshed interests (*diaplekomena symferonta*) permeated Greek civil society, undermining its potential to growth when interest for politics started to decline in the 1990's.

In fact, clientelism was sustained by temporary appointments and promotions in the civil service. The establishment of national recruitment examinations did not prevent party cadres from exerting their power by giving tenure to personnel initially hired on a temporary basis (Papadopoulos 1997). The distribution of invalidity

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<sup>6</sup> For the measurement of social capital in Greece, see Lyberaki A, Paraskevopoulos J. Chr.(2002), <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/22/15/2381649.pdf>

pensions by state-run medical committees in the 1980's was another occasion for low-level corruption to flourish, as evidenced by the disproportionate number of such pensions issued (Sotiropoulos 2004b: 52). This was not very surprisingly so, since needs-testing social programs undermine social trust, whereas contacts with universal welfare state institutions tend to increase it (Kumlin: forthcoming).

Recent administrative reforms that took place in 1994 and 1997, aiming at the decentralization of government powers through the transfer of new competencies to locally elected Prefects and Mayors (Kapsi 2000) have only partly achieved the detachment of local elites from official party cadres. Albeit somehow decreasing in the last years, strong party mechanisms stretch from the centre to the periphery and are maintained through the nomination of candidates, the attribution of the *chrisma*. This term, drawn from the ecclesiastical thesaurus, is the same word that stands for unction. The nomination of local political candidates by official party authorities is perceived as a 'sacred' procedure thus incorporating and strengthening traits of national culture.

Student parties, whose candidates run for university elections, are another aspect of how clientelism pervades the sphere of civil society. Those parties have strong connections to the Parties' Youth and virtually act as branches of the two major parties within Greek Universities. They function as a mechanism that provides new members to the party structure; expressing their loyalty to the party at an early stage can eventually pursue a political career later on.

This politicized social landscape gives the impression that the masses are indeed incorporated in politics. In fact, clientelism in Greece and other Southern European countries is understood as a mode of political participation (Mouzelis 1986: 74). It is considered as a means that brings lower and middle social strata into politics through various 'vertical networks of patron-client relationships' (Ibid: 76).

#### ***4. Other factors undermining the development of civil society***

A constitutional aspect of the contemporary Greek polity that might be related to the low formal civic engagement and gives off the idea of a high quality democracy is compulsory voting. Since participation in national and regional elections is a legally established responsibility of every citizen, political commitment is cultivated as an

unquestioned value. This measure ensures a high degree of legitimacy for the elected government, but it also reinforces the impression that a state has to be subject to periodical control. The principle of periodical elections and terms of office, even in its optional form, shows distrust in the willingness of rulers to surrender their power voluntarily (Sztompka 1999: 141). Compulsory voting further amplifies this conscious or unconscious distrust to the government and may capture the sense of civic responsibility into a single act. By solving the legitimation problem, it makes citizens less interested in engaging in further activities that will ensure political accountability during the tenure of office.

In addition, a twofold cultural legacy nourishes the idea that democracy is working well in Greece. On the one hand, the stereotype of Greece as the 'birthplace of democracy' appeases genuine political thinking, by virtue of a cultural reading of national history that cultivates a sentimental pride about the achievements of an ancient past. On the other hand, the cultural conceptualization of the Balkans as a region where politics 'is everywhere' and discussed 'by everyone' in the traditional coffee shops (*kafeneia*) -where the access is usually restricted only to men- gives off the idea of strong political commitment from the part of the citizenry. On this latter tradition, Sotiropoulos founds part of his argument about the strength of 'informal' civic society in Greece. Following his hypotheses, we find in Greece plenty of informal groupings where social interaction takes place thus constituting a form of unregistered civil activity (Sotiropoulos 2004a: 14).

But discussing about politics does not equal political action. Much more, it signals the necessity to criticize government performance in every possible occasion, as long as no other-independent- political forums exist, from where the citizenry can enforce peer pressure towards political elites. For the aggregate data of associational participation<sup>7</sup> suggest that, admittedly, there is a gap between political discussions and political activity. Greeks talk a lot about politics, but they do not do much about it. Criticism has been restricted, so as to be harmless for the sympathetic party, which can eventually ensure a place in one of the state's services.

In fact, clientelism has by now become a *mentality* of Greeks and other South Europeans, "a mental reflex, whenever they come in any kind of contact with state authorities ... a tendency to think in terms of political connections and 'plugs' in

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

order to bring any business, however small, with the state to a successful end" (Sotiropoulos 2004b: 23). This observation underlines the persistency of patron-client relations in Greece. The control of the electoral body through public sector appointments, albeit decreasing in the last years, lessens the costs of political campaigning and makes politicians less subject to large corporate interests. But, on the other hand, it maintains the power of political patronage and contributes to the citizen's feeling of powerlessness towards the state.

This common shared feeling creates a culture of distrust and uncertainty that keeps informal economic activity striving and incentives for corruption rife. As long as involvement in existing party mechanisms is the main road to influence decision-making, a road that is too long to go, bribery and unofficial dealings become a valid means to employ in the meantime. Since the public sphere does not operate efficiently "the masses ... seek refuge in support systems that are more familiar, not only procedurally but also emotionally" (Güne\_-Ayata 1994: 26). Knowing that civil servants hold their position not because of their merit, but because of instrumental friendships, enforces a preliminary judgment of their moral capacities. All of them are potential bribe-takers because they too do not trust the state as an entity devoted to the common good. The mechanisms they used to get employed or promoted themselves underline the relevance of particularistic criteria as the practically most efficient tool to move ahead in life.

### ***5. Clientelism and corruption distinguished?***

Traditionally, bribery and corruption are distinguished from patronage and clientelism. Corruption is considered as an individual social behavior that functions as a two-way process, whereas clientelism a form of social organization where it is possible to determine a vertical distinction with the subordination of clients to a patron. Another distinction is drawn from the difference in the medium of barter: "While political corruption involves the trading of public decisions for money, clientelism, on the contrary, barter protection for consensus" (Weingrod, cited in Della Porta 1997b: 173). The fact that clientelism involves "a generalized exchange relating to unspecified services" (Ibid.) such as personal obligations and gratitude, whereas corruption is an exchange of a financial type, led to a distinction that up to a

degree legitimized the former and criminalized the latter. This distinction however is not all that valid and the interconnection between the two phenomena must be taken into consideration properly.

Clientelism takes the form of an 'instrumental friendship', where one partner becomes clearly superior to the other in his capacity to grant goods and services (Wolf 1977: 174). However, the character of patron-client relations is not always clearly vertical. The client who exerts invaluable influence on voters does in fact capture the patron. And the rich businessman, who seeks favorable treatment by the decision-makers, willing to 'help out' with the increasing cost of politics caused by the decrease of grass-roots political support 'captures the state'.

Clientelism also involves 'money', when a politician in order to ensure the loyalty of his supporters votes for the increase of public expenditure in order to enhance the possibility for distribution of services to his clients. Or, when a member of the local city council selectively circulates the news about new job openings in the civil service or about the initiation of new public works. As a result, the client's income increases and the politician ensures reelection, which will help him stay in the 'business'. Instances of individuals who pursue political positions at a local level as an alternative job that provides better income than their previous one are not few. In short, there is no long way from clientelism to corruption, they are both exchange relationships involving either 'extrinsic or instrumental', as opposed to 'intrinsic or expressive' benefits (Della Porta 1997b: 174).

What is interesting, however, is not the relation between clientelism and political corruption, as much as the connection between clientelism or political corruption and bureaucratic corruption. Sajo raises a valid point by introducing the term 'clientelistic corruption' –albeit with reference to Eastern Europe: "The feeling that governments are sleazy is inevitable. The omnipresence of governmental sleaze reinforces the impression that both public and private action (like favoring the admission of certain students over others at a school) will be reasonably understandable only within a clientelist setting ... In the eyes of observant citizens, a public action will always fit into a clientelistic scheme; this is the context that gives social meaning to otherwise haphazard events" (Sajo 1998: 2-3).

In fact, the invasion of the society by political parties gives growth to "a secret, invisible, illegitimate power" (Della Porta 1997b: 179) that makes corruption between bureaucrats and citizens seem exactly what it is termed as: petty. The lack of

trust to the government, resulting from the unraveling of political scandals, becomes the basis for justification of private regarding. In the absence of ethical leadership that promotes the ideal of the public good, the citizen feels that the choices for himself are limited. He has to protect his interests himself for the state does not seem likely to do so. The partiality of the public administration, recruited with questionable procedures, does not favor him either. In his moral solitude, the best option seems to 'settle' his affairs all by himself, to 'arrange' them in the most immediate and efficient way. The bureaucrat, on the other hand, familiar with the power structure of the political parties that ensured him his job or with the rigidity of state regulations and formal rules deems also reasonable to circumvent them and to offer his 'collaboration', at the frame of the official cadres. As a result, corruption becomes a way of adaptation to the superimposed clientelistic setting.

## ***6. Corruption and democracy***

Time and again, Western scholarship and Western politicians have been doing their best to induce the idea that corruption is a pathology more likely to infect all the other political systems but democracy. Corruption has been linked to authoritarian regimes, the neo-patrimonial African states and, increasingly so, postcommunist Eastern Europe. At the same time however, old Western democratic regimes were facing numerous problems, low voter turnout, increasing demand for campaign funds, political scandals and ideological crises. Media accusations unraveled cases of corruption involving heads of state and former prime ministers in countries as democratic as Italy, Belgium and Germany or within the bureaucratic structures of the EU itself. No system seemed to be immune to corruption.

However, the emergence of the problem of corruption as a main topic of public discussions can be also regarded as the result of a positive development. The press being at the forefront of most corruption scandals, this confirms the 'openness' of democratic societies, where freedom of the media allows journalists to denunciate political malpractice and effective judiciary to take up decisive action. We could not convincingly argue that our times are more corrupt-plagued than previous times; a more realistic view should point at the development of a more incisive, 'investigative-type' journalism, which threw light on the dark sides of politics and mobilized public

opinion (Della Porta 1997a: 4). In addition, the strengthening of civic competence led to closer monitoring and exposure of civil servants and politicians.

A second aspect of the new concern about political corruption is related to the growing imbalance between the state and the market. The public sphere in contemporary democracies has been 're-feudalized' by different societal interests (Habermas 1996[1962]) or else 'colonized' by financial interests of large broadcasting companies and other business corporations. The need for huge financial resources, for politicians, raises the question of whether the democratic multi-party system and competitive politics escalate the demand for campaign funds and render politicians more liable to sell their political influence (Andvig 2001: 42). On the other hand, this same system induces political adversaries to discover and report misuses of office (Andvig 2001: 64).

The 'deepening' of democracy is considered to be linked with lower corruption levels. Corruption is a challenge ahead for a democratic state to achieve better institutional checks and balances, participation and democratic citizens. Horizontal and vertical accountability, i.e. within institutions and between institutions and citizens, assures performance of the political system and has a direct impact on its legitimacy; participation and an active political culture are the two other components of democratic consolidation (Nielsen 2000: 12-14). In addition, public appointments on the basis of merit in all levels of public tenure can induce trust in bureaucratic institutions and enhance the quality of public life. Finally, a universal distribution of welfare rights can lower economic dissatisfaction and lessen the incentives for corruption. All in all, democracy through its ability to reform itself can employ a series of remedies in order to fight decisively against all forms of corruption.

## **G. Conclusions**

The above discussion indicates that corruption is very much understood as a morally charged concept. Even for the person who engages in an instance of petty corruption, there are moral costs to be borne, which in some have to be done away with. The spaces where the actors seek for moral alibis tell us much about the specific social and ethnographic context where they are situated.



Thus, the first 'moral space' offering a shelter from the ethical burden of corruption is family. The family takes up several roles. First, it provides financial support and assumes full moral responsibility for the allocation of the money. Second, it provides a political unity from which the individual can challenge the state's authority. Third, it offers a world of metaphors that is deployed by the state in order to create the image of a nation-wide community. The cooptation of familial idioms by the state, illustrative of the symbolical significance of the family, reinforces its moral autonomy and legitimizes the pursuit of family interest over and above the interest of the state.

The second 'moral space' is religion. The church has a dual function and serves as a rather mediating space between the family and the state. By co-opting familial idioms itself, it also reinforces the family's moral autonomy, over and above the state and the church. By offering its own idioms at the disposal of nationalistic rhetoric however, it also assumes a moral autonomy from the state, which can provide ethical consolation for the pursuit of private regarding at the state's expenses.

The third 'moral space' is friendship. Through the use of corporate idioms and the quality of intimacy, friendship assumes a significant status. Under certain circumstances, it can replace the role of the family for the individual, but it does not offer a *repertoire* that can serve as vehicle for national ideology. Therefore, it can have a positive input to civic statehood. Although friendship, as an informal personal relation, still operates within certain social constraints, within certain conditions it can assume the quality of a civic virtue.

Moral spaces that mediate between the state and the citizen fall generally under the notion of social capital. As social capital we define the norms, trust and networks that facilitate coordinated action for mutual benefit. The participation in voluntary associations is considered as a necessary determinant for a prosperous democratic community. However, civil society organizations must try to maintain their autonomy from the state. The cooptation of NGO's and trade unions by international donors and governments can destroy social capital. As a result, the logics of political clientelism dominate the social landscape and civil society is 'colonized'. In Greece, this pervasive clientelist organization has been the major reason for low social capital, weak civil society, a culture of distrust versus the state and corruption.

Corruption and clientelism are often considered as two different concepts. Their similarities notwithstanding, their most 'direct' connection is the feeling of

powerlessness versus the patrimonial state, which is generated by clientelism and lies at the source of low civic mindedness and corruption, which can be viewed as an effort to transcend the institutional order.

Besides nationalism and clientelism, which differs in type and measure across different countries, modern democracies have an additional problem to tackle, namely political corruption. However, the rise of the discourse on corruption should not only be seen as a negative phenomenon; it is illustrative of an open society with free media, effective judiciary and democratic citizens. Besides, democracy's strength lies exactly there: in its ability to tackle the problems through policy and reform.

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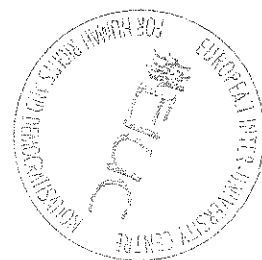
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