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Sampson, Steven

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LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00



Anti-corruption: Who Cares?

Steven Sampson

Introduction: Against Corruption!

Everyone is against corruption. Unlike other issues, such as climate change, global trade, or immigration, where there may be two sides to an issue (left/right; liberal/conservative; pro/contra), corruption does not cleave into pro-corruption versus anti-corruption forces. Corruption, everyone agrees, is bad (Bukanovsky 2006). It has been bad since ancient times, when it connoted a description of a collapsing, putrid society (Buchan and Hill 2014). Modern corruption fighting has been on the global agenda for about twenty years, notably since the famous ‘cancer of corruption’ speech from World Bank president James Wolfensohn in 1996. (Before that, the bank called corruption ‘the C word’.) So fighting corruption, raising awareness about corruption, and preventing corruption have come to be a desirable thing, a good thing. There is so much agreement about fighting corruption that

S. Sampson (✉)

Department of Social Anthropology, Lund University, Lund, Sweden

e-mail: steven.sampson@soc.lu.se

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anti-corruption conferences tend to take on a ritualized content: one speaker after another—government ministers, NGO activists, corporate executives—recites the mantra about all the bad things that corruption does—that corruption is an extra tax on the poor, that corruption undermines trust in government, that corruption distorts and dilutes development aid, that corruption discourages business investment, etc. Hearing such speeches, one begins to wonder why the disease of corruption, like smallpox or polio, has not been eradicated long ago. Perhaps this fight against corruption is not so self-evident as we think. Perhaps there indeed are some ‘pro-corruption forces’ out there that we do not understand. Perhaps we have to rethink what we are doing when we say that we will all come together to fight corruption. Perhaps we have to think not just about the rhetoric we use, but about the motivations of and social forces behind corrupt actors. Indeed, we need to think about WHO CARES about fighting corruption, WHY they care, and HOW they translate care into action. Analyzing who cares should not just be limited to taking a hard look at the business community, government programs, or international organizations to measure whether their commitment is real. We also need to look more closely, even critically, at the anti-corruption NGOs, the so-called moral entrepreneurs. For it is manifestly obvious that even anti-corruption NGOs have their own organizational interests. The world of anti-corruption, what I have called the ‘anti-corruption industry’ (Sampson 2010a), is thus more complex than we might think. It is a world dominated by what I call ‘anti-corruptionism’. Those concerned with sustainability and sustainability reporting are now part of this anti-corruptionist discourse (Sampson 2005, 2009, 2010a, b, 2015b).

To examine anti-corruption ‘critically’ raises a red flag. In academia, the word ‘critical’ or ‘critique’ tends to have a negative, destructive, more cynical connotation. Sometimes this critique takes on a moral tone, as a critique of power, a rhetoric of ‘speaking truth to power’. But this tone tends to be self-righteous and counterproductive. Other times the critique is too abstract: it deconstructs, or destructs, but fails to offer practical solutions. Small wonder that a critique of the anti-corruption industry may be marginalized as purely ‘academic’ or simply ignored. Here I would propose a critical view of anti-corruption as more

self-critical or even 'reflective'. After all, we have spent millions of dollars and thousands of hours and mobilized thousands of ordinary people and consultants in the 'struggle against corruption'. Here in the wake of yet another scandal, the Paradise Papers, it's time to think about what we have to show for it. We might even turn things upside down and ask whether anti-corruption might have come into the scene even if the so-called anti-corruption movement were not with us. This is not the place to record the history of anti-corruptionism. Yet, it is clear that anti-corruption campaigns in places like Saudi Arabia, China, or Russia are not the result of World Bank loan pressures, EU accession conditions, or advocacy campaigns by local NGOs; something else is going on that these countries suddenly decide to 'fight corruption'.

In this presentation, therefore I want to reflect on what is actually going on when we talk about and perform fighting corruption. When you fight something you have an enemy. Who exactly is the enemy when we are fighting corruption? How do we envision this enemy? Is it the lowly bureaucrat or traffic cop who just cannot resist that extra cash tip? Is it the unscrupulous official or government minister in a developing country who demands a 'facilitation payment' from a pressured sales representative and then deposits the funds into his Swiss bank account? Is the enemy the international corporation whose agents will do ANYTHING to get that pharmaceutical sale or infrastructure project, including bribes, free trips, commissions, and hiring the minister's daughter? Is the enemy the bribe giver or the bribe taker? Is it the simple citizen who unhesitatingly bribes the doctor in a Romanian hospital to care for his elderly father? Or is it the Romanian doctor or government official who takes the money (Stan 2012, 2018)? Is it the unscrupulous sales rep out in the field, or is it the manager back home who knows that his field staff are making facilitation payments? Who, indeed, are the corruption fighters fighting against?

I am an anthropologist. We anthropologists study culture. The cultures we study can be far away, in a mountain herding village or in a tropical forest among swidden farmers; or the cultures can be close by, as when we study an organization and they explain to us 'this is the way we do things around here'. I myself have studied corruption and civil society in many settings. I have studied planning and improvisation in socialist Romania. I

have been an NGO project consultant for governments, organizations and consulting companies (Sampson 1996). I have worked in the government of Romania trying to make administrative reform. I have studied anti-corruption initiatives in the Balkans. And I have recently studied ethics and compliance in private firms by attending ethics training courses and conferences (Sampson 2016). I have learned, for example, that in each of these settings, the ‘enemy’ and the definition of corruption are different. In the ethics and compliance field, which is largely a field for private firms created in the wake of the Enron scandal, there are no evil or corrupt employees. Bad guys are supposed to be weeded out in the hiring process. There are only ‘good people doing bad things’. But wait a minute. Why do the good people do so many bad things, you might ask? Well they didn’t know they were bad. In the ethics and compliance field, the task is to teach employees that this or that kind of behavior is not just unethical or immoral, but worse: it is bad for the company—that giving a bribe or fixing a bid might end up costing the company a lawsuit, criminal charges, and it might damage its reputation so badly that sales and profits suffer.

Now I give this example because I think that we need to understand more fully the relation between corrupt practices and the anti-corruption landscape that all of us now operate in. This includes those who are pursuing the sustainability project, which, under the slogan of transparency, includes sustainability reporting and accountability. So let me begin by describing two worlds: of corruption and anti-corruption, and then provide some suggestions about what we need to reflect upon in trying to understand them. I will not touch on sustainability reporting per se. But I will argue that much of what I present about the anti-corruption industry can be transferred to sustainability reporting regimes, transparency regimes, CSR, and other self-evident ethically highlighted practices that are now part of business life and of the work of many public organizations.

The World of Corruption and Anti-corruption

Let me begin by presenting the two views of what is going on in the corruption universe. We might call them the optimistic view and the cynical view. The optimistic view sees a widespread anti-corruption

movement that has taken off in the last 15 years, a movement that has made a deep impact in fighting corruption, reducing corruption, and preventing corruption. It is a view based on the idea that were it not for this coalition of enlightened civil society activists, international organizations, committed governments, and progressive private firms, that corruption would be much worse. The optimistic narrative is promoted in the many conferences and program declarations that take place almost weekly in some form, where aid organizations, government agencies, ethics officers from firms and NGOs participate. As a result of this frenetic activity, organizations, governments, firms, and the public are now more aware of corruption. This awareness is hyped by incessant demands for transparency, more audit systems, expert monitoring, public reporting, and more incentives to employee whistleblowing. In this view, the anti-corruption movement has led to real progress (Sampson 2010a, 2015a). By 'progress' is meant less corrupt firms or less corrupt bureaucracies, less bribery and nepotism, more corruption being identified and caught earlier, more effective corruption prevention programs, and more firms having anti-corruption initiatives and programs within their CSR or Ethics and Compliance office. 'Progress' in anti-corruption means that through various auditing mechanisms and coalitions of business, government and civil society actors, 'we' are on the way to some kind of 'society without corruption'. The fight against corruption is supposed to mean that things are getting better and that the bad guys increasingly have 'no place to hide'. I have called this package of anti-corruption practices and discourses 'anti-corruptionism' (Sampson 2015b). Like other such 'packages' or 'industries', such as human rights, good governance, gender mainstreaming, climate change action, or sustainability reporting, anti-corruptionism is now part of our everyday organizational life. The concrete manifestations of anti-corruptionism are everywhere: UN and OECD conventions, new or enhanced anti-corruption laws in the USA, the UK and other countries, anti-corruption initiatives, budget lines, agencies and programs, anti-corruption conferences and training, anti-bribery investigations, corruption diagnostics and surveys, an ISO anti-bribery standard, and even Master's degrees and certification in corruption and governance studies. The anti-corruption industry is established indeed.

Integrity warriors are everywhere. One of these days, you might think, there will be no corruption. It will be eradicated, like polio or smallpox.

Contrasting this optimistic, even heroic vision, there is a darker view: that petty and grand corruption continue to occur; that countries and sectors that were profoundly corrupt remain corrupt; that corrupt practices have now simply become more sophisticated due to electronic money transfers, global connections, and tax havens; that all the anti-corruption conferences, declarations, programs, standards, the awareness raising, Global Compact initiatives, and integrity systems have not had much effect. This darker view is confirmed by the major corruption scandals that appear every day, such as the Panama Papers; FIFA; Volkswagen; GSK in China; Siemens; Petrobras, Brazil; FCPA judgments; the UK Serious Fraud Office raids; and the many accusations levelled at accounting firms such as KPMG and PWC, who while training firms to become more ethical are at the same time caught in gross financial and bribery violations (see the FCPA blog or fcpaprofessor.com). This darker vision is marked by spectacular accusations, impressive fines, deferred prosecution agreements, reputation scandals, and the chain of apologies by firms who insist that 'we are changing our culture' and that 'it won't happen again'. These declarations last until the next scandal or the next leak of incriminating mails from WikiLeaks or the Paradise Papers. The anti-corruption dynamic also has its brakes, such as the Trump administration's effort to water down enforcement of financial irregularities. In Scandinavia as well, we have had our share of corruption scandals (the largest FCPA penalty ever, 966 million dollars, belongs to the Swedish telecom Telia). Most corruption scandals involve some kind of subversive cash payment. But here in the north, our corruption may be more sophisticated than cash under the table. It may be the kind of networking that has a dark side: fixing of public bids or contracts, free trips given to public officials, hiring former politicians as consultants or their children as interns, making sure your best friend finds out about a job or contract, or as recently occurred among politicians in Copenhagen, getting free use of the city hall to hold your private wedding reception. Here in Scandinavia, it's not called corruption. It's networking run amok. It may be called abuse of power, or conflict of interest (Swedish: *jäv*)

or bad management. From a Scandinavian perspective, ‘corruption’ is something that takes place far away, to the south or east. Yet, it is certainly one example of the darker scenario of persistent corruption. Nevertheless, the continued corruption scenario is illustrated by the numerous examples in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, where corruption scandals (both financial and political) occur with stunning regularity and involve those in the very highest offices.

It is not my intention to say that one of these scenarios is more valid than the other. Perhaps we can say that anti-corruptionist progress discourse and the reality of rampant corruption exist in two parallel universes. They influence each other, to be sure, but the presence of anti-corruptionism does not necessarily entail the reduction in corruption (this is hardly unusual, think of the relation between trafficking and anti-trafficking initiatives, between drug abuse and antidrug campaigns, between campaigns against sexual harassment and pervasive sexual harassment in Hollywood, business, academia, and elsewhere). Further, with so much funding available for anti-corruption programs and campaigns, it would be no accident to find corrupt anti-corruption organizations, which has in fact been the case. This has led Transparency International to develop a sophisticated monitoring, certification (and re-certification) regime for its affiliate national chapters, all in order to safeguard ‘the brand’.

Why Care About Corruption?

If my hypothesis about parallel universes is true, how do we explain it? One possible answer is that those in the ‘anti-corruption community’ are just hypocritical and insincere—that fighting corruption is nothing more than hollow piety. That it’s just window dressing or PR façade, and that firms are pursuing business as usual. We might call it ‘anti-corruption washing’. It might be, as some critics have asserted, that all the corruption awareness-raising seminars and ethics and compliance initiatives are only therapeutic, a kind of PR initiative, or a disguise by which neoliberalism penetrates the third world (Ochunu 2016; Bedirhanoglu 2016). However, this PR explanation would

be all too easy. There are people who sincerely want to stop the abuse of power we call corruption, and who have seen what even minor corruption can do in Scandinavia and in developing countries around the world. Peter Eigen and his international development colleagues, who founded Transparency International in 1994, were some of these dedicated people. Their tactic was to get businesses and especially the World Bank 'on board' (Eigen himself had previously resigned from his position at the Bank). For Transparency International, anti-corruption became 'coalition-building' among elites and interest organizations rather than a grassroots, radical social movement. Attending the World Economic Forum in Davos was more important than the World Social Forum in Porte Alegre, or marching in the streets. Getting project grants was more important than the kind of social mobilization that might antagonize government elites or potential donors.

If we examine anti-corruption from a managerial standpoint, we can see that while corruption can overcome certain bureaucratic barriers (the 'lubrication' thesis, via speed payments), paying bribes and patronage also involves certain risks (financial/legal/reputational). In this sense, pursuing an anti-corruption strategy presents a series of business-related 'opportunities': what Burritt and Schaltegger (discussing sustainability reporting) list as 'reputational opportunities, competitive opportunities, political opportunities and also market opportunities' (2010, p. 5). With these opportunities, let us assume that there really are people within firms who care about fighting corruption. The question, then, is whether the individual people's commitment to fighting corruption can be elevated to some kind of organizational commitment. From the firm's perspective, fighting corruption need not be simply an ethical or moral mission. There is a practical side: acting corrupt may be bad for business, especially in the Instagram age, where a single embarrassing post might ruin a firm's reputation. On the positive side, promoting anti-corruption may actually be good business (at least in some sectors). The idea that a nonbusiness aspect of firm behavior is **ULTIMATELY GOOD FOR BUSINESS** is invoked for other issues as well: climate change, sustainable development, sustainable development reporting, etc. In fact, there seems to be an entire industry trying to convince businesses that transparency, honesty, anti-corruption, climate awareness, CSR, and sustainability reporting are as important for the firm's bottom line as sales and financial accounting. Firms are encouraged to be proactive: grabbing the

opportunity before some kind of anti-bribery law or sustainability reporting standard is thrust upon them, or before a scandal occurs and a naming and shaming event takes place. For business, then, the issue is whether to come forward on their own initiative and exert a bona fide ethics and compliance management, or to wait and see if a scandal might occur.

Acknowledging that there are indeed people in the business world who sincerely want to reduce or prevent corruption also entails some qualification. Organizations being what they are, not everyone in the firm will share the same beliefs, attitudes, or priorities. More likely, there are groups within the firm, such as the ethics and compliance department or the CSR unit, who genuinely care about fighting corruption. It is this group who are most aware of the nonfinancial risks. In contrast, other sections of the firm might see anti-corruption as a necessary component of doing business but nothing more. Finally, the marketing and sales force, operating under other incentives, might view ethics, compliance and anti-bribery regulations as an impediment, or even straitjacket, to their work. The task for the ethics officer would be to get the sales force 'on board'. For this, one needs the proverbial 'tone at the top', such that anti-corruption becomes a priority in the organization. The problem is that companies are not ethical actors as such. Unlike NGOs, they do not have a moral project. Firms do not exist to be good. They exist to make money, as Milton Friedman famously reminded us. Businesses use ethics as an instrument. They are ethical only in so far as they believe that ethics is good business. Businesses respect those ethical, legal, and moral bounds because transgressing these might make their operations too risky due to legal penalties, regulatory surveillance, whistleblowing risks, or swindle by clients. If businesses care about corruption, it is a conditional sort of caring. If we operate with this assumption, that business' caring about corruption is conditional, then perhaps several basic concepts about corruption, as well as accepted measures of fighting corruption, need to be reconsidered. Let me summarize some of these reconsiderations.

The Definition of Corruption

In the ancient world, corruption was a social state that characterized an entire society. It connoted a weakness or decay in the social

order (Buchan and Hill 2014). We still use the word *korrumperede* in Germanic/Nordic languages when we talk about this kind of societal decay. Today, however, our definition of corruption is more limited. Corruption is defined as ‘the abuse of public office for private gain’. It is this ‘bad bureaucrat’ definition that we find in major policy documents by international institutions and aid donors. Transparency International, in the post-Enron era, later extended this definition of ‘bad bureaucrats’ to ‘the abuse of *entrusted power* for private benefit’. The ‘trust’ in this ‘entrusted power’ definition could be conferred (or abused) not just in a bureaucracy, but in a private firm or an NGO. And the ‘benefit’ need not be a bribe but could also be favoritism, nepotism, or party political advantage. This expanded definition of corruption, however, is in fact the result of a hotly contested political struggle between first and third world that took place decades earlier (Katzarova 2017). It constructs first world companies as victims of venal third world bureaucrats, and it downgrades the active use of bribes and abuse by corporate powers in the global economy, not to mention tax havens, etc. We now know that the corporate bribe givers are not just innocent victims. We are now seeing these abuses with the Panama and Paradise Papers. But perhaps we need to view corruption not as something extraordinary, as an isolated practice or set of practices, but as a daily, routine practice in the basic operation of some of our most established corporations, financial institutions, and accounting firms, as well as in many bureaucracies (Ochunu 2016 for Nigeria). Investigations into tax swindles, offshore tax shelters, or fixed public bidding contracts reveal hundreds of small decisions made by these firms and by those accountants, executives, and advisors entrusted with power. Tax evasion, tax shelters, umbrella holding companies, pervasive secrecy, secret oral agreements, shredded correspondence, and various other maneuvers resemble the very kind of corruption that these very companies—most of them signatories to the Global Compact—say they are fighting. Anti-corruption declarations aside, it seems that corruption is embedded in even the most routine business practices, in much the same way that it is embedded in so many bureaucratic offices in developing countries (typically customs, police, healthcare, contracting, etc.). If this is true, then what would ‘fighting corruption’ look like? It would be combatting routine practices.

What Is 'Corruption Fighting'?

Over the years, we have seen various methods of fighting corruption. These campaigns have begun with 'raising awareness'. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index and Bribe Payers Index are two examples of these awareness-raising campaigns. The 'I paid a bribe' sites (India) also work this way, as a kind of naming and shaming enterprise. They shine a light on corrupt practices and are meant to make publicity and then mobilize people to 'do something'. But who exactly does something? In fact, as many observers have pointed out, this awareness-raising project is now completed. We have a UN anti-corruption convention, an ISO anti-bribery standard, and all the rest. What is needed are various measures to actually reduce or prevent corrupt practices, to enforce anti-corruption laws. 'Good governance' in public administration and codes of conduct in the private firm are the mantras here. The measures involved are combinations of carrot and stick, incentives and penalties, plus measures to improve governance so that opportunities for bribes and favoritism become more difficult. Since corrupt practices are human activities, preventing corruption requires a combination of social psychological and sociological approaches. Do we try to make people better, make them more ethical? (education) Do we try to improve *structures* so that people do not feel the *need* to be corrupt? (carrot and stick). Do we assume that people 'need' to be corrupt, and if they were not compelled to take bribes that they wouldn't? Or do we try to reformulate the contexts, making it *more costly* to be corrupt (Lenin: 'Trust is good, but control is better'). In the present fad of nudging, can we nudge people to be more honest? I am not sure. What we do know is that people act differently once they feel outside a community. You do not cheat your friends or your family, or those to whom you feel attached (your mates, team, or gang). But you *can* cheat a faceless bureaucracy for whom you have no loyalty, or clients whom you will not see again and to whom you owe nothing. So perhaps fighting corruption is really about something much larger. Perhaps it is about how people, including ourselves, relate to institutions and communities. Perhaps it is about attachment, the attachment we now call 'trust'. Let's turn Lenin upside down, to fight corruption, trust is good, control is worse.

Deciding Which Corruption to Fight

Since abuse of power, including the abuse of power that we call corruption, is undesirable, and since there are so many kinds of corruption, we face a dilemma in deciding which kinds of corruption we should fight. If we examine debates and controversies about corruption, there seem to be two basic targets against which corruption fighting is directed: greedy officials in bureaucracies and unscrupulous international corporations. The officials may be bribe takers, or they may be pressuring clients or local/foreign companies for bribes to fulfill tasks that the official should do anyway. The corporations may be abusing their influence by paying for positive decisions, or by manipulating prices or using secret contacts to win lucrative contracts. Fighting these kinds of corruption requires more than just naming and shaming. Both the greedy officials and the unscrupulous corporations are quite aware that corruption is bad.

Fighting such corruption requires a theory of human behavior. Social science has tried to categorize types of behavior and types of influences on our behavior. Psychology, sociology, social psychology, anthropology, economics and political science try to understand why people do some things, and why they refrain from doing other things. I think it comes down to three basic explanations. First, people do things because they *want to*. That is, they have values which they act out in practice. For example, no one forces me to buy a birthday present for my daughter. I just do it. Second, people do things *because they have to*. There are structures and incentives which dictate that the benefits gained from doing something are higher than the costs of not doing something. I buy a birthday present for my boss because my chances for promotion are better if he remembers me. Buying the present for him is the sensible thing to do. And since everyone else is doing it, it would be awkward if I did not. Finally, we do things *because other people are doing them* and we want to stay in the community. I watch football with my friends or go with my street gang and fight another gang to show my loyalty. In this third type of motivation, we act because it gives some kind of meaning to be a member of a group or community. So we have these three kinds of human behavior. The social sciences articulate these three types of behavior in different ways: as theories of motivation, as social

capital, as interest groups, as power, as agency, as kinship obligations, or as community solidarity. But regardless of terminology, I think human behavior (voluntary, forced, or nudged) comes down to these three factors. Now, what if we applied these factors to ethics and compliance and to anti-corruption (Sampson 2014)? Since people are often resistant to change, we need to ask: Which kind of behavior is most difficult to change? I am not sure I have the answer, but I think all of us would agree that changing people's basic values is difficult, and it is a long-term project. Values tend to be deeply embedded; we are emotionally attached to them; values are part of our very self. It is easier to change the structures and incentive systems that affect people's actions, and it is also easier to affect communities, to build teams to make meaning, or to create conditions whereby people find their team or gang unfulfilling. In practice, this means that fighting corruption entails a process of deciding what kinds of behavior we should fight, and then identifying why people act corrupt: why they achieve their goals by giving bribes, why they accept bribes, why they encourage or tolerate nepotism, why they falsify records and conspire to cheat the state, their firm, or their community. A full understanding of corrupt practices also means recalling that people may not even view their behavior as corrupt or even wrong. Corrupt behavior may even be considered a kind of social obligation, or a kind of reaction or revenge to abuses by the system, as a means of asserting one's right to common goods. If this is true, 'awareness raising' about corruption is a blind alley.

Rethinking Transparency

Many anti-corruption and governance initiatives place their faith in illuminating information and procedures, invoking the trope of transparency. Hence, if we only make all bids for government contracts public, if we allow people access to information, if everything becomes digitally accessible, then nepotism and corruption will be limited or disappear. This idea of transparency involves an assumption of pervasive openness. It also assumes that corruption invariably involves some kind of secrecy. Various 'sunshine laws', forcing companies and

public actors to show their financial affairs, to disclose their CSR initiatives, or to submit sustainability reports, are viewed as measures that will magically stimulate firms to act better. These transparency mandates have given rise to all kinds of reporting regimes and associated monitoring systems of firms and organizations. Through transparency, firms commit themselves to ethical or moral projects such as the Global Compact, sustainability, diversity, Global Reporting Initiative, or various anti-corruption standards. With transparency and reporting comes the inevitable monitoring bureaucracy of periodic updates, statistics, and deadlines. We academics experience this kind of monitoring in terms of our 'productivity', which is followed by statistics on number of downloads of our articles, amount of grants we receive, and the measurement of the impact of our work. Firms and organizations experience the same thing. Such reporting regimes consolidate what anthropologist Marilyn Strathern (2000) called 'audit culture' and what Michael Power (1997) called 'rituals of verification'. The unintended by-product to all this, which all of us know but often ignore, is that every move toward transparency involves hiding something. Every disclosure creates its own shadow (Han 2015). Every demand for standardization creates a path around it. Every raised bar allows someone to slide under it undetected. We academics know how to manipulate the publication statistics. And firms now hire experts, lawyers, accountants, and consultants, to ensure that even under the strictest of transparency regimes, certain practices can be hidden, statistical categories can be made confusing, disasters are made to look like glitches, and crises are now reconfigured as 'challenges'. Like the Kremlinologists who analyzed the Soviet Union, we need new skills to interpret reports generated under transparency regimes. We need to do more than just read between lines. We need to truly translate what is being said. Take a look at World Bank anti-corruption reports, Council of Europe corruption monitoring reports, the sustainability reports of private firms, and other such documents. The most impressive fact about them is how few people actually download them, much less read them closely! The reports *perform* transparency, yes, but the performance is a pure ritual. Apparently, not many people care. If no one cares about transparency, if those

decision-makers who matter do not care, then the chances of transparency as a solution to corruption become that much less. Transparency regimes alone do not necessarily generate the kind of commitment—the kind of CARING—required to pursue anti-corruption. With more transparency and more data, there are fewer people to read them and make judgments. More transparency, more reporting about more things is not the magic bullet. What is missing in this kind of fetish of reporting, auditing, and self-auditing was highlighted by Michael Power in his book, *The Audit Society* (1997) 20 years ago. This something is called ‘judgment’. Judgment involves decisions and risks. It involves taking responsibility. It involves CARING about what you are doing. And in much of the CSR, sustainability, and anti-corruption reporting regimes, with its mandatory categories, metrics, protocols, and systems, judgment is somehow set aside. Judgment becomes suspect. How regrettable, since judgment, like corruption, is human behavior. Like human behavior, judgment articulates a set of values. Judgment articulates a community, and such communities can resist the pressure for easy, or illicit, or corrupt solutions. Academia, my community of meaning, is a community of judgment. We are now being increasingly subordinated to audit, metrics, and productivity indices (Strathern 2000). But none of us like it. Protest is useless. So what do we do? We PLAY ALONG. And I suspect that much organizational reporting on ethics, compliance, anti-bribery, anti-corruption, CSR, and sustainability is also affected by playing along, that is, by a calculation of the costs of not participating versus the benefits of playing along. So let us not delude ourselves about the magic bullet of transparency. Regardless of transparency, we still need to make judgments: about what to report, when to report, how to report, to whom to report, and especially why we report. WE NEED TO CARE ABOUT IT. Transparency regimes are regimes of power. Somebody is compelling someone else to act in a certain way. We may appreciate producing reports and manipulating statistics, we may get well paid to do them, but behind the reporting effort lies compulsion. It is a compulsion to put away our judgment tools and to play along.

We thus need to rethink the performance of transparency and to rethink what all this disclosure is leading to. We need to rethink what

it means to actors to make certain kinds of information (in certain forms) 'public'. Most such reporting, including sustainability reporting, can itself become corrupted; any statistician knows how to do this. Transparency and disclosure can be manipulated, contested, or passively accepted as the lesser of evils. There is a politics of transparency and a politics of disclosure that we need to understand. More is not always better. The transparent report becomes a dead exhibit, a fetish to be waved around, as so many reports are nowadays. We wave it, but don't read it! We put it up on our Web site, but no one downloads it.

Conclusions: Caring About Corruption

Management is about deciding on purposeful action to achieve results. Deciding that anti-corruption or sustainability are important goals, and that reporting on these goals is good for the firm and for society are management decisions. Management decisions should be translated into purposeful action. Like management experts, we social scientists also study purposeful action. But we also study *why* people think a specific course of action is purposeful, *how* this course of action was chosen over others, and what are the *unintended consequences* of such actions. The word 'unintended' also needs specification: unintended by whom, about what? Abuse of power exists in firms, organizations and societies, and some of these abuses have come to be called 'corruption'. Everyday actions of corporations and bureaucracies may also be abuses of power but these are called 'business as usual', 'how we do things around here' or 'just how the system works'. Anti-corruption, transparency, and sustainability initiatives, including the associated reporting regimes, certainly have an impact on how power is exercised and how power is abused. But this does not necessarily mean that these kind of initiatives have reduced or prevented these abuses, or reduced corruption. This is because anti-corruptionism also has its own dynamic, including its own potential for abuse. We might therefore conclude that anti-corruptionism has made corruption more sophisticated, and therefore harder to fight, in the same way that modern computer systems make it easier for us buy online, while also enabling hackers to empty our bank accounts.

In particular, we need to assess whether all this anti-corruptionism, with its many programs, with its awareness raising, the conventions, the laws, the regulations, the ethical finger pointing, the training, the seminars, and agencies, whether it makes a difference in how power is exercised and how it is abused. We need to figure out *who really cares about preventing corruption, why they care, and how. Ultimately, we need a theory of engagement*. Business is most effective when it engages with customers to find out what they think, or how to market a product in a new country. There is some kind of commitment from the executive, in the marketing and sales force. Can anti-corruption, ethics, and compliance not mobilize the same commitment? If we can figure this out, then maybe we can take the first steps toward eliminating the kind of impunity, the kind of abuse of power, and the perversion of trust that characterizes corruption. We need to share our knowledge about corruption and anti-corruption, so that we can understand who really cares about corruption.

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