

An adult developmental perspective on corruption in Russia

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Relevance:

- (Single) disciplinary frameworks are unable to grasp the cultural and cognitive legacies shaping systemic transitions

Method and Models:

- Combination of:
 - Kohlberg: model of moral reasoning development
 - Chilton (1988): „Any way people relate to each other is a moral project”
 - Commons: Model of Hierarchical Complexity
- logics of reasoning and action (= **systems of rules**) relevant for actors' behavior

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Examples:

- **effective bureaucracy = abstract system** of rules, needs moral justification (bureaucrats) functioning at Kohlberg's stage #4
- bureaucrat reasoning at an **interpersonal (stage #3)**: personal loyalty (towards his boss) goes before the rule of law
- Chilton, 1988: "Unless the institution's structure is preserved by people at the appropriate stage, the institution will regress to less developed forms".

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The **MHC** shows that what we call “corruption” (misuse of public office for private gain),

- only comes into being as a social phenomenon after **abstract concepts** like “public” and “private” **have been formed** (MHC stage 9), while the respective behaviors constitute the normal way of acting on MHC stages 8 (concrete) and below;
- is only **considered problematic** (socially harmful) after contradictions between social norms and individual behavior, and between different social roles (i.e. public/private) can be coordinated in a non-arbitrary way (MHC **stage 10**),
- **can only be prevented** /effectively reduced once **efficient social systems** (legal, financial, market systems etc.) are functioning as the **dominant** social, political and economic **structures**, and are supported by a sufficiently large number of people (MHC stage 11). This is also where most discourse about corruption takes place;
- Adequate / sustainable **solutions** of the problem of corruption are likely only based on at least **meta-systematic** structures of reasoning (MHC stage 12 and higher) which are able to understand the inherent logics of corrupt behaviors and to design stage-sensitive solutions beyond “one size fits all”.

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→ How can this be applied to Russia?

- comparatively high rates of corruption
- two major systemic transformations in less than 100 years (1917, 1991)
- three (ideal typical) phases of Russian history:
 - pre-revolutionary tsarist Russia (-1917),
 - Soviet Russia (1917-1991)
 - post-Soviet Russia (1991-)

→ To what extent do contextual (historical and cultural) factors contribute to shape values, patterns of thinking and social (inter-) action, and institutions and vice versa?

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1. Tsarist Russia

“We don’t take bribes, but we accept tokens of gratitude”

(Russian saying)

- Honor > material reward
- Basic education/literacy > professional ethic of competence

“Institutions have no meaning. Everything depends on persons”

(Konstantin Pobedonoscev, advisor of Russian Tsar Alexander III).

- personal networks, patron-client relationships > formal institutions

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2. Soviet Russia

“The rules are equal for everyone, only the exceptions are different” (*Literaturnaya gazeta*, 28.12.1977).

- Patron-client relations have played an important role throughout the 70 years of Soviet Power
- privileges of the *Nomenklatura*
- transformation of content (Bolsheviks replacing tsarist officials) but not of structure but not of structure
- Clan structure of Soviet society

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2. Soviet Russia

“Soviet generations have a much better sense of rules even if they violate them” (*Alena Ledeneva 2006: 2*).

- respecting the law not regarded as a universal civic duty, “beating the system” as a “sport”
- Interviews about Soviet *blat* (obtaining goods and services under the rationing through informal contacts and personal networks instead of legally; “having 100 friends is more important than having 100 roubles”)
- Rationalizations: „In my case, it was not *blat*, it was help.“
= typical of formal (MHC #10) reasoning

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2. Soviet Russia

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- MHC #10 political culture?
- Missing #11 systematic thinking as average level of reasoning: condition of functioning of Soviet system
- Soviet Union promoted cognitive development, but not moral (personal) development and critical thinking.

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3. Post-Soviet Russia

„The Russian evades or violates the law wherever he can do so with impunity; the government does exactly the same thing.“ (*Aleksandr Hercen*)

- 1990s: Introducing democracy, market economy and modernization
- “Today, it is “better to have 100 roubles than 100 friends.”
Ledeneva, 2006: 4)
- Institutions function according to structurally less complex logics
- Actual legal culture is insufficiently complex for the rule of law

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Conclusion

- “rules of breaking the rules“: breaking certain rules is a result of following other rules
- structural complexity of reasoning, meaning making and action = logics governing the functioning of institutions
- increasing complexity of reasoning structures → higher level of (self-)reflexivity, more complex institutions
- To increase the complexity of political culture, a society must foster moral development, social perspective taking etc.
- Means: undogmatic religion (?), civic education

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Thank you very much!