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How to Ignore Corruption

Reporting the Shortcomings of Development in South Africa[1]

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It has been a decade since South Africans were liberated from the oppressive apartheid regime, but unfortunately they have still not been freed from the corrupt practices that were part and parcel of it. Increasingly, studies have revealed the extent of the ongoing corruption in South Africa. A survey that asked respondents how likely it was for bribes to be demanded by public officials provides some indication of the magnitude of this problem. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents felt that the payment of bribes was likely or very likely to be necessary to obtain services from police officers; 28% said the same of local government officials and 26% of court officials (UNODC/SAG 2003:175).[3]

The apartheid police force was notorious for its handling of Africans without a pass who illegally attempted to find work in cities; it is now notorious among African migrants coming from as far away as Nigeria and Tanzania. These new illegal migrants have to undergo the

violation of their human rights by police officers, and corruption is also an institutionalized feature of their arrest and detention (Klaaren and Ramji 2001). Government officials also demand bribes or fail to report the deaths of welfare beneficiaries in order to pocket the money for themselves (Brown 1998). Furthermore, development projects aimed at empowering the poor and redistributing resources to those who suffered most from apartheid have also been tainted by corruption (Bähre 2001, 2002; Porter and Phillips-Howard 1997). Corruption is not, however, limited to government officials. In 2000, newspapers around the globe ran front-page stories revealing bribery and match fixing by Hansie Cronje, the captain of the South African cricket team.[4]

Corruption, typically defined as the misuse of public office for private gain (Jain 2001:73–75; Olivier de Sardan 1999; Scott 1972:3–5),[5] has become a major concern of donor organizations, states, and non-governmental organizations. Transnational organizations such as Transparency International have been established with the sole purpose of addressing and curbing corruption. The World Bank, calling corruption "the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development" and particularly harmful to the poor, has even developed a special anti-corruption unit.[6] On the national level, the South African government has passed the Prevention of Corruption Bill of 2002, which, among other things, establishes a special witness-protection programme and allows imprisonment of up to 15 years for offences relating to corrupt tendering (UNODC/SAG 2003).

Nevertheless, as Olivier de Sardan (1999:29–30) has noted, "corruption . . . is as frequently denounced in words as it is practiced in fact. . . . There is rarely any evidence of trials of the guilty, or of consistent and effective legal or political campaigns against the corruption complex." Indeed, there appears to be a discrepancy between the attention corruption receives in policy and legal documents and the silence that surrounds concrete corrupt practices. I will here demonstrate that people are very skilled in ignoring corruption when they are confronted with it personally. Notwithstanding the attention paid to corruption by development organizations, governments, and social scientists, instances of corruption seem to be easily dismissed, played down, or concealed. Anti-corruption policy and social analysis of the politics, economics, and cultural logic of corruption will not suffice if people tend to turn a blind eye to corruption that is too close for comfort.

How do people shield themselves from corruption?

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3. From the Markinor Omnibus survey of 2,000 urban and 1,500 rural respondents, South Africa scored a 4.8 on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean) on the Corruption Perceptions Index 2002 of Transparency International (2002).

4. See Vahed (2001) for a discussion of the way in which racial stereotypes fed into the public debate on corruption.
5. Olivier de Sardan uses the term "corruption complex" to include "nepotism, abuse of power, embezzlement and various forms of misappropriation, influence-peddling, prevarication, insider trading and abuse of the public purse, in order to consider what these various practices have in common, what affinities link them together, and to what extent they enter into the same fabric of customary social norms and attitudes" (1999:27).
6. See the Anticorruption home page (http://www.worldbank.org/publicsector/anticorruption) for details of the World Bank's approach.

How is evidence of corruption presented, and why is it often trivialized? The analysis of corrupt practices in South Africa will reveal that an instrumental view of development, fear, the difficulty of questioning social relations, and ideology all contribute to them.

Development: Ideology and Practice

The development of those who suffered under apartheid was high on the agenda of the African National Congress (ANC), and it designed a massive national development project called the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (ANC 1994) in an effort to overcome some of the inequalities of the past. Jobs had to be created, the education system needed to change, and the housing conditions of the many Africans and also Coloureds who had lived in the most abominable conditions in the informal squatter camps had to improve. In South African urban centres such as Cape Town there had already been a great housing shortage under apartheid (see, e.g., Cole 1987, Cook 1992, Ramphele 1991), and the demise of apartheid was accompanied by further growth of the urban population and an increasing shortage of housing. In particular, many Africans were forced to erect makeshift homes on land between existing formal settlements or on the outskirts of the city. The post-apartheid government wanted to put an end to these poor housing conditions. Private-sector companies and NGOs were ordered to demarcate plots, build houses, sewage systems, roads, electricity networks, and toilets, and supply all of the other facilities necessary to create new neighbourhoods. If people were eligible, they could own a plot in such a neighbourhood. The goal was to build a million low-cost houses for the poor by 1989. However, nothing near this figure could ever have been achieved (*Mail and Guardian*, February 20–26, 1998).

A positive attitude towards development was new to the ANC and can be seen as part of the democratization process. Critics of the apartheid regime associated development with government control, racial segregation, and apartheid ideology. In the post-apartheid era, however, the ANC "soon found itself adopting the 'pragmatic' language of 'reconstruction and development' " (Crush 1995:xii, quoted in Li 1999:296). Post-apartheid development differed from apartheid development in its emphasis on democracy, which was seen as a means to successful development as well as a goal in itself (ANC 1994:5):

> Our people, with their aspirations and collective determination, are our most important resource. The RDP is focused on our people's most immediate needs, and it relies, in turn, on their energies to drive the process of meeting these needs. . . . Development is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvement and growing empowerment. In taking this approach we are building on the many forums, peace structures and negotiations that our people are involved in throughout the land.

Community participation could be guaranteed only through the establishment of a local project committee consisting of representatives of the community and serving as a link between the development organization and the community. Its role was to enforce the rules concerning the allocation of housing grants, prioritize people's housing applications, and ensure that building companies contracted at least half of their workers locally. The emphasis on community participation was in accordance with international development policy and justifiable given the oppressive apartheid history.[7] In practice, however, it was highly problematic. Research in Indawo Yoxolo, one of the new settlements in Cape Town where houses were built for poor Africans, has revealed that it gave rise there to an oppressive Mafia-style leadership.[8]

I briefly visited Indawo Yoxolo in 1995, when the development project had just started. Indawo Yoxolo was still a small informal settlement squeezed between a large Coloured township to the south and a railroad track and an African township to the north. The few residents, Xhosa people who had left the impoverished Eastern Cape and moved to Cape Town in search of employment, lived in shacks scattered among the bushes. A muddy path pretended to be a road; there was no electricity, and the bushes served as toilets. To get water residents had to ask for the help of the residents of the neighbouring township, who were none too pleased with their new neighbours. Adjacent to these shacks, construction workers were clearing bushes and levelling the ground with heavy machinery; the illegal squatter settlement was about to be transformed into a formal township complete with electricity, toilets, water, streets, street lights, schools, public telephones, bus stops, taxi ranks, sports fields, and housing plots.

By the time I returned to Indawo Yoxolo in 1997, it had changed dramatically, and, at least at first glance, the development project appeared to have been very successful. One no longer had to reach Indawo Yoxolo by turning off the paved road that led to the adjacent Coloured townships, driving over the curb, and following a muddy path into the bushes. The bushes had been removed, and along newly built streets were neatly ordered plots of land, each one furnished with its own electricity connection, toilet, and water tap. Schools and sports fields were under construction, the roads were curbed, and there were even two public telephones (out of order most of the time). There were plans to build taxi ranks, a public library, bus stops, and other public facilities. The

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7. Since the late 1980s, because of disappointing experience with structural-adjustment lending, the end of the cold war, and the dominance of neoliberal thought, democracy has been regarded as an increasingly important aspect of development (Leftwitch 1994: 366). For detailed information on housing policy in South Africa, see Bähre (2001; 2002:63–97) and Huchzermeyer (2001).

8. On the oppressive consequences of development see Ferguson (1990) and Scott (1998); on community participation see Schroeder (1999) and Ribot (1999).

squatter camp that I had visited in 1995 had become a relatively small section of Indawo Yoxolo and greatly contrasted with it in the absence of paved roads, curbs, and demarcated plots. The residents of this squatter area were still waiting for the housing grants that would allow them to move to their plots.

Within days it became clear that there were serious political tensions in Indawo Yoxolo that had been caused by the development projects. The development projects of Indawo Yoxolo and other settlements of Cape Town had been organized by Future Dwelling. This private-sector company, established in the early 1990s, was responsible for managing relations with the construction companies and the government institutions and ensuring community participation. It had liaison officers working in the project areas and produced a free newspaper to inform residents about development plans and successes. Future Dwelling had set up the project committee to represent the community and worked closely with it. The committee consisted of five male residents of the informal settlements whose residents could apply for housing grants and was in charge of distributing plots and houses to applicants, and it took full advantage of this power. Applicants were often forced to pay bribes to receive the plots that they were entitled to.

Those who had already received plots also lived in fear of the project committee. In a few instances residents who had briefly left their houses for a family visit or funeral in the Eastern Cape were prevented from returning to them; in their absence their houses were occupied by supporters of the project committee and their belongings thrown out on the street. Help from the police was unavailable; the nearest police station was tremendously overburdened and situated in a Coloured area, and the African residents of Indawo Yoxolo felt that the Coloured officers were unwilling to deal with their problems. Challenging the project committee was also dangerous, for it intimidated, assaulted, and even killed those who opposed its corrupt practices.

A parents' protest at the local primary school revealed that, notwithstanding the power of the project committee, not all residents were prepared to accept this corruption. The primary school, housed in a container and a prefabricated classroom with broken windows and broken furniture, was unsuitable for teaching. The principal was known to be loyal to the project committee and was said to have stolen food from the school-feeding programme, a national presidential project to ensure that all children had at least one meal a day. The parents charged him with stealing bread and 12.5-litre containers of peanut butter and jam and selling them to his friends at R25 per container, thus depriving many children of their school lunches. They also accused him of embezzling the school fees that had been collected at the beginning of the year, without which children would not be allowed to take the end-of-year exams.

On a Friday morning in October 1997, some 20 women and 3 men held a spur-of-the-moment meeting with the principal and accused him of corruption. A fierce argument ensued among them over whether to kill him for stealing their money and their children's food, never attending school, and failing to show up at previous meetings or to take him to the police and report him to the Department of Education. The principal remained silent while these allegations and complaints were made. One of the project committee members, Mr. Nqase, was informed about the meeting and soon turned up, although he had no children attending the school. A big man in his late thirties, he was smartly dressed, and one could see his gun bulging underneath his jacket. He was known as "the gun" of the committee, and it was common knowledge that he was willing to murder people and that he was involved in illegal activities outside of Indawo Yoxolo. After some time, my research assistant and I decided to leave the meeting because of the extremely tense and aggressive atmosphere. When we returned later that morning, the mood had changed. During our absence Mr. Nqase had threatened to kill anyone who challenged him or the principal and many parents had left. The parents felt powerless, defeated, and angry. They had had the courage to challenge corruption, but as long as the project committee maintained its powerful position their attempts to end it would prove unsuccessful.

Ignoring Corruption: The ANC and the Development Organization

Community-based protests were also directed at organizations outside of Indawo Yoxolo. Since most members of the project committee were members of the ANC, residents of Indawo Yoxolo turned to party officials for help. In response, the ANC of the Western Cape Province established a commission of inquiry into the allegations of corruption and violence in Indawo Yoxolo.[9] The commission, made up of members of the provincial board as well as local councillors, interviewed 27 residents, who testified about the committee's intimidation, violence, and corruption. They informed the commission that the project committee had forced them to pay bribes of up to R700 in exchange for plots to which they had been legally entitled[10] and that it had "stolen" plots from their owners and sold them to people who did not qualify for housing grants. They also complained about violent repression; one said that he had been beaten with the butt of a firearm, another that he had been shot, and a third that he had been threatened at gunpoint. The commission ascertained that one of the members of the committee had attempted to steal a sum of R12,800 that the German embassy had given to the school. The committee had allegedly found out about the donation from the principal and demanded the cheque from teachers; out

9. This information on the proceedings and results of the commission of inquiry comes from the commission's confidential report to the ANC. It was dangerous for me to find out more about the commission; some of its members and those it investigated were involved in accusations of murder or had become victims of violence.
10. R700 is about US$70, almost a month's salary for a full-time cleaner employed by a cleaning company.

of fear, the teachers had immediately surrendered the cheque but phoned the embassy, which had stopped payment on it. Finding that the cheque could not be cashed, the principal had forced the teachers to go to the embassy to ask for another. The embassy, probably suspicious, said that the teachers would receive a new cheque only after they had written and submitted a proper project proposal.

The commission of inquiry found that the project committee also controlled the community meetings intended to ensure that residents could be actively involved in the development process, discuss results, express their needs, and so on. These meetings had been poorly attended, and therefore it had been decided that residents would receive money as an incentive for showing up at them. Now the project committee was ensuring that only its own supporters received any money by scoring off the other residents. After hearing these allegations and the committee's response to them, the commission recommended that two people be expelled from the ANC. While it judged the allegations of corruption, harassment, and violence to be true, the reason given for the expulsions was lack of party loyalty. One of the members expelled was said to have "acted in a devious manner, like leading a march to the ANC office and organizing the radio to come thus ridiculing and bringing the name of the organization in disrepute." The crimes that the commission had recorded were not reported to the police, and within a year one of expelled members was readmitted to the ANC. The residents' protests thus did not yield any results, and the project committee was allowed to continue its work in Indawo Yoxolo.

The ANC was not alone in ignoring the corrupt practices of the project committee. Residents had also contacted Future Dwelling, which provided the resources that the committee used to support its corrupt practices.[11] A few residents and local politicians had attempted to meet the director of Future Dwelling without success. However, when the director arrived at his office one day in November 1997, he could not ignore the dozen angry residents standing on his doorstep.

The meeting was initiated by Mr. Mabeqa, one of the leaders of the opposition to the project committee. In addition to the residents and the director, the town councillor, an employee, my research assistant, and I attended the meeting. The residents explained the corrupt practices of the committee in great detail and reported their dismay over Future Dwelling's continuing to give it control over the development projects. After having listened to the residents' concerns, the director of Future Dwelling reacted as if his company were not involved in these problems at all. He argued that he could not do anything until the results of a large-scale investigation into housing and the RDP in the Cape Metropolitan Area were

made public. In his view, the responsibility rested completely in the hands of the residents of Indawo Yoxolo: "Things have changed in Indawo Yoxolo since we started. All political groups have to be included, which represent the whole community. It has to be an inclusive community committee and should be elected. Then we have an accredited RDP forum in Indawo Yoxolo. It must include the entire community."

The residents objected strongly, "How can you expect us to co-operate with people who have threatened us and tried to kill one of us?" The director, however, kept repeating his mantra of an inclusive community committee and ignored all of the objections that were raised. The residents went on to accuse Future Dwelling's liaison officer of meeting only with the project committee, taking bribes, and manipulating the distribution of development resources. Confronted with these allegations, the director declined to take tough action against his employee: "One cannot change people's jobs on the basis of rumours." The director's unwillingness to deal with corruption led to rumours that he himself was engaged in corruption, but no evidence of this was found.

Mr. Mabeqa's public protest of the corrupt practices at the hand of the project committee had serious repercussions. In February 1998, he was shot in the head by the committee's Mr. Nqase and killed instantly, leaving a wife and daughter. An eyewitness with whom I had the opportunity to talk several times narrowly escaped being shot as well. He told me that Mr. Nqase, having shot Mr. Mabeqa, had shot himself in the leg in an attempt to make it seem self-defence. Mr. Nqase eventually appeared before court and was charged with killing Mr. Mabeqa, involvement in three other murders, and the possession of two boxes of illegal firearms. He was released on bail, and more than a year later the court found him guilty of the murder of Mr. Mabeqa and the illegal possession of firearms and sentenced him to a year in prison.

The day after the murder of Mr. Mabeqa, the members of the project committee visited about a dozen residents who had spoken out against them at home. During these visits they told the residents that the committee had ordered the murder of Mr. Mabeqa and that it had a hit list with their names on it. Within a few days after the shooting, virtually all the opponents of the project committee had fled the area. The local ANC councillor was among them; he told me that he had also received death threats from the committee and therefore had to go into hiding. The committee's opponents were shocked not only by the murder of Mr. Mabeqa but also by the committee's making no attempt to hide its role in the murder. On the contrary, they felt that it was openly displaying its power. During the months that followed, various residents told me on numerous occasions that they had been intimidated and that the project committee was involved in several murders in Indawo Yoxolo (Bähre 2001; 2002:63–97).

Some time after the murder, the project committee visited residents in their homes to "ask" them to sign a contract that would allow it access to a government sub-

11. See Thoden van Velzen (1973) on the pivotal role of political support and control over resources for big men and Barth (1959:7) and Van der Linden (1997) on clientelism. Among others Bayart (1993) and Reno (1995) have revealed the crucial role of such relations to the post-colonial state in Africa.

sidy for construction that many residents were entitled to. Most residents realized that this was a scam, that they would never see the money and that their houses would never be improved, but, out of fear of repercussions, they signed.

After serving his sentence, Mr. Nqase returned to Indawo Yoxolo and resumed his function as a member of the project committee. Through violence, terror, and the continuous support of Future Dwelling and elements of the ANC, the committee was able to maintain its powerful position. Residents' requests for help from political parties and development organizations were systematically ignored.

Reporting Corrupt Practices

The case of Indawo Yoxolo reveals that evidence of corruption is dismissed as trivial and unsubstantial. The ANC and the development organizations did not recognize the corrupt practices when they were brought to their attention. One reason for this could be that it is dangerous to address the issue of corruption. The project committee's willingness to murder and intimidate people and the weakness of the judiciary system make it difficult for corruption to be successfully contested. The underlying idea appears to be that, if corruption cannot be prevented anyway, one might as well just ignore it.

Another reason could be that it is difficult to admit to the shortcomings of development projects in which one is involved. The development policy places great value on community participation and empowerment. However, when community participation leads to corruption and violence, the fundamentals of development policy are called into question, and this poses serious problems for policy makers. Corruption implies that the fundamentals of development policy are problematic and that people and institutions once regarded as suitable partners for development have other agendas and aims.

This became particularly clear during a conference on development organized by Dutch development organizations involved in housing projects in South Africa. The conference revealed that it had been far more difficult to carry out these projects than the organizations had anticipated. The enthusiasm that had given rise to many initiatives a few years earlier had turned into frustration and disappointment. Although complex South African political dynamics were regarded as a major obstacle to development, many developers asserted that they were not involved in these dynamics and had no plans to become so. Some did not even want to know about the political dynamics in South Africa and "just wanted to get the job done." Many Dutch organizations were, however, heavily involved in the political dynamics of these projects. They set the conditions for funding and decided which projects would receive it; they attempted to influence where and how houses were built, who would construct them, who

their occupants would be, and what technical assistance could be provided. Instead of recognizing this involvement, many argued that the political problems they had experienced were something "over there," as if their intervention were irrelevant to the situation.

Although no Dutch organization was involved in the development of Indawo Yoxolo, my presentation of the case offered insight into the consequences of distributing resources among the poor and revealed that development organizations were intimately involved in creating the conditions under which corruption and violence could persist or even emerge. Many of the participants reacted defensively to this presentation. Some argued that this was only a single case that did not reveal much about the problems in South Africa. Only one, a Dutch local government official, supported my findings and disclosed the problems of corruption that she and her colleagues had experienced during the South African housing project that they had funded. When a report of the conference was published in the organizers' newsletter, it made no mention of corruption or violence.

One of the organizations behind the conference had as its sole objective to facilitate Dutch initiatives on South African housing projects. A close examination of corruption within housing projects was regarded not as an opportunity to reflect on policies and practices but as a threat to routinized behaviour. It may well be that corrupt practices in the Netherlands made it even more uncomfortable for people to consider corruption in South Africa. In 2001 the Dutch current-affairs television programme *Zembla* revealed large-scale corruption with respect to the awarding of construction contracts in the Netherlands. The parliamentary enquiry that followed sent shock waves throughout the country. It revealed that construction companies had established an elaborate financial system that ensured that they did not have to compete for contracts increasing government expenditure by millions. The "rival" companies had purposely overpriced their offers to ensure that the "right" company received the order. Complex illegal bookkeeping systems had been established for the sharing of the extra profits among the conspiring construction companies. The companies pretended that these practices did not involve real money by calling the money "ginger nuts" (*pepernoten*, a type of confectionery that is commonly eaten in celebration of the feast of St. Nicholas on December 5). However, this corruption was far from being peanuts. The enquiry revealed that corruption had become deeply entrenched in the whole construction process and that civil servants routinely received enormous bribes: indeed, many testified they could no longer do business without corruption (Rapport 2002). These corrupt practices had continued for years, and many people knew about them but remained silent. It could very well be that the corruption in South Africa was ignored because it was an uncomfortable reminder of the shady business that was being conducted at home.

Defences

Time and again, we find people and organizations reacting defensively and playing down or even ignoring corruption and its destructive consequences. Evidence of corruption is trivialized by characterizing it as rumour, by questioning the experiences of those who have suffered from corrupt practices, or by casting doubt on the integrity of the whistle-blower. Organizations involved in development present themselves as outsiders when the issue of corruption rears its ugly head. This is somewhat contradictory, because they advertise their involvement in the development process, their financial or political support of development, and their attempts to influence policy. Policy makers, development workers, and politicians have their own professional defence mechanisms against recognizing corruption. It may be that emphasis on the technical and denial of the political aspects of development is such a strategy. Ferguson (1990), for example, examining failed development projects, reports that even the most obvious political aspects of development tend to be translated into apolitical and technical language.

It is possible to point to four kinds of reasons for ignoring corruption: instrumental, emotive, sociopolitical, and ideological. The instrumental form is exemplified by the response to the corrupt committee of Indawo Yoxolo, where mafia-style leadership ensures that houses are built, sewage systems are provided, residents are employed by construction companies, and plots are distributed to poor Africans. Because many aspects of the development process are carried out successfully, it is tempting to relegate corruption to the status of an unfortunate side-effect of development or even a necessary evil.

Secondly, there is an emotive aspect to the response to corruption. Corruption can produce anxiety. In South Africa, corruption is accompanied by violence or at least the threat thereof, and this makes it very difficult to acknowledge it. It may be unnerving and guilt-producing to realize that, notwithstanding one's good intentions, one is involved in corrupt practices, either directly or indirectly. Devereux (1967:44) argues that people attempt to protect themselves from these emotions by soft-pedalling or misunderstanding information. Anxiety-arousing events are "disposed of by hurriedly sweeping them under the rug" (pp. 6–7).[12] A social and moral barrier is created that, as it were, shields one from such uncomfortable feelings.

Thirdly, ignoring corruption has a sociopolitical dimension. When corruption is revealed, relationships, whether personal or institutional, are put under pressure. It is difficult to confront a trusted colleague or an organization with which one works with allegations of involvement in corruption (cf. Olivier de Sardan 1999:30). Corruption is troublesome for sociopolitical associations

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12. Anxiety is central to Devereux's (1967) analysis of research methods, but it appears to be equally useful for the way in which development practitioners deal with uncomfortable situations.

and does not necessarily "lubricate" bureaucratic organizations or make them more efficient (see Jain 2001: 92–93 on this argument). This makes it even more tempting to reject incidences of corruption and distance oneself from those who would shine a spotlight on it.

Finally, ideology appears to make it difficult to recognize corruption. This is particularly apparent with the ideology of community participation that is so fundamental to development. The ideology emphasizes the empowerment of marginalized people, the eradication of poverty, and the establishment of democracy at all levels of society. When the existence of corrupt practices is revealed, the contradiction between ideology and practice becomes painfully clear.

The danger that unwanted, unsettling, or disturbing findings will go unrecognized is not new. Köbben and Tromp (1999), for example, have described the immense pressure that researchers have suffered when those who funded their research or interest groups were dissatisfied with the results. Researchers have been urged or even forced to conceal their findings or change unwanted results, and numerous strategies have been used to damage the reputations of those who refused to comply. Academic research should, ideally, take place in an environment that is free of interests, not guided by particular groups, and not vulnerable to political manipulation. It would be naïve to think that this will ever be possible, but I see no harm in striving to attain this unreachable goal.

Pels (1999:114) argues that "anthropology may be moving towards a morality of negotiation." This certainly seems to be the case, but it is problematic because such negotiations tend to favour the powerful. All too often research on development is guided by affluent and powerful institutions, and this inevitably endangers a rigorous analysis of what can go wrong in development projects (see Escobar 1991). However, it is not only powerful development agencies that may censor unwanted research findings. Researchers also run the risk of relegating crucial information. Becker (1996:301), for example, examining the famine during Mao's Great Leap Forward in the 1950s, reports that the atrocities that took place remained largely hidden: "Too many scholars readily accepted propaganda as fact, and even though more details of the famine emerged in the 1980s, there has still been a deep reluctance to reconsider the question."

The malevolence of corruption—the fear of retaliation against those who speak out against it—and the fundamental ideological questions that it raises make it attractive to ignore it. This contributes to its perpetuation, irrespective of policy and legal measures. Concerns about definitions, political structures, and technicalities, although important, can become professional defences that help one to ignore corrupt practices that occur in one's immediate surroundings. It is useful to analyse the function of corruption in a particular society—to show why it is fundamental to the distribution of resources and how it creates unexpected alliances. However, such analyses need to embrace the anger, frustration, and actions of those who suffer from these practices. The study

of protests such as the one by residents of Indawo Yoxolo is crucial for anthropology because it reveals that interests and ideology—in this case concerning development—are not hegemonic. It is our task to consider the doubts that people have, how they are expressed, and what happens to the powerless when they are systematically ignored.

Comments

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The ethnography of corruption poses many challenges: ethnographic, analytic, and expositional. Bähre accepts a standard definition of corruption as the "misuse of public office for private gain" and moves on to his ethnographic findings. Those findings underline the importance of rethinking the practices commonly called corrupt.

Corruption is a weak analytic concept (Williams 1999: 511; Brown and Cloke 2004:284). The phenomena it is used to describe are quite broad and complex. But if we maintain the definition of corruption adopted by Bähre, much of what he discusses in this paper is not corruption. The institutions people are stealing from here are not public in the sense of "public office." Rather, they are community-based empowerment schemes, NGOs, and private firms that work around rather than through the state.

Early in the article Bähre suggests that corruption is a remnant of injustice that has not yet been addressed by the transition to democracy. However, little in his paper bears out this suggestion. He also argues that corruption is an outcome of development, but what kind of corruption is the outcome of what kind of development? The bulk of the paper focuses on postapartheid development programs that emphasize community empowerment. These schemes exist in a broader context of neoliberal economic development. While many think of neoliberalism and empowerment as contradictory, the two can be mutually reinforcing (Elyachar 2002). Together, they engender particular forms of corruption. The lesson to be learned here is not about "the consequences of distributing resources among the poor." (Sitting in the United States right now, one would be hard pressed to argue that there is less corruption among the rich and powerful.) Rather, we need to analyze the mode of distributing those resources that Bähre has uncovered with his ethnography. His paper tells a story of emergent fields of power in which NGOs, mafia-type violence, private firms, and foreign donors are at least as important as the state in setting the rules of the game for political and economic life.

Neoliberalism is all about the formula "more market, less state." Development approaches that emphasize NGOs and community empowerment schemes also aim at less state and more markets (if of the empowering kind).

NGOs that distribute microloans can be important sites for instilling neoliberal subjectivities, which value short-term gain over long-term community value (Elyachar n.d.). In other words, Bähre's finding that "development projects aimed at empowering the poor and redistributing resources to those who suffered most from apartheid have also been tainted by corruption" should not be surprising.

Bähre's frame of analysis includes the broader constellation of power that structures his ethnographic setting. He pays special attention to the Dutch government, pointing out that the development organization it funded was "intimately involved in creating the conditions under which corruption and violence could persist or even emerge." He might have emphasized the fact the development organization was in fact a private corporation; it was left to the market to integrate community participation with construction company profits. We need to consider this broader constellation of institutional power (Wolf 1999) more carefully when we think about corruption and the modes of violence with which it is linked. Here, the careful historically rooted approach to mafia violence and movements of protest against the mafia's power laid out by the Schneiders (2003) could be of great value.

Empirically, neoliberalism is highly correlated with the rise of corruption, and the connection between the two is conceptual as well. Corruption is a concept with a long history. Concern with it became very prominent with the emergence of commercial society a few centuries before Transparency International and the World Bank. Then, corruption meant the decline of civic virtue (Pocock 1975). Since civic virtue was understood as active participation in public life and contribution to the common good, the early modern debate on corruption was eminently political. Corruption was a symptom of the disappearance of politics as a means of creating a meaningful life. It was regarded as the unscrupulous pursuit of private interest and gain. What was once corruption is now enshrined in neoliberal subjectivities. The formula of more market, less state, seems well enacted in practices of corruption.

We need to think more about who is charging whom with corruption and why. We could also learn from the historical debates to ask what market forces are being unleashed when corruption is charged and what contests over power are under way among those linked to charges of corruption. Now as in the past, discourses of corruption are debates about power, new market forces, and new modes of violence. Bähre's paper makes an important contribution to our collective effort to explore its meaning.

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Bähre examines the phenomenon of corruption in the context of development projects in South Africa, with specific emphasis on why people ignore it. He indicates that some Dutch funding organizations have ignored cor-

ruption in the South African projects because they themselves have been corrupt. He defines corruption as "the misuse of public office for private gain" and notes that it is ignored both by legal and political institutions and by ordinary people who refuse to speak out. One may draw from his essay that corruption is neither a South African nor a Dutch phenomenon but a human phenomenon that is manifested at personal, social, political, economic, legal, and organizational levels.

Bähre focuses on why corruption is ignored but offers no reason that people engage in it. Is corruption a phenomenon or crime of opportunity? The anecdotes he provides suggest that this issue is germane to his project. However, it is not clear what role these stories are meant to play. An analysis to bring out what is unique about them would have been helpful. Do they tell us anything unique about corruption and how or why it is ignored? Do they say anything about the different dimensions and nuances of corruption and corrupt practices or about what distinguishes corruption or the ignoring of corruption in South Africa? Are all corrupt practices the same? Do human, political, social, cultural, and legal structures affect the nature of corruption and the response to it? These questions remain unanswered.

Toward the end of the paper Bähre indicates some implications of the ideological reason for ignoring corruption for academic research. The oblique reference to this unclear connection, which needs to be developed, seems out of place. Bähre has contributed to a better understanding of corruption by addressing why corruption is ignored. I wonder, however, whether he has considered that ignoring corruption is itself a corrupt practice and an aspect of the human tendency to be corrupt. The fundamental issue is not why corruption is ignored but why people are corrupt. This essay scratches the surface of the phenomenon without addressing its deep theoretical issues.

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Bähre's article posits a discrepancy between the attention that corruption receives in policy and legal documents and the silence that surrounds corrupt practices in contemporary South Africa. This is an important observation. The types of activity chronicled by Bähre—misuse of public money, police inaction, and the misappropriation of development funds—haunt the social imaginations of many of the most disadvantaged people in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Scholars, activists, and policy makers have, however, been slow to acknowledge the significance of routine small-scale corruption in processes of social and political change. Bähre's article therefore represents part of a larger effort to "mainstream" analysis of everyday corruption and connect the interests of scholars with those of local people.

One of the key strengths of Bähre's account is to show that foregrounding corrupt practices entails intervening in a highly charged political field in which legal experts, private agencies, development organizations, political parties, and local people compete over meanings and resources. Accusations of "corruption" typically carry strong moral overtones and may be important political tools for the poor. Similarly, political élites may make strident efforts to euphemize, cover up, or explain away corrupt practices. In making these points, Bähre's analysis forms part of a wider effort to examine the cultural production of corruption (see Gupta 1995). It also reveals, however, that corruption is more than just a discourse. The prevalence of corruption in the implementation of the Indawo Yoxolo development project points to the way in which malfeasance often prevents the poor from obtaining access to basic goods and exposes them to multiple forms of political violence.

Less directly, Bähre's ethnography explodes a myth that "corruption" is an inherently Western concept. One of the few positive messages emerging from his account is that many people in contemporary South Africa believe that the state and its private-sector allies can and should be made to assist the poor in their struggle for shelter, education, and physical security. To speak of "corruption" implies that the poor recognize certain principles of good governance and, at least at some level, believe that the state and its allies can work better to serve their interests. What also becomes increasingly clear as Bähre's story unfolds is that corruption is a problem that traverses, problematizes, and sometimes redefines the boundary between state and society, as Gupta (1995) and Harriss-White (2003) have shown in research in India. People's efforts to ignore, justfy, or contest corruption frequently entail discursive or practical efforts to redraw the boundary between "the state" and "society."

Bähre's work could be usefully extended in at least two ways. First, his account points to the value of developing a political economy of corrupt practice but stops short of reflecting in detail on corruption's role in reproducing, undermining, or transforming inequalities based upon class, gender, race, ethnicity, and other axes of social difference. Long ago, Scott (1972) made a distinction between relatively routine "market" corruption, in which the illegal "price" of services was usually well known, and "parochial" corruption, in which questions of social standing, political affiliations, and other extraneous factors shaped people's access to its benefits. This conceptualization provides a basis for asking new questions of Bähre's research. Was access to housing grants a form of market corruption, or were these transactions powerfully shaped by parochial factors? Was there an important market element to access to police assistance? Were market corruption and parochial corruption evaluated differently by political elites and the poor? Scholars should be sensitive to counterintuitive and contradictory fmdings in this area. For example, if market corruption is the norm, it is possible that corrupt practices serve to reproduce class divisions while also undermining other forms of social inequality. Con-

versely, if parochial corruption holds sway, it is possible that corrupt practices may offer a form of social mobility to those who cannot afford to pay bribes but are from the "right" social group. As these scenarios suggest, a compelling irony of corruption is that it is often in the best interest of formerly marginalized social groups to participate in corrupt practice rather than protest against it.

Second, Bähre's account hints at the importance of comparing the experiences of people affected by corruption across national and cultural boundaries but does not reflect on cross-learning opportunities at any length. In addition to detailed ethnographies of the type offered here, we urgently require integrative studies that compare the politics of corrupt practice in a range of settings. This would allow scholars to better appreciate the conditions in which political élites seek to ignore corruption. It would also provide a strong foundation for understanding how the urban and rural poor in areas such as South Africa, Brazil, India, and Indonesia occasionally empower themselves through engaging in, critiquing, or resisting webs of corrupt activity.

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Bähre raises a number of important issues for social scientific studies of corruption, development, and South Africa's political transition. He shows how, with the mass migration of Africans into cities such as Cape Town, the allocation of housing has become an issue of cardinal concern. For me the clearest strength of the article is his courageous and careful documentation of the oppressive mafia-style leadership of the projects committee in Indawo Yoxolo and of how local and international development organizations, the ANC, and the state courts ignored this corruption. Bähre is correct to endorse Ferguson's (1990) suggestion that part of the problem stems from the presentation of development as an "anti-politics machine" and from the unwillingness of development agencies to engage critically and effectively with complex political dynamics.

This article underlines the merits of ethnographic fieldwork on the perspectives of marginalized people. I find it extremely valuable and can only point to what I believe are a few shortcomings in the analysis and suggest some avenues for future investigation. The most obvious shortcoming is Bähre's failure to recognize that South Africans do sometimes confront corruption. Police units such as the Scorpions and Bulelani Nguka's Directorate of Public Prosecutions regularly investigate and prosecute corrupt officials. The media also carry regular exposés of corruption. For instance, the lead story in this week's *Mail and Guardian* (June 25 to July 1) is the allegation that the Nelspruit's mayor awarded R2 million in council contacts to his wives. This observation does not invalidate Bähre's analysis but raises a more complex comparative question: What sorts of corruption are being revealed and what sorts concealed? It may well be that one does not anticipate corruption in sacred institutions such as development organizations and the church, where philanthropic work is presumably being done (see Bornstein's 2003 analysis of this connection). It may also be that corruption is most likely to be ignored where its victims are marginal and poor, but other, more complex local cultural and organizational issues could also be involved. I find it curious that there are so many complaints about theft from South African school feeding schemes and none about theft from burial associations.

More could be said about the social conditions that make corruption possible, such as increased dependence of poor households upon government and development organizations. During the 1990s de-industrialization accompanied South Africa's transition from the racist system of apartheid to democracy. There were drastic job losses in the mining, manufacturing, and construction industries. Sources estimate that only 6.8 million of South Africa's economically active population of 15.5 million are now "formally" employed (Robinson 2004). At the same time, however, the proportion of households with access to clean water rose from 60% to 85% and those having electricity from 32% to 70%. Six million citizens received housing, 1.8 million hectares of land have been transferred, old-age pensions have increased, child support grants have been introduced, and a nutrition programme now reaches 4.5 million school children *(The Sunday Independent*, April 25, 2004). These processes create powerlessness and dependency. Unemployed persons can ill afford to challenge the manner in which organizations provide necessities such as water, homes, land, pensions, and food for their children. People cannot bite the proverbial hand that feeds them.

On the basis of my own limited experience of South Africa's legal system, I find it hard to believe that a magisterial court could impose a one-year sentence for murder and for the illegal possession of a firearm. I am sure that readers would have appreciated more information about the events that transpired in Mr. Nqase's court case and on the manner in which the operation of legal institutions also trivializes corruption.

My final comment is about the role of anthropology vis-à-vis development and corruption. Here it is important to bear in mind that more anthropology graduates work in development organizations like Future Dwelling than in academic institutions. Perhaps we should more actively solicit the insights of our applied colleagues in intellectual debates about development. I cannot agree with Bähre's comment that those of us who embark upon careers in research should strive towards conducting work that is free of interests. This might well lead to anthropology's becoming the kind of "anti-politics machine" that we all fear. It might be more strategic to embrace an explicit political position, a stance that seeks to identify more closely with the poor and with civil society than with the powerful, the state, and political parties and one that embraces the politics of complexity

and the aim of speaking truth to power. Bähre himself demonstrates the value of such a stance.

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Development in South Africa under the government of the African National Congress seems to reproduce the classic problems of corruption, inefficiency, and violent conflict in the sites of development projects. Bähre is dismayed by this phenomenon. He offers a vignette from a specific development project to show the ways in which corruption pervades a community-based project. He goes on to present a brief schematic analysis of why corruption persists under the new, presumably popular regime and is systematically ignored by practitioners and funding agencies. There appears to be an ineluctable logic to the tragic repetition of nationalist misadventures in social engineering. The old poisons seep yet again into the latest gift of development that the newest nation-state of the twentieth century has offered to its people. Bähre does a good job of pointing out the way in which a corrupt situation unfolds and the tendency of governments and donors to ignore the situation in practical terms even while they harp on it rhetorically. What he does not ask is why this rhetorical excess occurs in the context of practical neglect. I would like to offer some thoughts, stimulated by the detailed case study provided, on this unasked question.

The study of corruption in development activities is not a new topic. In the 1990s a series of studies did begin to ask if the language of corruption encountered in the everyday world of development projects could be translated as Bähre has done—as the misuse of public office for private gain—cross-culturally. Some scholars, notably working in West Africa, began to reflect on witchcraft accusations as a local but changing form of political negotiation in conditions of relative instability. In an analogous fashion, others recognized the social production of indifference and the social reinterpretation of intimacy in the discourse of corruption in many postauthoritarian societies. Working with these culturally differentiated ethnographic accounts of corruption discourse has helped scholars to recognize the historically particular rise of these discourses in the wider context of bureaucratic governments that were hard-pressed to maintain forms of intimate sociality between rulers and citizens. One phenomenon that contributes to the spread of corruption-sensitivity across all levels of society is the cycle of expansive commitment and shrinking capability in which all developmental states are caught. While this cycle is not peculiar to postauthoritarian states, it is precisely because such states are more committed to openness and political participation that the practice and rhetoric of corruption spread quickly in the political environment they have generated. After long and arduous struggles for the overthrow of supremely unjust authoritarian predecessors, the nationalist states that follow are prone to excessive haste and grandiose sweep in their commitments to development.

It is a notable insight of Africanist anthropology of development that the national state arrives, almost unannounced, in the locality on the back of an internationally supported development project. But what this insight often obscures is that this occurrence, as an effect, underlines the inadequacy of any form of local state machinery to create a neutral political environment while the development project is actually being implemented. Corruption, then, becomes a way to speak about ineffectual governance and its reliance on local sovereignties—big men, mafia, traditional power structures, and so forth. Compressed time-frames and seat-of-the-pants delivery are key social characteristics of development projects. They tend to fertilize diverse forms of political engagement that a vocabulary of corruption makes intelligible across levels of engagement.

Subject formation in the context of development occurs alongside processes of state formation. Agents and objects of development are constantly redefining moral principles and patterns of recognition intrinsic to sociability and the transaction of power, prestige, and subsistence relations in local life. The instruments and conventions of participation and empowerment that development projects offer do not simply challenge traditional order; they also provide new avenues for reinforcing authority or seizing it. Such generative situations are negotiated, often violently, not merely according to received norms but in the growing awareness of a rights-based culture of entitlements and adjudication that development enterprises both create and (through corruption) undermine.

Bähre's concluding reflections on donor blindness to corruption and its manifestation in the donor home countries are quite provocative. He seems to suggest that aversion is learned at home, not only manifest abroad as technocratic tunnel vision or political naiveté. But he should be bolder and try to imagine the transnational neoliberal order that late twentieth-century development projects help to create. Corruption could be a language here for speaking about rates of return on investments or the production of an international regime of property rights and judicial review that makes development capital mobile in the same way as private investment.

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In sub-Saharan Africa, perhaps no other issue fuels popular discourse and debate more than corruption. Yet anthropology is relatively bereft of studies of corruption. Perhaps this is because of our fear of producing ethnographic accounts that might be too easily interpreted as blaming the local culture and people for corruption. Or

perhaps it is because of our relative incompetence in studying and confronting the role of the state and other powerful and complex institutions in the production of inequality and injustice through mechanisms like corruption. In any case, corruption is a subject that anthropologists can no longer ignore if we are to remain engaged with issues vital to the lives of the people we study.

Bähre's article is particularly valuable in that it reveals the connections between corruption, inequality, and violence. A mafia-style local leadership literally enforces its corrupt practices through violence, including the murder of opponents. Many forms of corruption in Africa and elsewhere occur without the overt threat of violence, but the role of the state in controlling the means of violence serves as a backdrop to corruption in most settings. The fact that not all corruption is so directly reinforced requires more elaboration and better explanation than is offered in this case. In much of Africa, exploitative corruption on the part of powerful elites is complexly intertwined with more everyday forms of petty corruption. Understanding how ordinary people are participants in the social reproduction of corruption even as they are also its primary victims seems key to a fully developed anthropology of corruption. Accounts of corruption must address the seeming lack of congruence between the strong public and official rhetoric against corruption and the prevalence and durability of corrupt practices. Scholars such as Joseph (1987), Mbembe (1992), Bayart (1993), Chabal and Daloz (1999), and Olivier de Sardan (1999) have made significant contributions in this direction.

Bähre is explicit in positing that development organizations are culpable in facilitating corruption. He argues that development agencies are remarkably myopic when it comes to acknowledging and addressing the corruption that takes place within their own programs. His speculations about why development organizations "ignore" corruption (e.g., because "it was an uncomfortable reminder of the shady business that was being conducted at home"), however, seem to me insufficiently theorized. Ferguson (1990), Uvin (1998), and others provide accounts that suggest much more complex explanations.

The article alludes briefly to the power of rumor in popular discourse about corruption. Rumors about corruption would seem to be fertile ground for further inquiry. Although their ubiquity often makes it hard to sort out fact from fiction, rumors offer a revealing window onto popular interpretations of corruption. In addition, rumors are frequently wielded by both the weak and the powerful as political weapons, and tracing the meanings and effects of rumors about corruption more systematically could deepen the ethnographic analysis.

The prevalence of rumors about corruption in public discourse is a testament to the level of popular awareness regarding the extent of corruption and its detrimental effects on society and the welfare of ordinary people. Bähre is right to point out that social scientific analyses of corruption need to move beyond a focus on the functional aspects of corruption and "embrace the anger, frustration, and actions of those who suffer from these practices." Such anger and frustration are expressed not only in rumors that depict the diabolical intentions and actions of powerful people engaged in corruption but also in other forms of popular practice. A range of extant and emergent social phenomena in Africa, such as organized vigilantism, the proliferation of witchcraft accusations related to the practice of statecraft and the accumulation of wealth, and the growing popularity of evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity must all be interpreted in part as responses to popular understandings of and anger over corruption and its consequences.

Though anthropologists and development agencies can justifiably be accused of ignoring corruption, I wonder if "ignoring" is really the right word to describe what is happening. The reality suggests rather that practices of corruption and discourses against corruption are bound together in a complex whole that must be further studied and better theorized. The ethnographic study and understanding of corruption is in its infancy and is a topic that anthropologists should pay much greater attention to as we try to engage with key social issues in the societies in which we work.

Reply

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Several commentators point out that the common definition of corruption—the misuse of public office for private gain—is problematic. Elyachar most strongly opposes this view of corruption and argues that corruption is increased by "more market, less state": "neoliberalism is highly correlated with the rise of corruption." In her comments on the case of Indawo Yoxolo, however, Eiyachar too readily finds a confirmation of her argument that corruption is increased by neoliberalism and draws too selectively from the material that I present. The case of South Africa reveals that the state *does* play a crucial role in the rise of corruption as well as in the way it is ignored and does so in numerous ways. First, the development objectives that make corruption so easy are developed by the state. The policy requires the involvement of "the community," NGOs, and companies in such a way that corruption seems inevitable. Government policy gives "community leaders" the authority to distribute houses and jobs and thus provides the conditions and resources for corruption. Secondly, on numerous levels government officials teachers, civil servants and local and provincial authorities are part of corrupt practices or ignore evidence of corruption. Niehaus provides unambiguous examples of this involvement. Thirdly, to those residing in development projects such as Indawo Yoxolo, the state is actually most visible through development. As illegal squatter camps were turned into legal settlements, residents were confronted with bureaucratic procedures such as registration of identities and households, application of housing sub-

sidies, and registration of plots. Furthermore, the schools were one of the sites in which corruption could proliferate as teachers sold food provided for by development aid, forced children to buy food on the school grounds, and stole entrance fees. Every single public initiative in Indawo Yoxolo, even the construction of speed bumps and the designation of taxi ranks, was incorporated into this national development project. The pivotal role of the state in development reveals that corruption cannot be explained in terms of "more market, less state." Instead, dependency on the state and corruption go hand in hand (see also Bayart, Ellis, and Hibou 1999).

Does this mean "more state, more corruption," as the common definition of corruption would suggest (if there is no public office, it cannot be used for private gain)? This too is simplistic, and in fact it points to a limitation of this approach. The case of Indawo Yoxolo and the Netherlands reveals that not only the state is involved in the maintenance and neglect of corruption. Private companies, NGOs, and mafia-style community leaders are equally involved, and in some instances they are so much intertwined with one another that it is unclear where the state stops and the market or society begins. This is particularly clear if one examines the project committee in relation to the state. There were town councils before the 1994 elections, but they were dysfunctional because of lack of funds and lack of legitimacy. Viewed as an extension of the apartheid state, they were frequently blamed for corruption. Many boycotts and protest marches were directed against them (Van Kessel 2000). After 1994 community-based organizations had to give up organizing boycotts and other forms of protest and support the state in its development aims (Seekings 1992:216). They had to be gradually incorporated into a new elected local government, but in the absence of elections they had to be somehow accountable to "the community." Rather than relying on public approval, they sought political security within the local and provincial ANC, attempted to control the resources provided by the state-funded private-sector company, and resorted to intimidation and violence to keep "the community" at bay. The case of Indawo Yoxolo reveals why such public-private partnerships are in danger of becoming partners in crime *and* development.

Smith points to the role of rumor in addressing corruption, while Niehaus asks, "What sorts of corruption are being revealed and what sorts concealed?" In Indawo Yoxolo as in many places in South Africa, the media are completely absent. Instances of corruption, intimidation, and even murder are never reported in the newspapers or on the radio. In the absence of the media and of a functioning police force, the options for those wishing to challenge corruption are limited. They can only turn to the same institutions that provide political security and resources to the project committee—the ANC and Future Dwelling. The consequences of their actions do indeed, as suggested by Jeffrey, raise the question whether it is not in the interest of the poor to go along with corruption instead of fighting it without success. Yet the unease about corruption, expressed either overtly by protesting against corrupt leaders or in terms of the growing popularity of certain religious movements that Smith points to, reveals that the ideology and politics of development are not hegemonic.

Although it is problematic if not impossible to balance the consequences of corruption against those of violence (precisely because they are intertwined), it does seem that violence disrupts the lives of the poor far more than the strict financial consequences of corruption. The rewards for the project committee and its allies appeared to be fairly small. They could afford fancy clothes and mobile phones and in one or two cases an old pick-up truck and were therefore a bit better-off than most of their neighbours, but the income they derived from corruption did not allow them to adopt a middle-class lifestyle. If issues of power are raised in relation to corruption in South Africa, the focus should be on violence rather than on the financial side that is so often emphasized.

The ideology of community in development policy is crucial to the power relations underlying violence and corruption. Policy is based on naïve and simplistic notions about what communities are—that they are empowering and homogeneous, with clear "natural" feelings of belonging and representation by leadership and interpersonal relations characterized by sharing and solidarity. Communities have other qualities, among them conflict over legitimate representation and belonging. By ignoring these disharmonious aspects of social relations, development policy creates the perfect conditions for corrupt mafia-style leadership that violently silences critical voices. The analysis of power and the reporting of corrupt practices, either through rumor or by challenging development institutions such as Future Dwelling, therefore needs to take the ideological foundations of policy into account. Corruption reveals that these ideologies are rooted in structural power and therefore far from arbitrary or easily dismissed (cf. Wolf 1999).

Ikuenobe strongly criticizes the way in which I approach corruption and argues that I ask the wrong type of question. To him "the fundamental issue is . . . why people are corrupt." This reminds me of an interview with, if I remember correctly, the Rolling Stones' lead singer Mick Jagger. The interviewer asked, "Why do rock stars so often date supermodels?" His provocative response was "Because they can." Asking why people are corrupt calls for the same kind of answer. More fascinating than an essentialist question is a contextual analysis of corruption. Which notions and ideologies of human behaviour are fundamental to socioeconomic policy? Why are particular ideologies (about communities, about rational behaviour) so powerful, and what problems accompany them? Why are discrepancies between socioeconomic policy (repertoires on development and empowerment) and practice (violence and corruption) ignored or manipulated?

Equally interesting is the way in which interdependencies between people and institutions are influenced by development. Instead of defining the boundaries of the community, the state, or the market, the study of

the more unpleasant consequences of socioeconomic policy reveals intriguing dynamic interdependencies that link the very local to powerful transnational policy-making institutions. It is more fruitful to analyze the social and institutional interdependencies, as proposed by Jeffrey, than to focus on essentialist issues. How does development alter these interdependencies, and what forms of interdependencies are more prone to corruption? In this respect, the ideology of public-private partnership in neoliberal development policy could be an indication of novel interdependencies of the state, society, and market in which accountability, legitimacy, and authority are being redefined.

Indeed, as Sivaramakrishnan says, development is on its way while a neutral political environment is absent. What is particularly striking is the effect of diverging views of those involved in development on interdependencies. These views are underlined in the public discourse on globalization and development policy, which highlights solidarity and sharing across social and national boundaries. Interdependencies are equally emphasized by opponents of corrupt development when they approach government agencies and development corporations and ask them to stop collaborating with mafia-style leaders. Corruption brings to the fore the fact that at other times or in other places, development organizations play down same interdependencies, emphasize social and national boundaries, and adopt a pose of noninvolvement. The process by which these boundaries of involvement and noninvolvement change is highly political and ideological in nature. What makes corruption such a fascinating topic of study is that it reveals the harsh consequences of the political turmoil and ideological narratives that are part and parcel of development.

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