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Dirty Togetherness: From Poland Under Communism to Weaponised Corruption Today

Brudna wspólnota: od Polski pod rządami komunizmu do dzisiejszej korupcji orężnej

Abstract

The concept of "dirty togetherness" appears even more significant today than when Adam Podgórecki identified the phenomenon in 1980's communist Poland. Then, it captured the dynamic of a resource-scarce society in which trusted family and friends operated in informal social networks to secure goods and services. Through cliquish and close-knit networks, they coped with shortages and distrust of the state. In the decades since, "dirty togetherness" took on new dimensions, as these informal networks adapted to, and helped shape, market and democratic institutions of the new Poland. Today, the currency of the concept extends beyond Poland and post-communist space. Dirtily together networks engaging in "weaponised corruption," the use of corruption for geopolitical ends, pose a palpable threat to democracy. In this essay, I explore Podgórecki's concept, the legacies associated with it, and its applicability beyond its originating context. I suggest guiding questions for research.

Keywords: dirty togetherness, social networks, informal systems, informal exchange, informality, corruption, social structure, flex nets, institutional nomads, clans, weaponised corruption

Abstrakt

Koncepcja „brudnej wspólnoty" wydaje się dziś jeszcze bardziej znacząca niż wtedy, gdy Adam Podgórecki zidentyfikował to zjawisko w komunistycznej Polsce lat 80. Wówczas ukazywała ona dynamikę społeczeństwa niedoboru zasobów, w którym zaufana rodzina i przyjaciele działali w nieformalnych

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sieciach społecznych, aby zapewnić sobie dobra i usługi. Poprzez klikowe i ściśle powiązane sieci ludzie radzili sobie z niedoborami i nieufnością wobec państwa. W kolejnych dekadach „brudna wspólnota" przybrała nowe wymiary, ponieważ te nieformalne sieci dostosowywały się do instytucji rynkowych i demokratycznych nowej Polski i pomagały je kształtować. Obecnie aktualność tej koncepcji wykracza poza Polskę i obszar postkomunistyczny. Istotnym zagrożeniem dla demokracji są brudne sieci powiązań i to, jak strategicznie posługują się korupcją, używając jej jako oręża. W tym eseju badam koncepcję Podgóreckiego, związane z nią dziedzictwo i jej zastosowanie poza jej pierwotnym kontekstem. Sugeruję pytania przewodnie do badań.

Słowa kluczowe: brudna wspólnota, sieci społeczne, nieformalne systemy, nieformalna wymiana, nieformalność, korupcja, struktura społeczna, elastyczne sieci, nomadzi instytucjonalni, klany, korupcja z użyciem broni

Introduction

The concept of "dirty togetherness" (*brudna wspólnota*) appears even more significant today than when sociologist Adam Podgórecki first identified the phenomenon in communist Poland in the 1980s. Then, it captured the dynamic of a resource-scarce society in which trusted family and friends operated in informal social networks to secure (often basic, yet difficult to obtain) goods and services. Through these cliquish and close-knit networks, people coped with shortages and distrust of the state. In the decades since communism, "dirty togetherness" took on new dimensions, as these informal networks morphed as they adapted to, and indeed helped shape, the new democratic Poland.

The currency of the concept has come to extend far beyond Poland. The informal networks and groups that arose with the unravelling of communism in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and became a signature feature of the 1990s recall key aspects of Podgórecki's dirty togetherness.[1] Because of this, I have employed the concept to help illuminate certain kinds of networks, including those that nowadays engage in "weaponised corruption," the use of corruption for geopolitical ends, and that often reach beyond post-communist space. Today, an amplified dirty togetherness appears to thrive far and wide, now presenting a palpable threat to democratic structures and possibly even to democracy itself. It is my experience that grappling with the concept of dirty togetherness can help us unpack this crucial force and its capacity to undermine democratic systems.

In this essay, I explore Podgórecki's concept, the legacies associated with it, and its potential applicability beyond the context in which it originated. With a nod to his concept, I suggest some guiding questions for research.

[1] A. Podgórecki, *Polish Society: A Sociological Analysis*, "Praxis International" 1987, vol. 7, no. 1, p. 57–78.

Dirty Togetherness Under Communism

"Dirty togetherness" emerged in the years of communist rule following World War II. I observed the phenomenon in action and learned about Podgórecki's concept when I conducted field research for my doctoral dissertation in Poland in the early 1980s as a budding social anthropologist. My dissertation and resulting book, *The Private Poland*[2] (and its translation a quarter century later – *Prywatna Polska* – with retrospective introduction[3]), discuss the informal social and economic networks through which people manoeuvred when they did not trust the official system or its information, which did not sufficiently deliver. This unofficial system, which arose to circumvent monopolistic state power and bureaucracy, was so ubiquitous that an entire vocabulary had evolved to convey its transactions and conditions.[4] Skirting the system became a way of life with its own language and habits of secrecy.

During those years, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to become acquainted with Podgórecki's former student and then collaborator, Professor Jacek Kurczewski, a legal sociologist who headed the Institute of Applied Social Sciences at Warsaw University (Instytut Stosowanych Nauk Społecznych), which previously had been led by his mentor Podgórecki. In the early to mid-1980s, Kurczewski spearheaded innovative research focusing on informal exchange in which dirtily together networks played a role. Employing participant-observation and interviewing tools, Kurczewski and his research teams studied the activities and behaviours of informal distribution, including, for example, those occasioned by the rationing system imposed during martial law of the early 1980s[5] and those associated with queuing, that is, the informal rules and exchange that governed standing in line *en masse* for scarce goods and services.

The result of all this activity, charted by me[6] and a handful of Polish scholars at the time, e.g., Firlit and Chłopecki, Gliński, Kawalec, Kurczewski, Pawlik, Śmigielska,[7] was an elaborate unofficial system of informal rules, reciprocal understandings, etiquette, and distribution of goods and services that often

[2] J.R. Wedel, *The Private Poland*, Facts on File, New York, NY 1986.

[3] J.R. Wedel, *Prywatna Polska*, transl. S. Kowalski, Trio, Warsaw 2007. New introduction to paperback version in Polish: *The Private Poland. A Quarter Century Later*, https://janinewedel.info/prywatna_polska_intro.html.

[4] Terms like "*załatwić sprawy*", "*kombinować*", and "*organizować*", hardly translatable into English, could be adequately conveyed only in context.

[5] *Umowa o kartki*, ed. J. Kurczewski, IPSiR UW, Warsaw 1985.

[6] J.R. Wedel, *The Private Poland*…

[7] E. Firlit, J. Chłopecki, *When Theft Is Not Theft*, in: *The Unplanned Society: Poland During and After Communism*, ed. J.R. Wedel, Columbia University Press, New York, NY 1992, p. 95–109; P. Gliński, *Acapulco Near Konstancin*, in: *The Unplanned Society*…, p. 144–152; S. Kawalec, *The Dictatorial Supplier*, in: *The Unplanned Society*…, p. 128–143; *Umowa o kartki*, ed. J. Kurczewski, IPSiR UW, Warsaw

overshadowed the official economy as it widely organised life across social and economic institutions.

Podgórecki delineates key aspects of this system with his work on dirty togetherness.[8] His work on the subject is confined almost entirely to communist Poland. He does, however, reflect on the phenomenon in non-communist contexts, perhaps from his perch in Canada (to which he emigrated in 1979). He observes that "dirty togetherness, though on a smaller scale, also functions in non-communist countries [where it] appears in politics and business, especially in North America."[9]

Wherever dirty togetherness operates, it is my conviction that exploring the characteristics and underpinnings of the dirty togetherness outlined by Podgórecki may help us analyse these informal networks and the practices and structures they forge – practices and structures that, wherever in operation, are incompatible with democratic principles and accountability.

The following principles can be distilled from Podgórecki's writing.

Firstly, he specifies that the "informal social structure" of dirty togetherness is grounded in the "m u t u a l t i e s" o f e q u a l s (that is, "those in the same status category"), which "constitute the unusually strong and vital fabric of the inner life of Polish society."[10] It is this kind of tie, he observes, that "may transfer or degenerate itself into… 'dirty togetherness'." Examples of transactions that manifest this degeneration are "the acceptance into a medical school of a daughter of a highly placed person in return for the possibility of buying the unaccessible cement for building a house; [or] the privilege of immediately

1985; W. Pawlik, *Intimate Commerce*, in: *The Unplanned Society*…, p. 78–94; J. Śmigielska, *There's the Beef*, in: *The Unplanned Society*…, p. 110–121.

[8] Over roughly the same time frame (largely 1990s) during which Podgórecki's concept of dirty togetherness was intensely discussed among Polish sociologists, so was the notion of "amoral familism", sometimes in the same breath, and as key to understanding Polish social-economic reality under communism. The notion of amoral familism, based on fieldwork by the American political scientist Edward C. Banfield (1958) in poor regions of southern Italy, concerns strategies of coping and survival. Banfield described an atomised society in which impoverished people, suspicious and envious of one another, pursue short-term goals to benefit their nuclear families (only), while lacking public spirit and the capacity for goal-oriented community action (E.C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois 1958). Tarkowska and Tarkowski suggested that this amoral familism bore similarity to the "social disintegration of Poland in the 1980s" marked by scarcity of consumer resources, "concentration on the present and immediacy", "a climate of distrust", and "the application of a dual ethic – one for one's 'own' people and another for 'others'." E. Tarkowska, J. Tarkowski, *'Amoralny familizm', czyli o dezintegracji społecznej w Polsce lat osiemdziesiątych*, in: *Grupy i więzi w systemie monocentrycznym*, IFiS PAN, Warsaw 1990, p. 37–69.

[9] A. Podgórecki, *Socjologiczna teoria prawa*, transl. Ł.M. Kwaśniewska, R. Smogór, Wydawnictwo Interart, Warsaw 1998, p. 89 (translation into English by J. Wedel).

[10] A. Podgórecki, *Polish Society: A Sociological Analysis*…, p. 67.

buying a car in exchange for admission to a well-equipped, specialised hospital for an elderly aunt."[11]

Undergirding such degeneration is, secondly, the population's wide rejection of the legal system that has been imposed on it, which it sees as "unjust" and "undemocratic",[12] and which results in the suspension of certain traditional norms. Dirty togetherness, explains Podgórecki, "means that elements of traditional social control, plucked from ethical emotions, are so saturated by various erosive influences that they eventually lose their character as agents of social control and assume new traits of specific 'perverse' loyalty."[13]

Participation in networks of dirty togetherness entails, thirdly, this perverse loyalty, which also assumes a self-perpetuating quality. Family ties, private transactions, and what Podgórecki calls "mutual fiddling services" (perhaps better understood in English as "finagling") serve to cement loyalty.

Fourthly, loyalty is secured through a community enforcement of loyalties, in which one's peers exert social control and compel loyalty. Podgórecki notes "the possibility of mutual blackmail in case of violations of the reciprocal code of collaboration – when the behaviour known to the hitherto tested partners is disclosed."[14]

Fifthly, dirty togetherness enjoys a form of legitimacy among the population. This legitimacy, Podgórecki assesses, is "*based on the existence of the superstructure of 'dirty togetherness'*." If a "complicated infrastructure of mutually interdependent interests" stands behind a legal system that lacks popular legitimacy,

> then this legal system may become accepted, not on the basis of its own merits, but because it creates a convenient cover-system for the flourishing phenomenon of "dirty togetherness." Then each institution, factory and organization serves, independently from its own production tasks, as a formal network which gives a stable frame of reference for an enormous amount of mutual semi-private services, reciprocal arrangements… In this situation, the formal legal network, irrespective of its own questionable, productive efficiency, becomes a very precious cover-scheme. It is clear that individuals who operate inside this system will, after a while, start to support this legal matrix not because they accept it (as a system, which has a normative validity, or a system which is supported on the basis its own inherent virtues), but because they become familiar with it, with the rules of its game, with its "who's who" background and with its conditions of efficiency[15].

[11] Ibidem, p. 68.
[12] Ibidem.
[13] Ibidem, p. 67.
[14] Ibidem.
[15] Ibidem, p. 68–69.

This, clarifies Podgórecki,[16] is how it can be that dirty togetherness "defend[s] itself against the official 'hostile system' in which it operates," yet at the same time operates within it and thus "supports [it] perversely." As such, dirty togetherness plays a double role.

Even so, it enjoys a robust superstructure. The superstructure and legitimacy of dirty togetherness serve to, sixthly, help bind the social system, thus fortifying it against the official system. As Podgórecki explains, "clusters of 'dirty togetherness', when they link themselves (or are perceived by the public as interrelated) into a developed frame or superstructure… may bond the social system together as a whole."[17] Moreover, he assesses, "these ties [of dirty togetherness], manipulative and instrumental in their character, serve to establish stronger links than the impersonal, rational relationships, and in turn create their own superstructure which dominates the social system in which they prosper."[18]

The public perception that dirty togetherness constitutes a sort of bulwark against the official system that is capable of constraining it can be seen, Podgórecki writes, in

> the strong conviction that only those public programmes have a chance to be materialized which will not be confronted with counteraction by the superstructure of the "community of dirty interests". When there is a reason to expect counteraction, or even retaliation, the agents of that community will extinguish any attempts of actions threatening them.[19]

At the same time, however, the perceived bulwark against the official system may not actually function as a united front due to "various attitudes of social insecurity" among the populace.[20] The insecurity arises from "the fact that 'dirty togetherness' usually is perceived as an influential superstructure by the public at large," and there is "uncertainty" about "where its decision–making centre is 'located'." While Podgórecki does not detail this revealing dimension of dirty togetherness, it warrants further exploration. How, and in what ways, one wonders, might social insecurity affect the ability of ruling regimes to manipulate the populace – a point to which we will return later.[21]

[16] Ibidem, p. 69.
[17] Ibidem, p. 68.
[18] Ibidem, p. 67.
[19] Ibidem, p. 68.
[20] Ibidem, p. 67–68.
[21] It is illuminating to reflect on dirty togetherness in light of the ethos of the Solidarity movement of 1980–1981. Solidarity, as Kurczewscy observe, sought to "create a new community, a 'clean community' that directly and viably opposed the 'dirty togetherness' of real socialism." "[A]bove all," it would be an "open, inclusive community" that constituted a break with the previous 'dirty togetherness' of totalitarian conformity." This community of people with "clean" interests would stand in

The Through Line of Dirty Togetherness

While Podgórecki coined the term "dirty togetherness" to describe Poland during the communist period, the phenomenon and the conditions that engendered it evoke historical legacies that predate his work. With the nation occupied by foreign powers for large swaths of its history (1795–1918, 1939–1945) prior to communist rule, lack of respect for the occupying powers' legal systems became an informal norm – even a patriotic obligation. Survival strategies deployed to circumvent imposed systems and their laws tend to live beyond the conditions that give rise to them. A forceful argument to this effect was made by the prominent literary critic Kazimierz Wyka in August 1945, on the heels of six years of occupation and World War that had devastated Poland, and only a few months after war's end in Europe. Wyka penned a powerful article, "The Excluded Economy," describing life under German occupation. The article (translated into English and published in my 1992 edited collection *The Unplanned Society: Poland During and After Communism*) documents the ubiquitous black market and bribery practices of the day – practices that as Podgórecki[22] puts it, "depended on the suspension of social, moral, and legal norms with such a strength that this relatively short period accumulated a considerable potential." In fact, writing in 1945, Wyka warned that

> the excluded economy of our nation has left behind a residue difficult to cleanse and eradicate and all too likely to continue in the new state and society. Yet, if nothing else succeeds, the residue must be torn out of the psyche of our society *even if it means losing some skin along with it*. Otherwise, the moral corruption is bound to last longer than what is still forgivable and acceptable as the echo of circumstances that no longer exist.[23]

Wyka's words were scarcely heeded. The survival strategies would persist, long after the circumstances that created them had vanished.

New circumstances with echoes of the old were instated with communism, and this same pattern would be repeated after its fall decades later. In other words, the long-standing informal institutions and social networks honed under

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stark contrast to the "'dirty' system", a system that "forced people to fake political loyalty in exchange for the regime's tolerance of various forms of dishonesty – from theft and bribery to nepotism to the usual shirker behaviour and wastefulness" with which people treated state property and employment. J. Kurczewski, J. Kurczewska, *'Solidarność' i Obywatelskie Nauki Społeczne*, in: *Ku Demokracji. Księga z okazji jubileuszu prof. dr hab. Iwony Jakubowskiej-Branickiej*, eds. M. Sfitat, B. Kamiński, B. Walczak, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Dialog, Warsaw 2024, p. 43–59 (translation into English by J. Wedel).

[22] A. Podgórecki, *Polish Society: A Sociological Analysis*…, p. 63.

[23] Originally published in the literary journal "Twórczość", "The Excluded Economy" was reprinted in 1959 and 1984 in Wyka's book *Życie na Niby. Pamiętnik po Klęsce* with very few changes; K. Wyka, *The Excluded Economy*, in: *The Unplanned Society*…, p. 56–57.

communism hardly disappeared with the entrance of market and democratic institutions. Informal institutions would impede, facilitate, and otherwise interact with the newly established market and democratic institutions.

Dirty Togetherness After Communism

In the 1990s, as I studied informal networks and groups in the region, I adapted Podgórecki's notion of dirty togetherness – this time to help illuminate economic, political, and social structures of emergent post-communist systems.[24]

In late 1980's Poland, as communism was unravelling, I saw elites, operating in long-standing informal networks rise to take control of their lives – to reduce state constraints on private business, lobby for environmental cleanup, and build private schools and homes, and, when the communist regime fell in 1989, to fill leadership vacuums in state and other organisations of the newly democratic Poland.

In this new order, the same kinds of networks I had previously observed now placed their members in key governmental and nongovernmental organisations – for instance, in top positions in a privatisation ministry, a national branch of an international bank, a think tank or a foundation – to coordinate their influence and to sway the distribution of newly available state resources. Here, notably, we see how Podgórecki's dirtily together networks "serve to establish stronger links than the impersonal, rational relationships" and may even "create their own superstructure which dominates the social system in which they prosper."

Sociologists Antoni Kamiński and Joanna Kurczewska aptly dubbed such actors – pivotal players in the emergent system – "institutional nomads" (*nomadzi instytucjonalni*).[25] They were so named because their members migrate among institutions – governmental and nongovernmental – to achieve the concrete goals of their circle, placing primary loyalty to it above that to any formal organisation with which they might be affiliated at a given time. They put their fingers in many pies – government, politics, business, think tanks, foundations, NGOs, and international organisations. They circulate among and traverse the spheres of state and private and the domains of politics, economics, and law – all the while principally serving their fellow nomads. Their mutual loyalties are cemented not only by the access to resources and opportunities that their

[24] E.g. J.R. Wedel, *Dirty Togetherness: Institutional Nomads, Networks, and the State-Private Interface in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, "Polish Sociological Review" 2003, no. 142, p. 139–159.

[25] A.Z. Kamiński, J. Kurczewska, *Main Actors of Transformation: The Nomadic Elites*, in: *The General Outlines of Transformation*, eds. E. Allardt, W. Wesołowski, IFIS PAN Publishing, Warsaw, p. 132–153.

pooled efforts reap, but also by the mutual awareness that they are all involved in dirty togetherness.

Such networks and groups were so ubiquitous and instrumental in shaping economic, political, and social development, that sociologists and journalists throughout post-communist space devised organic terms for similar phenomena.

In Russia, scholars and journalists called them "clans" – invoking a kinship connotation of brotherhood and mutual support where no actual family relationship generally existed. Sociologist of elites Olga Khrystanovskaya wrote that

> A clan is based on informal relations between its members, and has no registered structure. Its members can be dispersed, but have their men everywhere. They are united by a community of views and loyalty to an idea or a leader (...). But the head of a clan cannot be pensioned off. He has his men everywhere, his influence is dispersed and not always noticeable (...). Unlike the leaders of other elite groups, he does not give his undivided attention to any one organization.[26]

Clans might have formal power, but they m u s t have informal power, and they indirectly control formal power. Even without necessarily holding direct power, clans perform pivotal roles in shaping economics, politics, and society. In 1990's Russia, for example, clans mobilised to control valuable portfolios, including natural resources such as oil, gas, metals, internal security, economy, and the military.[27] Parts of these clans were built on relationships created through the KGB and its successor institutions. Each clan ran its own kleptocratic resource-extraction and offshoring operation.

A symbiotic relationship arose between the political and criminal-business worlds. The Russian clan I studied in the 1990s,[28] which cornered the country's privatisation and economic restructuring portfolios (and foreign aid to carry them out), was practiced: (1) at making end runs around the bureaucracy and the democratically elected parliament, (2) closely guarding information, and (3) and straddling multiple and mutually reinforcing formal and informal roles across government and private organisations, including those underwritten by foreign aid.

Dirtily together networks operating in Russia and other parts of post-Soviet space were much more likely to cross into criminal activity than, say, in Poland

[26] O. Kryshtanovskaya, *The Real Masters of Russia*, in: *Argumenty i Fakty*, May 1997 (reprinted in *Johnson's Russia List*).

[27] E.g. E. Kosals, *Essay on Clan Capitalism in Russia*, "Acta Oeconomica" 2007, vol. 57, no. 1, p. 77.

[28] J.R. Wedel, *Tainted Transactions: Harvard, the Chubais Clan and Russia's Ruin*, "The National Interest" 2000, no. 59, p. 23–34; J.R. Wedel, *Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Eastern Europe*, Palgrave, New York, NY 2001; J.R. Wedel, *Shadow Elite: How the World's New Power Brokers Undermine Democracy, Government, and the Free Market*, Basic Books, New York, NY 2009.

and other parts of Central and Eastern Europe, where there was comparatively little evidence of criminal infiltration in political establishments.

Still, clans and institutional nomadic groups share a powerful mode of organising: they have their feet firmly planted both in segments of the state and private sector organisations, as well as in civic organisations relevant to achieving their group's agendas. This means that the same people, with the same agenda, constitute or power both the clan or institutional nomadic group and the relevant state authorities. It also means that these network structures are inconsistent with democratic accountability.[29]

Podgórecki's "dirty togetherness", with its emphasis on mutual reciprocity within a network of equals and rigorous loyalty of members to their fellows, also fittingly characterises today's tightknit networks, whose members snake through business, politics, and government to achieve their often underhanded agendas. Further, under communism as well as after it, dirtily together networks garner resources for their in-group at the expense of outsiders. Both the process itself and its outcome are antithetical to democracy.

Weaponising Corruption through Dirty Togetherness Networks

Dirty togetherness has not confined itself to communist and post-communist space. An equally, if not more potent, form of potential dirty togetherness has been proliferating over roughly the past decade and a half, as networks and perhaps even "clusters of dirty togetherness"[30] have expanded onto other landscapes. Can the concept of dirty togetherness help illuminate the networks that underpin "weaponised corruption" in Western democratic countries?

In Vladimir Putin's model of this strategic corruption, which not only weaponises oil and gas to dominate European energy markets and distribution

[29] My concept of "flex nets" builds on observation of clans and institutional nomads. A flex net is a self-propelling multiplex and dense network. A flex net's membership is drawn from a limited circle of players who continually resurface in different roles, both inside and outside government, to achieve their group's goals over time. Its members pursue a shared agenda by working at the interstices of state and private power and conflating their own interests with those of the state. Members of the flex net pool their efforts, resources, sponsors, and roles. They circumvent and/or reorganise standard government processes and structures and create alternative not-quite-state, not-quite-private entities and authorities. The strength of the flex net lies in its interpenetration of state authorities and organisations and in its ability to reorganise them for its own ends. Ibidem; J.R. Wedel, *From Power Elites to Influence Elites: Resetting Elite Studies for the 21st Century*, "Theory, Culture & Society" 2017, vol. 34, no. 5-6, p. 153.

[30] A. Podgórecki, *Polish Society...*, p. 68.

networks,[31] dirty money is channelled into shadow lobbying and political action in Western target countries to "compromise [their] political stability and defense capabilities" and "erod[e] the political legitimacy of democratically elected leaders."[32] Networks of security-political-business-criminal actors are also highly active in today's influencing operations, serving as handmaidens of Putin's foreign policy.[33]

As dirty togetherness networks operating in the interests of weaponised corruption position themselves to powerfully reshape economic and political structures, they threaten democratic systems and sustainability.

Conclusion: Guiding Questions for Research

The following questions, which arise from Podgórecki's analysis, and are also informed by my own work, may help analyse contemporary dirty togetherness networks.

- How do these "dirtily togetherness" networks and groups coalesce? Do they invariably draw on "equals", as Podgórecki specifies, and what difference might this make in their operations?
- How are the networks and groups organised *vis-a-vis* state, market, and civic organisations?
- What are the mechanisms of social control within these networks and groups? Through what means are loyalties enforced and do these means and their results recall Podgórecki's "perverse loyalty"?
- In what ways, and to what extent, do today's dirty togetherness networks and groups enjoy societal support and legitimacy among the population at large, based on a superstructure of dirty togetherness, as did networks of the communist period outlined by Podgórecki? And what difference does this support or lack thereof make in their operations?

[31] E.g. C. Belton, *Putin's People: How the KGB Took Back Russia and Then Took On the West*, Farrar, Straus, Giroux, New York, NY 2020; A. Orbán, *Power, Energy and the New Russian Imperialism*, Praeger Security International, London 2008.

[32] O. Huss, J. Pozsgai-Alvarez, *Strategic Corruption as a Threat to Security and the New Agenda for Anti-Corruption*, 16.03.2022, p. 3, https://www.corruptionjusticeandlegitimacy.org/post/strategic-corruption-as-a-threat-to-security-and-the-new-agenda-for-anti-corruption (accessed: 17.09.2024).

[33] E.g. K. Bennhold, *The Former Chancellor Who Became Putin's Man in Germany*, "The New York Times" 23.04.2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/04/23/world/europe/schroder-germany-russia-gas-ukraine-war-energy.html (accessed: 14.08.2024); R.S. Mueller III, *Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election*, vol. 1, 2, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. 2019 (redacted version of 18.04.2019).

- What role do attitudes of "social insecurity", mentioned by Podgórecki, play in the spaces in which dirty togetherness today thrives? Does this insecurity play a part in controlling the populace?
- In what ways, and to what extent, do dirtily together networks and groups reorganise the state and private structures around them, as do "flex nets"? Do the networks under study qualify as flex nets?
- How do practices associated with dirty togetherness proliferate across networks to forge cultures resistant to democratic principles and accountability? And what are the particular ways in which these networks, their practices, and the infrastructures they create supersede or reshape heretofore democratic institutions?

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