



Sociologizing Corruption Risk

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**Organizational, Agential and Cultural
Determinants of Public Sector
Malfeasance**



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Wojciech Świątkiewicz

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Introduction

Global Challenges, Local Resolutions

If contemporary sociological discourses on risk and uncertainty are organized by any structuring principle rendering order to the otherwise nebular nature of the discipline, it is the critical assumption that the terms are indispensable in order to get a more informed perspective on the contemporary, late modern societies (see Beck 1992; Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994; Giddens 1990; Bauman 2007). Social theories of risk often postulate that the multifaceted, utterly obscure nature of late modern social systems and institutions—chief among which are “abstract systems”—is represented by an increase in the number of risks and contingencies faced by individuals and collectivities in the practice of everyday life. In this particular way, dangers have been subsumed within an essentially critical perspective on late modernity which stresses that “uncertainty retains and proliferates everywhere” (Beck 1994, 12). The ubiquity of risk, to put it otherwise, has been conceptualized as a negative consequence of modernization processes, an indispensable cost of assuming a progressive, overly and overtly optimistic perspective on the supposedly emancipatory nature of technological, economic and institutional development.

The problem of corruption affecting the functioning of the Customs Service of Poland may be easily subsumed within the aforementioned line of interpretation. The character, intensity and technological sophistication of contemporary customs operations is determined by the dynamics of late modern social systems whose globalizing tendencies are also reflected by the increase in global crime as manifested by the accelerated circulation of illegal goods and illegitimate immigrants, as well as potential or actual members of terrorist or criminal organizations. Given the scale of challenges associated with globalization, it is little wonder that customs operations in Poland are nowadays furrowed with intense corruption-related risks which, considering the fact that

the Polish eastern border is at the same time the perimeter of the European Union, are not liable to decrease in the foreseeable future.

The specificity of contemporary corruption-related hazards has paved the way for various institutionalized attempts to curb the problem by means of implementing a whole plethora of modernizing incentives and projects. In this particular context, the “Anti-Corruption Action Strategy of the Polish Customs Service 2010–2013+” constitutes an attempt to detect, operationalize, assess, and manage corruption risks as they are typical of the Customs Service operations and its organizational functioning.¹

This monograph is conceptually and methodologically grounded in the survey research concerning corruption risks in the Customs Service that took place in fall 2011 and whose results were subsequently delivered in a form of sociological report in December 2011 (Burzyński et al., 2011). The argument is conceptually divided into seven chapters aiming to delineate a panoramic picture of corruption risks with reference to their organizational, cultural and agential (personal) determinants. Likewise, both the collected data and provided interpretations may be considered as an empirical framework for implementing actions and modernization schemes addressed to structural-organizational and agential dimensions of the workplace environment. In this way, the postulated managerial solutions (the concluding chapter of the monograph) could be perceived in terms of “local,” highly contextualized resolutions to problems and challenges of an inherently global scope.

Needless to say, the monograph may be inscribed within a broader scope of empirical considerations and theoretical reflections associated with the discourse of “risk studies.” Although the discipline can be considered as a novelty in the context of the Polish academia, it represents a well-known and firmly institutionalized response to risk-related issues worldwide.² From the perspective of risk studies, the aim of our research is, first and foremost, to improve the organizational resilience of the Customs Service by means of postulating a set of ready-made solutions and postulates designating the perimeter of good practices associated with corruption risk management.

¹ At this point, one may also refer to the “Action Strategy of the Polish Customs Service for the Years 2010–2015” which postulates, among a number of other ideas, “implementing a comprehensive risk management system for the purposes of control, auditing procedure, facilitations and simplifications” (15). <http://www.mf.gov.pl/en/customs-service/customs-service/strategy>.

² It is worth a reminder that the faculty of risk studies is among the most promising fields of research at the most distinguished universities. This is, for instance, the case of the Centre for Risk Studies established at the Cambridge University. <http://www.risk.jbs.cam.ac.uk/>.

Jan Burzyński, Tomasz Burzyński, Andrzej Górny, Wojciech Świątkiewicz

**Ryzyko korupcyjne w perspektywie socjologicznej
Podmiotowe, organizacyjne i kulturowe uwarunkowania
przestępstw urzędowych w sektorze instytucji publicznych**

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Publikacja stanowi socjologiczne spojrzenie na problematykę zagrożenia zachowaniami korupcyjnymi w instytucjach państwowych na przykładzie Służby Celnej RP. Istotą pracy jest przyjęcie możliwie szerokiej, wielopłaszczyznowej perspektywy na problem ryzyka korupcyjnego, w której zawierają się organizacyjne, podmiotowe oraz kulturowe uwarunkowania tego złożonego zjawiska społecznego. Przyjęcie takiej optyki badawczej umożliwia jednocześnie wpisanie niniejszej pracy w te nurty myśli socjologicznej, w których przyjmuje się założenie o konieczności wychodzenia poza sztywne ramy metodologii tradycyjnej, która opiera się na rozgraniczeniu między podmiotowością jednostek a strukturalno-systemowymi wymiarami życia społecznego.

Książka jest adresowana do wszystkich osób, które są zainteresowane socjologią pracy, socjologią przestępczości, czy też ogólnie pojmowaną socjologią empiryczną. Wydanie publikacji w języku angielskim oznacza również, że tezy i obserwacje w niej zawarte mogą okazać się przydatne dla profesjonalistów badających problemy korupcji w ramach struktur Unii Europejskiej.

Jan Burzyński, Tomasz Burzyński, Andrzej Górny, Wojciech Świątkiewicz

**Das Korruptionsrisiko aus soziologischer
Sicht Subjektive u. organisatorische Bedingtheiten
und Kulturbedingtheiten der dienstlichen
Straftaten im Sektor der öffentlichen Institutionen**

Z u s a m m e n f a s s u n g

Die vorliegende Publikation ist eine soziologische Betrachtung der Korruptionsgefahr in staatlichen Institutionen am Beispiel des Zollamtes der Republik Polen. Ihre Verfasser behandeln weitläufig und vielschichtig das Problem des Korruptionsrisikos, indem sie organisatorische, subjektive Bedingtheiten und Kulturbedingtheiten des komplexen gesellschaftlichen Phänomens darstellen. Mit dieser Forschungsmethode passt die vorliegende Publikation in solche soziologischen Strömungen hinein, die voraussetzen, über feste Grenzen der konservativen Methodologie, die die Subjektivität der Menschen von den strukturell-systemhaften Ausmaßen des gesellschaftlichen Lebens trennt, hinauszugehen.

Das Buch richtet sich an alle Personen, die für Soziologie der Arbeit, Soziologie der Kriminalität oder für allgemeine empirische Soziologie Interesse haben. Es wurde auch in englischer Sprache herausgegeben, denn die darin enthaltenen Thesen und Bemerkungen können von den Fachleuten gebraucht werden, die die Korruptionsfälle in den Strukturen der Europäischen Union erforschen.

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