



Laboratoire méditerranéen de Sociologie - UMR 7305

Call for Papers

to be presented at the interdisciplinary international symposium

"Denunciation and denouncers of corruption"

Do-gooders, pamphleteers and whistleblowers, 19th-20th centuries

Venue: Maison méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme (MMSH), Aix-en-Provence
17 – 18 November 2016

This two-day meeting is being organized by a group of specialists in social sciences and humanities who have been studying the social history of contemporary political corruption for several years on the international scale, focusing in particular on France and Germany. This research project is supported by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG) in Germany and the Agence nationale de la recherche (ANR) in France.

General introduction

The term "corruption" is taken here to refer less to specific forms of venality defined *a priori* than to broader issues in which civil morality or public probity are at stake (Lascoumes, 2010). Corruption has been denounced since the late 18th. Century and the early 19th. Century by various people taking a critical stand against what they regard as the immoral practices of politicians and members of civil society and the business world.

This topic has been previously discussed at several meetings and symposia which have taken place in Germany and France. These meetings have resulted in a series of five proceedings: the latest volumes were devoted to the links between patronage and the abuse of power, scandals and the mechanisms whereby they have been widely publicized (Dard, Engels, Farmheir, Monier, 2014), and how behaviour defined as immoral has been prohibited in economic spheres (Engels, Farmheir, Monier, Dard, 2015).

The symposium it is planned to hold in November 2016 will focus on the modes of denunciation and the denouncers of corruption and immoral political and economic practices. The idea of organizing this event was based on the assumption that a broad overall comparative picture of the players and movements involved is likely to shed light on how the concept of "transparency" came into being and the many acceptations acquired by the term up to the present day.

The second day of this meeting will be devoted to debates and round-table discussions with guest speakers who have been invited to participate and persons either previously or currently involved in fighting corruption and the underhand practices of some political and economic leaders, especially by denouncing them publicly. These speakers' testimony will certainly give rise to fruitful discussions with the research scientists attending these round table meetings.

Objectives and hypotheses

Relatively few studies have dealt so far to our knowledge with the denunciation and the denouncers of corruption, although a few authors of historical studies have addressed the processes whereby scandals and politico-financial affairs have been publicized, and especially how they originated and how they were made known world-wide (Boltanski, Claverie, Offenstadt, Van Damme, 2007 ; Garrard, Newell, 2006 ; Gelz, Huser, Russ-Sattar, 2014 ; Markovitz, Silverstein, 1988 ; Thompson, 2000). On similar lines, recent sociological studies on criticism of politicians by civil society and public interest organizations (Briquet, Garraud, 2001) have resulted in the development of analytical tools as well as various interpretations of events which have occurred since the end of the 1980s. Other studies in the field of cultural and political history have recently paved the way for a new understanding of public morality and political virtue. They suggested that ideal models had a real influence on governmental practices (Matthews, 1994 ; Biard, Bourdin, Leuwens, Touret, 2015). However, this cultural and political historical approach has attracted relatively little attention in France and Germany, and this also seems to have been the case in most of the other European countries.

It is to be hoped that this symposium will help fill this gap by stimulating collective thinking about the denunciation of corruption, which is taken to constitute a complex social fact. The aim in particular is to build a comprehensive comparative historical sociological picture of the main individual and collective players who have taken an ethical stand against corruption and denounced what they have regarded as illegal and/or immoral practices. These issues raise questions as to how specialised denouncers of corruption came into existence, such as the libelists at the end of the Ancien Régime and the 21st. Century pamphleteers, to quote a more contemporary example. Many facts still remain to be established about the individuals and the political groups who have set themselves up for various reasons as defenders of a cause or upholders of civic morality by denouncing the corruption of those in power. Other questions also arise about how corruption is advertised and judged: it will be necessary in particular to examine the discrepancies which have frequently occurred between the penal sentences pronounced by legal institutions and the moral judgements and ideological positions of some of the other people involved. Thanks to the geographical and chronological diversity of the situations observed, it should be possible to distinguish between common, general historical processes and more specific, particular characteristics. According to the hypothesis it is proposed to discuss here, drawing up a historical sociological account of these denouncers and their networks is not an end in itself. This meeting is intended rather to shed light on the genesis of the concept of transparency, which has become a central issue these days at both national and international levels. The latest debates about transparency – or about underlying themes such as the right to individual privacy and financial accountability – have shown that differences of interpretation have often occurred. Some authors have suggested that the “dream of transparency” is a kind of anthropological constant (Schneider, 2013), whereas others have claimed that transparency is a relatively novel idea (Monier, 2013). In its present form, the concept of transparency emerged between the 1970s and 1990s in various countries in the wake of the profound social mutations triggered by the “long 1968” (Sherman et al. 2013): this concept is thought to have paved the way for new cultural and political codes. Another widely held opinion is that transparency does not differ very significantly from publicity, one of the main constitutive components of present-day society. If this is the case, transparency can be said to date back to the days of the Enlightenment, when all the processes of transition and scission between the modern and contemporary worlds were initiated (Requate, Wessel, 2002).

This historical outline will no doubt suggest some reflections on further issues which arise about the fact that corruption is generally taken these days to mean the misuse of public responsibility for personal ends. In other words, the ever vacillating borderline between the public and private spheres was partly created by the denunciation of corruption (Engels, 2014). The aim of this historical sociological project is therefore not just to understand current principles of public morality. It is also intended to elucidate the long, complex process of separation which has tended to occur between the State and civil society in many countries at the present time.

The main themes on which this call for papers focuses

The questions which arise in this context relate not only to broad socio-historical changes but also to much narrower topics. Contributions dealing either with a single country or several countries, including those based on a comparative approach, will be welcome. At least one of the following topics should be addressed:

1) How are denunciations written?

Under this heading, we are interested in examining the rhetorical devices used to denounce corruption and unethical political practices and the various linguistic and semantic registers adopted by the denouncers. Denunciations are published not only in editorials and other appropriate forms such as pamphlets, critical essays, tracts, blogs, etc., but they can also be found in the general press and in legal and administrative files, which might be expected *a priori* to be neutral and dispassionate. In what terms are corruption, favouritism and political clientelism stigmatized? Does the discourse used for this purpose in various societies show a high level of linguistic innovation?

2) What exactly is denounced?

What micro political practices tend to be denounced, and how truthful are the descriptions of the malpractices denounced? With what concrete events are these criticisms usually associated? How can confusions, superimpositions and contradictions be detected between the terms employed and the evils denounced? Does the denunciation of personal political graft always involve naming specific individuals and networks? Is a shift liable to occur from denouncing public figures for tactical reasons to criticizing a whole system on the grounds of immorality and corruption?

3) Who are the denouncers?

Apart from the rhetorical devices used and the unethical practices denounced, who are the people who have written these denunciations? Whether or not a whole-scale process of denunciation and political criticism has been developed, what cross-links can be detected between denouncers' practices and their personal histories? Are their backgrounds, occupational paths, social status and political position decisive factors? Does the occurrence of schisms and divergences explain why some people go in for denunciation more than others? We hope to receive contributions about various figures who have denounced corruption and political immorality, such as journalists in the press and other media, do-gooders, pamphleteers and essayists, politicians, civil servants, magistrates, members of the police force, members of militant associations, etc.

4) When do denouncements occur?

It seems reasonable to assume that denunciations do not occur all the time. It is therefore proposed to examine the question as to what contexts are the most favourable or unfavourable, which might explain why denouncements take place at some times and not at others. What were the underlying strategies and calculations involved? What were the people who were denounced expected to do next? Questions of this kind are particularly relevant in the case of individuals grappling with political career strategies, journalists torn between the legal constraints imposed and the wish to present the truth openly, etc.

5) What interactions are involved in the process of denunciation?

The interactions between denouncers and the denounced play an important role in the process of denunciation and accusations of corruption flung at elected members of society. The "denounced" often retaliate by producing actions and discourse which it would be well worth studying: this aspect has not attracted much attention so far in the field of social science. We must not overlook the fact that public figures who have been denounced are tending increasingly these days to call on their communications teams or expert advisers to draw up appropriate defence and retaliation strategies.

References

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The organization of the symposium

In this call for papers, we are targeting participants from all the branches of social science, including those interested in the historical, political science, sociological, anthropological, information and communication science and linguistic aspects of social science. Proposals can be written in any of the four following languages: English, French, German and Italian. The oral presentations (lasting not more than 15-20 minutes) can be made in English, French or German, but the text of any accompanying material used (slides, photocopies, etc.) should be in either English or French.

Proposals should be submitted by 14 March 2016 at the latest to Olivier Dard (UMR IRICE, Université Paris-Sorbonne; or by mail to olivierdard@orange.fr), Cesare Mattina (UMR LAMES, Aix-Marseille Université; or by mail to cesare.mattina@univ-amu.fr) and Frédéric Monier (UMR Centre N. Elias, Université d'Avignon; or by mail to Frederic.monier@univ-avignon.fr).

These short proposals (approximately 2.500 to 3.500 characters in length) should include the authors' personal details, their occupational status, the institution(s) on which they depend and their e-mail address. Prior to the Symposium, authors whose proposals have been accepted will be requested to submit a 10.000-character summary of their paper, which will constitute the basis of a full scientific paper to be published subsequently in the Proceedings of the Symposium: the production of this collective volume will be supported by the **Agence nationale de la recherche**.

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Accepted proposals will be listed on the page presenting the "Politics and corruption" (POC/K) project. This page will be published on the website of les carnets de POC/K [<http://hypotheses.org>] and on the Norbert Elias site [<http://Centre-norbert-elias.ehess.fr>], that of EHESS (école des hautes études en sciences sociales) and that of LAMES [www.lames.cnrs.fr].

The Scientific Committee undertakes to abide by the academic rules of deontology and anti-plagiarism defined by the group headed by Michelle Bergadaà at the University of Geneva <http://responsable.unige.ch>