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Metaphors of corruption in the news media coverage of seven European countries

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Abstract

This article explores the symbolic dimension of corruption by looking at the metaphors employed to represent this phenomenon in the media across seven different European countries (France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia and UK) over ten years (2004-2014). It focuses on the media practices in evoking corruption related metaphors and shows that corruption is a complex phenomenon with unclear boundaries, represented with the use of metaphorical devices that not only illuminate, but also hide some of its attributes. The article identifies and analyses the metaphors of corruption by looking at their sources and target domains, as well as it analyses contexts in which media evoke corruption-related metaphors.

Keywords: corruption, metaphors, symbolism, source domains, target domains, media review

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Introduction

The rules of conduct of a professional journalism state that the primary obligation of a journalist is to the truth.[2] But how can a journalist observe the principle of truth and other canons of the craft, such as accuracy, fairness and comprehensiveness (Black 2010), when the very meaning of the concepts used by a journalist is vague and contested? It is rarely perceived by the media professionals that abstract concepts – such as democracy, justice, welfare, - might not have universal meaning that is always the same, even in different societies and in different centuries. By evoking and explaining such concepts, journalists co-construct their meaning for the mass audience.

Corruption is one such concept that is frequently evoked by journalists in news reporting and editorials with an underlying assumption that its meaning is universal and self-evident. Even though scholars and journalists might work with an implicit assumption that there is a universal understanding of what constitutes corruption (Rothstein (2014: 29)), it is in fact a 'a highly contested concept that triggers heated discussions and lengthy scholarly arguments' (Karklins (2005:4-5)) and historical analysis would indicate that this term has had different meanings and expressions throughout the centuries (Heidenheimer (1970a:3)). For example, Carl Friedrich proposed a complex definition of corruption arguing that it was 'a kind of behavior which deviated from the norm actually prevalent or believed to prevail in a given context, such as the political' (1972:15)). Contemporary attempts to define corruption tend to cluster around a more

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[2] See Article 1 of IFJ Declaration of Principles: "Respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth is the first duty of the journalist" Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists. (Adopted by 1954 World Congress of the International Federation of Journalists - IFJ. Amended by the 1986 World Congress.) Code of Ethics of Society for Professional also lists the first obligation as "Seek truth and report it". SPJ Code of Ethics. Society of Professional Journalists. Revised September 6, 2014 at SPJ's National Convention in Nashville, Tenn.

restricted notion: that of abuse of public power for private gain[3]. The problem of defining corruption is further complicated by the fact that the semantic universe of this concept is populated by additional related concepts whose meaning partly overlaps with corruption such as clientelism, patronage, state capture, particularism and patrimonialism (Rothstein and Varraich (2014: 38-39)). Exploring the nature of such overlaps within a social cultural context brings forward a completely new vocabulary of corruption practices such as gift giving, reciprocity, favor exchange, informality, patronage, hospitality and conviviality (Torsello (2014: 4))

In their reporting, the media do not purely reproduce a scholarly discourse on corruption; they plays a more creative and socializing role providing corruption's images and language (Karklins (2005: 7)). One particularly vivid form of providing images is metaphorical language. In cognitive linguistics metaphors are understood as tools that define one conceptual domain in terms of another (Kovecses (2002)). They provide images that are "better suited to making it [the thought] more tangible and more striking than if it were presented directly and without any sort of disguise" (Ricoeur (1978: 60)). In this way, metaphors contribute to giving meaning to abstract terms, such as corruption by providing images to model their reality.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980: 3) show that our cognitive system is primarily metaphoric, but we are mostly not aware of it. They further argue that metaphors not only illuminate the meaning of some abstract concept, but simultaneously hide/obscure/misrepresent it: "In allowing us to focus on one aspect of a concept, a metaphorical concept can keep us from focusing on other aspect of the concept that are inconsistent with that metaphor." (Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 10)) When evoking a corruption related metaphor, a journalist co-constructs the concept of corruption for his audience.

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[3] See for example Transparency International (http://www.transparency.org/cpi2011/in_detail)

This article aims to investigate how is corruption represented by and in the print media across several European countries between 2004 and 2013. It further aims to uncover the metaphors used to portray the semantic complexity of corruption and to explore in which context are those metaphors evoked by the media. We argue that metaphors are 'practical' tools that construct the meaning of a complex phenomenon bottom up, offering powerful templates for what corruption might look like.

The study

We analysed corruption-related newspaper coverage in United Kingdom, France, Italy, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary and Latvia during 2004-2013[4].

Our research indicates that despite the fact that metaphors convey powerful images, media in the seven countries use corruption-related metaphorical imagery relatively infrequently. Approximately thirteen percent (total: 1416) of all corruption-related articles in our corpus (corpus: 12742 articles) contained at least one corruption related metaphor, and nearly two

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[4] In each country four daily newspapers were chosen to form an initial corpus of newspapers. All articles which contained one of nine corruption-related keywords (corruption, bribe, kickback, collusion, clientelism, embezzlement, favouritism, nepotism, familism) either in a headline or in the text were selected for sampling. The sampling technique was based on a constructed week.[4]

An extensive codebook was created to analyse the articles by seven coding teams. The question No.6 of the codebook asked the coders to 'specify up to two metaphors that are used in the article to describe/interpret the case/actors/situation of corruption (e.g. the corruption plague, the cancer of corruption, the gang of corruptors, etc.)' Each national coding team could specify maximum two corruption-related metaphors per article, providing the transcription of the metaphor and translating it to English. Coding resulted in a list of 1702 entities consisting not just in metaphors but also other vivid corruption-related expressions (for example, idioms, similes, metonymies, etc.) Each entry could be compared with entries relating to other questions specified in the codebook (such as type of article, date of article, main subject, area, type of corruption, etc.)

This article has been written on the basis of the full list of metaphors that were collected via coding of corruption-related articles within the framework of ANTICORRP research project. No additional metaphors have been added by researchers to offer examples or to support conclusions for this article. An important limitation of this research relates to the fact that the differing national approaches to coding of metaphors found in the selected sample of articles does not permit to make reliable comparative research among the countries from our sample.

percent of all articles (total: 286) had two or more such metaphors[5]. Corruption-related metaphors were used more frequently in editorials than in any other article format[6] and were heavily underrepresented in news stories and short texts. We identified corruption-related metaphors more frequently in articles that explored corruption as a general topic rather than in articles dealing with concrete corruption cases. This pattern was identical for all the seven countries under consideration. Conversely, no such pattern emerged regarding media coverage of anticorruption activities and regulations.

The corruption-related metaphors that appear in newspapers has allowed us to take a deeper look into the sources for metaphorical comprehension of corruption (see source domains below). Not all of the corruption-related metaphors relate to the general concept of 'corruption'. Some corruption-related metaphors relate to various forms of corruption (for example, conflicts of interest, political party funding regulations, bribery) or to partly overlapping concepts (such as clientelism, patronage, nepotism). Therefore, it also makes sense to analyze the different target domains of corruption-related metaphors.

What are corruption metaphors in this study?

Official corruption-related lexicon that media encounter in their reporting is broader than just the term 'corruption'. Several closely connected terms, such as bribe or nepotism, are also prone to metaphorical representation. For the purposes of this research, we use the concept of target domain to identify the areas that are explained and brought closer to the readers with the

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[5] 20% of all articles in Hungary, 19% in Latvia, 15% in Romania, 13% in Italy, 11% in UK, 5% in Slovakia and 3% in France.

[6] 23% of all articles that contained at least one corruption- related metaphor were editorials. In comparison: editorials made up only 13% of the total sample of corruption-related articled.

use of metaphorical devices[7]. This research project chose as a basis for newspapers' content analysis nine corruption-related keywords: corruption, bribery, kickback, embezzlement, collusion, favouritism, nepotism, clientelism, familism. Some of these keywords are at the same level of abstraction as the term 'corruption' (for example, clientelism), while some are less abstract (for example, kickback, bribery). There has been attempts to provide those terms with universal (official) definitions, nevertheless, their meaning in different cultures is flexible and so is the frequency of their usage (Bratu and Kazoka (2016: 6-7)) . We argue that each of these terms form a separate 'target domain' for metaphorical reasoning.

Target domain: bribery

The idea of bribery is conveyed by journalists by a variety of source domains among which the most prominent are the following: business transactions, gift-giving and different forms of remuneration.

Translating the idea of bribery as a form of a business transaction by newspapers in 7 EU countries that we studied is very frequent. It represents the briber as a buyer, the transaction itself as a purchase and the bribe-giver as a seller or as goods that are sold ('It is cheaper to buy a judge than hire a lawyer'; 'Seats in the Lords are bought and sold like armchairs on eBay'; 'buying of Parliament members'). The amount of the bribe is conveyed by the idea of a price or an exchange rate ('Price of a politician'; 'the exchange rate of MPs').

It is common in a sarcastic manner to represent a bribe and bribery as, respectively, a gift and gift-giving. Bribes can also be likened to non-obligatory transactions that are neither fully

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[7] Kövecses (2001) contents that "the two domains that participate in conceptual metaphor have special names. The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions to understand another conceptual domain is called source domain, while the conceptual domain that is understood this way is the target domain. Thus, life, arguments, love, theory, ideas, social organizations, and others are target domains, while journeys, war, buildings, food, plants, and others are source domains. The target domain is the domain we try to understand through the use of the source domain." Kovecses, Zoltan. Metaphor: A Practical Introduction. Oxford University Press, 2001

business transactions nor gifts to friends, such as tips or unofficial, semi-legal payments to doctors.

Media sometimes use the remuneration-related vocabulary ~~is used~~ to explain the idea of bribery. Bribes have been likened to honorariums, scholarships, extra income, financial incentives, bonuses. The idea of a bribe being a kind of an incentive can be combined creatively with other source domains, for example, food and alimentation – as in 'financial sweetener'. In cases where a bribe is the only way how to achieve some goal, a bribe can be likened to a 'tax' or a 'solution'.

Target domain: kickback

The metaphors in our corpus generally did not distinguish between a bribe and its sub-form, a kickback. It can be assumed that, in the eyes of a journalist, those source domains that are frequently used in order to denote the idea of 'bribery' would be, depending on context, just as appropriate regarding 'kickbacks'. The only specific designation that relates to kickbacks to a greater extent than to bribes in general: transforming the amount of the kickback into a sarcastic name for a bribee, such as Mr. Ten Percent.

Target domain: embezzlement (and abuse of state resources)

In order to convey the idea of embezzlement or abuse of state of resources one needs to have an image of common resources that need to be distributed fairly. The common resources can be metaphorically depicted in a number of creative ways, for example, as a common pot or even a cow. The unfairness of distribution of common resources has been depicted in the media of 7 EU countries by the idea that someone is milking the state, being a parasite, stuffing one's own pockets, water-pumping the public funds, picking from a common pot, carting away the money, feeding upon the common resources, playing tricks. Systemic embezzlement practices

can be metaphorically depicted as somebody using the country as their feudal domain or a feeding trough.

Target domain: collusion

Some metaphors are applicable to secret agreements for corrupt purposes, specifically - collusion. The collusion tends to be conveyed by metaphors that denote an idea of a tight control over some process, not always illegitimate – for example, tailored cloth-making ('tailor-made' tenders), careful selection ('guided selection of judges'), manual control over some process ('jurisdiction is manually operated'), match-fixing . The idea of collusion is linked with necessity to provide protection for everyone involved. That is metaphorically conveyed by the term 'to cover' or 'provide a roof'.

A specific type of collusion consists in illegal funding of political parties. Examples from Latvian and Hungarian newspapers seem to indicate that this form of corruption inspires metonymies – when the notebooks or party registers where illegal funds are kept or written down are being used in order to refer to the idea of illegal party funding itself (such as 'square patterned notebook', 'small notebook', 'black cash-register', 'stuffed party register').

Target domain: nepotism

Unsurprisingly the idea of nepotism, which is a practice to favour one's friends and relatives, is being metaphorically depicted by using vocabulary that refers to friends ('friendly help', 'friends of a ruler'), family, clan. It can also draw upon a more distant circle of social contacts, such as acquaintances or comrades. According to the needs of a particular situation, the sources for nepotism-related metaphors can be as negatively charged as 'a gang', 'a clique' or as loose as 'eating together'.

Target domain: clientelism

Clientelism is understood metaphorically via various parallels connected to relations of patronage. Namely, there is a 'patron' and this person has a political/financial influence and a certain amount of social obligations towards his or her 'clients'. The patron does not need to be always designated as a patron, media in 7 EU countries have just as well likened him to a 'king', ' prince', 'oligarch', 'magnate', 'godfather', 'director', 'sponsor, 'benefactor'. The relations between a patron and his clients can be conveyed by parallels from feudal social system – for example, patrons being designated as 'aristocracy' and clients as 'vassals' or 'mouths to feed'.

Target domain: familism

Familism being a sub-type of nepotism, it is not surprising that the same metaphors that could be used in order to represent the idea of nepotism can also be used for the same purpose regarding familism. Nevertheless, there are some corruption-related metaphors that are centered upon the idea of a 'family' that would fit the concept of familism better than the broader concept of nepotism. For example, depending on context, the metaphor 'mouths to feed' could be best understood in context of familial obligations of parents towards their children. On the other hand, the idea of 'brother-in-law' which is usually used in a context of a family, can be extended in order to refer to clientele of some patron.

Target domain: favouritism

Four corruption related concepts – nepotism, clientelism, familism, favouritism – are all highly abstract and their meaning tends to overlap to varying degrees. It could be argued that nepotism, clientelism and familism are all subtypes of favouritism – unfair preferential treatment. Metaphorical source domain that seems to fit all those concepts and that we uncovered in our sample of articles is that of a network or a web.

Source domains represent the conceptual domain from which one draws metaphorical expressions (Kövecses (2002; Lakoff and Johnson (1980)). We identified five major source domains used by media to explain/represent/uncover the meaning of corruption, that relate to fundamental human activities and needs[8]: agriculture (eating), disease (medicalization), war (militarization), leisure/pleasure (prestige and accomplishment thought individualization), culture (socialization). Some source domains were context specific, thus making it difficult to integrate them into a wider category. The general picture of corruption is that: 1. It is widespread and intertwined in the society, rampant, ubiquitous systemic; 2. It is out of control; 3. It thrives; 4. It is deeply entrenched in the society.

1. *Food production and consumption*

An important metaphorical dimension of corruption relates to food production and consumption. ***Eating*** − as an essential human activity − ensures not only the survival of the human race at biological level through food consumption, but also the survival of the society through the rituals associated with family/communal eating. In the latter sense, food preparation is a form of giving and participating in the life of the community. However, when involved in corruption, people 'roast their own meat' or 'butter their own bread', which means they concentrate exclusively on their own interests. Essentially, in this metaphorical representation, corruption re-focuses the lens of interest, moving from community to individual. The individualistic logic of corruption allows the individual to cherry pick from the public funds in the same way as one would choose the best piece when eating from a common

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[8] Bratu and Kazoka (2016) discussed more in-depth the source domains, but for the purposes of this article, we consider five domains as most important.

pot. When this form of relating to the world is the rule, corruption becomes a monster that 'eats' the society, 'devours public funds' and consumes the democratic forms of government.

When corruption draws metaphorically on this domain, it may depict a bad ***plant*** (***weed***) with deep roots, that has found a prolific ground. The favourable conditions create a hotbed conducive to the fast growth and spread of this bad plant. Thus, corruption 'flourishes' along other twin practices like clientelism. When not a plan, corruption can be a ***worm*** or a woodworm that rots the wood. As an ***animal***, corruption is by no means a modest beast. Metaphorically, it is a mythical raging animal like a hydra, whose tentacles are 'stretching to the bottom of the state'. It hides in dens and lives in nests in order to protect itself and proliferate, lurking in the darkness to attack the political system and society as a whole.

2. *Disease/ Medicalization of corruption*

The metaphor of disease is by far the most common way to depict corruption in the media. Whether a blight , a social malaise, a virus or a parasite, corruption is a complex disease that 'pockmarks' the society and 'poisons' the environment. When presented like this, the disease of corruption has a few characteristics. It is: ***1. incurable and/or terminal*** – in this form, corruption is a cancer, growing when human beings/societies do not notice and spreading everywhere, sometimes in association with other forms of social cancer like organised crime. Even if it is not a form of cancer, corruption is still portrayed as a terminal disease (e.g. gangrene), or at least one that causes permanent damage – e.g. paralysis –, leaving the subject crippled. The pathology of corruption typically displays signs of addiction similar to drug use; ***2. far reaching*** - in its medicalized metaphorical representation corruption takes apocalyptic forms such as an epidemic plague. This indicates the widespread occurrence of an infectious, highly contagious disease which impacts on the society as a whole, 'infecting' public life or

specific areas; *2. stigmatised* – a particularly vivid metaphor of corruption relates to leprosy, which resonates especially with people/environments with a distinctively strong Christian tradition. Leprosy was a common disease during Christ's time, incurable and highly contagious. The methods of treatment were both spiritual and physical, as the leprosarium were initially established under the supervision of the church. The implication of this metaphor is that corruption is a visible, highly contagious, highly stigmatised disease, with spiritual and physical roots. Hence anti-corruption efforts should be directed towards tackling a more fundamental order of spiritual nature relating to practices and ways of thinking and not only merely the formal institutional reform.

The effects of this pernicious, highly contagious 'disease of corruption' are dramatic - it 'contaminates' the entire society leading to the death of states/cities/sectors by bleeding or strangulation. Ultimately, it leads to a generalized state of decay connected to the concept of 'dirt' or 'messiness' that spoils the social practices, the resources and the objects of exchange tangling up the entire society in a 'mess of corruption'.

3. *War/Militarization of corruption*

The metaphor of war is used to portray corruption as an enemy that has the potential to 'destroy the nation'. Far less common than in the area of anti-corruption, this metaphor is nevertheless used mostly in the contexts of Italy, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, which means in contexts perceived to be highly corrupt and conducive to corruption (see for example Transparency International Corruption Perception Index that assesses these countries as more corrupt than their the average EU[9]). Corruption is portrayed as an aggressive invader conquering new territories. Remarkably, this research uncovers that the usage of a rather historical notion of colonialism in which a nation state physically conquers another is overturned. Metaphorically,

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[9] http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016

corruption colonizes the nation states bottom up turning countries with a strong colonial history from dominator into dominated. This massive warfare shifts the balance of powers in society, making democratic institutions such as political parties, or economic agents such as banks behave like organised crime entities similar to the Italian Mafia.

4. *Entertaintnment*

A particularly interesting metaphorical representation of corruption relates to entertainment. In this sense, corruption as entertainment relates to various activities that were traditionally within the realm of the upper class and have subsequently become widely popular. These can take the form of innocent sports games (e.g. hunting), artistic performances (e.g. theatre) or more vicious activities (e.g. orgies). Most part of the semantic context is from the UK and France.

Hunting has been a preferred activity for nobility because it displays and hones many war skills such as weapons, horse riding, courage, spirit of competition. This sporting game aims to prevent countries from 'falling prey' and extinguish the 'obstacle of corruption'. Not always a blood sport, the game of corruption could be subtle and popular. Whereas in any sporting game the aim is to reach the top, in the case of corruption the hierarchy is reversed, as reaching the top in fact means being at the bottom. The 'global leaders' in corruption need in fact to 'cleanse the game of corruption'.

Games are not the only sources of entertainment. Corruption is metaphorically represented as a type of performing art such as theatre or a banquette. In its extreme version, it can be an orgy acquiring all the characteristics of a prostitute that is shamelessly renting itself out 'like tarts on a street corner', tempted by the fragrance of big money, making an obscene spectacle of itself. Descending into the vicious circle can only lead to entanglement into vicious practices

like bribery, favouritism - e.g. remarkably successful organisations at public procurement tenders or supra-taxation ('two billion for a kiss')or.

5. *Socialization into practices of corruption/ Practices of corruption*

Some metaphors take corruption to its socio-anthropological dimension, representing it as a socio-cultural matter. **Corruption as a set of social practices** may refer to the practice of bribing, various institutional arrangements that are rife or a particular lifestyle based on bribery. All these social 'bad habits' are based on tradition and lack fairness thus facilitating the emergence and institutionalisation of pervert practices such as selective justice. In this way, corruption becomes normalized displaying familiar patterns that people tend to follow automatically, as a second nature. The dominance of corrupt social practices gives 'free rein to corruption', making nepotism or clientelism the absolute royalty of social mechanisms.

Socialization into corruption practices does not only rely on traditional forms and patters. In its innovative form, corruption brings together economic, historical and legal knowledge creating new mechanisms that are difficult to tackle with the traditional provisions that pertain to the legal system. Thus, corruption can be: 1. A **business** based on the enmeshment of political and economic interests, such as business politicians; 2. A **dowry** when a principal gets extensive economic attention through corrupt means; 3. A form of '**legitimate illegitimacy'** or a form of legal corruption when legal arrangements are put in place to protect illegal arrangements.

6. *Others*

Curruption can also be represented as an ocean, as mud, as business, as a scheme, as culture (Bratu and Kazoka (2016). Some metaphorical representations of corruption are less coherent

across time and space. For example, 'the shackle of corruption' is a surprising metaphor. The shackle, as a physical object of restraining a perpetrator is typically associated with anti-corruption. Other examples relate to local corrupt practices such as 'water-pumping'/'well of money' (referring to methods used to systematically acquire public funds), 'corrupt back room deal dumping' (refers to multiple cases of corruption occurring simultaneously), 'casino deal' (the government gave the rights to run casinos to close allies). In some cases, the metaphors are constructed with the use of landmark buildings – e.g. Prague town hall 'is the main symbol of corruption in Czech Republic'. In other cases, corruption metaphors include reference to the typical illegal economic practices – e.g. 'five lats bribe[10]', 'hidden advertising' (bribes paid to the media to influence publishing political content), 'keeping a socket' (declaring a large amount of money to legalise later bribes).

Corruption is associated with the colour black in societies across Europe, which portrays it as a fundamentally negative state of affairs that leaves little room for hope or change. The depth of this metaphorical domain comes from the fact that black is not a colour in itself, but the lack of or complete absorption of light. Levels of social acceptability come in shades of black covering a wide spectrum of arenas that range from moral to social or legal to natural. For example, 'black economy' conveys illegal economic behaviours, while 'black cash register' refers to a cash register used for money obtained illegally. The latter metaphor uncovers the full ambivalence of corruption showing how apparently antagonist orders of meaning co-exist in practice (aka the order of maintaining a cash register is also applied to 'black cash'). A different, more nuanced, kind of blackness comes in the form of a *shadow,* as a dark area produced by the interference of a body between light and a surface. The 'shadow of corruption' casts doubt upon institutions that accept such behaviours. For example, 'the shadow of buying MPs is running through the Slovakian Parliament'. In moral and theological terms, black is

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[10] The lats was the currency of Latvia until it was replaced by Euro in 2014. This is roughly 8 EUR.

associated with demons and hell. So, in extremis, a society can be troubled by 'the old demons of bribes' or even descend into 'the terrible circles of hell of corruption'.

Discussion

After identifying the target and the source domains of corruption metaphors, this section now turns to discussing the implications of such metaphorical choices on the message and meaning conveyed by media. The main argument is that metaphors not only illuminate, but also hide meaning creating essential blind spots. This section is organised around three essential blind spots that tend to conceal: the multivalence of corruption, the multiplicity of corruption types and the necessity for complex, multi-faced solutions.

In most corruption-related newspaper articles, the concept of corruption is mentioned without any explanation – as if it was a free-floating abstract entity whose meaning was self-evident. When metaphorical language is used[11], it is usually quite salient: corruption tends to get associated with having a bad smell, being dirty or rotten, different forms of adversity. Perhaps unsurprisingly such language is more likely to be found in editorials as compared to, for example, general news stories or short texts. It could be assumed that the same metaphorical images that appear on the pages of newspapers linger in the minds of the readers whenever they encounter the term 'corruption'. If this is so, then the term itself evokes a particular pejorative reaction in its audience: naming something as being 'corruption' invites the emotion of outrage and mobilisation. Corruption-related metaphors function as a conduit for such emotions.

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[11] The vast majority of articles from our corpus (87%) did not contain metaphors.

There are dangers lurking behind each metaphor. By regarding something as a representation of something else we highlight certain elements of the thing/concepts that we want to comprehend, but with the very act of representation blind-spots appear. Those aspects of corruption that have not been captured by a particular metaphorical image used by a journalist disappear almost imperceptibly in the background. The more vivid and striking the metaphor, the larger the blind-spot. The presence of typical metaphorical language on corruption in media tends to conceal the possibility for the audience to notice traits of corruption that are not congruent with those metaphors: its multivalence, internal complexity and (the almost inevitable) complexities of anti-corruption solutions.

Blindspot on multivalence of corruption

Metaphorical language of corruption tends to hamper analytical approach to corruption as a societal phenomenon because it de-contextualises the concept historically, and consequently strips it from any positive association with societal progress or functionality.

What a newspaper would call corruption today is not necessarily the same phenomena as that what was understood by corruption yesterday. There are a number of examples when what was once a 'normal behaviour becomes corruption' (Friedrich (1972:21)). In the eyes of British and French aristocrats of previous centuries, gifts, patronage, venality was not something inherently corrupt (Genaux (2002: 107)) Many of the practices that would now constitute an abuse of power (for example, jobbery or sinecures) were once in Britain practiced 'with an openness that show they were not regarded as improper by those whose opinions mattered' (Leys (1965:68)). "Britain did not pass from corrupt condition to a very pure one: rather it passed from one set of standards to another, through a period in which behaviour patterns which were acceptable by the old standards came to be regarded as corrupt according to the new." (Leys

(1965:68)) Under such circumstances the term 'corruption' has a signalling function – indicating that a new standard of what constitutes corruption is now in place. At the same time the standard metaphorical images of corruption as typically used by media do not make it obvious that our understanding of corruption is based on shifting standards – there is tendency to believe that what seems 'smelly' now should have been just as 'smelly' at other times and in other circumstances.

It is also easy to get overwhelmed by metaphorical language and forget to what extent the concept of corruption depends on WHAT gets corrupted, namely the 'naturally sound conditions of politics' (Philp (2002: 51)). The contemporary idea of corruption is based on our assumptions and projections of what should constitute a sound political process. It is the high quality political process that – we automatically assume - gets corrupted, not some bad or unreasonable decision made by a legislature. For example, when condemning the abuse of power in a newspaper editorial, the author usually assumes that the corrupted regulation itself is a result of a legitimate political process and it is fundamentally sound and well-considered. Nevertheless, this assumption is not always warranted. Legislature is perfectly capable of passing new regulation in a misguided manner, and the resulting regulation might be unreasonable, disproportionate and/or without public benefit.

The standard set of corruption metaphors prevents the readers of newspapers from seeing any positive aspect to what could be called 'corruption'. The standard assumption is that corruption is a phenomenon that needs to be 'fought against.' "Under certain circumstances, citizens may reasonably feel that an act which is legally defined as corruption is nevertheless a necessary tool to survive." (Gardiner (1993:39)). In some cases corruption might even be a good thing for development – for example, it might mitigate the hostility of government, increase investment and innovation (Leff (1964: 311-315)) or improve efficiency and help growth (Bardhan (1997:323)). Even in context of liberal democracies "acceptance of the possibility

that the legislature can create a bad policy ... creates the possibility that some corruption may be necessary or even good." (Gardiner (1993: 32). Irrespective of the merits of such arguments, it is important to note that pejorative and adversary implications arising out of the metaphors related to the term 'corruption' would prevent one from even considering such an argument.

Last but not least, a typical set of corruption metaphors veils the ambivalence of public attitudes towards different expressions of corruption and whether they would see some acts as constituting corruption itself. Heidenbeimer distinguished between three types of corruption: black, grey and white, where black corruption is condemned by elite and by mass public opinion. There are ambivalent attitudes towards grey corruption – the majority would find white corruption tolerable and would not demand punishment. (Heidenheimer (1970b: 152) A recent comparative study in Bosnia, Kosovo, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, Russia, Tanzania, and Turkey documented that "Almost forty percent of the respondents from all countries did not consider favour-exchange related corruption as socially detrimental" (Torsello (2014: 9)). This 'white' corruption would not be seen as detrimental to society at all presumably. The vivid corruption-related metaphors found in newspaper editorials are capable of bringing an illusion of certainty there where there is none: "What may be 'corrupt' to one citizen, scholar, or public official is 'just politics' to another, or 'indiscretion' to a third" (Peters and Welch (1978:156))

Blindspot on multiplicity of corruption types

Corruption is an umbrella concept blending and subsuming a variety of corruption expressions (Ledeneva et al. (2017:4)). In 2005 Rasma Karklins made a list of 15 types of corrupt acts, most of which has several different expressions.[12] The concept of corruption and its associated

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[12] For example, profiteering from public resources by using public employees for private work; profiteering from public resources by quasi-privatization of state-owned enterprises and property; undermining elections

metaphors relate to the types of corrupt acts (bribery, misuse of licensing, self-serving use of public funds, etc.) in the same manner as the concept of being a fruit relate to apples, oranges and bananas. Yet it is easy to forget that the relation is almost exclusively conceptual[13]. The term 'corruption' as used by newspapers in a pejorative way often tells us very little about people's attitudes towards corrupt acts themselves – it is easy to be anti-corruption in a general manner (to propose a 'war against corruption' or to complain about 'the smell of corruption'), outside of the context of real-life situations. In this sense, the frequency of abstract corruption-related discourse in various countries might be misleading: people might not necessarily attribute the pejorative term 'corruption' with all its striking metaphors to the full typology of corrupt acts created by scholars.

Blindspot on necessity for multifaceted solutions

In theory and in practice metaphors have enough flexibility to indicate that corruption might have different degrees of extent and of harmfulness (compare: 'a pond of corruption' and 'an ocean of corruption'). Nevertheless, the usual metaphorical picture of 'corruption' as found in newspapers in 7 EU countries is a less-nuanced one: that of a dangerous adversary that reeks badly. Such mental image orients one to believe that: 1) as long as 'adversary' is there, the 'fight' is not over; 2) there should be an easy solution to win the battle (medicine in case of illness or killing/capturing human enemy).

Perceiving corruption as an 'adversary' might have both a mobilising and demotivating effect. On the one hand, the image of adversary triggers the desire to 'fight' and 'combat'. On the

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and political competition by illicit campaign and party financing; citizen initiated bribery of public officials to bend rules, etc.

[13] A person might have general anti-corruption attitude, never take bribers, but nevertheless engage in some acts of nepotism just as easily as he would be allergic to apples, but willing to eat oranges and other 'fruit'.

other hand, as corruption never reaches zero level, the ensuing fight might seem never-ending, thus, becoming demotivating and disillusioning. It is easy to lose one's sense of proportion when in fight-mode and not perceive any signs of progress. This might be one of the reasons why in Latvian, Italian and Hungarian newspapers there are so many references to their country being totally corrupt (Bratu and Kazoka (2016:28)). "Absolutely clean politics is a utopia that does not exist anywhere in the world, but stating the truism 'there always will be corruption' undermines efforts for improvement. There are huge differences in levels and types of corruption between countries and institutions, and it does matter that it be controlled as much as possible." (Karklins (2005: 3))

In order to control corruption, one needs to have a clear understanding of its nature, causes and best 'remedies'. For this purpose it is not helpful to personify corruption (via adversary metaphors) – such an image brings forth two illusions: that of clarity of understanding and that of availability of a scenario of rapid 'victory'. Politicians are asked to 'fight' corruption and may get sanctioned in case there are no immediate results. Such a personification is not helpful in the sense that corruption as a problem can rarely be solved easily. Even the creation of a successful 'war-machine' (anti-corruption agency) does not always allow a country to perform better (Mungiu-Pippidi (2016: 23)). Sometimes the very designation of some problem as being a corruption problem leads to the 'law of the instrument'- 'if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail'. In a same manner, if all one has is anti-corruption policies, then many societal and political process-related problems start to look suspiciously like corruption.

Conclusion and implications

This article has analysed the metaphor representations in the media over a period of 10 years (2004-2014), in seven different European countries (France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia and UK). To our knowledge, this is the first systematic attempt to conduct research on metaphors of corruption and on media practices in evoking corruption-related metaphors. The main findings revolve around five key aspects: 1. Media in 7 EU member states evoke metaphorical language on corruption relatively infrequently, usually in editorials and when describing corruption as a general phenomenon rather than in context of concrete corruption stories. In other circumstances journalists tend to assume that their readers have a clear understanding of corruption as a concept and/or describe concrete situations that have been labelled as corrupt without evoking metaphors or any other vivid expressions. 2. Metaphorical representations of corruption function as bottom-up alternatives to the official corruption lexicon. They introduce concreteness and corporality to the abstract concept of corruption. That is why it makes most sense for journalists to use corruption-related metaphors in editorials and when describing corruption as a general phenomenon. Metaphors essentially transcend the binaries inherent in the analytical definitions of corruption (Ledeneva et al. (2017: 12)) (e.g. public-private, formal- informal, legal-illegal) shaping multi-faced and context-bound situations. In this way, metaphorical language captures the fluidity of corruption and its various expressions. For example, expressions like 'the sea of corruption' or 'the waves of clientelism' portray the depth of these social problems, their ever changing nature, while giving a more concrete and familiar form to such abstract concepts. 3. Corruption is 'multi-level concept' incorporating a wide range of practices (e.g. nepotism, favouritism, familism) that need to be unpacked themselves. Our section on target domains shows that on the one hand, there is a meta-narrative of corruption as represented by media in 7 EU member states and encompassed by the eight key concepts chosen for analysis: bribe, kickback, embezzlement, collusion, favouritism, nepotism, clientelism and familism. This transnational corruption lexicon is

strongly associated with the criminal justice system and constantly revised in the realm of policy and academia. The key concepts, our research shows, are as abstract and analytical as the concept of corruption. On the other hand, when this meta-narrative is unpacked at the local level with the use of metaphors, it displays quite a lot of variation in terms of meaning, frequency, social tolerance and acceptability. For example, the concept of nepotism can mean favouring one's relatives, but also 'eating together' or being part of a 'clan' or even worse, a 'gang'. All these expressions are not inherently negative; they point to the sociability net that surrounds all human actions, which can sometimes get perverted and transformed into criminal activities. 4. Corruption metaphors evoked by newspapers in 7 EU member states draws on similar source domains across the various countries and periods. This meta-imaginary of corruption could partly mirror the Maslow pyramid in the sense that the key source domains relate to needs of survival (agriculture), safety (disease and war), love and belonging (culture & social practices), esteem (leisure and pleasure). 5. Corruption metaphors not only illuminate, but also hide some of the characteristics of the concept of corruption. Furthermore, they also imply how and when and with what tools to counteract this phenomenon. This makes a metaphor into an appropriate tool for social mobilisation (for example, in a context of editorial), but unreliable and risky instrument for journalists who intend to use corruption-related metaphors for accurate and comprehensive news reporting. The more striking the metaphor, the larger the blind-spot. Our research indicated that simplistic and highly emotional metaphorical corruption-related language typical in newspapers of 7 EU member states tends to conceal from the audience the multivalence of corruption and the complexities of anti-corruption solutions. Journalists need to be aware of both benefits and risks ~~to responsible journalism~~ entailed in employing corruption-related metaphors.

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