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HOGESCHOOL GENT
FOR THE STUDIES OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

GaPS
"Governing and
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The Belgian customs officers and corruption in a global trade market

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Cross border crime inroads on integrity
26-27 November 2009, Ghent




Anti-corruption training for Belgian customs officers

- A training organised by the National School of Finance and Taxes on the initiative of the Belgian Customs
- Trainers:
 - GofS: the Flemish part
 - ULg: the French part
- Aim of this training: to sensitize the customs officers for corruption in their work environment and for the corruption vulnerabilities of their complex job.
 - 2008-2009: level a and level b – more than 1000 customs officers took one compulsory training day
 - 2009-2010: level c and level d – more than 1200 customs officers will take one compulsory training day
- Content:
 - A theoretical introduction
 - A dilemma discussion
 - Communication training: role-playing



The vulnerability for corruption

- The aetiology of corruption for the Belgian customs
 - Macro-level
 - **Meso-level: the organisation**
 - Micro-level
- Motivation
- Opportunity
- Control:
 - Neutralisation / moral disengagement
 - Corruption as a process

 Vulnerabilities of the organisation
motivation

Individual motivation: difficult to discuss

Organisational motivation: the protection of the economy

- Customs is the facilitator of trade
- All for (big) business: a pressure on people not to control

 Vulnerabilities of the organisation
Opportunities

- A label of corruption inherited from the past
- New public management: the client-oriented approach
 - Does that mean "not refusing gifts?"
- Leadership: a system of inherent collusion:
 - Receptions, parties, exaggerated working dinners, trips, ...
 - Customs officers who are working in the company building
- Regulation - a lack of straight rules: the self-made customs officer
 - cfr. tolerating fake goods / accepting favours and presents
- A computer-controlled system:
 - A computer-controlled system: losing authority to an incapable system
 - ... that is not working: Do it yourself-attitude

 Vulnerabilities of the organisation
control

- PLDA: a system of "control"
- Training of new-comers / starters
- The independent complaint desk / no whistleblowing rules
- Communication:
 - No top-down control - no support of the top
 - No informal social control of colleagues: Some work as if they have an independent profession

GofS Moral disengagement

- Neutralization techniques and corruption
- Albert Bandura: Social cognitive theory on 'Moral Disengagement' (1990 & 1996)
- Moral disengagement operates through eight different cognitive mechanisms:
 1. Euphemistic labelling
 2. Moral justification
 3. Advantageous comparison
 4. Displacement of responsibility
 5. Diffusion of responsibility
 6. Distortion of consequences
 7. Dehumanization
 8. Attribution of blame

GofS Moral disengagement

- Scientific work on moral disengagement has remained primarily theoretical and used in explanations of military violence, severe violent crimes, cybercrimes
- Celia Moore theoretical concept of moral disengagement in the context of organizational corruption (2008)

GofS Moral disengagement

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    graph TD
      MD[Moral disengagement] --> LMA[Lack moral awareness]
      MD --> UDM[Unethical decision making that advances personal goals]
      LMA --> UDM
      UDM --> UA[Undue advancement]
      UA --> C[Corruption]
      subgraph Processes
        P[Perpetuation process]
        F[Facilitation process]
        I[Initiation process]
      end
  
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- Celia Moore (2008)



Conclusions

- Prevention: both organisational & behavioural approach
- Corruption nestled in the system is hard to stop
- Handling corruption through prevention?
