

Description for the general public

Buying disability certificates, university diplomas, jobs in police, house of justice or kindergarden are the everyday practices of Daghestani people. Daghestan is the most multiethnic republic of the Russian Federation, it is also the most politically unstable one. Growing interest in Islamic militancy (that provides volunteers for the Islamic State in Syria), overwhelming corruption and political killings are among many problems the republic experiences.

Corruption is usually spoken about in terms of „handicap” democracy, lack of trust in the state institutions or the „immaturity” of the society. Yet, if we leave behind the western notions of corruption (that are based on the hegemonic conception of the nation state) – which is one of the goals of our project – then we may see corruption as a much broader notion that is filled with different meanings in different parts of the world.

Can practices popularly called corruption actually help to empower certain groups, for example people from disprivileged clans or women? Can deliberate participation in corruption practices be seen as a „silent resistance” towards the Russian state that which presence in the North Caucasus has never been truly internalized and accepted. Can participation in corruption practices be linked to the support of the militant resistance to the Russian state conducted by the Islamic underground?

During our research we will take a closer look at the two settlements in the southern Daghestan (Druzhba and Chinar) where the pilot research has been conducted. As initial results showed the inhabitants of the two villages not only involve in corruption activities on the everyday basis but also eagerly share their experiences and narrations about their and others „successful” arrangements, job purchases or bribery practices.

The throughout study of the corruption in Daghestan will be the result of the project. Academic and non-academic articles will be published in journals and on the project website. The collected material will also serves as a base for the habilitation project of the project leader. Our findings may also turn out useful for NGOs conducting development projects in the post-Soviet space, who encounter corruption on the everyday basis and who come across individuals who describe their informal economic activities in terms of smartness, care for family or resistance to the oppressive state.