



UNIVERSITY OF  
GOTHENBURG

# THE QUALITY OF GOVERNMENT INSTITUTE

Report for the first ten years of a Research Programme at  
University of Gothenburg

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## Preface

This report aims to provide a general summary of the political science research programme "The Quality of Government Institute" at the University of Gothenburg, commonly referred to as *The QoG Institute*, whose chief sponsor has been The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences (in *Swedish Riksbankens Jubileumsfond*). This research program was founded by Professor Sören Holmberg and me after having received a smaller research grant from the Foundation in 2003. In 2007, we received a larger so-called programme grant by the Foundation, which enabled us to expand our research considerably. This report has been produced following a request from the Foundation that we ought to present our main results for the general public.

The report is thus aimed at the general public, mass media, the parliament, the Foundation, and our research colleagues within and beyond the social sciences. We have chosen not to add references to the text. Instead we have listed the main scientific publications of the research programme at the end of the report. In cases where we have cited publications that are not listed in the report, we have incorporated those references as footnotes.

As the Principal Investigator of the research programme, I have also been responsible producing this report; yet all the researchers who participate in the programme have contributed. Our programme coordinator Alice Johansson and research assistant Annika Lindberg have also provided excellent assistance. The report is intended to present the results of the research programme, but efforts have also been made to describe how the research problem was constructed and how the research programme has been organised, the reason being that the identification and specification of a research problem are important elements of the research process. How to organise a relatively comprehensive research programme like the QoG Institute may also be of interest.

Building and organising the QoG Institute has been the most exciting, stimulating, interesting, and challenging task I have experienced during my research career. I owe sincere thanks to many people, especially the skilled and dedicated colleagues at the Institute. I would like to express special thanks to my two closest collaborators in this operation: Firstly, my jointly responsible and senior advisor (or, to use a popular and more poignant term, the *consigliere*) of the research programme, Sören Holmberg, and secondly, the programme manager of the QoG Institute, Andreas Bågenholm, who has been in charge of the administrative and operative activities. Both Sören and Andreas have also carefully and commendably contributed to and commented on earlier versions of this report.

Gothenburg, April 2015

Bo Rothstein

## 1. The Quality of Government: The Construction of a Research Programme

### How to Get Drinking Water in Luanda

On June 16, 2006, the world leading newspaper *The New York Times* published a front page article on Angola. The article begins with a large picture of two young boys and a young girl – a qualified guess is that they are around ten years old – who are collecting water from a river that runs through what in the picture looks like a huge garbage dump. The article begins as follows:

*In a nation whose multibillion-dollar oil boom should arguably make its people rich enough to drink Evian, the water that many in this capital depend on goes by a less fancy name: Bengo. The Bengo River passes north of here, its waters dark with grit, its banks strewn with garbage.*

The article goes on describing how impoverished Angolans in the slums of the capital city, Luanda, have no other alternative water sources than the severely contaminated Bengo River. What is more, the widespread use of the contaminated water is the reason why this has also become the site of one of the worst cholera epidemics to strike Africa in recent days. The outbreak caused over 43 000 people to sicken and killed more than 1 600 during a period stretching from February to June the same year. Cholera usually spreads through contact with contaminated water, and according to the article, polluted water was to be found everywhere in the slums of Luanda. According to economists cited in the article, the Angolan oil boom has generated a situation where the Angolan government has an enormous budget surplus and dispose of more money than they can spend; yet they still seem unable to provide the population with essential goods like clean water and sanitation. In the concluding remarks, the article cites experts from different international organisations claiming that the disastrous water situation in the country is caused by two factors: the lack of infrastructure and widespread corruption.

When Transparency International, a prominent international anti-corruption organisation, published its yearly *Global Corruption Report* in 2008, they chose to focus on corruption within the water sector. The report encompasses no less than 23 chapters that analyse the relationship between corruption and the provision of clean water. The magnitude of the problem can be illustrated by reports from the World Health Organisation (WHO), which in 2006 estimated that 1,2 billion people lacked access to enough clean water and that 2,6 billion people lacked adequate sanitation. Figures further reveal that 80 per cent of all diseases in developing countries are waterborne, and that contaminated water causes the death of 2,8 million children every year. A careful estimate by the WHO is that 12 000 people, two third of them children, die every day from water and sanitation related diseases.

What makes this enormous problem interesting to us as political scientists is that a growing number of experts in the area are now arguing that the problem is not, as previously assumed, an issue of engineering. The acute lack of clean water that affects a large amount of people in developing countries is not due to a lack of technical solutions, such as pumps, reservoirs, or sewers; nor is the problem caused by limited access to natural clean water. Instead, the main problem seems to lie within the judicial and administrative institutions – in other words, in a dysfunctional state apparatus. Developing countries more often than not possess the technical devices needed to provide the population with clean water; the problem is that these technical installations rarely fulfil their functions due to lack of supervision, incompetence, and corruption in the public sector.

#### How to Get a Bit of Food in the Caribbean

The lack of access to clean water is of course not the only social problem related to a dysfunctional state apparatus. Economic underdevelopment is another example, which can be illustrated by the following anecdote. Just across the street from Vigie Airport on St. Lucia – a stunningly beautiful island in the Caribbean but also a relatively poor country – are two run-down sheds from which coffee and food is served. Outside the two run-down sheds, where only a few cus-

tomers sit down to eat and drink, there are no real tables or chairs, just broken stools and pallets and cable winches overthrown to serve as tables. The result of this sad outlook is that tourists who use the airport hardly even venture these places, although many of them are waiting long hours for the often delayed planes to take off. However, those who dare to use these services will find that the local food served there is excellent and substantially cheaper than the fast food served by American chain restaurants in the airport lounge. Furthermore, they will find that the women running these small businesses are very friendly and talkative and the location – an ocean beach lined with palm trees – delivers a stunning postcard view.

If you ask the women who run the small businesses why they do not make efforts to attract tourists by making use of their perfect location, for example by investing in a porch, repairing their dun-down shacks and putting up some chairs and tables, they will give the following answer: “Great idea, I’ve thought of it, but there are two problems. Firstly, although I have been here for twenty years, I don’t own this piece of land; I’m a squatter, so I can be forced away by the authorities at any time. Secondly, if I did invest and opened a real bar or a restaurant, I could probably never afford to pay the bribes demanded by the health inspectors”. Further conversation reveals that the women do not know whether it is at all possible to buy the land or at least get a long-term lease, and they do not know who they could turn to in order to avoid paying bribes to the health inspectors. “The police are even worse,” they will tell you. This example illustrates how the lack of predictable judicial institutions that can secure property rights and reduce corruption prevents many local entrepreneurs from making necessary investments that would most certainly improve their own economic situation – and the situation of the entire country – considerably.

These two problems – how corruption and issues associated with corruption are related to poor health and poverty – are illustrated in the two charts below. In both cases we see a strong correlation between corruption and public health on the one hand, and with economic prosperity on the other.





Insights from a large number of case studies and the availability of new country comparative data have been among the principal motivations for our research programme. In one of the first articles published within the programme, Sören Holmberg, Bo Rothstein and Naghmeh Nasiritousi demonstrate a strong, negative relationship between available measures of the quality of government and a range of commonly used measures of human welfare. The new field of institution-oriented research within comparative political economy had found that it is not the lack of entrepreneurship and economic resources or the absence of physical capital that hinders economic and social development. Instead, the principal problem is often low quality in those public institutions that plan and implement public policy. The researcher Mancur Olson identified this problem early on. In one of his last published article, he declares:

*The large differences in per capita income across countries cannot be explained by differences in the ratio of population to land or natural resources, or by differences in the quality of marketable human capital or personal culture. Albeit at a high level of aggregation, this eliminates each of the factors of production as possible explanations of most of the international differences in per capita income. The only remaining plausible explanation is that the great differences in the wealth of nations are mainly due to differences in the quality of their institutions and economic policies<sup>1</sup>.*

However, the quality of institutions has not only proved to have an effect on economic growth. *Quality of Government* (QoG) also appears to have a strong impact on other important factors, such as whether or not people are satisfied with their lives, different measures of public health, the legitimacy of the political system, the prevalence of civil war, and the prospects of consolidating democratic political rule. In short, we came to the conclusion that if we were to summarise the causes of human misery in today's world, the single most important explanation seems to be that the majority of the world's population live under deeply dysfunctional government institutions. In an often-cited speech from 2005, the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan

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<sup>1</sup> Olson, Mancur, Jr. (1996). "Big Bills Left on the Sidewalk: Why Some Nations are Rich, and Others Poor." *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 10(2): 3-24.

argues that good government is probably the single most important means to combat poverty and enhance social and economic development.

The question of the quality of political institutions originates from the so-called institutional turn (or revolution, if you will) within social science research. The reorientation, which took place in the early 1990's, has challenged the notion that structural conditions, such as social class structures, economic interdependence, or deeply rooted social and cultural norms, constitute the most important obstacles to economic and social development. Instead, researchers such as the Nobel Prize winners Douglass C. North and Elinor Ostrom, and the duo James B. March and Johan P. Olsen, claim that the essential problem lies in the quality of government institutions.

Inspired by this institutionalist focus, the research programme was founded upon two fundamental assumptions. Firstly, the construction of political and administrative institutions is a central object of political science research. Secondly, a society's political and administrative institutions are created through political decisions and can therefore in principle be reformed through deliberate and planned action, which can be contrasted with the deeply rooted structural social conditions that are not adjustable to the same extent. This generated new challenges for a political science research that has traditionally been occupied with political decision-making processes.

Based on these insights, one of the distinctive characteristics of the QoG programme was formulated: the idea that *human welfare* would constitute what in social science research terminology is called "the dependent variable". In other words, what we ultimately aim to elucidate and explain is how the quality of government affects people's living conditions. More specifically, we ask why there is such variation in countries' institutional quality and in their ability to generate *human welfare* for their citizens. The issue could surely be discussed at length, but we have chosen to build upon the theory put forward by the philosopher and economist Amartya Sen (who has also received the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences). His theory focuses on peo-

ple's possibilities of achieving a good life by the provision of essential resources. Most people wish to live in a society where most infants live to see their fifth birthday, where human rights are respected, where most people get to live a long and relatively healthy life, where there is access to clean water and only a low proportion of the population live in poverty, and where the majority of residents are satisfied with their lives and believe that most people can be trusted.

This motivation distinguishes our research programme from the majority of other political science research projects, which rarely seek to explain variations in human welfare. Instead, most political scientists are interested in the political processes inside the political machinery (vote choice, election results, and democratisation). The globally respected political scientist Francis Fukuyama has emphasised that there has been ideological motives behind much of political science research which have made researchers focus more on how state power can be restricted and contained, while they have been remarkably indifferent to the question of how states' capacity and quality can be enhanced in order to create and sustain human welfare.

Two additional motivations should be mentioned here. The first emanates from a comprehensive field of research on interpersonal or social trust, also called social capital. The research field has its origin in the much-debated book *Making Democracy Work*, written by the American political scientist Robert Putnam in 1992. In the mid-1990s, Bo Rothstein participated in a research project organised by Robert Putnam that sought to make cross-country comparisons of the concept of social capital. Rothstein came to the same conclusion as the project leader; namely, that a high level of social trust is a prerequisite for high social capital and constitutes one of the single most important assets for a society to create good living conditions. Theoretically, this claim rests upon the assumption that a well-functioning society is conditioned by citizens' capacity to produce a fairly comprehensive set of so called *public goods*. In order to achieve this, a relatively high level of social trust needs to be in place.

The problem with public goods is that they are not (or not to a sufficient degree) created as a direct effect of a market economy; instead, they require the active involvement of state institu-

tions, including democratic and judicial institutions, but also infrastructure, universal education, and social insurance systems. A crucial question that arises is how social trust and social capital can be generated. Putnam and many of his followers have emphasised the importance of citizens' active engagement in civil society organisations. It is in this context, they argue, that the foundation of interpersonal trust is created, which can in turn be transformed into social capital that is conducive to social development.

However, this relationship has proved difficult to support empirically. Subsequent studies have failed to demonstrate any relationship between people's voluntary engagement in civil society organisations on the one hand, and their perception of whether "most people can be trusted", which is the standard formulation of the survey item, on the other. This puzzle has created a difficult dilemma for social science researchers: they have identified social capital as a new important concept that is also possible to measure, and there are well-founded theoretical and empirical evidence that confirm its significantly positive effects on social development. Yet the most important theory of how social trust and social capital are generated is not supported by empirical evidence.

Bo Rothstein has therefore, in a joint effort with colleagues within and outside the research programme (Sören Holmberg, Margaret Levi, Staffan Kumlin, Dietlind Stolle, and Eric Uslaner), introduced an alternative theory on how social capital can be generated. The theory argues that whether or not people perceive that other members of their society can be trusted depends on their perceptions of the quality of public institutions. In contrast to the society-centred approach, this state-centred theory is backed by significant empirical evidence. The theory will be outlined in more detail later in this report; the point to be made here is that if social trust and social capital are important for positive social development, and if these factors are conditioned by people's perceptions of the quality of public institutions, we may conclude that it is important to a) try to define what we mean by the quality of public institutions, b) explain why the quality of those institutions vary to such great extent between societies, and c) explain how quality of government can be generated.

These two principal motivations behind the research programme are accompanied by a third, more theoretical question. What seems to characterise high quality public institutions is their political neutrality, or their ability to act in an impartial manner. The foundation of what is usually referred to as the rule of law is the principle of equality before the law. In a democratic state governed by the rule of law, everyone – including the political elite – is required to abide by existing laws. The American political scientist Barry Weingast has formulated this principle eloquently: a state that is strong enough to protect citizens' property and rights in an equal manner is also strong enough to confiscate the wealth of citizens. Most political and economic actors would prefer that the institutions in place benefit their own interests. Yet institutions that favour one specific group over others are the opposite of the impartial and neutral institutions that a society needs in order to create welfare for its citizens. If we build upon an approach that assumes that actors are primarily driven by self-interest, it will be difficult to explain how institutions characterised by impartiality can be generated, and why these institutions are not immediately transformed into tools in the hands of the political elite.

This is not merely an issue of theoretical interest. A quick look at the country-comparative empirical research mapping corruption levels across the world reveals that most societies have failed to create high quality political institutions. An overwhelming majority of the world's population live in societies where corruption in public institutions is pervasive or relatively widespread. In fact, countries with low levels of corruption and fairly high quality institutions are the exception, rather than the rule. A common assumption is that systemic corruption and other forms of dysfunctions in public institutions are predominantly found in developing countries and post-communist states; however, this has turned out not to be the case. Quite on the contrary, even though systemic corruption is relatively rare in countries like Australia, the US, and the Northern European countries, as compared to many developing countries, these countries also experience problems with corruption and other dysfunctions in the state apparatus. Certainly, a country free from corruption would be as sensational as a country free from crime; yet empirical surveys have demonstrated that well-developed Western democracies like Italy and Greece have higher levels of corruption than many developing countries. Many Western countries experience issues with strong, organised interest groups exerting significant influence over the very same public institutions that are supposed to supervise and regulate their activi-

ties. Also in Sweden, corruption and other forms of power abuse have been detected, notably on the municipal level.

As has previously been emphasised by Douglass North, there is no reason to assume that “history is effective”; that is, that citizens of a society are willing and able to create the type of institutions that will benefit the welfare of society at large, rather than institutions that will first and foremost promote their own self-interest. Joseph Stieglitz (also a Nobel Prize winner) has recounted how during his time as member of president Clinton’s expert council for economic issues, he was constantly attended by representatives of different companies and business interests who all emphasised that they were of course in favour of the free market and the principle of fair competition, but for some particular reason, their own company or business was in need of special regulations that would advance their economic interest.

The theoretical puzzle is thus how to make self-interested agents align their preferences and create institutions founded on impartiality and equality before the law – norms that represent the opposite of self-interest. Much of previous research on political institutions has focused on economic development and has therefore been dominated by researchers within the field of economics. The pressing need for a complementary, political-scientific perspective on the issue was formulated by the prominent development economist Dani Rodrik in the late 1990’s. According to Rodrik, the then dominant neoclassical political economist approach to the problems facing developing countries had been unsuccessful, the reason being that neoclassical economy tended to ignore the importance of good institutions for the functioning of the market economy. These institutions were:

*A clearly delineated system of property rights, a regulatory apparatus curbing the worst forms of fraud, anti-competitive behaviour, and moral hazard, a moderately cohesive society exhibit-*

*ing trust and social co-operation, social and political institutions that mitigate risk and manage social conflicts, the rule of law and clean government*<sup>2</sup>.

Rodrik then added, “These are social arrangements that economists usually take for granted, but which are conspicuous by their absence in poor countries”. The quote illustrated the dire need for political science research on the issue.

Yet the political science discipline had been unable to satisfy the demand for more research on the quality of government, albeit with a few exceptions. The doyen of political science research on corruption, Michael Johnston, expressed this concern in the following way: “American political science as an institutionalized discipline has remained steadfastly uninterested in corruption issues for generations”<sup>3</sup>. The statement also holds true for European and Nordic political science research; the issue of corruption has been remarkably absent in both elementary textbooks within the field and in postgraduate education. Nor can it be found in the numerous handbooks on the different political science disciplines published by leading university-affiliated publishing companies in the last fifteen years. The remarkable shortage of corruption research can be demonstrated statistically if we analyse the occurrence of so-called key words in articles published in international scientific and peer reviewed journals. Key words include words that can be found in the title or abstract of the article, and words that the author has stated as a key term. The database Thomson Web of Science has registered over 1 800 journals within social sciences, economics and humanities. The table below illustrates the number of articles containing the keyword *political corruption* published since 1992.

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<sup>2</sup> Rodrik, Dani (2000). "Institutions for High-Quality Growth: What They Are and How to Acquire Them." *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 35(3): 3-31.

<sup>3</sup> Johnston, Michael (2006). "From Thucydides to Mayor Daley: Bad Politics, and a Culture of Corruption." *P.S. Political Science and Politics*, 39(4): 809-12.



In 1992, only 14 articles stated “political corruption” as a key word. In 2013, the number had increased to 300. To put the numbers in perspective, the total number of registered articles in the database in 1992 amounted to 60 000.

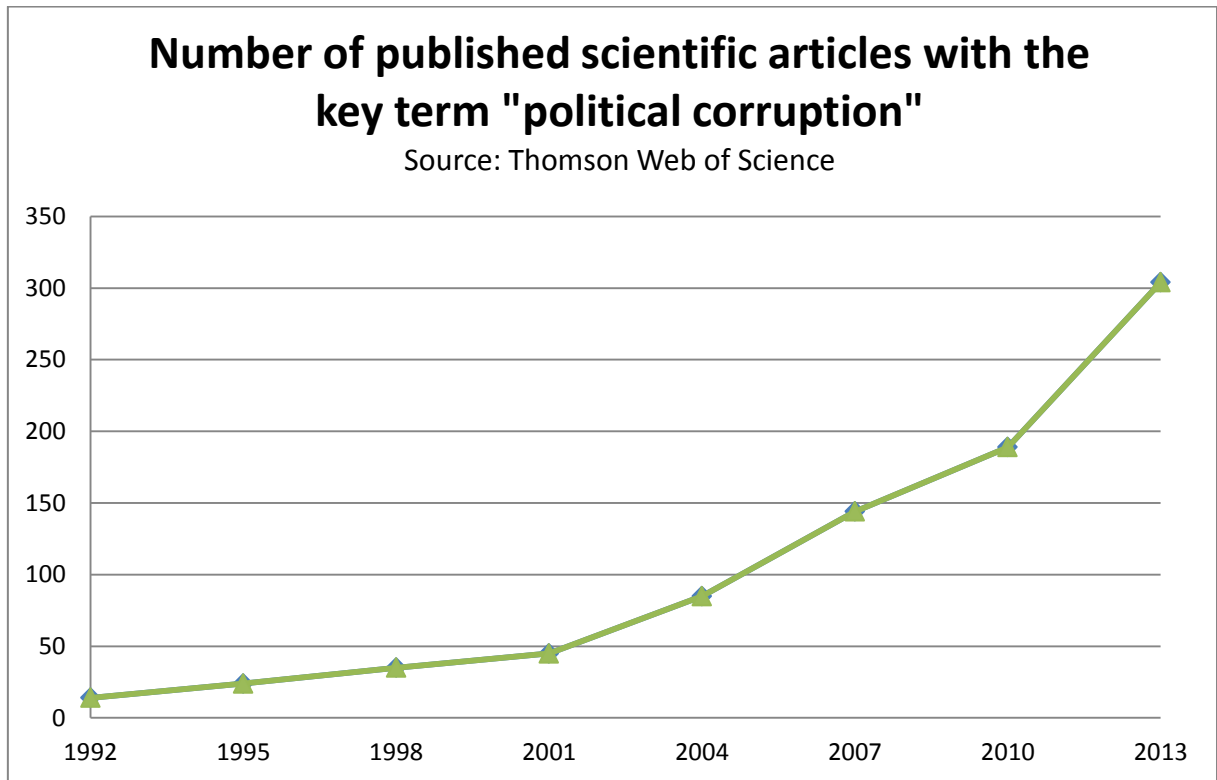


Figure 3. Number of scientific articles with the key term “political corruption” published since 1992.

We can only speculate as to why, until only recently, the interest in political corruption has been so limited within social sciences and humanities. An often mentioned reason is the absence of relevant data. The first rudimentary data comparing corruption levels between different countries was only released in the mid-1990s. It was also around this time that researchers first observed the relationship between corruption levels and different measures of human welfare. Until the mid-1990s, the dominant theoretical approach to corruption and dysfunctional state

institutions presumed that despite its negative effects on social development, some types of corruption might also generate positive outcomes. Corruption, it was argued, could potentially grease the wheels of the economy by enabling companies and individuals to circumvent slow bureaucratic processes, thereby enhancing economic growth. The latter, positive effect was assumed to compensate for the negative effects of corruption, and the overall impact of widespread corruption should therefore not be negative for states. However, the results of empirical research facilitated by access to more comprehensive country-comparative data have fundamentally altered this theory. Nowadays, there is almost a consensus among social science research that corruption and other dysfunctions in the state apparatus have a strong negative impact on countries' capacity to create good living conditions for their citizens. In conclusion, this research programme has been founded on the assumption that there is need for political science research on three key issues:

- How should we define and measure high quality of government?
- Why do countries vary in their level of quality of government?
- Which effects does low and high quality of government respectively have on society and human welfare, and how can we explain this relationship?

In order to answer these questions, especially the latter ones, it has been necessary to create a large country-comparative database. The process has partially entailed organising and making available already existing data, as data has proved to be dispersed, inaccessible, and organised in a way that renders simultaneous use of the different datasets difficult. Furthermore, we have collected new data of our own. Building the QoG Institute databases has thus been a central task of the research programme.

## 2. How to Organise a Research Programme

Professor Bo Rothstein and Professor Sören Holmberg have been in charge of the research programme. Since 2009, Senior Lecturer Andreas Bågenholm have been the research programme's program manager and responsible for its operative administration.. When organising the research programme, we built upon existing knowledge of what characterises a creative research environment, of which one key element is the importance of not having a pre-determined theoretical model, as this may create a situation where only the empirical evidence that confirms the theoretical assumptions will be taken into consideration. We also wanted the research to be pluralistic in terms of research methods, and as a result, such varied methods as statistical, experimental, ethnographic, and qualitative historical methods have all been used within the programme. Consequently, researchers with different methodological competences have worked and published papers together and have been able to complement each other.

Three key aspects have kept the programme together:

Firstly, a distinct problem formulation - all research funded by the programme has focused on the three above-mentioned questions. Secondly, the construction of our own comprehensive databases - these have also been available to all researchers, within as well as outside the program. Thirdly, the entire research group has been based at the Department of Political Science, at the University of Gothenburg, and has so been concentrated both geographically and disciplinary. This structure has enabled us to create a close network and to facilitate extensive exchange and collaboration within the research group, which we believe, is an important reason behind the extensive amount of jointly produced reports and publications. We have also been able to hold weekly meetings, arrange joint seminars every other week, and to invite external scholars to present their research. As a result of additional research grants, our research group today consists of around thirty political scientists. The focus on political science has, however, not resulted in disciplinary isolation, as we have had collaborations – and jointly published articles – with colleagues from other disciplines, including history, economics, psychology, sociology, and social anthropology. In addition, a relatively large number of guest scholars have visited the

Institute (usually for a period of one or two weeks, but sometimes for more extensive time periods). Finally, we have organised two internal conferences each semester, where the researchers have drafted their ideas and presented research reports. All this has enabled us to create a strong research community and to facilitate different forms of collaboration within the research group.

### The Operative Aims of the QoG Institute

The operative aim of the QoG Institute has been to establish an internationally renowned research milieu with good scientific reputation. One example of our success in this regard is the recently published *Handbook of Political Corruption*, where researchers from the QoG Institute have contributed with three out of a total of 25 chapters, which is more than any other research institute. The QoG Institute is also the leading organisation of a comprehensive EU-funded research programme titled *Anti-corruption Policies Revisited: Global Trends and European Challenges to Corruption (ANTICORRP)*. The five-year long research programme was initiated in 2012, involves 20 research groups in 15 European countries, and employs nearly 70 researchers. In financial terms, it was the largest social science project ever financed by the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme, with a budget of 8 million euro.

The researchers at the QoG Institute are frequently invited to present their research at prestigious universities<sup>4</sup>. Our researchers have further been successful in applying for new projects over the years, and we have attracted guest scholars from all over the world, which has enabled us to create a strong and important international network. In addition, we have been invited as speakers at a variety of policy organisations, including the European Commission, the World Bank, Transparency International, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The QoG Institute has received additional funding, which will enable us to continue our work with undiminished capacity until 2019.

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<sup>4</sup> E.g. Australian National University, European University Institute, Harvard University, SciencesPo-Paris, Stanford University, Higher School of Economics-Moskva, Oxford University, London School of Economics and Political Science, Cambridge University, University College London, University of Austin-Texas, Yale University.

The QoG Institute has also been active in its communication with various actors in Swedish society. Through additional funding from the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences in 2010, specifically aimed at dissemination and at making QoG research available to the broader Swedish public, we have had two full-timed employed communicators during almost two years. Their work resulted in two so-called practitioners' conferences (one in Gothenburg and one in Stockholm), with over three hundred participants in total, and in the production of various information folders in Swedish. During these two years, the QoG Institute was the only research programme to have our own booth at the Gothenburg Book Fair. A number of publications have also been released in Swedish<sup>5</sup> and we have presented our work to a range of Swedish administrative authorities and organisations, such as the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA), the Swedish National Audit Office, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SKL), and the Expert Group for Aid Studies.

### The QoG Databases

One important part of the QoG Institute's work has been to make the comprehensive empirical data, gathered by its researchers, available to the public, and for this purpose, a number of databases have been produced. The databases today contain information on 207 countries, from 1946 until present day, and include a range of indicators concerning what high quality of government is, how it can be achieved, and what its effects are. In 2009, the database was awarded the prestigious Lijphart, Przeworski, Verba Award for Best Dataset by the APSA Comparative Politics Section. All data is freely accessible in three different formats at the Institute's homepage ([www.qog.pol.gu.se/data](http://www.qog.pol.gu.se/data)).

The databases contain over 2 000 different indicators that are either produced by researchers at the QoG Institute or gathered from some hundred external data sources, such as the World

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<sup>5</sup> E.g. a report for *Svenska institutet för europapolitiska studier (SIEPS)* by Charron, Lapuente och Rothstein, and a textbook titled *Vägar till välstånd*, co-authored by Rothstein. Furthermore, researchers at the QoG Institute have written a number of chapters in the frequently used textbook *Politik som organisation: Förvaltningspolitikens grundproblem*.

Bank, Freedom House, World Value Survey, and the OECD. The databases are widely used by both researchers and students around the world, notably in teaching. As a step to enhance the accessibility of the QoG databases, the Institute has integrated a data visualisation tool on the webpage that allows for instant visualisation and analysis of various relationships between a subset of the variables without using statistical programmes. In principle, anyone capable of handling a computer can now create his or her own diagrams, tables, and figures from our database<sup>6</sup>.

The flagship among the databases is the award-winning *QoG Standard Dataset*, available in both cross-section and time-series versions. The QoG Standard Dataset includes indicators from a variety of data sources, such as the World Bank, Eurostat, and Transparency International. The Dataset has continuously grown and now encompasses almost 2 400 variables. In order to facilitate an overview of the data, the variables are divided into sixteen thematic categories, including Quality of Government, Economy, Media, Environment, Judicial System, and Political System etc.

The *QoG Basic Dataset* offers the most frequently used variables from the QoG Standard Dataset in a more accessible package, but here limited to 200 variables. We also offer more advanced databases, such as the *QoG OECD Dataset* – recommended for those who are interested in the relationship between social policies, public opinion, and quality of government. This dataset is richer in the sense that it has more fine-grained indicators on policy related variables. It is also limited to the OECD member countries and the data quality is therefore exceptionally high in terms of valid cases. The *QoG Expert Survey Dataset* is a unique dataset on the structure and behaviour of public administrations. It is based on a web survey of 1 035 country experts from 135 countries across the world, and covers key dimensions of the quality of government, including politicisation, professionalization, openness, and impartiality. Finally, the *EU Regional Dataset* is a survey of corruption on a regional level within the EU, conducted during 2010

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<sup>6</sup> For more information, please visit [www.pol.qog.gu.se/data](http://www.pol.qog.gu.se/data), where users have written a number of special program commands.

and supervised by Nicholas Charron. It covers all 27 EU member states as well as 172 so-called NUTS 1 and NUTS 2 regions. The survey was answered by in total 34 000 respondents. During the winter of 2012-2013, a second round was conducted, this time covering 212 regions and over 84 000 respondents, which makes it one of the most comprehensive surveys within the field.

The databases can be used for more or less advanced statistical analyses, or as a tool to select qualitatively comparable cases. Today, it only takes a minor effort to get the material needed to select cases that, based on specific theoretical assumptions, could be compared to qualitative historical methods. To give an example, one might be interested in comparing two structurally similar cases with comparable levels of corruption, but where one of them has had notable success in curbing corruption. Access to the QoG Institute Databases facilitates the selection of such cases considerably.

### 3. What Is Quality of Government and How Can It Be Measured?

If it is high quality of government that creates a good society, then we are faced with the problem of how to define quality of government. An enduring problem within the research community is the lack of consensus on how concepts like *good governance* or quality of government (QoG) should be defined. Research on the topic has been dominated by a cultural relativistic approach, which argues that quality of government cannot be defined in general or universal terms, as it will inevitably differ between cultures.

The relativistic approach is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, one may question whether it is wise to use relativistic definitions when working with essentially normative concepts of the most fundamental political institutions. If this is the case, then the government of the People's Republic of China may well claim that they are a *democracy*, but that they have their own definition of democracy. Similarly, the ruling elite in Saudi Arabia may argue that they promote *gender equality*, they only differ in their understanding of what constitutes gender equality. Or, the Syrian president can claim that his regime respects *human rights* principles, but that their understanding of human rights stems from a specific cultural context and will therefore manifest itself differently from a country such as Denmark.

Secondly, there is limited empirical support for a cultural relativistic definition. Using a comprehensive database containing anthropological data, Bo Rothstein and Davide Torsello have found reports of corruption in different types of societies, across the world, also including hunter-gatherer societies with very low material standards. Furthermore, accounts of corruption, dating as far back as to the Roman Empire, 13<sup>th</sup> century France, or Renaissance Florence, appear remarkably modern in their line of reasoning. Survey data from highly corrupt countries in Africa, such as Kenya, Uganda, and Nigeria, show that their view of corruption is not so radically different from that in our part of the world. This argument will be further developed in the following chapter.



For a research programme that has the issue of quality of government as its focus, it is important to work with a clear and viable conceptual framework. However, the most widely used definition of corruption, which is a variation of “abuse of public power for private gain”, has proved to be impracticable, as it does not specify what constitutes “abuse”.

The problem of definitions is not only of academic interest. If we are incapable of finding a valid definition of “quality”, we will not be able to create a measurement of what constitutes high and low quality of government respectively. As a consequence, we will be unable to measure the quality of government in different countries and hence be unable to explain cross-country variations. Ultimately, this undermines all possibilities of adjusting shortcomings in the quality of government, which would not only be critical for our research programme, but also for the capability to develop effective solutions.

Developing a theoretical and empirical definition of what constitutes quality of government was thus one of the first questions that needed to be answered. In an article published in 2008, Bo Rothstein and Jan Teorell offered one suggestion. They proposed that the quality of government should be defined as the opposite of corruption, which is often defined in terms of abuse of entrusted power for private gain. A problem with this definition was that it opened up for a relativistic notion of corruption, since the understanding of what constitutes “abuse” and “private gain” may vary across contexts. Corruption is furthermore a problematic concept as it appears in different forms and prevails in different contexts: it encompasses everything from petty corruption, which could take the form of a police receiving a bribe to disregard a traffic violation, to the huge sums involved in agreements on infrastructure projects or weapon purchases. Social sciences are not the only discipline struggling with issues of proportion; within biology, both hummingbirds and condors fall into the category of “birds”.

Another problem, with deploying such narrow understanding of the concept, is that the quality of government is conditioned by other factors than corruption. The research community uses the terms such as clientelism and patron-client relationships to describe political systems where

different groups are granted benefits in exchange for political support (in American cities, with strong *political machines*, a group might constitute an urban district and in developing countries it is usually a clan). Such systems are often closely related to direct or indirect discrimination, and usually associated with ethnicity, class, or gender. Furthermore, many dysfunctions within the state apparatus appear in other forms than those we usually associate with corruption, such as bribes. These might involve different types of special treatment and favouritism, which is manifested in various benefits granted by bureaucrats to political affiliates or personal contacts. One example could be that teachers and medical staff fail to turn up at work despite receiving full salary, or that the majority of public employees lack the competence required for their job because they were recruited based on their political or personal contacts. In other words, it is not always clear what should be conceived as corruption or related dysfunctions in the state apparatus.

One possible solution is to define quality of government as a democratic government; that is, as a system where the people, through free and fair elections, choose their parliament and thereby their government, or alternatively, where the president is elected independently. The problem with this definition is that empirical research has failed to prove the existence of a straightforward relationship between representative democracy and low corruption. On the contrary, some of the worst cases of corruption have appeared in newly democratised countries, while the few countries that have successfully managed to curb corruption in recent days, such as Singapore and Hong Kong, can hardly be called democratic. The reason why new democracies are particularly vulnerable to corruption is probably that politicians are easily bought in democratising countries.

Historical analyses have also revealed that countries such as Denmark, The Netherlands, Sweden, Great Britain, and Germany successfully managed to reduce systemic corruption and enhance state capacity several decades before they had established functioning representative democracies. Countries with a long-standing tradition of representative democracy generally have low levels of corruption; yet there are exceptions, like Italy and Greece.

In this context, it is important to distinguish between the “input” and the “output” side of the democratic system. The input side of the political system encompasses the processes that regulate the inflow of political ideas and the access to political power (for example, the electoral system, political parties, and rules for the formation of opinion). The output side of the political system consists of the bureaucratic apparatus. At the input side, the principle of *political equality* is accepted as a fundamental norm. The question is whether a similar norm can be found on the output side of the political system. Rothstein and Teorell suggest that the principle of *impartiality* should guide the exercise of public authority. This principle implies that when implementing laws and policies, government officials are not allowed to take into consideration anything about the citizen, or the case at hand, which is not beforehand stipulated in the policy or law. This principle prohibits special treatment or discrimination on the basis of origin, political beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or economic position. Bribery, clientelism, and nepotism will also be considered illegitimate. The impartiality principle can be found in a central paragraph in Swedish constitutional law (Regeringsformen, 1 kap 9 §):

Courts and administrative authorities, and others who exercise public authority, should ensure the equality of all before the law and respect the principles of objectivity and impartiality.

As revealed in the paragraph, the principles not only apply to courts and public authorities, but to anyone who “exercise public authority”. It should be emphasised that this paragraph is a regulation that should be implemented in the daily work of government officials, and not merely an abstract ideal. Consequently, every form of special treatment that lacks legal foundation is not only a crime but is to be considered unconstitutional. Importantly, the regulations also apply to private businesses and organisations that “exercise public authority”.

We may conceive of favouritism as the opposite of impartiality. The empirical results of survey research indicate that this definition mirrors how a majority of respondents conceive corruption. People not only react negatively to the traditional form of corruption – bribes – but also to dif-

ferent forms of favouritism. Internationally renowned political philosophers like Robert Goodin have further argued that favouritism can be conceived as the opposite of justice.

Defining quality of government in terms of impartiality in the exercise of public authority has many important advantages. Firstly, this definition not only captures corruption but also a range of other issues (such as nepotism, clientelism, and discrimination). Secondly, we can handle the fact that some undemocratic countries, such as Singapore, still have high quality of government. The opposite problem – that the introduction of representative democracy does not necessarily produce high quality of government – can also be managed. There is, however, an important relationship between impartiality in the exercise of public authority and the democratic principles embedded in the notion of “human rights”, notably the right to freedom from discrimination and to equal treatment in front of the law. Hence, we could say that high quality of government, based on the principle of impartiality in the exercise of public authority, is a well-established norm that is closely related to democracy, but that may also exist in a political system not governed through representative democracy.

Defining quality of government along these lines is not uncontroversial. Many significant theoretical approaches within social sciences emphasise different values and argue that impartiality is impossible. Classical Marxism claims that government institutions will always serve the interests of the bourgeoisie or capitalist class and therefore cannot act impartially with regard to the different class interests. Neoclassical economic theory, also called *public choice* theory, assumes that public officials are primarily guided by their own self-interest and not by ethical norms like impartiality. Identity politics theories stress that people who belong to a particular ethnic (or sexual, or class) group cannot act impartially in relation to individuals belonging to other ethnic (or sexual, or class) groups.

In response to these approaches, Rothstein and Teorell argue that the theory of impartiality does not aim to cover the totality of individuals' actions. Importantly, each individual is free to be partial in relation to their friends, family, and other people with whom they share interests; it is

only in the exercise of public authority that the principle of impartiality needs to take priority. It is therefore of crucial importance to differentiate between one's actions as an individual and as a public official exercising public authority.

One alternative to the theory of quality of government as impartiality, as presented by Rothstein and Teorell, would be to take the concept of the *rule of law* as a starting point. However, most professionals working in public services, such as healthcare, schools, nursing, and labour market policy, do not conceive themselves primarily as practitioners of a judicially codified legal system. Nevertheless, the principle of impartiality also applies to these agencies. The demand for impartiality is not identical to the principle of equal treatment. It should be obvious that all children in primary school, all patients in hospitals, and all people seeking employment at the job centre, must be treated in accordance with their own individual needs; yet they must also be treated in accordance with the professional norms stated in legal and policy documents. Public servants must not be influenced by the fact that a student, a patient, or a job seeker belongs to a certain group, offers to pay a bribe, or holds certain political views.

Building upon these insights, it also becomes clear that a democratic political system encompasses two conflicting normative principles. On the input side, partiality is the rule rather than the exception, and is generally considered legitimate - most people who chose to engage in politics do it to support a certain group or to put forward specific interests (for instance by improving infrastructure on the countryside, increase support to families with children, give tax relief to small businesses, or more subsidies to the agriculture industry). Yet, once these policies have been accepted and printed in laws and regulations, the opposite norm ensues - that of impartiality in the exercise of public authority. Not even the groups that have advocated more beneficial financial assistance to say the small businesses at Gotland would accept that only people with good connections to the ruling political party, who have family ties with officials at the county administrative board, or who are willing to pay bribes, are granted access to the financial assistance.

Another advantage of this rather narrow definition is that it enables us to study empirically the relationship between the quality of government and democracy, which would of course be impossible if we included representative democracy in the definition of QoG. The definition allows us to explore whether QoG enhances the prospects for democratisation, or whether it is democratisation that generates high QoG. Similarly, we exclude the economic efficiency variable, which might seem odd at first. Yet again, the narrow, procedural definition of QoG enables us to study whether or not this factor, understood as impartiality in the exercise of public authority, results in higher economic efficiency.

The procedural definition of QoG (understood as impartiality) has another advantage compared to other definitions; namely that it does not include any substantial political content. Take, for instance, the World Bank's definition of *good governance*, which among other things encompasses a demand for *sound policies*. Including substantial political content in the definition is, however, problematic for the following reasons: Firstly, who is to determine what is "sound enough"? It is far from evident that economists or our colleagues within political philosophy have the answer to this question, and as pointed out in Dani Rodrik's above-mentioned critique, the answers provided by economists have hitherto been rather unsatisfactory. Secondly, how shall we handle groups who disagree on what should be included in "sound policies"? Thirdly, if the experts at the World Bank (or other organisations) are the ones to determine political content, then representative democracy becomes redundant. The organisation of representative democracy rests upon the rule that substantial political content should not be part of the decision-making machinery, and we argue that the same should be the case when defining what constitutes quality of government.

It has further been emphasised that a procedural definition of QoG makes it possible for a state to implement normatively objectionable policies with high quality of government. Yet, this is the price we will have to pay when using procedural definitions, regardless of whether we are concerned with representative democracy or with QoG. As is well known, nothing stops a democratic majority from taking decisions that are disadvantageous for the minority. When it comes to QoG, there is no logic contradiction in recognising that a military power or a police force

holds high quality in their operational activities while at the same time criticising the aims of those operations. Addressing this question, the prominent political philosopher John Rawls has argued that although there can be no guarantees that procedurally just institutions will not be utilised to generate unjust outcomes, this is an unlikely scenario. Systems for substantial and procedural justice, notably in the form of impartiality, tend to be mutually reinforcing and we therefore rarely see large-scale unjust policies being administered in an impartial manner. Where there is procedural justice, we will also find a higher level of material justice, according to Rawls<sup>7</sup>.

Deploying a procedural definition of QoG – or of democracy for that matter – arguably entails an expectation that if we succeed in providing societies with just procedures, the likelihood increases that people will undertake political action that will make society *de facto* more just. John Rawls distinguished between two different terms for justice: *justice* and *fairness*. The latter has sometimes been translated as “fair game”, the idea being that institutions promoting “fair game” will also contribute to making society more just. Again, this is a mere aspiration, but also a hypothesis that can be tested empirically, which we have also done within the framework of the research programme. What constitutes a just society is of course debatable, and we present our findings in chapter six. Yet, it is worth noting that if we look at the most commonly used indicators of human welfare, Rawls’ prediction of the effects of QoG corresponds remarkably well with our results. One example taken from the research conducted within our programme is a study by Björn Halleröd et al that contains detailed data on the life situation of no less than 2,1 million children in 68 low-income countries. The data reveals a strong positive effect of QoG on most measures of children’s wellbeing, including access to clean water, sufficient nutrition, and adequate healthcare, also when controlling for the countries’ economic situation. Unfortunately, democracy levels did not have any effect on the wellbeing of children. These results are confirmed in other empirical studies conducted within the programme - high quality of government is of great importance for people’s welfare, also when controlling for the countries’ level of economic development, while the presence of democracy turns out to have little or no effect.

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<sup>7</sup> Rawls, John (1971). *A Theory of Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp 56-60.

The problems associated with measuring different aspects of QoG have been vividly debated, and the measures that have been constructed after the mid-1990s, notably different measures of countries' corruption levels, have been criticised. As of today, there are at least some half a dozen globally established empirical measures of what constitutes quality of government. The measures are produced by research institutes such as Transparency International, the World Bank Institute, the World Justice Project, the Bertelsmann Foundation, World Value Survey, European Social Survey, etc. As mentioned earlier, the QoG Institute has contributed with two surveys: the QoG Expert Survey and the QoG Regional Dataset, which contains data from European regions. These surveys are intended to capture different aspects of QoG, including the level of corruption, rule of law principles, public sector efficiency, and, for the surveys designed by the QoG Institute, the level of impartiality in the public sector. Some surveys rely on expert interviews, while others are based on a representative sample of the population in each country or region. With regard to the popular surveys, surveyors generally ask for respondents' perceptions of the level of corruption in the public sector and whether respondents have had any direct personal experience of corruption. Experts' estimates of corruption levels in different countries have proved to correlate well.

Furthermore, the results of expert surveys correlate remarkably well with popular surveys, which mean that "common people" and country experts make similar judgements about the level of QoG in each given country. In the two surveys conducted by the QoG Institute, neither country experts nor common people have had any trouble understanding the questions on impartiality and equal treatment in the public sector.

Based on results from the QoG Regional Survey, Nicholas Charron has verified that there is substantial agreement between measures of experts' subjective judgement of corruption levels and individuals' own experiences of corruption. Charron further establishes that the measures are not as affected by other factors, such as economic prosperity, as has previously been claimed. Conclusively, Charron's analysis shows that the pessimism that often characterises discussions on how to create reliable indicators of QoG is exaggerated. The high correlation between the different measures indicates that they all capture something that is essential to a



country's public institutions. The claim is further supported by the high correlation between these indicators and objective measures of human welfare, such as infant mortality, life expectancy, and BNP per capita. However, two problems that have been encountered should be mentioned here: In the two comprehensive survey projects that the QoG Institute has conducted in the EU regions, great variation was found within countries, between regions, but also between the three sectors included: the police, the healthcare, and the education systems.

To give a rough estimate, one third of European countries demonstrate significant regional variation as regards to the quality of government. Not surprisingly, Italy displays the largest discrepancies. When looking at the data, it is hardly an overstatement to say that the institutional quality in the southern regions of Italy levels with many African countries, while the northern parts demonstrate similar QoG levels as Denmark.

A similar problem arises when we look at the sectoral variation. While the healthcare system in many regions and countries has severe issues with equal treatment and corruption, the opposite is true for the education system.

However, this should not lead us to conclude that it is impossible to create reliable measures of QoG, instead, we need more fine-grained measures that take these variations into account.

Researchers at the QoG Institute have also investigated corruption levels in Sweden. In collaboration with the SOM Institute, Monika Bauhr has conducted surveys on corruption between 2010 and 2014. The study offers the hitherto most comprehensive investigation of Swedish public perceptions of corruption, and includes question batteries on the prevalence of corruption among different sectors and professions in society, on individual experiences of corruption, and on the acceptance of different types of corruption. The results show that businessmen are generally perceived as more corrupt than public sector employees who, in turn, are perceived as more corrupt than politicians. The Swedish public also proves to have a broad understanding of cor-

ruption that not merely includes bribes. According to the survey, only 1,2 per cent of the respondents has been asked to pay a bribe to a public official, and only 1,3 per cent to a business man. These are very low numbers in international comparison.

The surveys also demonstrate that, although an overwhelming majority consider corruption to be unacceptable, there are some interesting differences between different types of corruption. Bribes are considered as the worst kind, while a business man handing over a gift to a public official in conjunction with the closing of procurement, is not considered as bad, nor is a rupture with the principle of merit-based recruitment. The Swedish public also believes that it is more acceptable for a private doctor to allow a friend or a relative to advance in the healthcare queue to get quicker treatment as compared to a public sector doctor.

#### 4. The Basic Nature of the Problem

One question of critical importance for the research programme has been how to understand what is commonly referred to as *the basic nature of the problem*. The issue concerns what general social science theory is most applicable to the problem of dysfunctions in the state apparatus. There is widespread consensus within the research community that a constitutional state, the rule of law, impartiality, competence, and non-discrimination, as well as non-bribable public officials, who are recruited on a meritocratic basis, are important for achieving high QoG. What is more, policy actors generally support these principles: for example, the African Union's Convention on Combating Corruption does not deviate from corresponding documents adopted by the EU in this regard.

One may therefore ask why countries with low QoG do not simply copy the model found in countries with high QoG. Yet, it seems to be considerably more difficult to spread QoG, despite the fact that its advantages in terms of improved living conditions seem to be substantial. A critical issue is the absence of concrete progress, despite substantial efforts on behalf of international aid and development agencies to improve the quality of government (or *good governance*) in the last two decades. For example, the overall level of corruption in the world has shown no sign of decline during this time period. Furthermore, the anti-corruption programmes launched in many developing countries and in several new EU member states have only had modest results. One possible explanation to this failure, suggested by researchers at our programme (notably Anna Persson, Bo Rothstein and Jan Teorell), is that most anti-corruption programmes rest upon a theoretical mischaracterisation of the basic nature of the problem.

Persson, Rothstein and Teorell have challenged the established view of QoG and the basic nature of the problem of corruption, suggesting an alternative approach. Their critique is directed at the theoretical approach that has prevailed in both research and policy circles: the *principal-agent theory*. The framework assumes the presence of an employer or principal, who wishes to obtain high QoG but needs to rely on employed (or hired) agents who perform government tasks (the public officials). The agents are often given substantial autonomy and discretion, and

since agents are assumed to be rational and inclined to look to their own self-interest, they are also likely to betray the principal's intentions (honest and hard work in the interest of the public good) and instead use their discretionary power to accept bribes or unduly benefit themselves and their clan, family, or political affiliates. According to this framework, the problem lies in the incentive structure, and the solution therefore requires principals to "fix the incentives" by making it more beneficial for agents to comply with the principal's intentions. The principal therefore needs to introduce control mechanisms for detecting and punishing misbehaving agents and increase the rewards for those who comply. The policy recommendations following from the principal-agent theory are designed to decrease the level of discretion among public officials, for example by deregulating and privatising the public sector.

The principal-agent approach has several caveats. Firstly, if low QoG and corruption were mere incentive problems, they would already have been solved; there are numerous insights and instruments designed to change the incentive structures within organisations. The second problem concerns the principal, who is assumed to act in the interest of the public good and improve the living conditions of his or her fellow citizens. Hence, the theory presupposes an actor that according to the theory cannot exist, as all actors are assumed to act rationally and in accordance with their own self-interest. This is not merely a problem of academic interest, since many international aid organisations, not to mention the World Bank, build upon this theory in their efforts to reduce corruption across the world. There are, however, well-founded reasons to believe that those who gain the most from systemic corruption in highly corrupt states are the leaders – the "principals" – themselves. Money and benefits tend to be accumulated at the top. In other words, the principal-agent theory offers no way out of corruption, as the actors who need to change the incentive structure in order to end corruption and improve the quality of government have little or no incentives to do so.

An alternative model within this theoretical framework models citizens as the principal. We will demonstrate that this assumption is just as unviable, since individuals in a society characterised by systemic corruption find themselves in a situation that we may call a *social trap*, where they for rational reasons cannot act as principals against corruption.

Theories of public ethics have also been prominent in the field. Rather than assuming that individuals act rationally, this approach holds that individuals act in accordance with culturally contingent social norms that guide their ethics. Combating corruption, then, is not a matter of changing incentive structures, but of changing the social norms guiding actors' behaviour through various educational efforts. Hence, the premise is that corrupt countries need to be illuminated through "sensitising strategies". Interestingly, however, ethnographic studies (some of them conducted within the framework of our programme) and existing survey data reveal that people living in highly corrupt societies decisively disapprove of corruption. The research project conducting the Afrobarometer surveys has showed that the vast majority of the population in highly corrupt countries like Kenya and Uganda consider corruption and actions breaching the principle of impartiality to be "both wrong and punishable".

We may thus conclude that none of the two leading theories in the field presents a logically accurate or empirically verifiable theory of the basic nature of the QoG problem. In face of this dilemma, Anna Persson, Bo Rothstein and Jan Teorell have suggested that QoG-related problems, especially corruption, should be conceived as a case of an altogether different social science theory; namely, the so called "collective action problem" or "the problem of the social trap".

Using this approach to QoG not only changes our understanding of the basic nature of the problem, but also of what measures need to be taken in order to combat corruption and other similar dysfunctions in the state apparatus.

The basic idea behind the theory of collective action is that the way people act in situations where they have the choice to engage in corruption is guided by the principle of *reciprocity*. Put simply, this means that the choice of what action should be undertaken in such situations is determined by shared expectations about how other individuals will act in a similar situation. Insofar as corrupt behaviour is the expected behaviour, individuals are more inclined to act corruptly. The opposite is also true: if people generally believe that others can be trusted, they will be

more inclined to act honestly. Trust hereby becomes a crucial factor in the analysis of corruption. The fairly comprehensive experimental research, focusing on people's behaviour in strategic situations, has demonstrated that people's actions are visibly influenced by the idea of reciprocity, rather than by rational self-interest (principal-agent theory) or culturally contingent social norms (the theory of public ethics).

The theoretical approach to QoG as a collective action problem, as developed within our research programme, is strongly influenced by the Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom's research on how local groups and societies govern the so-called "commons". Empirically, Ostrom and her followers have used natural resources as an example of such common pool resources. If all actors only look to their own self-interest, natural resources will be exhausted to such an extent that they cease to exist (common examples are fisheries, pasturages, forests and groundwater basins). The dynamic has been translated by QoG researchers into the issue of quality in a society's common institutions and framed in terms of a *social trap*. The logic behind the creation and maintenance of high quality government can be depicted in the following way:

1. All actors realise that if they all respect the impartiality of public institutions and refrain from corruption, everyone will profit from that agreement.
2. However, if the majority of actors doubt that other actors will respect the principles of impartiality and zero corruption, they have no reason to stick to those principles themselves.
3. This means that corruption and infringements on the impartiality principle may appear as rational for the individual in situations where there is no reason to believe that most other actors will act honestly.
4. The lack of trust leads actors into a *social trap*, which means that "everyone" is worse off, although "everyone" realises that if only they could trust each other, "everyone" would be better off.
5. In conclusion, the possibility of effective co-operation to create high quality institutions is determined by the extent to which actors perceive that they can trust other actors to behave in an honest manner.

The logic can be illustrated by the following concrete examples: it is probably not only futile but also extremely dangerous to be the only honest police in the kind of police force we find in countries like Mexico. It is also pointless to be the only parent who does not bribe school teach-

ers in order to give their children the amount of additional tutoring that it takes to achieve good grades when “all other” parents are paying bribes. Likewise, although honourable, it is also meaningless to be the only surgeon at the hospital who does not demand money under the table to perform surgery. A long list of similar examples could be compiled. Empirically, this theory has gained substantial support, especially within experimental research. People are generally willing to do the right thing, but only if they believe that others are prepared to do the same thing.

The theory of collective action thus calls for an altogether different approach and a different set of measures for reducing for example systemic corruption. Rather than attempting to incrementally “fix the incentives”, or alternatively, trying to change actors’ norms and ethics, the theory of collective action should lead us to conclude that any measures taken must be of such magnitude that they not only influence the behaviour of one single actor, but also his or her perception of how “everyone else” will act in similar situations. In an analysis of what caused the transition from low to high QoG in Sweden during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bo Rothstein suggests that such transformations must take the form of a “Big Bang”.

It should be emphasised that the theory of collective action is broadly applied outside the QoG field. Many of the aims we wish to achieve regarding the environment, the rule of law, and democracy, require that we manage to break out of the social trap. It is, for example, pointless to be the only one in town to recycle garbage, or to pay for the tram, and make efforts to reduce one’s driving. Importantly, the theory offers an explanation to why societies may maintain high levels of corruption although a majority of citizens clearly disassociate themselves from the irregular practices associated with low QoG. Another possible conclusion is that there is not necessarily anything wrong with the culture or with people’s norms and ethics in highly corrupt societies. The system requires people living in those societies to participate in corrupt practices, even though they find them morally appalling, in order to get access to healthcare and schooling for their children and to be able to live decent lives.

## 5. The Effects of the Level of Quality of Government

Studying the effects of QoG, on different social and political conditions, entails all the well-known methodological issues that social science are continuously faced with in their efforts to establish what is a causal relationship, and what is merely statistical co-variation between different factors. It should be emphasised that it is not easy to distinguish between what is an effect of QoG and what is a cause of an observed variation in QoG, as there are significant feedback effects that appear over time between many of the variables. Yet, both our own and other research show that the quality of government has a positive effect on a number of important social factors, such as the economy, welfare, public health, sustainable development, the environment, social trust, and people's subjective well-being, also known as "happiness".

What constitutes "the good society" is a normative question and it may be presumptuous to let researchers define what constitutes a good life. Nevertheless, Sören Holmberg has constructed a *Good Society Index* (GSI). Following Ockham's famous principle of parsimony, which means to work with definitions that are as simple as possible, the index only incorporates three variables per country. Two of them are objective factors: infant mortality and life expectancy, while the third factor captures people's perceptions of how satisfied they are with their lives. Hence, the good society can be defined as a society with low infant mortality, where people live long lives, and feel satisfied with their lives. Based on this model, Holmberg and Rothstein have recently published a book chapter with data on no less than 149 countries, where they demonstrate that the Good Society Index (GSI) co-varies with a number of other variables.

The quality of government is strongly related to countries' ability to obtain high GSI levels, while the relationship between GSI and democracy is substantially weaker. This chapter outlines some of the societal factors that are affected by the quality of government and that have been studied by our colleagues at the QoG Institute.



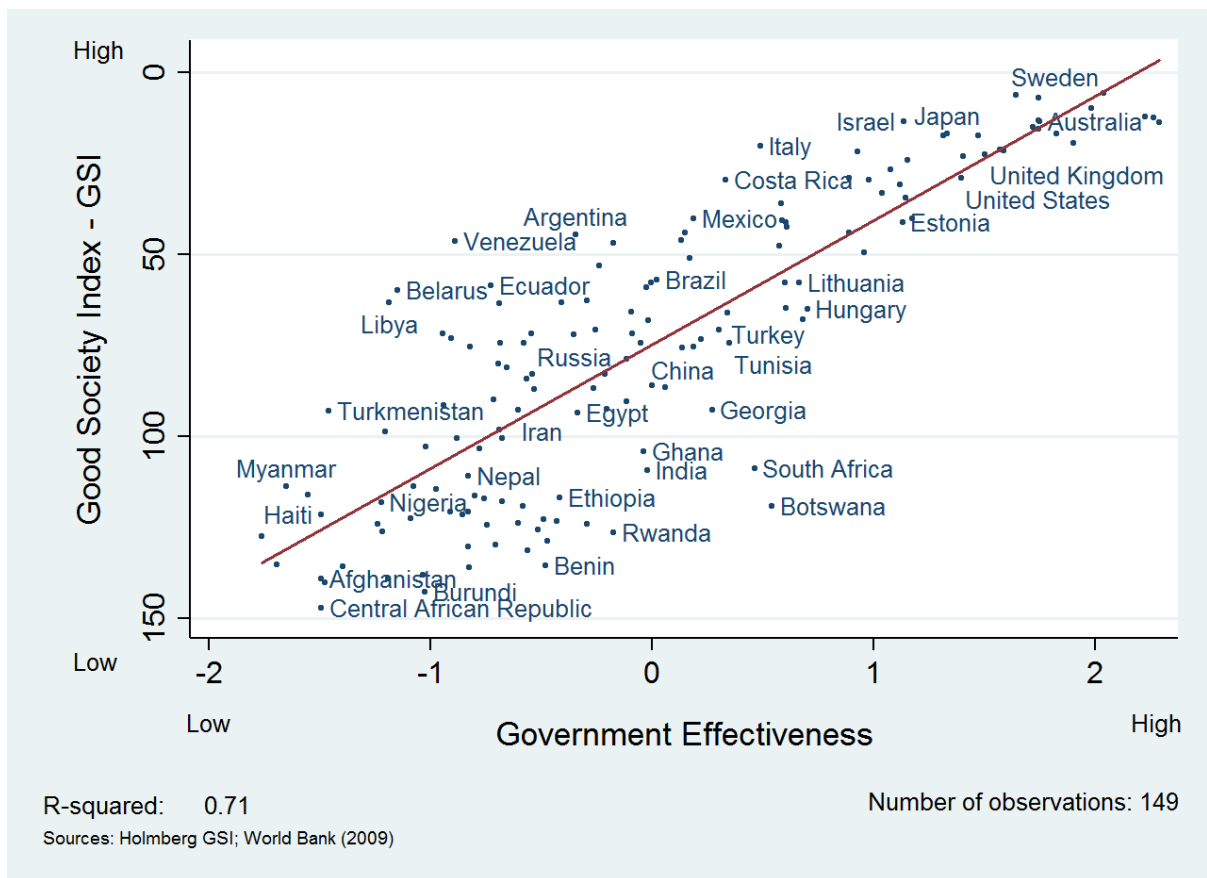


Figure 4: The Good Society Index vs. QoG

In this chapter, we will look at the effect of QoG on the functioning of democracy as well as how corruption influences public attitudes towards democratic institutions. We will then explore how the fight against corruption has become an important issue for political parties and investigate the relationship between quality of government and economic development. We then look at how high QoG can influence the prospects of reaching environmental and climate-related goals. The quality of government has also proved to be important for popular attitudes towards foreign aid and for the effectiveness of multilateral development efforts. The latter point is demonstrated in the last part of this chapter, where we focus on the relationship between QoG and aid effectiveness.

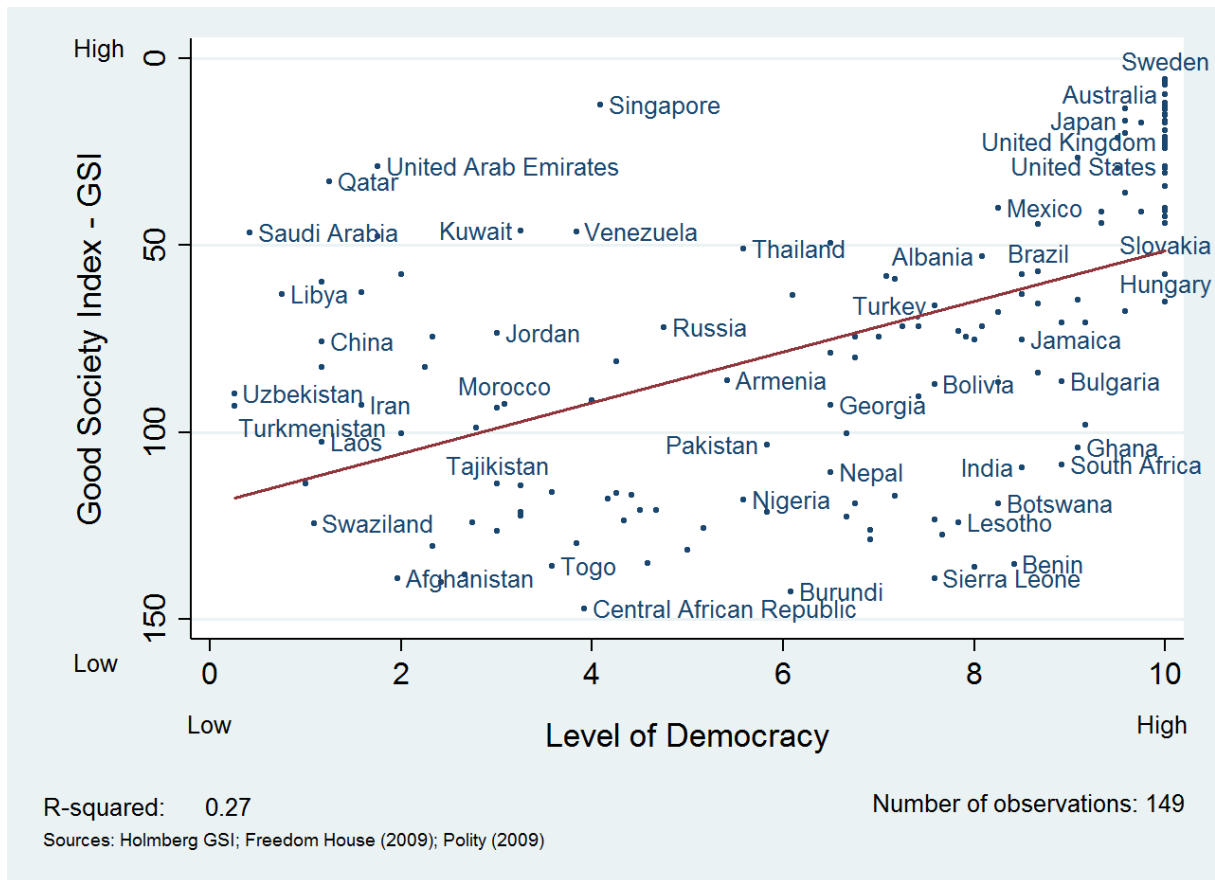


Figure 5: The Good Society Index vs. Democracy.

### The Importance of High Quality Institutions

New democracies differ in to what extent they succeed s in creating stable political and democratic systems. Agnes Cornell, Marcia Grimes, and Victor Lapuente have explored why some countries succeed in these respects, while others fail and are instead plagued with recurring political crises that threaten the survival of the democratic system. Previous research has primarily focused on the formal and informal political institutions at the input side of the political process; namely, the relationship between political parties, politicians, and their electorate. In contrast, Cornell, Grimes, and Lapuente focus on the importance of the output side of the politi-

cal system, where exercise of public authority occurs, for the survival of democracy and the consolidation of new democracies. Public institutions are responsible for delivering public services to the population, and in order for state resources to benefit all citizens, public services should be delivered in an impartial and effective manner. Politicians' ability to appoint, promote, and remove public officials is therefore found to be particularly important.

In a bureaucracy, where most public officials are politically appointed, politicians and citizens are likely to use clientelistic strategies, which prevent the political system from responding to the demands of the general public. Hence, when in power, political parties will seek to tailor benefits to their own electorate as a form of vote buying. Clientelism increases the risk that citizens who vote for parties not in power will feel like losers in the competition for state resources, and will therefore resort to undemocratic actions to demonstrate their discontent or attempt to reclaim power over the distribution of resources.

In contrast, when the public sector is characterised by impartiality, where public officials are not politically appointed and politicians are prevented from micromanaging the implementation process, it is more difficult for politicians to use state resources to favour their own electoral base. Incentives to general solutions that encompass both political winners and losers are instead generated. A number of case studies have demonstrated that clientelism is more widespread in countries where many public officials are politically appointed.

A higher proportion of politically appointed public officials in the public sector is therefore expected to reduce the probability of democratic survival. There are remarkable differences between countries in this regard. For example, regime change in a country like Mexico forces around 60,000 public officials, who owe their position partially or entirely to their party political affiliation, to quit their jobs. In Denmark, where the proportion of politically appointed public officials is relatively low, the corresponding number is about twenty; in Sweden the number is about 200. Generally speaking, the higher the number of public officials whose professional careers depend directly on what political party wins the elections, the more likely it is that the

government will undertake opportunistic actions in order to remain in office at any cost, for instance by pursuing policies that benefit the party's core supporters at the expense of other groups. The situation in turn affects the political opposition's perceptions of whether they have more to gain from accepting and upholding democratic institutions and procedures, or from undertaking pre-emptive undemocratic actions, such as military coups.

A politicised administration grants the government unlimited power, which makes it more rational for the opposition to resort to extreme, undemocratic measures to protect their interests. Clientelistic democracies with highly politicised bureaucracies are therefore expected to be short-lived. Conversely, governments in democracies with meritocratic public administration will find that autonomous public officials prevent them from pursuing clientelistic and biased policies. Analyses of democratic systems show that democracies with meritocratic bureaucracies have better prospects for maintaining stability.

Agnes Cornell and Victor Lapuente illustrate this relationship with a comparative study of two cases of democratisation that enshrined politicised bureaucracies and that eventually resulted in democratic collapse: Spain (1876-1936) and Venezuela (1958-1998), and one case of democratic survival with a meritocratic public administration: Spain (1975-). In the latter case, the meritocratisation of the bureaucracy had made it more beneficial for public officials to support the survival of democracy than to support new coup attempts. The case studies verify the hypothesis that meritocratic bureaucracies increase the chance of democratic survival.

Another conclusion drawn by Cornell and Lapuente is that a certain degree of political polarisation is important, also in new democracies. Different interests must exist within government institutions, or more specifically, between the political and the administrative class, as it creates incentives for them to control each other.

Marcia Grimes and Agnes Cornell further demonstrate how the level of politicisation of the bureaucracy may influence civil society – another important democratic actor. Civil society organisations act within the framework established by the political system, and will use the type of strategies they deem most efficient given the structure of the system. In countries with a more politicised bureaucracy, we may therefore expect civil society to seek to join clientelistic networks, as it is the most effective way to secure political influence. Political actors also have an interest in including civil society in their networks as a means to increase their political support. Civic associations may feel compelled to resort to disruptive and violent behaviour to demonstrate their political relevance. Furthermore, politicised bureaucracies are expected to fuel popular discontent, which increases incentives to undertake undemocratic and violent actions in order to demonstrate their frustration and secure access to state resources.

An empirical analysis based on data from 19 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean shows that in countries where civil society is strong and where the bureaucracy is politicised to a relatively high degree, there is a substantially higher risk that people will participate in violent protests.

The structure of the bureaucratic apparatus may also affect the political content of democratic decisions. The party system, public support for specific policy solutions, and the level of organisation and influence of different interest groups are commonly mentioned as important factors for explaining why some policies are selected and implemented rather than others. Yet another important factor often overlooked is the influence of public officials. More specifically, we need to look at the bureaucratic structures and especially the processes of recruiting and promoting public officials, which is related to their competence and reliability. In a number of studies, researchers within the programme (Carl Dahlström, Mikael Holmgren, Johannes Lindvall, Birgitta Niklasson, and Bo Rothstein) have investigated how bureaucratic capacity influences the selection and implementation of different policy suggestions. One illustrative example of when bureaucracy has played an active role in the formation of policy suggestions is the severe economic crisis that struck Sweden in the early 1990s. The portrayal of the crisis and the retrenchment packages were almost exclusively developed by autonomous state officials in the Gov-

ernment Offices, which had at least two important consequences: Firstly, political adversaries such as the Social Democrats and the Conservative Party could agree on the depiction of the situation and on a number of proposed welfare cuts, which facilitated political compromises. Secondly, the proposed retrenchment packages had some distinct characteristics: welfare cuts were more evenly distributed than they would have been, had the policy decisions been entirely in the hands of politicians or politically appointed state officials, as they would only have sought to please their own electorate.

The relationship not only holds true for Sweden. The same group of researchers have also studied retrenchment processes in 18 welfare states between 1985 and 2002 and find a similar pattern, which holds even when controlling for economic, political and structural conditions. The distribution of welfare cuts is considered more just in countries with a larger proportion of politically independent state officials, which indicates that the recruitment of officials may have a direct effect on policy output.

One objection could be that the policy effects studied are all welfare cuts. However, researchers within the programme have demonstrated that the level of bureaucratic capacity (whether the administration is competent, impartial and effective) also greatly influences in which labour market and social policies politicians choose to invest. An analysis of 18 mature welfare states between 1985 and 2005 indicates that countries with high QoG undertake more demanding reforms, such as active labour market policies, to a greater extent than countries with low bureaucratic capacity. In other words, politicians' expectations of which policies the bureaucratic apparatus is capable of implementing determine the level of clientelism in policy suggestions. It might seem like an obvious conclusion, but it has – with a few notable exceptions – largely been overlooked in the research on the determinants of welfare policies.

Jon Pierre has emphasised that for a country like Sweden, as for many other Western countries, high levels of institutional trust have been generated and maintained through tangible institutional stability and bureaucratic integrity. In Sweden, constitutional regulations have prevented

politicians in office from micro managing the administration, which has implicated that administrative processes have been guided by the rule of law, impartiality, transparency, and equality before the law.

However, since the early 1990's, public sector management and its ensuing decision-making processes and objectives have partially been modified to meet the requirements of increased efficiency, lower costs, market adjustments, subjection to competition, and deregulation. These objectives may seem both reasonable and pressing from an efficiency perspective; yet it also appears that the architects of these reforms have not properly considered the long-term effects. Today, some of the initiated reforms threaten to undermine the institutional trust that government representatives of all ideological orientations claim to support.

#### Quality of Government and Support for Democracy

When the quality of government is low, it affects citizens' trust in the democratic government. Stefan Dahlberg and Sören Holmberg challenge the notion that the election system and the level of ideological congruence between voters and representatives are the most important factors for how citizens judge the way their democratic system works. In a comparative study, covering 34 democratic countries, they find that effective, professional, and impartial public institutions, and perceptions of the quality of public services and the judicial system are more important for citizens' satisfaction with the way democracy works. These factors also prove to be more important determinants of the level of political trust than for example economic factors. The quality of public institutions – the output side of the political system – is in other words more important for citizens' trust in the political system than the quality of the input side, the democratic procedures.

Dahlberg and Holmberg further investigate the importance of institutional trust for a well-functioning society, and ask what institutions must be effective in order for a society to function

well. Trust in democratic institutions is of major importance for high quality of government. Previous research has emphasised that trust in electoral, judicial, economic and bureaucratic institutions is especially important. Yet, Dahlberg and Holmberg show that trust in electoral and judicial institutions (the parliament and the political parties on the one hand, and the police and legal system on the other) and the quality of public institutions is of major importance for the political system to be perceived as legitimate and effective. Economic factors proved to be less significant.

Stefan Dahlberg, Sören Holmberg, and Jonas Linde further note that several countries display widespread discontent with the political system, even among those who claim to support democracy as a principle. Since trust and political participation are important for democratic stability, citizens' increasing distrust and discontent with democratic institutions may jeopardise the legitimacy and functioning of democracy. It is therefore essential that we find out what causes this discontent.

The researchers explore two theories: one that emphasises that political trust and legitimacy are created through democratic representation, or at the input side of the political system. The other theory argues that legitimacy and support for democratic government are generated when the state delivers services in an effective and impartial manner. The researchers compare citizens' evaluations of democracy in 26 countries, and find three main factors that influence democratic legitimacy and democratic support among the population: people's evaluations of government capacity to deliver public goods, perceived corruption levels, and the extent to which voters feel represented in the political system.

The authors also register certain differences between new and old democracies. In older, consolidated democracies, subjective perceptions of corruption and of being represented politically are the most important factors, while in new democracies government performance is the most essential factor. One plausible explanation is that people living in older democracies have higher expectations on state and government performance as regards both representation and the quali-



ty of government. In contrast, citizens of new democracies do not have as high expectations on politicians and state officials to be non-corrupt and impartial, and therefore rather base their support for democracy on the government's capacity to deliver economic growth and basic welfare services.

Low trust in public institutions has thus proved to have a negative effect on citizens' willingness to exercise their democratic rights. Low quality of government also disturbs the democratic decision-making process: corruption and clientelism give politicians few incentives to meet the demands of their voters, as they have other mechanisms for holding on to power. Corruption also undermines citizens' trust for the democratic political system.

Stefan Dahlberg and Maria Solevid therefore explore to what extent popular perceptions of corruption influence voter turnout both on an individual and national level in 26 countries. Previous research has pointed out that corruption may on the one hand increase voter turnout, since voters are either bought by corrupt politicians or organise themselves against corruption. On the other hand, corruption generates low trust in the political system, cynicism, and political apathy among voters, which results in lower voter turnout. Dahlberg and Solevid demonstrate that perceptions of widespread corruption result in lower voter turnout; however, the relationship only holds for countries with low or moderate corruption levels. In highly corrupt countries, corruption played a minor role for voter turnout. The relationship could be explained in a similar fashion as above: corruption is perceived as a more grave political issue in less corrupt, consolidated democracies, while people in highly corrupt countries instead focus on government performance.

Different types of corruption can have different effects on people's reactions to corruption and influence to what extent they participate in corrupt activities or engage in active resistance. Monika Bauhr suggests a distinction between *need corruption*, where citizens use corruption in order to get access to fundamental service and neutralise the effects of power abuse; and *greed corruption*, which occurs when bribes are given to gain personal advantages that the individual

would not be entitled to in a non-corrupt system. The type of corruption in turn influences civic engagement against corruption. In a country-comparative study, Bauhr demonstrates that need corruption often boosts civic engagement against corruption and public demands for accountability, but it also diminishes public trust in the government's capacity to handle corruption issues. Greed corruption turns out to have the reverse effect: it results a reduced willingness among the population to organise against corruption.

Following the logic of collective action theory, outlined in the previous chapter, we expect actors' willingness to engage in and against corruption to depend on others' perceived willingness to do the same. However, the ways in which expectations on others' behaviour influence engagement against corruption depend on the type of corruption. Instead of enhancing engagement against corruption, the anticipation that others will engage may discourage civic engagement in contexts marked by greed corruption. Greed corruption thus seems to result in a tendency to free ride on other people's efforts. Consequently, measures aiming to convey a sense of broad civic engagement can enhance civic engagement against corruption among those involved in need corruption, but may have the reverse effect among those involved in greed corruption.

Bauhr's distinction between these two types of corruption suggests that anti-corruption measures that alter expectations about others' behaviour may more effectively contain corruption in contexts marked by need corruption, rather than those marked by greed corruption.

### The Politicisation of Corruption by Political Parties

Corruption and clientelism in the exercise of public authority have thus proved to have a negative effect also on the input side of the democratic system, as it may result in decreasing voter turnout and in some cases political apathy and cynicism among citizens. What are then the options available to citizens to hold a corrupt government accountable?

Andreas Bågenholm has investigated to what extent voters hold politicians accountable for corrupt behaviour. A series of studies have indicated that even though voters punish corrupt officials and parties, rulers remarkably often manage to remain in office. In a large, country-comparative study, Bågenholm charts election results for all democratic governments in Europe between 1983 and 2010 and check those results against the occurrence of either allegations of corruption from opposition parties and/or concrete evidence of corrupt actions. Governments facing corruption allegations or charges are expected to be less successful and more likely to fall than governments allegedly free from corruption.

The results partially confirm the hypothesis. Corruption charged incumbents on average lost around 10 percentage points in elections while governments free from corruption allegations on average lose six percentage points. European voters tend to punish corrupt governments, but only to quite a limited extent – unfortunately, often to such limited extent that it does not result in governmental change.

The fact that the level of corruption within the country influences prospects for governmental change does not necessarily imply that the government is corrupt, even though the incumbent government is at least indirectly responsible if anti-corruption measures have been inefficient. The results arguably show that European voters are not indifferent to corruption: instead, corruption is one of the factors influencing voter accountability.

The ideological positions of the voters and the party system also influence the propensity of voters to support or punish corrupt politicians. Andreas Bågenholm and Nicholas Charron base their analysis on data from a multi-country survey covering 23 European countries and show that voters who have their ideological preferences further towards the extreme left and right are more likely to vote for their preferred party, even when the party is involved in a corruption scandal, as long as there are no proximate alternatives. However, if there are credible alternatives, extreme voters are expected to switch parties and punish corrupt parties to the same extent

as centrist voters. The authors conclude that proportional electoral systems, which often result in multi-party systems, enable more “party switching” which enhances accountability.

Bågenholm and Charron have also studied the rise and success of anti-corruption parties. The politicisation of corruption has become an increasingly popular electoral strategy, especially in Central and East-European countries where corruption levels are high. In these countries, the politicisation of corruption occurs systematically and can be found in seven out of ten election campaigns, while the phenomenon is almost non-existent in North-Western Europe and rarely occurs in Western Europe.

The level of corruption is thus an important factor for determining when political parties choose to politicise corruption and when these parties are successful. In the least corrupt countries, the politicisation of corruption gives little or no electoral advantage, while it has proved successful in the most corrupt countries. Incumbents generally have less credibility when they wage the issue and therefore have less to gain from it. New parties are the most successful in politicising corruption, and Bågenholm further notes that these parties generally stay true to their word and continue to combat corruption even when they are in a position of power. Anti-corruption parties should therefore not merely be dismissed as irresponsible populists; instead, they can be actors that in a credible way work to enhance the quality of government where established parties have previously failed.

### Quality of Government and Economic Development

Democracy and the quality of government are two factors that have a significant effect on the wellbeing of people and society. Economic prosperity and development have also proved to be important factors in this regard. There is a substantial relationship between high quality of government and high BNP per capita: countries with an impartial, non-corrupt and effective public sector tend to be more prosperous. However, the relationship between economic growth and the

quality of government is weaker and more complex. For example, many oil rich and relatively poor countries with partially corrupt political systems have been among the fastest growing economies in the world since the turn of the millennium.

Which are then the mechanisms whereby high quality of government can help create a prosperous economy? Victor Lapuente, Marina Nistotskaya, and Nicholas Charron have studied the effects of corruption on entrepreneurship and the establishment of small and medium-sized businesses in 172 European sub-national regions. Constituting approximately 99 per cent of all European businesses, these companies are vital to a region's overall development. Whereas the level of entrepreneurship varies between countries, differences are even more striking within countries. Lapuente, Nistotskaya, and Charron argue that the within-country variation can be explained by the fact that subjective perceptions of the level of government impartiality also vary between different regions. Their study indicates that when the quality of institutions is perceived to be low and regional governments are corrupt, ineffective and partial, businesses see limited opportunities for business venturing. The relationship holds even when controlling for other factors, such as population size, economic development, and income inequality.

Perceptions of QoG also influence the geographical distribution of businesses. In countries where corruption levels are perceived as high, businesses tend to be concentrated in the capital region. One possible reason for this is that economic agents find it important to be physically close to the geographical locations of political power, where they can establish informal relations with office holders and secure access to benefits.

One policy relevant conclusion that can be derived from the study is that rigorous efforts should be devoted to reducing corruption as a means to stimulate entrepreneurship and reduce inequalities between European regions. Anti-corruption efforts may even prove to be more conducive to economic growth than subsidies, tax relief, and similar commonly used measures aimed at stimulating economic growth.

Marina Nistotskaya further investigates the impact of a meritocratic bureaucracy on the quality of regulatory instruments and the number of new business entries per capita. Autonomous bureaucratic structures are expected to generate stable and just regulations for investors and entrepreneurs, which affects economic agents' risk assessments and their expectations on economic returns, thereby also influencing their willingness to venture businesses in the country. Nistotskaya demonstrates that the bureaucratic structure has an indirect effect on the level of entrepreneurship as an effect of better quality of government; yet it also has a direct effect as it prevents *moral hazard*, where businesses are encouraged to take big risks as the costs of potential economic losses can be transferred to other actors.

### The Tragedy of the Commons within the Fishing Industry in Southern Africa

Fishery is an important source of economic development and poverty reduction around the world. However, many fish stocks and marine ecosystems are today threatened by overfishing. The situation is particularly acute in Africa, as many people there depend directly on fisheries for their survival. Overfishing makes up a paradox: how come people actively participate in overfishing when they are all dependent on fisheries?

Martin Sjöstedt and Aksel Sundström have investigated this issue and concluded that fisheries, just like many other natural resources, are typical common-pool resources, and as has previously been demonstrated, these are difficult to govern. Fisheries cannot, for example, be transformed into private goods that fall under private property rights, since the fish stocks are constantly moving and it is difficult to exclude individual resource users. Moreover, if all resource users enjoy free access to the commons, most of them will believe that other users will overexploit the resource. Consequently, resource users have strong short-term incentives to exploit resources more than what is sustainable in the long term; they are compelled to take the opportunity to utilise the resource before it is depleted. This problem is generally known as the “tragedy of the commons”. In the long term, however, all users will benefit from co-operation with regard to managing and sustaining fish stocks, which leads us back to the issue of social trust

and social capital. In order for each individual actor to choose to co-operate, they must trust that others will also co-operate. It is therefore critical that the institutions governing the commons are strong enough and enjoy enough legitimacy among resource users to be able to create and transmit such trust.

Sjöstedt and Sundström conclude that institutions are of crucial importance for the effective and sustainable management of natural resources. In developing countries, notably in Africa, low quality of government is conceived as the main reason behind the overexploitation of natural resources. Sjöstedt and Sundström therefore compare the institutional arrangements governing fisheries management in different African countries and evaluate how well institutions succeed in securing sustainable fisheries. They find that the functioning of formal institutions largely depends on how well they work together with informal institutions. Sundström compares the public sector efficiency in Angola, Namibia, and South Africa, and shows how the interplay between the state and society affects rule compliance and the effectiveness of the regulatory system.

The country that has been most successful in this regard is Namibia, where illegal fishing is a prioritised political issue and strong, credible institutions have been established to contain the problem. Sundström and Sjöstedt argue that such institutional reforms are ultimately a matter of politics, which raises fundamental issues of power and resources. Detailed insights into how existing institutions work and who benefits from the current arrangements are required in order for reforms to succeed. International organisations and donors need to take national capacities and local, context-specific conditions into account when initiating reforms.

Sundström has further investigated how the quality of government affects rule compliance in his study of how and why corruption generates overfishing. Using experimental studies and interviews, Sundström shows that corruption both undermines the efficiency of the regulatory system and makes resource users expect that most other people will overexploit resources.

The political system, regime type, and the level of economic development, are other factors that influence the capacity of states to manage marine resources, which is demonstrated by Marina Povitkina, Sverker Jagers, Martin Sjöstedt, and Aksel Sundström. Their study shows that democracy has a positive effect on marine ecosystems, but only in countries where the level of economic development has reached a certain threshold; in low-income settings, democracy had no positive effect on the management of marine resources. The researchers also show that island states seem to manage their marine resources in a more sustainable manner than continental states.

### Combating Global Environmental Issues

The idea of common goods and the logics of co-operation in the management of commons can also help us understand why individuals maintain unsustainable consumption of fossil fuels, despite being aware that climate change entails enormous long-term costs and risks. The state and the political sphere can make efforts to facilitate co-operation, using a range of policy instruments designed to either punish or reward, or to raise public awareness on those issues. The quality of institutions is of uttermost importance for the functioning of these policy instruments, and ultimately for our prospects of responding to global environmental challenges.

Niklas Haring and Sverker Jagers have analysed the dynamics behind public acceptance and support of environmental policy instruments. They find that public acceptance of pro-environmental policy instruments is important for compliance with environmental regulations. Individuals' support of those instruments is partially determined by their economic situation and their values, but also by their trust in the political system (vertical trust) and in other citizens (horizontal or social trust). Both types of trust are in turn related to the quality of political institutions: in societies with high quality institutions, the level of horizontal trust is also high. People tend to trust institutions that function well, and this spills over into horizontal trust – a relationship that has been verified by Bo Rothstein and Daniel Eek. Their experimental research has revealed that people who perceive public officials to be dishonest and corrupt not only distrust



public institutions; they also distrust “people in general”. In other words, vertical trust affects horizontal trust. People living in countries with high quality of government are therefore generally expected to accept and comply with pro-environmental policy instruments.

However, in their country-comparative study, Haring and Jagers find a relationship that may seem counterintuitive: citizens in countries with corrupt political systems and low levels of trust are more likely to prefer coercive environmental policy instruments, compared to citizens in countries with high quality of government. In high-QoG settings, people instead tend to support market-based policy instruments, such as environmental taxes. Individuals in corrupt countries tend to have lower trust, both in institutions and in other actors, including businesses and people in general. They simply do not trust that “others” will take necessary measures to protect the environment, and therefore prefer coercive measures that are more difficult to evade. People in those countries also tend to dislike economic environmental policy instruments, since these usually involve monetary transactions managed by institutions in which they have no confidence.

The situation can be compared to countries with high quality of government, where people generally have higher trust in public institutions but also higher social trust and therefore are more inclined to co-operate. In those countries, coercive and controlling mechanisms are not deemed necessary, and there is more widespread demand for, and acceptance of, market-based policy instruments.

The quality of government, via vertical and social trust, thus seems to have an effect on the acceptance of environmental policy instruments. Haring and Jagers’ conclusions are important for political decisions on which pro-environmental policy instruments should be utilised to respond to global environmental challenges. If policy instruments and institutions can be created and shaped in a manner that makes people trust that institutions do not act corruptly and that other people do not free-ride, even those who do not possess “green values” will agree to accept policy instruments that are good for the environment.

## Corruption and Foreign Aid

Perceptions of high or low quality of government thus influence our trust in institutions and in each other, and also our tendency to believe that others will comply with democratic rules and regulations. Perceptions of the quality of government may also influence attitudes towards foreign aid: more specifically, perceived levels of corruption might affect people's trust and willingness to donate money to countries in need of foreign aid. Prior research has asked whether more corrupt countries receive a lesser amount of foreign aid than countries that are less corrupt, and found that the level of corruption does not substantially affect the quantity of foreign aid. Monika Bauhr, Nicholas Charron and Naghmeh Nasiritousi instead look at the support for foreign aid among European donor countries.

Public support for foreign aid is important for aid legitimacy, but almost certainly also for governments' decisions on how much money they are willing to spend on foreign aid. Bauhr, Charron and Nasiritousi find that perceptions of widespread corruption in receiving countries have a negative effect on public support for foreign aid, but attitudes also differ between the countries included in the study. Especially in old EU member states, perceptions of widespread corruption in recipient countries diminish support for foreign aid. The researchers detect an "aid-corruption paradox": the need for foreign aid is often greatest in corrupt environments, which implies that a zero tolerance approach to corruption prevents aid from being channelled to the poorest, most needing countries.

Bauhr, Charron, and Nasiritousi have therefore also looked at how the public in both donor and recipient countries handle this paradox. Recipient countries emphasise the moral duty to donate, but also the strategic domestic advantages of aid, and the importance of aid for curbing corruption and enhancing the quality of government. Within the European Union, citizens of old member states consider foreign aid to be a moral duty, and also believe that foreign aid enhances the quality of government. In new EU member states, the most prominent argument is that

aid boosts the development of poor countries, which also makes it acceptable to donate to corrupt countries.

Hence, low QoG in recipient countries may jeopardise public support of foreign aid in donor countries: it affects perceptions of aid legitimacy. But how does the quality of government affect recipient countries' ability to absorb the aid they receive; in other words, aid effectiveness? Agnes Cornell looks at the effect of bureaucratic stability on the success of democracy aid implementation by conducting interviews with representatives from both donor and recipient countries who work with implementing development projects in Peru and Bolivia. Cornell finds that the implementation of aid programmes can be obstructed if there are high turnover rates among public sector employees, especially if they are recruited on a political basis. The loyalty among politically recruited public officials lies with the appointing person, political party, or government, rather than with the public institution, and politically recruited officials are therefore often reluctant to take over the implementation of aid programmes that have been established under former governments. This is problematic for aid programmes, as the implementation timeline often does not correspond to the term of office of the elected government appointing public sector personnel.

Cornell also explores whether the effects of democracy aid differ between different types of authoritarian regimes. Cornell's analysis of a global data set covering 143 aid-recipient countries from 1990 to 2007 shows that democracy aid only has a positive effect on democratisation in one type of authoritarian regime: one-party regimes. These regimes are generally very stable and have often already established important political institutions, such as parliaments. Military regimes proved to be the least receptive to democracy aid, since they tend to be both unstable and lack functioning civilian political institutions. Nor did democracy aid seem to have any effect on unstable authoritarian regimes with a multi-party system. Cornell finds no support for the claim that aid directed at supporting democracy results in regime transition in authoritarian regimes; paradoxically, the most stable authoritarian regimes were most receptive to this type of aid. Nevertheless, democracy aid has proved to be useful for preventing the collapse of democratic regimes.

One question that has generated extensive discussions, both within the research community, and in public debate, is whether ethnic diversity is detrimental to social trust and social cohesion, and if this in turn negatively affects citizens' support for redistributive welfare programmes. A large amount of studies have been conducted on the topic in the last decade, and meta-analyses show that research results are far from unequivocal. The number of studies disclosing a negative effect of increased ethnic diversity (measured as ethno-linguistic fractionalisation, ELF) on social trust is about the same as the studies demonstrating a total absence of such an effect. However, what is usually not controlled for in these studies is the potential effect of QoG. Stefan Kumlin, Nicholas Charron, and Bo Rothstein have identified a negative effect of ethnic diversity on social trust (measured as the number of residents in the region who are born outside of Europe); yet this effect disappears when controlling for QoG. In other words, in regions with high institutional quality, ethnic diversity does not generate low social trust<sup>8</sup>.

A plausible explanation of the observed relationship is that high QoG makes most people believe that individuals from all ethnic groups will comply with the rules: they will pay their taxes and refrain from abusing different welfare systems. In contrast, low QoG implies that the level of suspicion towards other groups will increase.

A few of our researchers have answered the question that we, following John Rawls, posed in chapter three; namely, if we can assume that societies with more procedurally just political systems, taking the form of high QoG, also tend to have higher ambitions when it comes to creating social justice. Previous studies on welfare state ambitions have been limited to about twenty Western OECD countries. One result of these research efforts is that the more left-leaning the government, the more ambitious the social – and welfare policies.

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<sup>8</sup> Charron, Nicholas & Bo Rothstein (2014). "Social Trust, Quality of Government and Ethnic Diversity: An Empirical Analysis of 206 Regions in Europe". *Working Paper 2014:20*, The Quality of Government Institute, University of Gothenburg.

Carl Dahlström, Johannes Lindvall, and Bo Rothstein have analysed the welfare state ambitions of these countries from a QoG perspective, and have been able to show that the effect of high quality of government is equally strong as the impact of the ideological position of the incumbent government. In countries with low QoG, even left-wing governments have had troubles convincing their electorate to pay the high taxes that a comprehensive welfare system requires, since citizens do not believe that their money will be administered in a correct and competent manner. Moreover, voters in low-QoG countries do not trust that they will receive the promised services, and they generally perceive the quality of public services as unacceptably low.

In a study inspired by the QoG Institute's research, Stefan Svallfors has shown that a similar relationship can also be detected on the individual level<sup>9</sup>. Based on a comprehensive survey data set covering 29 European countries, his analysis shows that the respondents who claim to be in favour of more social and economic equality (and who are thus on the political left) but who at the same time perceive that public healthcare and tax administration are partial and ineffective, generally wish to reduce public spending and taxes. However, respondents with the same left-wing ideological orientation who perceive the quality of government to be acceptable state that they want to increase public spending and are also willing to pay higher taxes. The author concludes that the ideological orientation of individuals and governments fail to explain the comprehensiveness of welfare and social policy; instead, these political factors are conditioned by the quality of government.

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<sup>9</sup> Svallfors, Stefan (2013). "Government Quality, Egalitarianism, and Attitudes to Taxes and Social Spending: A European Comparison". *European Political Science Review* 5(3): 363-380.

## 6. How to Achieve High Quality of Government

How high quality of government can be generated is arguably one of the most pressing issues of our time, on a local as well as a global level. In this chapter, we will outline our findings on how to obtain high quality of government – in other words, what causes variation in the quality of institutions between different countries. Once again, we wish to emphasise the significant methodological problems associated with investigating this type of question: for those who are interested in learning more, we therefore recommend Bo Rothstein and Jan Teorell's contribution in *Handbook of Political Corruption*. In the current time of intensified globalisation, it is important to take note of how and to what extent the quality of institutions is affected by non-governmental actors, such as international organisations and actors within civil society. A certain level of openness and transparency needs to be in place in order for norms to proliferate from the international arena and for the control mechanisms of civil society to work in a way that enhances the quality of government. However, these concepts have proved to be complex and have had seemingly contradictory effects on QoG, depending on how and when they are used. The question of transparency has been investigated by researchers at the QoG Institute, who have provided important insights into the interplay between political actors, bureaucracies, and society.

### The Heritage of Historical State Formation Processes

Political science research has established that the origins of the legal system (common law or civil law tradition) can explain differences in the quality of government. Countries with common law, which emphasises property rights and freedom of economic agents, experience higher levels of economic prosperity and less corruption than countries with civil law. However, Carl Dahlström, Nicholas Charron, and Victor Lapuente instead highlight the state formation process as a central factor for the quality of government, as well-functioning political institutions are a prerequisite for the implementation of a legal system. More specifically, they look at whether the state formation process has influenced the character of the state infrastructure to be either patrimonial or bureaucratic.

A patrimonial public service is recruited on the basis of political affiliation or personal ties and loyalties, which increases the capacity of the political elite to implement its will. The patrimonial type developed in countries like France, Portugal, and Hungary. In countries with a more bureaucratic state infrastructure, public officials are recruited based on their skills and education, which makes them more autonomous in relation to the governing elite. Public officials can then influence the ruling elite and constrain their capacity to undertake actions that benefit their own interests at the expense of the general social welfare, and this in turn influences a number of institutional and political factors. Such bureaucratic structures were established already in the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in the German States and in Denmark, Sweden and Britain.

Dahlström, Lapuente, and Charron test their hypothesis by conducting a study of 31 OECD countries. The results show that the bureaucratic state infrastructure that was established during the state formation process has had a visible effect on the judicial institutions and corruption levels that holds even today. The bureaucratic state infrastructure also proves to be more important for the quality of government than the country's legal tradition. These conclusions are important to take into account in modern state formation processes, where state infrastructures have disintegrated or been reorganised.

Historical processes can also explain why the quality of political institutions differs between regions that today share many formal institutions, such as Northern and Southern Italy. Previous research has explained this variation by referring to differences in cultural values and variance in the level of social trust. Using data from over 200 European regions, Charron and Lapuente therefore test the relationship between historical institutions and the quality of today's institutions on a sub-national regional level. They concentrate on to what extent rulers could govern relatively unconstrained and how access to key resources facilitated the establishment of clientelistic networks of patronage. Access to resources, but also the absence of independent media and a legal system that could provide checks and balances, gave rulers significant discretion. Charron and Lapuente argue that the establishment of long-lasting clientelistic networks does not affect individuals' norms and morals as such; however, individuals in a clientelistic system have strong incentives to participate in the clientelistic networks, as they will otherwise risk

being excluded from the distribution of resources, including jobs in the public sector. The results show that the regions where the executive was more constrained during the state formation process, which took place between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, today enjoy higher quality of government. Furthermore, the effect of social trust disappears when controlling for constraints on the executive. The relationship can be outlined as follows: unconstrained executives were able to create long-lasting clientelistic networks that, through a process of path dependency, have developed legacies of more partial and informally ruled institutions. This has in turn resulted in lower quality of government.

Bo Rothstein has conducted an in-depth study of the Swedish case and has found that the Swedish bureaucracy was thoroughly corrupt until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Public positions, notably within the military, could be bought, and it was not uncommon that one and the same civil servant held five or six full time positions that they could lease out to someone else in exchange for a share of the salary. Public positions were considered comparable to feudal property that the 'owner' could use to extract private resources. There was no clear distinction between the civil servants' private means and state property. The income of civil servants mainly came from direct payments from citizens, which encouraged corruption. The skills and merits of civil servants were limited, and personal contacts were more important for employment.

The change towards a more Weberian-style civil service came with the initiation of a very large amount of reforms that took place between 1855 and 1875. Fixed wages and pension systems were introduced, and prohibitions on position purchasing were established. A new general criminal code, which included a novel law on misconduct in public office, was introduced, and the knowledge and skills requirements for the recruitment and promotion of public officials increased significantly. The process can be characterised as a "big bang" change of the sort that the theory of collective action points out as necessary for obtaining sustainable change that breaks with corruption, partiality, and clientelism.



In an attempt to explain this drastic transformation, Jan Teorell, and Bo Rothstein have gathered a unique material of court hearings on malfeasance in public office from 1720-1850, and have found a significant increase in such court hearings between 1800-1830, followed by a dramatic decrease between 1840-1850. A similar trend has been identified in Denmark. A plausible explanation is the traumatic loss of Finland in the war against Russia, which gave rise to “the revolution of 1809”. The leading actors behind the coup d’état seemed to have been under the impression that the country’s future existence as a sovereign nation-state was severely threatened. The military defeat was largely blamed on the incompetence of the army, which was held to be a direct consequence of the so-called accord system within the army. There seems to have been a widespread notion of an approaching national crisis that became a strong motivation for reforms. In the parliamentary debates from the 1820, we can observe straightforward demands in debates and parliamentary commissions that the current clientelistic, partially corrupt system must be reformed. However, it would take another forty years before charges against malfeasance in public office were deployed more efficiently and on a larger scale. The rise of political liberalism also seems to have influenced perceptions of the kind of reforms were needed.

Anders Sundell has studied the elimination of the system of informal payments for public services, where government employees received their salary through semi-informal payments (“sportler”) from citizens. Parliamentary debates from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century reveal an awareness that the system of informal payments could lead to power abuse and even extortion. Due to low and irregular salaries, public officials were also suspected to fail to perform their job tasks or be absent from their jobs for extensive periods of time. From the government’s point of view, the informal payment system was necessary to finance the wages of the government employees, given the lack of tax revenue and monitoring capacities. This way of organising public services would in today’s vocabulary be called franchising. Public officials were paid by the population to finance their positions and they could use their income to employ assistants in accordance with the supply and demand of services. Despite its adverse effects, the system was relatively well functioning, given the prevailing circumstances. The reform of the informal payment system into a modern wage system indicates that the reform process proceeded incrementally, taking into account what reforms were feasible to introduce at each given point in time. The infor-

mal payment system was gradually replaced by fixed wages, but persisted within some sectors until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Rasmus Broms has conducted a range of studies on another factor that has historically proved to be important for state formation and bureaucratic processes: taxation. Research on the rise of the European nation state from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and onwards has shown how the rising costs of warfare from the Middle Ages increased the need of government revenue considerably. This in turn resulted in a range of fundamental reforms of state organisation, but also in a drastically altered relationship between the state and its citizens. The state apparatus, which had hitherto been rather limited, started expanding and developed into the comprehensive system we have today. State territory and the people residing therein were mapped and registered in order to calculate what resources could be extracted. Police services were established to supervise and control tax collection. The civil services, which had previously mainly consisted of the nobility and wealthy individuals who had bought their positions to get access to the privileges the regime could offer, were gradually replaced by educated bureaucrats, recruited on a meritocratic basis.

People started to become used to regular encounters with the state and its representatives. The increasing economic pressure on citizens was in many cases met with public protests and demands for openness and public influence over state affairs. In some cases, such as England, this led to the establishment of a parliament and a dialogue between the state and its citizens. In other cases, it resulted in a revolution, notably in France and the American colonies. Broms argues that a social contract gradually developed between the state and its citizens where citizens in exchange for an ever increasing tax burden gained access to infrastructure, security policy, and later also social security, and the power to influence those in charge of the government.

It may thus be concluded that there has been a historical relationship between a functioning tax system and high quality of government. But is it possible to observe a similar relationship today? Broms investigates whether the relationship between taxation and quality of government

varies with regime type. He finds a strong positive relationship between tax burden and state effectiveness in democracies, while the relationship is virtually non-existent in dictatorships. Broms explains this pattern by arguing that the social contract is constantly being renegotiated in democratic states, notably through free and fair elections. The incomes that are generated are subsequently redistributed and spent on public goods to the benefit of all. In dictatorships, however, taxes are often collected by coercive means and the regime only needs to bargain with the elite, who in exchange for political support enjoy a disproportionate share of the privileges generated by tax revenues.

Broms also looks more closely at how the historical tax burden of former colonies influences their quality of government today. His study of former British colonies shows that the colonies subjected to the heaviest tax burdens in the inter-war period today are the best governed states. The relationship holds even when other relevant factors, such as revenue and pre-colonial history, have been taken into account. Even if this is just one among many variables influencing the state building processes in young states, the relationship unmistakably demonstrates the path dependency of high quality of government, and therefore also how difficult it might be to reform state organisations and practices. Broms further argues that paying taxes encourages individuals to become more politically active and interested. Broms analyses data from survey interviews with people in twenty African states where tax paying is still far from generally accepted, in contrast to Western societies, and he compares the level of political interest between taxpaying and non-taxpaying citizens. The results show that even when controlling for a number of economic, social, and cultural factors, taxpaying has a positive effect on the political interest of citizens. This induces hope that a more developed tax system in developing countries, apart from providing the state with necessary resources, will contribute to a strengthening of civil society and enhanced dialogue between governments and their citizens, much like what happened in early modern Europe.

A study by Anna Persson and Bo Rothstein, based on ethnographic material from a highly corrupt country, like Uganda, generates similar results. One reason why people do not mobilise against the widespread corruption is that they generally do not pay taxes. The fact that the polit-

ical elite loot natural resources and arbitrarily spend aid funds is not regarded as a matter of great concern for citizens, since they do not consider the funds spent to be their money. Using quantitative data, from a number of countries, Persson and Rothstein furthermore show a positive relationship between low corruption and high public spending. The empirical results challenge the findings of a number of well-cited neo-classical economists, who argue that the root cause of corruption lies in a large state apparatus.

### The Role of Bureaucracy for Good Governance

One of the insights into what generates good, impartial, and effective public institutions is that elite groups have an interest in utilising the system to forward their own interests and satisfy the needs of their own group, if their power is left unconstrained. Carl Dahlström, Victor Lapuente, and Jan Teorell therefore ask what a handful countries, all relatively successful with regard to anti-corruption measures, state effectiveness, and reform capacity, have in common. They show that the power of elite groups can be constrained, if the elite include groups of individuals with known different interests, since this will encourage them to monitor each other and force rivaling groups away from self-interest towards the common good. For example, the U.S. Constitution emphasises the importance of a division of power, which is intended to prevent different fractions from taking control over the state apparatus. Yet, the researchers argue that such problems are not necessarily best solved by constitutional rules, but by letting elite groups with different interests control each other. It is therefore an advantage if politicians and bureaucrats constitute two separate groups that are incentivised in different ways, since they are both involved in governing the state. It is, for example, reasonable to assume that most individuals are interested in their own career, and if the career incentives are different for politicians and bureaucrats, this should incentivise them to prevent each other from engaging in corruption and instead stimulate good and effective governance.

Dahlström, Lapuente, and Teorell have tested this hypothesis in a country-comparative study, and found a strong relationship between the career incentives of bureaucrats and the quality of

government. Using the *QoG Expert Survey*, based on interviews with public administration experts in 107 countries, they have mapped the recruitment system and other characteristics of state administrations. An important finding is that a high level of meritocracy within the bureaucracy (in contrast to, for example, recruitment on a personal or political basis) co-varies strongly with low corruption. A similar relationship can be found with regard to how efficiently state resources are being used, and whether the state is capable of reforming bureaucracy. The relationship holds even when controlling for political, economic, and cultural factors, previously suggested to be strongly connected to corruption and the quality of institutions. The researchers conclude that a professional bureaucracy with public servants recruited on a meritocratic basis and loyal to their colleagues rather than to politicians is important for the quality of government.

The reason for this is probably that if public servants discover corruption or wasteful behaviour, they will be inclined to speak out, which is more difficult for public servants who depend on their rulers and therefore stay loyal to politicians. The hypothesis can be illustrated with the corruption scandals in Spain (a European country with a relatively high degree of politicisation), where it turned out that the prevalence of corruption was known to an extensive network of individuals; yet these had refrained from reporting or drawing media attention to the issue, probably because of fear or loyalty to their politicians or the political party. If public servants would instead have the option to be loyal to their own profession, this pattern could be broken. Chances increase that someone will uncover corruption if people are not dependent on those who engage in corrupt actions. The benefits of having groups with diverging interests involved apply not only to the prevention of criminal behaviour: also when it comes to wasteful behaviour or investments that only benefit certain groups, to have someone questioning the distribution of resources will affect redistribution in the direction of the common good. It is also significantly easier to reform the bureaucracy if the employees trust that professional considerations are guiding reforms, rather than political objectives. A meritocratic bureaucratic structure that balances political interests has also proved to have a stabilising effect in situations of political or social conflict. According to Bo Rothstein and Victor Lapuente, public servants then have an interest in preserving the neutrality of the state: their career would probably be jeopardised if they would join active politics, and they therefore seek to keep political conflicts within the policy-making arena. In contrast, civil servants in a politicised bureaucratic apparatus have an

interest in engaging in politics as it may enhance their career prospects, which may in turn result in an escalation and proliferation of political conflict within the public agencies and to the citizens interacting with them.

To illustrate their hypothesis, Rothstein and Lapuente compare two conflicts that took place in Sweden and Spain respectively in the 1930s, where the bureaucratic structures played an important role for the evolution of the conflicts. In the 1930s, Sweden was faced with a significant risk of open conflict between labour and capital, but because the Swedish state was considered a neutral actor in the conflict due to its meritocratic, autonomous bureaucracy and political actors who respected the rule of law, the “losers” refrained from resorting to violence. The Swedish conflict ended with the historical “*Saltsjöbaden Accord*”. In contrast, Spanish left and right wing governments (1931-1936) had made sure to politicise the bureaucracy, shown systematic disrespect for the rule of law, and initiated political reforms that benefited their own group at the expense of others. The Spanish case resulted in an open and disastrous civil war. The examples illustrate how an impartial, mediating bureaucracy on the one hand and a bureaucracy that actively engaged in the conflict on the other influenced the different outcomes of the two conflicts. The politicisation of bureaucracy, we may conclude, has a negative effect on the quality of government.

What, then, produces a politicised bureaucracy, apart from historical processes? In a joint project, Birgitta Niklasson and Carl Dahlström have mapped over-time variations in the proportion of politically appointed agency heads in Sweden. The proportion of politically appointed Director Generals saw a steady increase from 34 per cent in the 1960’s to 51 per cent in the 1980’s. The level then stabilised at around 45 per cent until it fell dramatically in 2004. Since then, however, the proportion of politically appointed Director Generals has gone back to the same levels as in the 1960’s. The reason for this is unknown. Niklasson and Dahlström find no support for any of the previous explanations. For example, their findings do not support the notion that one particular political party (the Social Democrats) has pushed for politicisation, since all political parties have equally influenced politicisation. Nor does politicisation seem to be an effect of one and the same government staying in power over an extensive period of time, or of

minority governments. The authors conclude that there is need for more systematic research on the matter.

One plausible explanation, which has been explored by Niklasson, is whether the introduction of *New Public Management* (NPM) could lead to politicisation of the bureaucracy. The idea behind NPM is that the public sector should be structured more like the private sector, and traditional bureaucratic values such as professionalism, personal responsibility, and justice are replaced by competition, specialisation, efficiency, and flexibility. In practice, these reforms result in more insecure job contracts (*contractualism*), which makes public positions less attractive and increases possibilities for politicians to appoint politically loyal public servants. At the same time, the autonomy of agency heads increases in the implementation process (*managerialism*), which initially constrains the power of politicians. However, this creates incentives for politicians to take back control over the implementation process by appointing agency heads on a political basis. Politicians are thus equipped with both possibilities and incentives for controlling public administration by politicising the appointment of public officials, and such trends have also been found in previous research. Yet Niklasson finds no support for this claim: when looking at 120 Swedish public agencies in 2009, there is no indication that public agencies characterised by NPM are more politicised.

### The Importance of the Political Regime

The conditions for an impartial and predictable public administration apparatus are also influenced by the political regime. Regime type, the electoral system, and the level of politicisation within the state apparatus, all affect the quality of government. Victor Lapuente and Nicholas Charron therefore investigate whether democratic states perform better in terms of the quality of institutions than autocratic states. Previous research has found no clear relationship between democratic government and the quality of government. Lapuente and Charron argue that two factors need to be in place if high quality of government is to be obtained: leaders who have the power to implement necessary reforms, and public demand for long-term investments over

short-term needs. The latter is a function of economic development, which implies that democratic leaders have strong incentives to improve the quality of government once a certain level of wealth has been achieved, while poorer countries have less incentive to invest in long-term bureaucratic reforms. The authors test their hypothesis in a study of 125 countries, and find strong support for their case.

Lapuente and Charron further study the variation in the quality of government between different types of autocratic regimes. What type of dictatorship (military, civil or monarchy) produces better government, and which are the mechanisms explaining this variation? One argument is that single-party regimes are more responsive to citizens' demands than other types of autocratic regimes, since the party functions as a mechanism to channel citizens' voices. These regimes are therefore expected to deliver QoG following societal demands. The demand for better services is in turn expected to be higher in high-income countries for the reasons mentioned above, while it is expected to be lower in low-income countries. In contrast, the quality of government under monarchies and military regimes is entirely conditioned by rulers' self-interest. Lapuente and Charron find that high-income countries with single-party systems produce better quality of government. In monarchies and military regimes, the level of QoG depends on the time horizon of the regime: long-term horizons give stronger incentives to improve the quality of public institutions, while rulers with short-term horizons tend to under-provide QoG. Hence, a monarchy or military dictatorship where rulers have short time horizons is expected to under-provide QoG, while long-term horizons among rulers in such countries are expected to generate better quality of government.

The authors employ a sample of over 70 authoritarian countries between 1983 and 2003, and find that single-party regimes, with higher average income, generate better quality of government, while it is the time horizon of the rulers that determines the willingness to deliver public services in monarchies and military regimes.



The time horizon of rulers is also the focus of Victor Lapuente and Marina Nistotskaya's study, where they investigate the circumstances under which meritocratic bureaucracies are established. More specifically, they look at why some authoritarian regimes decide to establish meritocratic bureaucracies when it might seem more intuitive to retain control over the state apparatus by maintaining a politicised bureaucratic structure. The authors develop a theoretical model inspired by repeated game theory that focuses on the interaction between the regime (be it democratic or autocratic) and economic agents. The results show that both democratic and authoritarian rulers have an interest in establishing a meritocratic bureaucracy when they have a long time horizon, since such structures enhance regime credibility in the eyes of economic actors. The researchers test their hypothesis on a sample of 39 sub-national regions in Russia and 35 developing countries and find support for their theory.

The political regime can also influence the conditions for the quality of government on a more technical level. The party system in a democracy is vital for citizens' ability to hold politicians accountable for corrupt behaviour: yet the structure of the democratic political system may also influence politicians' inclination to engage in corrupt activities. Both the number of political parties and the type of electoral regulations create different incentives to raise the issue of corruption. This in turn affects actors' risk calculations for engaging in corruption. Charron finds that the effect of the number of political parties on corruption levels is conditioned by the electoral formula: whether it is a single member district (SMD) formula (as in France, Great Britain, or the United States), or a system of proportional representation (PR) systems (as in Sweden). SMD elections often generate two-party systems, while proportional representation results in multi-party systems. Charron tests the direct relationship between party system and corruption and controls for the influence of the electoral formula, and demonstrates that multi-party systems increase the risk of corruption, but only in countries with SMD electoral formulas. Two party systems in countries with SMD instead tend to demonstrate lower corruption levels. However, the interaction effect disappears for countries with proportional representation formulas. Countries with SMD formulas generally demonstrate lower levels of corruption, but only when the number of larger political parties in parliament is low.

Georgios Xezonakis and Stefan Dahlberg have conducted studies on the effect of the electoral formula on corruption levels. More specifically, they have investigated how the party system influences voters' opportunities to hold politicians accountable for corrupt behaviour. Prior research has shown that SMD systems demonstrate lower corruption levels than PR systems. The researchers therefore ask whether voters in countries with SMD formulas have better chances of punishing corrupt governments than citizens of countries with PR systems. Yet their empirical findings do not support the hypothesis that electoral accountability for corruption is conditioned by the electoral formula – at least not as long as corruption is not politicised in election campaigns. In those cases, media and the quality of information that reaches voters are more important factors than the structure of the electoral system. Still, even when voters have the opportunity to “throw the rascals out”, they do not always choose to do so. Xezonakis therefore investigates why so many voters seem to tolerate corruption and abstain from sanctioning corrupt leaders through their votes in democratic elections. Using Greece as a case study, Xezonakis conducts an experimental study and shows that voters weigh the prevalence of corruption against other tangible (economic) benefits that they can receive from parties. Yet he also finds low tolerance for clientelism, which tends to reduce tolerance for corruption and which is an encouraging result since clientelism was pointed out as one of the causes behind the Greek economic crisis. If voters demonstrate low tolerance for clientelism, it hopefully reduces the risk that politicians continue to deploy this type of strategy.

Moreover, the political system can be differently structured when it comes to accommodating political, ethnic, and ideological diversity, which risk polarising society. Empirical studies have shown that ethno-linguistic fractionalisation can have a negative effect on the quality of government. States have two optional strategies to contain polarisation: they could attempt to integrate different groups into a centralised, unitary constitution, or to accommodate the needs of minorities through ethno-federalism, where each group is granted regional autonomy. In the first study to test the effect of ethno-federalist institutions on the quality of government, Charon finds that ethno-federalism is a better option with regard to QoG.

Political polarisation may also have a negative effect on the quality of government. Georgios Xezonakis presents the hypothesis that ideological polarisation in the public sphere has a negative impact on the quality of government, since it prevents political co-operation on long-term reform, is detrimental for the credibility of the government, and encourages clientelism. Furthermore, political polarisation is expected to increase incentives to politicise the bureaucracy, which in turn has a negative effect on the quality of government. Yet Xezonakis only finds weak empirical support for his hypothesis, and also finds that new democracies seem to be more sensitive to political polarisation than older, more established democracies. Xezonakis emphasises that the topic deserves further investigation.

### Universal Education and Corruption

In collaboration with Eric Uslaner, Bo Rothstein has investigated the relationship between universal education reforms and control of corruption. The background of the study is an empirical relationship found in a dataset for 78 countries regarding education levels in 1870. The empirical data shows a surprisingly powerful statistical link between education levels and today's corruption levels for the 78 countries, and the relationship remains strong even when controlling for the level of economic development and democracy. The analysis reveals that the early-industrialised countries were not the first to introduce universal education. Great Britain was late to introduce such reforms: public schooling was not established until 1905/06. Instead, following the defeat against France in Jena 1805, military-authoritarian Prussia was the first to introduce educational reforms that would educate citizens to become more loyal towards the state. We find a similar motivation behind the Swedish public education reform, which was initiated in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. France also follows this pattern; the military defeat to Germany in 1877 increased support for public schooling reforms, aimed at – to paraphrase one researcher – “making peasants into Frenchmen”. Citizens who experienced that they received something positive from the state could also be expected to be more loyal to public institutions, which is one important factor for obtaining high quality of government. The Italian case is particularly interesting in this regard. The decision to introduce public schooling is taken in 1859 but is only implemented in the northern regions. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a substantial part of the population

in southern Italy is illiterate – a factor that plays well into our previous findings of the stark differences between the northern and southern regions of the country.

Mass education can be conceived as the first universal egalitarian reform to be introduced in many countries, and it came years before social reforms. Furthermore, public schooling had a significant, positive effect on gender equality. Before the introduction of these reforms, education was almost exclusively for boys. Universal education reforms broke with this trend by giving girls and boys the same amount of education, and even letting them be taught side by side.

### Gender Equality and Control of Corruption

Research on gender equality and corruption sparked off when two research teams, affiliated to the World Bank, showed that countries with a high number of women in elected office tended to demonstrate lower corruption levels. The relationship persisted even when controlling for a range of other explanatory factors, such as democracy and economic development. However, the studies were met with harsh criticism from researchers who argued that the pattern had nothing to do with women's participation as such; instead, the correct explanation was that well-functioning states generate both gender equality and lower corruption levels. The studies were also criticised by feminist researchers, who argued that women's political participation was framed as a means for combating corruption rather than as an end in itself. Feminist research reversed the question, focusing instead on male networks excluding women from the inner circles of power where many corrupt transactions take place. Furthermore, women are in many countries associated with the family and the private sphere, which gives them few opportunities to engage in corruption. A third, alternative theory emphasises the importance of gender, which has to do with the different social roles ascribed to women and men respectively. For example, women are socialised into being risk averse, and through their role as caretakers they develop a more "helping" behaviour than men.

Researchers at the QoG Institute have developed yet an alternative theory, which builds upon a “rationality perspective” where women’s active positioning is highlighted to a larger extent. The starting point is that in most societies, women as a group have less power and assets than men. When calculating costs and benefits, it is rational for women to abstain from corruption and instead focus on the wellbeing of the family and on getting money for food, schooling, etc. It is further emphasised that women who reach political positions often have a different background than their male colleagues. Studies from Mexico and other places indicate that it is more common among women politicians to have a background in social movements. To engage in corrupt behaviour would therefore be particularly risky for women, since it could damage their relationship with civil society and their future political career. This perspective puts more emphasis on the agency of women, and opens up for multiple explanatory models that may further our understanding of gender and corruption.

The relationship has been explored in a number of studies conducted by researchers at the institute. Lena Wängnerud looks at corruption levels in sub-national Mexican states, and observes a pattern where areas with a high number of women elected tend to display lower corruption levels than states with a low number of women elected. Furthermore, corruption levels have decreased between 2001 and 2010 in states where the number of women elected is particularly high (the measures of the number of women elected are from 2005). Wängnerud emphasises that several different factors need to be in place in order for reforms to occur: a high number of women elected is usually a result of conscious efforts by devoted actors, which is in turn often a consequence of pressure from local and international organisations. If there is a simultaneous ongoing public debate on how to reduce corruption, this can create a window of opportunity where political parties are forced to reflect on and reconsider their working procedures and where corruption and other forms of power abuse are being questioned.

Previous studies on gender and corruption have not differentiated between the number of women in the legislative arena and women on high positions within state administration. Helena Stensöta, Lena Wängnerud, and Richard Svensson have therefore conducted a comparative study between effects of the number of women on executive positions within state administra-

tion and in the legislative arena (national parliaments). The results show that a high number of women in the legislative arena co-vary with low corruption levels; however, the relationship disappears when they look at women on executive positions within state administration. The researchers theorise that the results are due to the different institutional logics that mediate the effect of gendered experiences in distinct ways. In the legislative arena, candidates emphasise their particular personal attributes in order to get elected; in contrast, bureaucracies tend to absorb individuals' personal characteristics. Female politicians may for different reasons, be they opportunistic or due to deeply rooted values, choose to position themselves as a "clean" alternative to male politicians who have got their hands dirty by engaging in corruption and power abuse. However, in an administration where bureaucratic values are weak or absent, gender is expected to have a stronger effect on corruption levels, as the dynamics are then more similar to the legislative arena.

Conclusively, gender equality in public administration cannot be said to have a remarkable effect on the quality of government; at least not when there is an impartial, professional, bureaucratic structure in place. However, gender equal legislative institutions have proved to be an important factor for the success of anti-corruption efforts. Corruption may also signal or even result in less gender equality. Aksel Sundström and Lena Wängnerud explore variations in corruption levels between European regions, especially focusing on the police force, education system, and healthcare. As these are institutions that citizens encounter on a regular basis, corruption may spread a sense of unequal treatment to public life in general, and this in turn affects the recruitment of women. The researchers conclude that political parties wishing to have more women in executive positions need to adopt a more comprehensive approach and reform public life in its entirety. Increased gender equality may have a positive effect on the fight against corruption, but conscious action is usually needed, on behalf of decision-makers, to deal with both gender inequality and corruption within their own sphere.

## The Impact of International Institutions

International actors can help promote good domestic institutions in several different ways, but their positive influence is conditioned by a number of factors. Monika Bauhr tests the hypothesis that international institutions are expected to improve the quality of government, and thereby contribute to a positive global development, by spreading “good” norms that emphasise the importance of QoG. The ability of international institutions to promote quality of government is, however, conditioned by the quality of their internal procedures. Monika Bauhr and Naghmeh Nasiritousi suggest a typology of the means used by international organisations to influence government institutions, where the more traditional forms of power discussed within international relations – normative and material power – are complemented by an additional power dimension: “contestation-integration”. The dimension concerns to what extent international organisations contest existing orders in society and institutions or try to integrate governments in international settings. The framework shows that international organisations can use four strategies to put pressure on governments: by using international governance rankings, aid conditionality, socialisation into international settings, and conditional membership in international organisations.

Bauhr and Nasiritousi analyse a substantial number of empirical studies, and find that the contestation-integration dimension is important for understanding the factors that reduce the influence of international organisations. When international organisations contest and challenge existing orders in a state as an outside actor, their influence tends to be limited by a lack of solid knowledge, both of the national context and of the effectiveness of different anti-corruption measures, which may lead them to pressure governments to undertake ineffective or even counterproductive reforms. When international organisations socialise and integrate public officials and governments into international contexts, their influence is instead often limited by low quality in the organisation’s internal procedures. Bauhr and Charron are currently investigating how the contestation-integration dimension can help further our understanding of variations in the effect that international organisations have had on education reforms in Africa.

Bauhr has also studied the ability of international organisations to diffuse “good” environmental and climate-related norms. She emphasises that government officials who are in close contact with international organisations are influenced by the organisations’ internal processes; not only materially, but also in terms of values. Negative experiences of international processes may therefore result in government officials becoming less willing to support suggested reforms that would contribute to better quality of government in their own country.

Bauhr and Nasiritousi have also conducted a comprehensive study of the government officials in developing countries who are responsible for administering resources aiming to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and freons that negatively affect the ozone layer. The analysis is based on interviews with government officials, UN personnel, and representatives of civil society, as well as a comprehensive survey among public officials at environmental ministries, in a number of developing countries. Their results show that public officials who perceive the procedures of international organisations as unjust, partial, ineffective, and unpredictable develop suspicion towards the media and civil society organisations and are more sceptical to the advantages of transparency and openness. The researchers develop a theory of why public officials are negatively influenced by poor procedures in international organisations. The awareness of bad quality in international organisations reduces the legitimacy of the environmental policies that government officials are representing. If people have low trust in for instance the quality of the UN agencies that distribute resources for emission reduction projects, and if they perceive approvals of such projects to be based on unfair grounds, it will encourage corruption and cheating among domestic public officials.

Maria Gustavson’s doctoral thesis (which has been revised and published by Palgrave Macmillan) focuses on the national audit offices in two developing countries in Southern Africa: Botswana and Namibia. Public institutions in Africa are often described as highly partial and closely tied to informal networks. Some researchers have argued that reliance on informal, particularistic networks is part of African societies’ traditional culture, which has persisted and survived despite the imposition of colonial bureaucratic structures. Europeans dismantled the traditional systems for governance that existed in African societies when they colonised the continent, and



public institutions and officials are therefore described as fundamentally different in African states and Western societies. One could, however, ask if the state audit offices in Africa function differently compared to audit offices in for example Europe.

Gustavson's thesis reveals a different and somewhat surprising result. As expected, audit offices in the selected countries are short of resources, including competence, technical equipment, etc. However, the results also clearly show that the norms guiding African auditors and the audit offices and its work, are not different from the norms guiding audit offices in Western countries. The originally Western, professional norms we today find in international auditing standards also characterise the work of African audit offices. They continuously work to reform their organisation in order better to live up to the norms established by The International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions.

The study illustrates the importance of being cautious to base conclusions on cultural explanations. One of the most notable results of the study is the presence of a strong professional identity among auditors, expressed in their willingness to follow international auditing norms. The African auditors also emphasise the advantages of maintaining similar auditing practices across the world. Gustavson's research thereby changed the perception of public officials in African countries that has been most prominent and widely accepted in prior research. As public officials are becoming increasingly professionalised through training, networking, and also increasing participation in international contexts, their professional identity is transformed and streamlined with internationally established standards for state auditing.

In another study, Nicholas Charron challenges the assumption that openness towards the world, often conceived in terms of economic openness (high levels of international trade and capital freedom) reduces national corruption levels by proliferating anti-corruption norms across borders. Charron instead focuses on the social and political aspects of globalisation (including participation in international organisations, UN operations, and transnational contacts through the Internet, foreign news media, migration and tourism), since social and political globalisation

enhances information exchange between countries. Charron also emphasises national institutions; or more specifically, the level of press freedom, as an important factor in order for the openness to the world to have a significant positive impact on the quality of government on a national level. The level of press freedom determines whether anti-corruption norms reach the public and the extent to which citizens receive information about the prevalence of corruption among the political elites. This in turn influences their possibilities to sanction rulers for corrupt behaviour, and the likelihood that rulers will keep getting away with corruption despite increased external and international pressure for openness. Charron tests his hypothesis in a study of 90 developing countries, but does not find that press freedom is particularly important for the effect of political openness on corruption levels. The pressure for increased openness and less corruption primarily comes from international actors, including members of international organisations and foreign diplomats. Still, a free press is essential for social openness to have an effect on and decrease government corruption.

#### Transparency, Press Freedom, and Corruption

Openness and access to information on government activities, which is at least partially achieved through a free press, are considered as necessary conditions for effective accountability and high quality of government. The concept of government transparency is often broadly defined but can mean a range of different things. Monika Bauhr and Marcia Grimes therefore emphasise the importance of conceptual clarity and analytical precision. Transparency is conceived as synonymous with accountability or even impartiality. Bauhr and Grimes therefore critically investigate existing measures of transparency, and suggest an alternative theoretical and empirical definition of the concept, which is largely consistent with the Swedish Freedom of the Press Act. The definition is based on three crucial components of government transparency: government openness, whistle-blower protection, and the likelihood of exposure or publicity. Whistle-blower protection is incorporated in the national freedom of information law and freedom of press acts in a number of countries. Bauhr and Grimes investigate cross-national variations in the three dimensions of transparency using data from the *QoG Expert Survey* on 52 countries. They then compare their transparency measures with existing quantitative and qualitative analyses of transparency. The results show that the measures of openness and publicity

are reliable, while the measure of whistle-blower protection is more problematic. The authors therefore intend to continue to improve the indicators in subsequent studies, and emphasise that these new, global measures will hopefully enable more precise analyses of the effects of different types of transparency in the future.

Despite the conceptual confusion, the notion of transparency as a fundamental democratic value and instrument for legitimate and just decision-making procedures is deeply rooted in political and philosophical theory. From a moral perspective, it is easy to defend transparency before secrecy when it comes to political decision-making processes. However, there is a lack of theoretical and empirical knowledge on how and why transparency is expected to influence people's perceptions of legitimate political decision-making. In her doctoral thesis, Jenny de Fine Licht therefore explores how increased transparency, in the form of information on how and on what grounds a decision has been made, influences people's perceptions of procedural fairness and their trust in decision-makers. A theoretical overview shows that there are well-founded reasons to believe that transparency makes people perceive decisions as more legitimate, but there are also several possible reasons why the positive effect may be reduced, disappear entirely, or even turn into a negative effect.

de Fine Licht tests the relationship between openness and trust empirically, through five different experimental studies, in which subjects have been provided with descriptions of a political decision containing varying degrees of information on the political decision-making process, and then been asked to answer a set of questions on how they perceive the decision, the process, and the decision-makers. de Fine Licht looks at public attitudes towards political decisions within publicly funded healthcare. The healthcare sector was chosen because transparency is considered important to enhance public acceptance of political decisions on which medical treatments should be prioritised when society cannot meet all healthcare demands. In addition, healthcare priorities may be difficult for people to accept since they entail that individuals' healthcare demands are weighed against each other. The experiments show a negative effect of transparency on public trust in healthcare. The subjects who received a description of how healthcare priorities were determined reported lower levels of trust than those who only received information on

the decision. Hence, we may conclude that increased transparency does not automatically result in greater acceptance and trust; it may even have the opposite effect. One plausible explanation might be that priority setting in healthcare is a policy area that is relatively unknown to the public, and increased transparency therefore makes people aware that political decisions are made which could potentially be harmful to themselves. This might generate a feeling of unease, and result in lower trust.

According to the theory of procedural justice, people accept decisions more easily if they perceive decision-making procedures to be just. Therefore, it seems plausible that people who feel that decision-making is carried out in a transparent way also perceive the decision to be more just and will more readily accept it. However, people do not always base their perceptions of transparency on information provided by political actors, but more often on journalists' evaluations. *de Fine Licht* tests this hypothesis and finds that the framing of a political decision-making procedure has a larger effect than *de facto* transparency on public perceptions about the level of transparency in decision-making processes. Thus the relationship between *de facto* transparency and perceived transparency is weak, which implies that it is not solely in the hands of decision-makers to enhance people's feeling of transparent decision-making procedures.

In another study, *de Fine Licht* explores how the effect of openness varies between different policy areas. She finds that increased openness has a positive effect on the legitimacy of decisions within policy areas where priority settings are not perceived as morally problematic (culture and leisure), while the effect of transparency is more ambiguous when policy decisions are related to human life and wellbeing (traffic security).

Transparency can thus enhance public legitimacy beliefs, but decision-makers should reflect on what type of decisions they are handling before assuming a positive effect of increased transparency on public acceptance and trust. Transparency in rationale can be as good as or even better than transparency in process for creating a sense of legitimacy, and could provide an alternative that meets public demands for transparency while avoiding some of the costs associat-

ed with transparency in process. Transparency in decision-making is a complicated phenomenon. However, this does not imply that we should reduce transparency – not even for decisions that are deemed sensitive. As has previously been stated, transparency is an important democratic value and is necessary for the ability of the public to take part in decisions affecting them and hold leaders accountable for decisions they perceive as incorrect.

The relationship between transparency and trust does not become less complicated on the national level, when we move from individual policies to public trust in the political regime. In highly corrupt countries, transparency can be detrimental for public trust, and thereby also for democracy, as it may result in diminished political interest and political involvement. In a study based on data from 52 countries, in different parts of the world, Monika Bauhr and Marcia Grimes confirm this relationship. Despite difficulties in establishing the causal direction, there are convincing theories that may help us understand the correlation. One plausible explanation is that transparency may induce a sense of powerlessness by informing or reminding the public of the prevalence of corruption within public institutions, such as the judicial system and the media, or that people in general are dependent on and deeply involved in corruption and therefore will not engage in actions against it. The same logic can be found in the earlier mentioned theory of social dilemmas, where expectations on others' behaviour affect individuals' willingness to contribute to the common good. If actors assume that most other people will contribute to improving the quality of government, most people will also be willing to engage in such efforts. Conversely, if transparency reinforces or confirms widespread assumptions that most other people do not contribute to the common good, this reduces incentives for individuals to become engaged for the common good.

Bauhr and Grimes emphasise that transparency is an important value in itself. However, transparency must be combined with other institutional reforms in order to be effective; notably reforms that improve citizens' ability to hold leaders accountable. Transparency does not automatically solve corruption issues, but other institutional arrangements, such as ombudsman offices, need to be in place in order for citizens to be able to report power abuse. Without such mediating channels, citizens will soon learn that public institutions intended to hold leaders accounta-

ble are not to be trusted. In conclusion, openness, clarity, and transparency are of great importance, yet it is of equal importance that it is made sure that transparency does not generate a widespread assumption that corruption is the norm in society.

### Civil Society, Social Policy, and Corruption

Channels for accountability are of crucial importance in order for transparency on an aggregated level to result in action against corruption. In policy discussions, and within research on corruption in the public sector, civil society is regarded as a key actor in the process of creating accountability in society. While the importance of civil society for democracy has been extensively studied, knowledge of its impact on the quality of government is scarce. Marcia Grimes therefore investigates the question of whether the density of civil society organisations has an impact on corruption levels. Her study, which is based on data from 133 countries, indicates that the density of civil engagement in a country, measured as the number of civil society organisations in relation to population size, reduces corruption, provided that certain necessary factors are in place.

Which, then, are the mechanisms through which civil society can help reduce corruption? Civil society both represents the public interests and criticises the ruling elite; or, if we use the terminology introduced in the chapter on international organisations, civil society influences the state apparatus with the help of “contestation” and “integration” of the public interest. Moreover, civil society often plays an indirect role in anti-corruption efforts by raising awareness on incidents of corruption, which can then be followed up within the judicial framework. The conditions needed in order for civil society to have a positive effect on accountability, and thereby on the quality of government, are therefore political competition, openness, and transparency, a free press, and rigid judicial frameworks that can guarantee that corrupt actions will be punished.

Without those institutions, civil society has no other choice than to use protests and mass demonstrations as means to influence or remove corrupt politicians. We have previously seen such demonstrations result in the resignation of leaders such as Yanukovich in Ukraine and Collor de Mello in Brazil.

Marcia Grimes and Lena Wängnerud have conducted another study on the subject, where they explore an innovative welfare programme in Mexico aiming to reduce, or at least circumvent, the corruption and clientelism that otherwise tend to undermine redistributive efforts in highly corrupt contexts. The welfare programme – *Oportunidades* – was the first of its kind, but many countries have subsequently introduced similar programmes. In the programme, commonly referred to as a *conditional cash transfer programme*, participants receive cash transfers, given that they fulfil certain conditions: the children in the family should attend school and receive regular health check-ups, and parents should participate in courses in nutrition and first aid.

The programme has proved to contribute to the reduction of corruption in Mexican states. However, the researchers also investigate whether the programmes could possibly have any additional effects that would in the long run have a different effect on corruption. Prior research on individual societies had found such tendency; namely, that similar programmes tended to have a negative effect on the participation in local and regional civil society associations. The programme could, according to previous studies, generate resentment on behalf of those who also lived in poverty but under marginally better conditions and were subsequently excluded from the programmes. Furthermore, new social groups were generated through obligatory participation in the courses arranged by the programme. Previous evaluations of conditional cash transfer programmes have theorised that this may have a negative effect on the strength of civil society, and Grimes and Wängnerud's study confirms that the welfare programmes undermined civil society and had a particularly strong negative effect on women's involvement in civil society.

In conclusion, the welfare programmes proved to have positive short-term effects on both poverty reduction and anticorruption efforts; however, the programmes may weaken civil society in the long run and negatively affect citizens' ability to organise and hold leaders accountable.



## 7. Conclusion

The research programme “The Quality of Government Institute at the University of Gothenburg” has generated novel results on how quality of government should be defined and understood theoretically, but also on what social scientific approach is better suited if we wish to identify the basic nature of the problem. The programme has contributed with the globally most complete and publicly accessible database within its field of research. Furthermore, we have contributed with four of our own, prominent data collections. In addition, our researchers have published a significant amount of theoretical and empirical results on what explains cross-country variation in the quality of government and on the effects of this variation on countries’ ability to create good living conditions. QoG is of great importance for human welfare. If we were to summarise the causes of human misery and suffering in today’s world, the single most important explanation is probably that a majority of the world’s population live under dysfunctional government institutions.

Compared to prior research, our focus on institutional qualities has great potential with regard to policy recommendations. Changing structural factors is almost always beyond the reach of human power, and countries are therefore bound to their history, their cultural heritage, their natural resources, and their geographical setting; in contrast, institutions can be reformed through conscious political action. There are numerous factors that our researchers have found to be of importance: the method for recruiting public officials, the extent to which women are granted access to political power positions, the construction of the universal education system, and the structure of the tax system, to name a few.

The funding of the programme by the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences ended in 2014. However, the QoG Institute will continue to operate thanks to a large number of new research grants. These new resources will allow the QoG Institute to continue for at least four more years.

## Appendix

Publications by the QoG Institute (2007 - January 2015): Scientific Articles Published in Peer-reviewed Journals

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Guest Scholars at the QoG Institute 2010 - Spring 2015

Spring 2015

Donatella Casade, Department of Business and Law, University of Siena

Nan Zhang, European University Institute, Florence

David Eric Lewis, Department of Political Science, Vanderbilt University

Oguzhan Dincer, Department of Economics, Illinois State University

Petra Schleiter, Department of Politics and International Relations & St Hilda's College, University of Oxford

Adrienne Lebas, Department of Government, School of Public Affairs, American University

Simone Dietrich, Department of Political Science, University of Missouri

Salvador Parrado, Distance Learning University (UNED), Madrid & Governance International, UK

2014

Andrew Patterson - University of British Columbia

Cathrine Holst - ARENA Centre for European Studies, Oslo University

Eva Zemandl - Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy, and International Relations,  
Central European University

Roberto Foa – Department of Government, Harvard University

Sven Steinmo – Department of Political and Social Sciences, European University Institute

Thomas Koelble – Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town

Anna Khakhunova - Higher School of Economics, National Research University, Russia

David Booth – The Overseas Development Institute (ODI), The UK

Eliska Drapalova - European University Institute

Herbert Kitschelt – Department of Political Science, Duke University

Santosh Srinivasan - Transparency International (TI) in Berlin

Tom Pegram - Department of Political Science/ School of Public Policy, University College  
London

2013

Jonathan Hopkin - Department of Government, London School of Economics and Political Sci-  
ence

Vinothan Naido - Department of Political Studies, University of Cape Town

Pablo Beramendi - Department of Political Science, Duke University

Sheri Berman - Department of Political Science, Barnard College

Takis Pappas - Department of Political and Social Sciences, European University Institute

Ben Ross Schneider - Department of Political Science, MIT

Kathleen Thelen - Department of Political Science, MIT

Jong-Sung You - Graduate School of International Relations, University of California

Bryane Michael - Asian Institute for International Financial Law, Department of Law

Illong Kwon - Graduate School of Public Administration (GSPA), Seoul National University

Robert Cox - Department of Political Science, University of South Carolina

Anett Hodosi - Doctoral School of Economics at University of Debrecen

2012

Susan Ariel Aronson - Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University

Andreas Schedler - Center for Economic Teaching and Research (CIDE) in Mexico City

Mette Frisk Jensen - Institut for Kultur og Samfund, Aarhus university

Paul Heywood - Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nottingham

Davide Torsello - Department of Cultural Studies, University of Bergamo University

Margaret Levy - Department of Political Science at the University of Washington

Fengping Zhao - Zhengzhou University, Kina

2011

Eric Uslaner – Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland

Steven Pfaff – Department of Sociology, University of Washington

Pierre Englebert – Pomona College

Bryon Moraski – Department of Political Science, University of Florida

Anirudh Krishna – Department of Political Science, Duke University



David Collier - Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley

Ruth Collier – Department of Political Science, University of California, Berkeley

Susan Stokes - Department of Political Science, Yale University

Heather Marquette - International Development Department of the University of Birmingham

Esther Shalev-Gerz, Konstnärliga fakulteten, Göteborgs universitet

2010

Apostolis Papakostas - School of Social Science, Södertörn University College

Michael Johnston - Department of Political Science, Colgate University

Stefan Svallfors – Institutet för framtidsstudier, Stockholm

Strom Thacker - Department of International Relations, Boston University

Michael Hechter - Department of Sociology, School of Government, Arizona State University

Desmond King - Nuffield College, Oxford University

Luis de Sousa - the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon

Edgar Kiser – Department of Sociology, University of Washington

Mariela Szwarcberg - Department of Political Science Reed College

Vivien Schmidt – Department of Political Science, Boston University

Göran Rosenberg – Hedersdoktor vid Göteborgs universitet

## Grants Received for Continued Research at the QoG Institute

Carl Dahlström (together with Monika Bauhr, Victor Lapuente, Marina Nistotskaya & Maria Gustavsson). "Överkontrollerad eller utom kontroll? Incitament, utvärderingar och New Public Management". Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social sciences, 2015-2018.

Carl Dahlström (together with Mikael Holmgren). "Den politiska striden om administrationen: partipolitiska konflikter och förvaltningens självständighet I Sverige 1960-2010". Swedish Research Council, 2015-2018.

Sören Holmberg and Stefan Dahlberg. "Language Effects in Surveys (LES)". Swedish Research Council, 2015- 2019

Andrej Kokkonen and Anders Sundell. "Delivering Political Stability? Succession Arrangements' Impact on Leader Survival, Civil Wars and State Building in Autocracies". Swedish Research Council, 2015-2017.

Victor Lapuente, Agnes Cornell, Marica Grimes. "No Democracy Without Bureaucracy? The Role of Administrative Institutions in Democratic Consolidation". Swedish Research Council, 2013-2016.

Marina Nistotskaya. "Credible Enforcement before Credible Commitment: Explaining the Implications of Institutional Sequencing". Swedish Research Council, 2014-2017.

Bo Rothstein. "The Performance of Democracies". Advanced Research Grant from European Research Council, 2013-2018.

Helena Stensöta and Lena Wängnerud. "Making Sense of Gender and Corruption". FORTE, 2015-2018.