QOG

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THE THREE WORLDS OF GOVERN-ANCE

Arguments for a Parsimonious Theory of Quality of Government

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ABSTRACT

It is necessary to conceptualize and provide better measures of good governance because in contrast to democratization, empirical studies show that it has strong positive effects on measures of human well-being, social trust, life satisfaction, peace and political legitimacy. A central problem is that the term "governance" is conceptualized differently in three main approaches to governance which has led to much confusion. To avoid this, the term *quality of government* (QoG) is preferred. This paper argues for a parsimonious conceptualization of QoG built the "Rawls-Machiavelli programme". This is a combination of the Rawlsian understanding of what should be seen as a just political order and the empirical strategy used by Machiavelli stating what is possible to implement. It is argued that complex definitions are impossible to operationalize and that such a strategy would leave political science without a proper conceptualization as well as measures of the part of the state that is most important for humans' well-being and political legitimacy. The theory proposed is that impartiality in the exercise of public power should be the basic norm for how QoG should be defined. The advantage with this strategy is that it does not include in the definition of QoG what we want to explain (efficiency, prosperity, administrative capacity and other "good outcomes") and that recent empirical research shows that this theory can be operationalized and used to measure QoG in ways that have the predicted outcomes.

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Conceptualizing Good Governance: Why is this exercise necessary?

Why it a discussion about how to theorize, define and measure "good governance", "quality of government" and/or "state capacity" necessary? Political scientists and especially their compatriots the political philosophers are known to spend endless amounts of energy on conceptual issues. Just think about the infinite debates on how to define justice, power, rationality, discrimination, ethnicity and social class to name a few. For "governance" two large handbooks have recently been published which together contain no less than 1200 pages (Bevir 2010b; Levi-Faur 2012b). Add to this a number of widely cited books and articles and one could ask if enough is not enough.

My argument for why it is important to continue this debate is basically empirical and has to do with two unexpected and for many, including this author, also normatively unwelcome results. The first is about the effects of democratization. The waves of democracy that have swept over the globe have brought representative democracy to places where it seemed inconceivable fifty, thirty or even ten years ago. More countries than ever are now by the most sophisticated measures used classified as being democratic and more people than ever live in democracies (Teorell 2010). This is certainly something to celebrate but there are also reasons to be disappointed. One example is South Africa that miraculously managed to end apartheid in 1994 without falling into a full scale civil war. As Nelson Mandela said in one of his speeches, the introduction of democracy would not only liberate people but also greatly improve their social and economic situation (Mandela 1994, 414). Available statistics gives a surprising bleak picture for this promise. Since 1994, the country has not managed to improve the time children on average go to school with one single month. Economic inequality remains at a world record level, life-expectancy is down by almost six years and the number of women that die when they give birth has more than doubled.[1] Simply put, for many central measures of human well-being, the South African democracy has not delivered. Another example has been provided by Amartya Sen in an article comparing "quality of live" in China and India. His disappointing conclusion is that on most standard measures of human well-being, communist-autocratic Peoples' Republic of China now clearly outperforms liberal and democratically governed India (Sen 2011). Using detailed data about child deprivation including a set of thirty standard measures of national levels of human well-being and also some variables known to be

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[1] Data from the Quality of Government Data Bank, www.qog.pol.g.u.se

related to human well-being such as capacity for taxation, and including from between 75 and 169 countries, Holmberg and Rothstein (2011) find only weak, or no, or sometimes even negative, correlations between these standard measures of human well-being and the level of democracy as defined above. Maybe the most compelling evidence about the lack of positive effects of democracy on human well-being comes from a recent study about child deprivation by Halleröd et. al. (2013) using data measuring seven aspects of child poverty from 68 low and middle income countries for no less than 2,120,734 cases (children). The result of this large study shows that there is no positive effect of democracy on the level of child deprivation for any of the seven indicators (access to safe water, food, sanitation, shelter, education, health care and information).

This bleak picture of the effect of democratization on prosperity and other aspects of human well-being is confirmed by many other studies (Doucouliagos and Ulubasoglu 2008), (Norris 2012). In sum, the picture that comes out of available measures is this: Representative democracy is not a safe cure against severe poverty, child deprivation, economic inequality, illiteracy, being unhappy or not satisfied with one's life, infant mortality, short life-expectancy, maternal mortality, access to safe water or sanitation, gender inequality, low school attendance for girls, low interpersonal trust or low trust in Parliament. Why is this so? One explanation was given by Larry Diamond in a paper presented when the *National Endowment for Democracy in the United States* celebrated its first twenty-five years of operations:

> There is a specter haunting democracy in the world today. It is bad governance—governance that serves only the interests of a narrow ruling elite. Governance that is drenched in corruption, patronage, favouritism, and abuse of power. Governance that is not responding to the massive and long-deferred social agenda of reducing inequality and unemployment and fighting against dehumanizing poverty. Governance that is not delivering broad improvement in people's lives because it is stealing, squandering, or skewing the available resources (Diamond 2007, 19).

If we follow Diamond and instead of focusing on representative democracy turn to measures of state capacity (SC), quality of government (QoG) or good governance (GG), the picture of what politics can do for human well-being changes dramatically. For example, the above mentioned

study on child deprivation finds strong effects from measures of quality of government on four out of seven indicators on child deprivation (lack of safe water, malnutrition, lack of access to health care, and lack of access to information) controlling for GDP per capita and a number of basic individual level variables (Halleröd et al 2013). Other studies largely confirm that various measures of state capacity, quality of government and good governance have strong effects on almost all standard measures of human well-being, including subjective measures of life satisfaction (aka "happiness) and social trust (Norris 2012; Holmberg and Rothstein 2012; Ott 2010; Rothstein and Stolle 2008). Recent studies also find that absence of violence in the form of interstate and civil wars are strongly affected by measures of quality of government and more so than by the level of democracy (Lapuente and Rothstein 2014; Norris 2012)

Some may argue that the normative reasons for representative democracy should not be performance measures like the ones mentioned above, but political legitimacy. If people have the right to change their government through "free and fair elections", they will find their system of rule legitimate (Rothstein 2009). Here comes maybe an even bigger surprise from empirical research, namely that democratic rights seem not to be the most important cause behind people's perception of political legitimacy (Gilley 2009, 2006). Based on comparative survey data, several recent studies show that "performance" or "output" measures such as control of corruption, government effectiveness and the rule of law trumps democratic rights in explaining political legitimacy (Gilley 2009; Gjefsen 2012). As stated by Bruce Gilley, "this clashes with standard liberal treatments of legitimacy that give overall priority to democratic rights" (2006:58).

Thus, if the relevance of research in political science is understood in how it may improve human well-being and/or improve political legitimacy, political scientists have to a large extent been focusing on the least important part of the political system, namely how the access to power is organized (that is, electoral and representative democracy and democratization), ignoring the more important part of the state machinery – how power is exercised, or in other words, the quality of how the state manages to govern society. As argued by Fukuyama (2013), this seems to have been driven by an underlying ideological view inspired by neo-classical economics and particularly strong in the United States, which emphasizes the need to limit, check and control (and also minimize) the state which is basically seen as "predatory" organization. The result is that the quality of the administrative part of the state that we now know is of the outmost importance for increasing human well-being has been severely under-studied, under-theorized and under-measured in political science. It

is also (and maybe even more) surprising that public administration scholars have largely ignored this comparative "human well-being" aspect of their enterprise (cf.Pierre and Peters 2009). In sum, a political science that ignores to empirically study and lacks a sound theoretical conception of the part of the state that is most important for delivering human well-being (and political legitimacy!) deserves all the critique for being irrelevant that has lately been launched against the discipline (Cohen 2009). If the purpose of the political science enterprise is related to improving human well-being, we need to know three things. First, how should be conceptualize what is to be understood as "good governance", "quality of government" and/or "state capacity"? Secondly, how can we produce reasonably valid and reliable measures for this part of the state apparatus? Thirdly, how should we theorize the causal logic between quality of government, etc. and the type of outcomes mentioned above? In some cases, this is not so difficult since it is pretty obvious why an incompetent, corrupt, unprofessional and underfunded public health care system will not make child birth safe for women or babies. In other cases, this is more complicated. For example, why would high quality of government decrease the risk of civil war, make people more satisfied with their lives and make them think that in general, most people in their society can be trusted?

The Problem with "Governance"

A central problem in this discussion is that there are at least three very different ideas of what constitutes "governance" in the social sciences. The first has its background mainly in public administration and public policy analysis of western democracies. Its basis was the recognition, beginning in the early 1990s, that an increasing number of empirical studies had shown that western democracies no longer relied mainly on government authorities when trying to reach public or collective goals. It was argued that traditional public administration structures that used to have a monopoly, or at least was the main actor, in implementing public policies, had been weakened, replaced, or challenged by various forms of public-private partnerships and more lose networks of organizations including also various civil society organizations, trade organizations and private companies (Pierre 2000). The empirical studies showed that various forms of market solutions were also used for providing what were essentially public goods, such as for example publicly financed charter school systems and pseudo-market systems in the provision of health care. This development was seen as a result of a long standing critique in western democracies of the traditional type of Weberian type of public administration as being "rigid and bureaucratic, expensive and inefficient" (Pierre and Peters 2005, 5).

The critique of the Weberian model of bureaucracy as not being able to function well for the more interventionist and "human-processing" public policies, has been almost endless (Rothstein 1998; du Gay 2000). In this line of research and theory, governance is seen as a society's pursuit of collective goals, through various forms of steering and coordination, independently of the formal status of the actors that are involved (Pierre and Peters 2000; Levi-Faur 2012b). Normatively as well as empirically, large parts of this approach to governance, that I would prefer to label as the policy approach to governance, the main idea was built on a critique of the classical Weberian model of public administration. The critique pointed at the fact that this top-down steering of public administration lacked participatory elements and that it was incapable of handling the type of complex implementation tasks that modern western societies were in need of. Especially, what came to be known as implementation research, showed a number of pathological trends, when central policy ambitions and programs meet reality on the ground (Rothstein 1998, ch. 3). Under umbrella terms such as "new public administration", both more market oriented governance systems as well as more network and participatory systems were supposed to provide more flexibility and increased adaption of steering measures to a more demanding and competitive oriented society (Lynn 2012). A large part of this literature also argued that the public administration should use more of competition and performance based measures imported from the private sector (Laegreid and Christensen 2007).

This post-Weberian policy approach to governance has become a fairly large enterprise, judged by number of publications and citations (Levi-Faur 2012a). For example, it almost completely dominates the recently published 800 pages *Oxford Handbook of Governance*. The index of this handbook has only five entries about *corruption,* but fifty about *participatory governance* and forty-eight on *network governance.* The same can be seen in the only international academic journal that is titled *Governance –* searching for the term *management* in abstracts yields five times as many articles than a search on *corruption.* It should also be noted that this approach to governance rarely concerns issues about the public administration in developing countries (Pierre and Rothstein 2011)

The problem is that the conceptualization of governance in this approach is not overwhelmingly precise. On the contrary, leading governance scholars tend to make a virtue of conceptual ambiguity. An example is David Levi-Faur (2012a, 3) who in his introductory editorial chapter to the *Handbook of Governance* mentioned above states that this publication intends to demonstrate that "governance is increasingly becoming a broad concept that is central to the study of political, economic,

spatial and social order in general". In a critical analysis, Claus Offe (2009) has pointed to the fact that the concept is empty of agency. There is no verb form of the word like there is for government. Members of the government can govern but what it is that members of a network of governance are doing? In reality, the concept tends to capture all forms of collective social co-ordination, outside pure market relations or the family. The problem is that such a broad understanding of governance makes it difficult to distinguish it from all other forms of social co-ordination. To paraphrase what Aaron Wildavsky (1973) said about another once popular concept (yes, many years ago): "If planning is everything, maybe it's nothing".

In this policy approach to governance, there is now a widespread discussion of entities like "global governance", "corporate governance", "interactive governance" and "network governance" just to name a few. My impression is that governance in this public administration and public policy approach should be seen as a meta-concept for all possible forms of order (or disorder) in a number of different settings – from the very local to the global and from the very political and state-centred to various private networks that exists outside and has a minimal relation to the state. It may be possible to assess the quality of governance in specific sectors with this approach (see Levi-Faur 2012b). However, it goes without saying that "assessing the quality of governance", as it is understood in this policy approach for a whole country, region or even a city cannot be accomplished in any meaningful way. Leading scholars in this approach also argue that it is not a feasible enterprise to try to establish quantifiable measures of this type of governance for comparing analyses. Instead, they argue for qualitative "process-tracing" case studies (Torfing et al. 2012, p. 84,). While I think that this policy approach to governance empirically captures an important development in Western liberal democracies, the conceptual net is simply too big for assessing what goes on in a country as a whole. A second problem is that there are very few normative analyses of what should constitute "good" or "high quality" in this approach to governance since it is usually unrelated to the type of measures of human well-being discussed above. What can be done within this approach is assessing governance in particular sectors, such as the health care system in a country or region, or at certain levels of government, such as the city or village level.

A second approach to "governance" is what has become known as "participatory governance". This approach emphasize the role that ordinary citizens can play in influencing politics outside (or beside) the traditional channels in representative democracy such as voting and activity in political parties. A strong focus in this approach is given to various forms of deliberative practices in which

citizens can discuss and form opinions about how to solve various collective problems (Bevir 2010a; Bellina et al. 2009). This is inspired by theories emphasizing the importance of broad based and open systems for collective deliberation in public decision making either as a complement or as an alternative to the system of representative democracy. Another important part of this approach is how various "grass-root" organizations can become involved and consulted in policymaking as well as taking responsibility for the provision of public services. The development of this approach can be seen as a response to what has become known as the "democratic deficit" problem in many international organizations, the paramount example being the European Union. It is, however, also applied at the very local level when citizens are given possibilities for "voice" outside the electoral-parliamentary system such as in public hearings and other organized deliberative processes (Bevir 2010a; Popovski and Cheema 2010).

The discussion about the advantages of new and more participatory forms of engaging citizens in public decision-making in liberal democracies and the effects of increased possibilities for deliberation is in itself interesting. In my view, the problem of an increasing "democratic deficit" is in many cases for real. There are, however, two main problems with "democratic governance" from the perspective of increasing the relevance of political science by focusing on the part of the political system that turns out to have a significant effect on people's life situation. One is that "democratic governance" blurs the distinction between "access to power" and "exercise of power". The second is that so far, the lack of conceptual precision in this approach has prevented the production of any standard measure for this concept which can be used in comparative research.

What is interesting is that at the same time as the above mentioned approaches to governance started to mushroom, a very different idea of what this concept entails saw the light of day. The background of this approach was not located in studies of public administration and public policy in mature western democracies, but instead located in discussions in research about development and (the lack of) economic growth, in third-world (and later transition) countries. In common language, the approach argued that the institutionalized "rules of the game" should have a more central role in social science research and especially for explaining variation in social and economic development (North 1990; Shirley 2005; Greif 2005; Smith 2007). In this approach, that I would prefer to call the *political economy approach to governance,* the importance of informal institutions has often been stressed by leading scholars (Ostrom 1990; North 1998). However, in empirical research, these "rules of the game" have de facto become very oriented towards state centred variables, such as:

states' administrative capacity; the degree to which the rule-of-law principles are respected; the level of corruption in the public sector; the effectiveness and professionalism in the public administration; the secure enforcement of property rights, and meritocratic recruitment of civil servants (Smith 2007). This idea of "good governance" for achieving social and economic development has become central for many international development organizations. For instance, in the mid-1990s, when the World Bank started to emphasize the negative impact of corruption, in the public sector, on economic development, this lead to the establishment of the Work Bank Governance Indicators project (Kaufmann et al. 2005; Kaufmann 2004) (Kaufmann et al. 2005). An important empirical result was produced by Evans and Rauch (1999), who already in the late 1990s showed that a Weberian type of public administration had a positive impact on economic growth for developing countries.

Good governance is now used, in particular, by many national development agencies and international organisations, such as the World Bank and the United Nations. One example is the International Monetary Fund that in 1996 declared that *"promoting good governance in all its aspects, including by ensuring the rule of law, improving the efficiency and accountability of the public sector, and tackling corruption, as essential elements of a framework within which economies can prosper"* (Rothstein 2012a, 143). In development policy circles, this "good governance" agenda has to a large extent replaced what was known as *the Washington Consensus*. This approach stated that economic growth could be created by systematic deregulations of markets, tightening of public spending, guarantees for property rights, and large scale privatizations (Serra and Stiglitz 2008). The reason why this strategy did not work was, according to many observers, that poor countries lacked the necessary type of institutions that were "taken for granted" in neo-classical economics. Among those, leading development economist Dani Rodrik listed institutions such as "a regulatory apparatus curbing the worst forms of fraud, anti-competitive behavior, and moral hazard" and "the rule of law and clean government". According to Rodrik, these were institutions that economists usually took for granted "but which are conspicuous by their absence in poor countries" (Rodrik 2007, 97). In the former communist countries, this strategy became known as "shock-therapy capitalism". It ran into a number of problems, not least because its proponents did not pay adequate attention to the need for institutions, which would hinder fraudulent, anti-competitive, corrupt, and other similar types of destructive behaviour (Kornai et al. 2004).

As should be obvious, what is understood as "governance" in this development research perspective is very different from the approach that has come out of the post-Weberian critique of the hierarchical model of top-down steering in public administration analysis centred on problems in liberal western democracies. In the political-economy approach to development, governance is a very state-centred concept referring mainly to specific traits in the court system and the public administration (Norris 2012). A first conclusion is that much of the complaints that the governance concept is ill-defined (Lynn 2012, 49ff; Fukuyama 2011, 469) stems from the fact that these two almost completely different approaches, use the same term, each with their own specific intellectual as well as policy background. I would argue that much of the conceptual confusion in governance research is caused by the conflation of these two very different approaches to the subject. A second conclusion is that since the development approach has a more restricted idea of where "governance" is located, the possibility for creating a definition, that is specific and precise enough to be operationalized for assessing and measuring governance in a specific country should increase. This is also why I prefer the term "quality of government" (henceforth QoG) instead of "good governance".

It is to this task that the rest of this paper will be devoted. The conceptual discussion that will follow builds on and expands earlier efforts that I (together with Jan Teorell) have made in this conceptual enterprise (Rothstein and Teorell 2012; Rothstein 2011b; Rothstein and Teorell 2008). I will also take the opportunity to reply to some recent criticism. The overall ambition for this theoretical enterprise is nothing less than to provide what Fukuyama (2004, 22) has asked for, namely "a theory of institutions, that can be generalized, and that will provide the basis for policy guidance for poor countries". This "policy guidance" is based a normative theory about justice called "the capability approach" launched by Amartya Sen (Sen 1979, 2009). In extremely short terms, this theory suggests that justice requires that the state ensures all individuals a set of *basic resources* that will equalize their chances to reach their potential as humans which is the motivation for having measures human well-being as the core dependent variable. Thus, we are not interested in state capacity for states being successful in wars, or for being effective in ethnic cleansing or for oppressing various minorities. Instead, as argued by Hall and Lamont (2009), what we are interested in is why some states are more successful than others in supplying their citizens with the type of capabilities (or basic resources) as suggest by Sen's theory of justice. Below, I will introduce a number of dimensions on which this theoretical enterprise has to make choices and present my arguments for

the choices made. In this I rely heavily of the approach about concept formation (and misformation) in political science that goes back to Giovanni Sartori and that has been deepened by for example David Collier, John Gerring and Andreas Schedler (Schedler 2010). It should be kept in mind that we are striving for a definition of QoG that can be operationalized in such a way that we can actually measure the level of QoG in different countries (or regions or cities or branches of public administration within these entities).

Normative or empirical strategy

One issue is if QoG should be defined by a certain norm that pertain to how government power is exercised or if it is a more empirical "thing", for example bureaucratic "autonomy and capacity" as tentatively suggested by Fukuyama (2013). There are three reasons why I think a normative definition is necessary. First, terms like of "*good*" or "*quality*" are inherently normative. Something is "good" or has high/low "quality" in relation to a certain norm (or norms) and it is therefore necessary to specify this norm. Trying to define *good* governance while ignoring the normative issue of what should constitute "good" defies logic. Secondly, the empirical results show that when people make up their mind of whether or not they find their governments legitimate, how a state's power is exercised turns out to be more important for them than their rights pertaining to the "access" side of the political system. Since perceptions of political legitimacy are inherently normative, we have to theorize this norm. It should be noted that the legitimacy of how the access side of a democratic system should be organized is, according to Robert Dahl, based on a single basic norm, namely *political equality* (Dahl 2006, 1989). Thus, if what happens at the "output side" is more important for citizens when they make up their mind of whether their government is to be considered legitimate, we should be able to find the parallel basic norm for this part of the political system. Obviously, it cannot be "political equality" since most laws and public policies entails that citizens should be treated differently (pay different taxes, get different benefits, subsidies and services dependent on their specific situation and circumstances). Thirdly, the risk with empirical definitions is that they will become tautological. One example is the definition of good institutions provided by Acemoglu and Robinson (2012). Their now well-known argument is that it is institutions of a certain kind that promote economic prosperity. Such institutions, they argue, should be "inclusive". With this, they mean institutions that "allow and encourage participation by the great mass of people in economic activities that make best use of their talents and skill and enable them to make the choices they wish". Such institutions should also "secure private property, an unbiased system of

law, and a provision of services that provides a level playing field in which people can exchange and contract". Moreover, such institutions "also must permit the entry of new business and allow people to choose their careers". The list does not stop, the institutions that are needed for economic prosperity should also "distribute power broadly in society" and ensure that "political power rests with a broad coalition or plurality of groups" (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012, 73 and 80).

The problem with this definition is that it is very close to what the theory intends to explain. How surprised should we be that a society with such "inclusive" institutions will create the good and prosperous society and that a society with the opposite type of "extractive" institutions will be bad and poor? What they are saying is basically that a good society will produce a good (or prosperous) society. The central issue is this: If a society decides to organize its public administration according a certain norm (or set of norms) which states for example who will work in this administration and according to which principle(s) civil servants and professionals will make decisions, will this result in higher organizational capacity and will this make it more likely that the politicians will entrust this administration with a certain degree of autonomy? The empirical answer to this question seems to be in the affirmative. If civil servants are recruited based on the norm of impartiality, which means that factual merits for the job in question is what decides recruitment and promotion, this will lead to higher QoG, and higher state capacity, which in turn will lead to increased levels of human well-being (Dahlström et al. 2011; Rothstein 2012b; Teorell 2009). The question raised by Fukuyama (2013:349), i.e., if impartiality as the basic norm for how the state interacts with its citizens will result in increased state capacity - is thus no longer only "simply asserted" but empirically grounded.

Should the definition be based on political procedures or policy substance?

Is QoG something that should be defined by reference to a set of political procedures or should it be defined by reference to certain policies or outcomes. An example of the latter the well-known definition of "good governance" provided by Daniel Kaufmann and colleagues at the World Bank researchers which among other things include "sound policies" (Kaufmann et al. 2004). Others argue wants to include the "moral content" of enacted laws and policies (Agnafors 2013). The well-known problem with any substantive definition of democracy and thereby QoG is why people, that can be expected to have very different views about policies, should accept them. Since we are opt-

ing for a definition which can be universally accepted and applied, including specific policies becomes problematic. To use Rawls terminology, political legitimacy requires an "overlapping consensus" about the basic institutions for justice in a society so that citizens will continue to support them even when they have incommensurable conceptions of "the meaning, value and purpose of human life" and even if their group would lose political power (Rawls 2005). This is of course less likely to be the case if specific (sound) policies or moral content of the laws are included in the definition of QoG.

Including the World Bank's "sound policies" in the definition also raises the quite problematic question if international (mostly economic) experts really can be expected to be in possession of reliable answers to the question of what "sound policies" are. For example, should pensions, health care or education be privately or publicly funded (or a mix of these)? To what extent and how should financial institutions be regulated? Secondly, such a definition of QoG which is not restricted to procedures but includes the substance of policies raises what is known as the "Platonian-Leninist" problem. If those with superior knowledge decide policies, the democratic process will be emptied of most substantial issues. The argument against the "Platonian-Leninist" alternative to democracy has been put forward by one of the leading democratic theorists, Robert Dahl, in the following way: "its extraordinary demands on the knowledge and virtue of the guardians are all but impossible to satisfy in practice" (Dahl 1989, 65). All this implies that a strictly procedural definition of QoG is to be preferred. This also follows from the ambition to strive for a definition of QoG that is parallel to how the "access side" for liberal representative democracy usually is defined which speaks for a strictly procedural definition. The system known as liberal representative democracy should not in itself favour any specific set of policies or moral standards. From the perspective of legitimacy, it should be noted that there is ample evidence from experimental studies showing that when people decide if a decision by a public authority that affects them is just, they do not only take into consideration the "what did I get" issue. Instead, "how they got it" – the fairness in the actual procedure in which the decision is implemented is in most cases more important for them to accept the outcome, especially in cases when the outcome is a negative one (Tyler 1992; Levi et al. 2009).

There is a well-known drawback to all procedural definitions of political processes for decision-making, namely that they cannot offer a guarantee against morally bad decisions. As is well-known, there is no guarantee against perfectly democratically made decisions in a representative democracy

will result in severe violations of the rights of minorities and individuals. As Mann has argued, there is a "dark side" to democracy (Mann 2005). This is also the case for any procedural definition of QoG, be it ethical universalism (Mungiu-Pippidi 2006), impersonal rule (North et al. 2009), bureaucratic autonomy and capacity (Fukuyama 2013) or impartiality in the exercise of public power (Rothstein and Teorell 2008) . In this approach, I think the strategy suggested by John Rawls is the right one. His central idea is that if a society structures its systems for making and enforcing collective decisions in a fair way, this will increase the likelihood that the outcomes are normatively just. Thus, the *probability* that a political system that builds the access to power on the fair principle of "political equality" will produce outcomes that increase social and political justice is higher than if the access to power is organized in a different manner. The equivalent for the administrative side of the state would then be that if implementation of policies is based on a norm such as impartiality, the *probability* for normatively good outcomes would increase. As argued above, empirical research shows that the latter case is more probable than the former, that is, high QoG has a much stronger impact on measures of human well-being than representative democracy has. Given a fair political order such as high QoG, this is what we can expect but again, not guarantee. This is what Philippe Van Parijs has labelled the "Rawls-Machiavelli programme" which he argues has two components: From Rawls he takes what one should regard as a just political order and from Machiavelli what we, from empirical knowledge, can suppose is feasible for "real people" to accomplish (Parijs 2011).

An argument against defining QoG as based on the principle of impartiality in the exercise of public power is that, in theory, a Nazi extermination camp could be administered in an impartial way (Agnafors 2013, Fukuyama 2013). The first thing to be said about comments like this is that an overwhelming part of the historical research about how the Third Reich was administrated gives a completely different picture. Instead of impartiality, the "modus operandi" of the Nazi state was systematic political and ideological motivated favouritism, personalistic rule, clientelism, disregard and manipulation of the rule of law principles, disregarding professional knowledge and ad-hoc decision-making (Evans 2009; Broszat 1981; Aly 2007). The idea of the impartially administrated Nazi state or concentration camp belongs to the "crazy cases" approach in political philosophy which according to Goodin (1982), strongly increases the discipline's irrelevance. As he stated:

> First we are invited to reflect on a few hypothetical examples - the
> more preposterous, the better apparently. Then, with very little further
> argument or analysis, general moral principles are quickly inferred from

> our intuitive responses to these "crazy cases." ... Whatever their role in
> settling deeper philosophical issues, bizarre hypotheticals are of little
> help in resolving real dilemmas of public policy (Goodin 1982, 8)

Secondly, the same problem exists for the procedural principles following from political equality which forms the basic norm for representative democracy – there is nothing in this norm that hinders the majority in an ever so correct procedural representative democracy to decide illiberal policies that seriously violate human rights (Zakaria 2003; King 1999) . This problem of possible normatively unwanted outcomes is unavoidable if we want to stay within a procedural definition of QoG (or liberal democracy). That is why most democratization activists and organizations nowadays usually speak of "democracy and human rights" as if these are inseparable. There is certainly nothing that hinders policy activists and policy organizations to start promoting "quality of government and human rights" (something that I certainly would support). However, from a theoretical perspective, democracy, quality of government and human rights are separate things and should not be conflated since we want to know how they are empirically related. As stated by Fukuyama (2013:351), we probably would not like to "argue that the U.S. military is a low-quality one because it does things we disapprove of, say, invading Iraq?" If we define QoG by "good outcomes" or include "the moral status of the laws" and/or the "public ethos" (Agnafors 2013), we will be creating a conceptual tautology saying that society with a high moral standard and a good "public ethos" will result in good outcomes. Simply put, we must have the intellectual courage to admit that a public organization can have a high quality or capacity in doing what it does even if we from a moral perspective disapprove of what it is doing. Otherwise, QoG is just simply when a public authority efficiently implements the policies that we happen to like.

The advantage with a procedural strategy is that it is more likely to attain a broad based acceptance (i.e., Rawls' "overlapping consensus") even in a society with groups that have incommensurable ideas of "the good". If QoG would include "the moral status of the laws" (Agnafors 2013) as defined by some ideology, it is very unlikely that a Rawlsian "overlapping consensus" can be reached. However, if we decided to stay within a procedural definition of QoG, as the empirical results mentioned above show, this will increase the probability of outcomes that increases human well-being in the form of extended capabilities for citizens as suggested by Amartya Sen's theory of justice. Empirically, as argued above, there is ample evidence that this is also the case (Teorell 2009; Holmberg and Rothstein 2012; Charron et al. 2013). In sum, the procedural strategy in defining

QoG can be said to rest on an assumed probability that if the political system of a society is based on procedures which can be normatively motived as fair, this will increase the likelihood of normatively just outcomes. The alternative substantive definitional strategy is less likely to achieve "overlapping consensus" since there is not much agreement in many countries in the world of what should constitute what the economists argue are "sound policies" or the philosophers claim to be the right "moral status of the laws".

Should the definition of QoG be multi- or unidimensional?

Several attempts to define QoG have argued for a multi-dimensional or "complex" strategy. QoG should entail that decisions in the public administration adhere to "efficiency", "public ethos", "good decision-making", "transparency", accountability" and "stability" to name a few. Others have argued for a uni-dimensional strategy (Rothstein & Teorell 2008, Mungiu-Pippidi 2006, North et al 2009). There are several drawbacks with the multi-dimensional strategy. The first one is that we may treat what is basically an empirical question by definitional fiat. Simply put, we want to explain why high QoG makes some states' public administration more efficient than others and this implies that we cannot include efficiency in the definition of QoG since we don't want to state that efficiency explains efficiency. The same goes for "good decision-making" (as suggested by Agnafors 2013) and "capacity" (as suggested by Fukuyama 2013). We want a definition of QoG that can be helpful in explaining why the public administration in some states have a better capacity for making good decisions than the public administration in other states (or regions, cities) and if we include what we want to explain in the definition this explanatory purpose becomes impossible.

The problem with "accountability" is that it is only a tool. No organization or bureaucrat can be held accountable in general since you are always held accountable according to some specified normative standard(s). Without defining this normative standard(s), accountability as well as transparency are empty concepts. Another well-known problem with multi-dimensional definitions is how to handle a situation when a state for which we want to measure QoG shows very different values on the dimensions. The World Bank researchers include five different dimensions and Agnafors (2013) for example includes no less than six dimensions. The question then becomes how to handle a situation where the rule of law is zero but where there is maximum efficiency (or stability, or public ethos, or good decision making). Would that be a state with fifty per cent QoG? As Agnafors (2013) readily admits, there can be "no universal and complete weighing procedure" for

solving this problem. His solution is that "one can perform an *incomplete* weighing, at least in theory, because it will be inescapably messy in practice".

This line of reasoning is a luxury that many political philosophers think they can afford since they seldom engage in empirical research or take responsibility for the administrative or practical side of their policy suggestions (Wolff 2011). As Agnafors (2013) states it, he does not want to take responsibility for how his many criteria for what should be included in QoG should be weighed when they come into conflict. He readily admits that his method is "incomplete" and then he adds that he does not want to address "the extent to which such incompleteness can be overcome". Avoiding responsibility in this way does not work for political scientists who care about the relevance of their research for peoples' well-being. Producing a definition that cannot be operationalized in any meaningful sense will not help us answer the question of why some states are much more successful than others in implementing policies that cater to the basic needs (capabilities) of their citizens. If we were to follow this conceptual strategy, the question of what politics can do against, for example, sever child deprivation or extremely high rates of women dying when giving birth, will never be answered. Here, Agnafors (2013) as well as many other contemporary political philosophers stand in sharp contradiction to John Rawls who argued that "political philosophy must describe workable political arrangements that can gain support from real people" (Wenar 2012). Rawls' famous theory of justice does entail two basic principles but, *nota bene*, they are lexically ordered making it is clear which of them that has priority (Wenar 2012).

As argued by Van Parijs (2011:1), "it is sound intellectual policy… not to make our concepts too fat". He continues, and I agree, that "fat concepts hinder clear thinking and foster wishful thinking. By packing many good things under a single label, one is easily misled into believing that they never clash". As known ever since William Ockham's days, ontological parsimony is an analytical virtue. In sum, the conceptual obesity that is suggested by Agnafors (2013) and many others for what should constitute QoG will inevitably lead to explanatory impotence and thereby become unusable for policy recommendations. This is not only a question of internal academic civilities and intellectual hair-splitting since we now know that low QoG has severe effects on human well-being. As I have shown elsewhere (Rothstein 1998, 2011a), political philosophers often propose policies for which a large body of implementation research shows is beyond any known administration's capaci-

ty to carry out[2]. If a state would try to implement the policies they often suggest, this would lead to "bureaucratic nightmares" that in all likelihood would create a majority against policy efforts for increased human well-being. These über-elaborated, über-complex, and über fine-tuned principles (definitions) are thus counterproductive for realizing the principles the philosophers define as serving the purpose of increased justice.
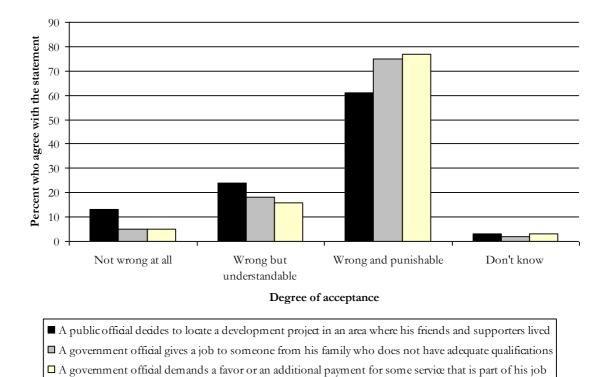
Is QoG universal or relativistic?

The development of the international good governance and anti-corruption regime since the late 1990s has not been without its critiques. One point that has been stressed in this critique is that the international anti-corruption agenda represents a specific western liberal ideal that is not easily applicable to countries outside that part of the world (Heidenheimer 2002; Bukovansky 2006; Bratsis 2003). There are at least three arguments against this type of relativistic conceptual framework. The first is that if we would accept a relativistic definition of corruption or QoG, all efforts to make empirical comparisons between countries in different parts of the world are in vain. It would impossible to verify that for example Denmark has less corruption than Nigeria since what is regarded as corruption in these two political cultures is in the relativistic approach completely different. This is the problem with the standard definition of corruption as "abuse of public power for private gain". Since the norm or principle that is "abused" is not defined, this definition is empty and thereby it invites relativistic notions of what corruption is. The second main argument against relativism in this area is normative and based on the similar discussion in the areas of human rights and democracy. First, the right not to be discriminated by public authorities, the right not to have to pay bribes for what should be free public services and the right to get treat with "equal concern and respect" from the courts are in fact not very distant for what counts as universal human rights. For example, for people that do not get the health care they are entitled to because they cannot afford the bribes the doctors demand, corruption can result in a life-threatening situation. The same can occur for citizens that do not get protection by the police because they do not belong to the "right" group. The third reason against a relativistic definition of corruption is empirical. Although the empirical research in this area is not entirely unambiguous, most of it points to the quite surprising result that people in very different cultures seem to have a very similar notion of what should count as corruption. Survey results from regions in India and in Sub-Saharan Africa show that people in
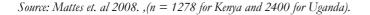
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[2] The major sinners are the approaches known as "luck-egalitarianism" and the advocates for "basic income".

these societies take a very clear stand against corruption and understands the problem in the same manner as it is understood by for example organizations such as the World Bank and Transparency International (Widmalm 2008, 2005; Miller et al. 2001; Nichols et al. 2004).

For example, asked by the Afrobarometer (2006) survey whether they consider it "not wrong at all," "wrong but understandable," or "wrong and punishable" if a public official: 1) decides to locate a development project in an area where his friends and supporters live; 2) gives a job to someone from his family who does not have adequate qualifications, and; 3) demands a favour or an additional payment for some service that is part of his job, a clear majority of respondents in countries severely hit by corruption such as Kenya and Uganda deemed all three acts both wrong and punishable (see figure 1 below).

FIGURE 1. MORAL APPROVAL OF CORRUPTION

Source: Mattes et. al 2008. ,(n = 1278 for Kenya and 2400 for Uganda).

As can be seen, it is only a small minority of the respondents who find that such acts are "not wrong at all" and the group that finds them "wrong but understandable" is also small. Widmalm (2005, 2008) finds similar results in a survey study of villages in India. Although, in reality an absent figure in these villages, Widmalm finds that the Weberian civil servant model (impartial treatment of citizens disregarding income, status, class, caste, gender, and religion), has a surprisingly large support among the village population. In other words, the idea put forward by among others Heidenheimer (2002) that the public acceptance of what is commonly understood as corruption varies significantly across cultures does not find support here.

The reason why people, although condemning corruption, participate in corrupt practices seem to be that they understand the situation as a "collective action" problem where it makes little sense to be "the only one" that refrains from using or accepting bribes and other kick-backs (Karklins 2005; Persson et al. 2013). As Gunnar Myrdal stated in his analysis of the "soft state" problem in developing countries already in the 1960s,"Well, if everybody seems corrupt, why shouldn't I be corrupt" (Myrdal 1969, 409). In his anthropological study of corruption in Nigeria, Jordan Smith concludes that "although Nigerians recognize and condemn, in the abstract, the system of patronage that dominates the allocation of government resources, in practice people feel locked in" (Jordan Smith 2007). It makes little sense to be the only honest policeman in a severely corrupt police force, or the only one in the village who does not pay the doctor under the table to get ones children immunized if everyone else pays (Persson, Rothstein & Teorell 2013). In his classic study of clientelism and particularism in southern Italy, Banfield (1958) found that it made perfect sense to all the families in the village of Montegranesi to be amoral familists since everyone was expected to be or eventually to perform according to this social template. The spatial universalism of corruption increases theoretical depth when considering that even temporal approaches to this phenomenon have provided similar conclusions. Analyses of what counted as corruption in very distant pasts, such as the Roman Empire or XIII century France, give the impression of not being different from contemporary notions of the concept (MacMullen 1988; Jordan 2009).

Another set of important empirical results that questions the relativistic position comes from recent comparisons of results from expert surveys and surveys of representative samples of citizens. The first thing to note is that various expert-based surveys and estimations for measuring corruption and other theoretically related concepts of "good governance" such as the rule-of-law and the extent to which impartiality is the basic norm for the civil service in different countries, correlate at a

surprisingly high level (Holmberg et al. 2009). Even more interesting is that the expert-based measures of the level of corruption in various countries and measures based on representative samples of the population correlate strongly. One example is a recent study by Svallfors using the European Social Survey carried out in 2008 that covers 29 countries in both western and Eastern Europe (Svallfors 2012). This survey had questions such as if people perceived that the police or the public health care gave "special advantages to certain people or deal with everyone equally?" Svallfors compared the answers to questions like this from the sample populations in the 29 countries with three different expert-based measures: the International Country Risk Guide indicator of Quality of Government, the Transparency International Corruption Index and the World Bank Estimate of Government Efficiency. Comparing the results (using standard Pearson's correlations) from the expert based survey measures and the measures from surveys with representative samples of the population, his conclusion is the following: "we find amazingly strong correlations between the experts' judgments and the public's perceptions. The correlation coefficient is no less than 0.81, which indicates that the measures are very strongly interrelated". This strongly suggests that perception of corruption correlates with perception of good government, and by extension that judgment on the quality of the political and administrative institutions are not seen as a particularistic product.

Another similar comparison has been done by Bechert and Quandt based on the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). In its 2006 survey, the ISSP for the first time included questions that would measure the extent of perceptions of corruption. Comparing the results from 35 countries, including not only the West but also the countries in Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and South America, with Transparency Internationals expert based measure of corruption, they conclude: "The two measurement tools of corruption, one based on expert interviews, the other on probability samples, reveal astonishingly similar results" (Bechert and Quandt 2009, 100). Yet another recent survey of corruption carried out by the QoG Institute on behalf of the EU commission reveals the same pattern. This study consisted of interviews with 34000 persons in 27 EU countries and has question to not only capture perceptions but also direct experiences of corruption. Again, the correlation between results about the level of corruption in various EU countries from the survey of "ordinary people" and expert based measures are surprisingly similar (Charron et al. 2013). The conclusion from these results are that "ordinary people" in both high and low corrupt countries have the same perceptions and also experience the same level of corruption as the international

country experts. In sum, there are both empirical and normative arguments speaking in favour of a generally accepted definition of corruption and QoG.

One way to understand why there seems to exist a universal understanding of what should count as corruption (or low QoG) despite its enormous variation both in types, frequency and location, is what could be labelled as a *public goods approach* to this problem. In all societies/cultures, in order to survive, all groups of people have had to produce at least a minimal set of public goods such as security measures, a basic infrastructure or organized/collective forms for the provision of food. As Fukuyama (2011:29ff) has argued, the very idea proposed by rational choice oriented contracts theorists that we as humans started out as atoms in a state of nature and then decided to rationally accept a "social contract" is highly misleading.

The very nature of a good being "public" is that it is to be managed and distributed according to a principle that is very different from that of private goods. The public good principle implies that the good in question should not be distributed according to the private wishes of those who are given he responsibility for managing them. When this principle for the management and distribution of public goods is broken by those entrusted with the responsibility for handling the public goods, the ones that are victimized see this as malpractice and/or as corruption. This is why corruption is a concept that is related to the political and not the private sphere and why it is different from (or a special case of) theft and breaches of trust in the private sector Much of the confusion about cultural relativism in the discussion about what should count as corruption stems from the issue that what should count as "public goods" differ between different societies and cultures. For example, in an absolutist feudal country where the understanding may be that the central administration is the private property of the lord/king, this state is not seen as a public good. In many indigenous societies with non-state political systems, local communities have usually produced some forms of public goods, for example for taking care of what Elinor Ostrom (1990) defined as "common pool resources" which are natural resources that are used by members of the group but that risks depletion if overused. Such resources are constantly faced with a "tragedy of the commons" problem and is thus in need of public goods in the form of effective regulations to prevent overuse leading to depletion.   My argument departs from the idea that it is difficult to envision a society without some public goods. The point is that when these public goods are handled or converted into private goods this is generally understood as corruption independently of the culture. A second conclusion is thus that we should not expect indigenous people to have a moral or ethical

understanding corrupt practice that differs from for example what is the dominant view in western organizations like Transparency International and the World Bank or as it is stated in the UN convention against corruption. Instead, what may differ is what is seen as falling under the public goods category. An example could be that even in cases where there is not a system for taxation, there are still certain individuals who have been selected to perform functions as arbitrators or judges. These functions are to be understood as public goods because they make it possible to solve disputes between village members/families in a non-violent way. These arbitrators may, in several cases, receive gifts from the parties involved for their services. Such gifts may for a westerner look like bribes, but they are usually not seen as bribes by the agents , who make a functional distinction between bribes and gifts (Sneath 2006; Werner 2000). The reasons for why they are not seen as bribes by the local villagers is that: a) the gifts are publicly given, and b) there is a culturally defined level for how big such gift can be. This implies that the gift is to be seen as a fee for a service, not a bribe. It would only be a bribe, and would also by the local people be seen as a bribe, if it was given in a way that would influence adjudication by favouring one party over another. In this case the public good is converted into a private one, and this is perceived as corruption. Understanding corruption in this public goods approach can thus serve as a solution to the relativism – universalism puzzle that has plagued discussions about this problem for a long time, especially in the lights of anthropological reservations on applying the dichotomies public-private, moral-immoral.

Conclusions: Quality of Government and Impartiality

The conclusion so far is that we should strive for a normative, procedural, universal and parsimonious definition of QoG that, moreover, can be operationalized and measured. The definition should not include the system of access to power (e.g., representative democracy) since we want to be able to explain the relation between representative democracy and quality of government. It should also not include things like efficiency, capacity and human rights since we want to be able to explain if QoG has a positive or negative impact on these things. Following the "Rawls-Machiavelli" programme as suggested by Van Parijs, this conceptual strategy can be seen as resting on the assumption (or hope) that if we as political scientists can suggest "just institutions" for making and implementing collectively binding decisions, the people that come to operate these "just institutions" are also likely to produce morally good outcomes. The alternative, that we should suggest specific ("sound") policies or prescribe the "moral status" of the laws runs in the face of the

need to reach an "overlapping consensus" for how collectively binding decisions should be made and implemented. Again, no such procedural definition (of democracy or QoG) can work as a guarantee against morally bad outcomes – we are dealing with probabilities, not absolute certainty. Since empirical research shows that higher levels of QoG (but not representative democracy) are related to higher levels of human well-being (and political legitimacy), following Amartya Sen's capability-oriented theory of justice, we as political scientists have a moral obligation to increase our ambitions to define, measure and study what takes place at the "output" side of the political system. This is not an internal academic affair in which you can sacrifice what actually works for what would be an ideal (but un-implementable) definition. I have no doubt stating that a major part of human misery in today's world is caused by the fact that a majority of the world's population are forced to live under dysfunctional (low quality) government institutions.

The question is then what would be the equivalent to Robert Dahl's *political equality* as the basic norm for the "output" side of the political system. Based on the type of rights-based liberal political theory launched by philosophers such as Brian Barry and John Rawls, Jan Teorell and I have suggested such a basic norm, namely *impartiality* in the exercise of public power. This is defined in the following way: "*When implementing laws and policies, government officials shall not take anything about the citizen or case into consideration that is not beforehand stipulated in the policy or the law*" (Rothstein & Teorell 2008, 170). This definition is fairly precise and, as argued above, it can be applied universally. As we have shown in other studies, this definition of QoG can be operationalized and measured in both expert surveys and surveys with representative samples of the population. Neither experts nor ordinary people seem to have problems understanding and answering the battery of survey-questions that follows from this definition of QoG. Moreover, these measures largely perform in the expected way when correlated with various outcome measures such as measures of human-well-being.

In contrast to the standard definition of corruption, our definition makes clear what basic norm is being "abused" when corruption, clientelism, favouritism, discrimination, patronage, nepotism or undue support to special interest groups in the implementation of public policies occurs. It excludes the content of policies since it is strictly procedural and it does not include what we want to explain such as economic efficiency, administrative capacity or good decision-making.

What does it mean to be impartial in the exercise of public power? Cupit writes: "To act impartially is to be unmoved by certain sorts of considerations — such as special relationships and personal

preferences. It is to treat people alike irrespective of personal relationships and personal likes and dislikes." (Cupit 2000). The connection to "good" or "quality" is motivated by the fact that impartiality is the driving notion behind John Rawls' liberal right-based theory of justice. As Goodin argues: "Certainly, the antithesis of justice is favouritism" (Goodin 2004, 100). In this context, impartiality is not a demand on actors on the input side of the political system, but first and foremost an attribute of the actions taken by civil servants, professional corpses in public service, law enforcement personnel and the like.

In political philosophy, this distinction between which norms should guide the content versus the procedural sides of the political system is readily seen in Brian Barry's important book *Justice as Impartiality*. Barry argues that impartiality should be a normative criterion in the exercise of political power: "like cases should be treated alike" (Barry 1995, 126). His idea of "second order impartiality" implies that the input side of the political system should be arranged so that it gives no special favour to any conception of "the good". However, as Barry readily admits, his theory "accepts that a demand of neutrality cannot be imposed on the outcomes" (Barry 1995, 238). Accordingly, when it comes to decisions about the content of the policies that governments should pursue, it is not neutrality or impartiality but "reasonableness" that is his main criterion (Barry 1995, 238) By this he means that people engaged in the political process should give sound arguments based on a secular understanding of knowledge for why they prefer certain policies over others. In Barry's words: "What is required is as far as possible a polity in which arguments are weighed and the best arguments win, rather than one in which all that can be said is that votes are counted and the side with the most votes wins" (Barry 1995, 103).

The implication is the one argued for here, namely that impartiality cannot be a moral basis for the content of policies that individuals, interests groups and political parties pursue on the input side of the political system since reasonableness is not the same as impartiality. For example, in a given situation there may be good reasons for lowering pensions and increasing support to families with children. This is, however, not the same as being impartial between these two groups, because there is no such thing as an impartial way to decide in a case like this (Arneson 1998). This is particularly problematic when it comes to conflicts over which public goods a state should provide since such goods can often not be divided into minor parts (like money), something that often makes reasonable compromises easier to reach. Either the airport or dam is built or nothing is built (Miller 2004). The implication is that when a policy has been decided upon by the political system, be it deemed

just or unjust according to whatever universal theory of justice one would apply, QoG implies that it has to be implemented in accordance with the principle of impartiality.

Impartiality in the exercise of political power should not be conflated with equal treatment but instead that we do not "favor some people over others in illegitimate ways" (Stone 2011, 71). For example, applicants to positions in the civil service that have better qualification should be favoured over those with lower qualifications. A public school system would usually give children with learning problems more support than children that do not suffer such problems. Impartiality implies that only legitimate reasons for differential treatment are acceptable and what constitute such a legitimate reason is stated in the policy and/or the law. Impartiality is also not to be conflated with indifference (Stone 2011, 79). We do not want social workers or health care personnel to be indifferent to the problems or suffering of their clients. However, we would strongly object if patients/clients were given favours because they had good political connections, had paid bribes or belonged to the "right" ethnic group.

 It should also be underlined that the argument is not that impartiality is equivalent to "objectivity". Terminology is a tricky business (especially if you trade in a language that is not your own). Still we would say that, as a concept, objectivity has an absolute and perfectionist ring to it that implies that humans can have full knowledge of a case and weigh all things equal and come down with a decision as if the outcome was decided by some natural law process. We would argue that impartiality implies somewhat more human and realistic demands. First, it is about a "matter of factness", implying that things which according to the policy/law should not have an impact on the decision are to be left out. Secondly, it requires that the public official should not be a party to the case, neither directly nor indirectly. Moreover, the idea of QoG as impartiality notion stands in sharp contrast to the public choice idea of public officials maximizing their self-interest. For example, an impartial civil servant should not be susceptible to bribery, should not decide in cases where his/her friends and relatives are involved, and should not favour any special (ethnic, economic, or any other type of organized) interest when applying laws and rules.

It is important to note that, for many, increased social justice implies policies that contain more partiality (for example, extra resources to underprivileged groups). However, proponents of such policies usually do not want these policies, once enacted, to be implemented in a partial way where bureaucrats are given total discretion in each and every case (Tebble 2002; Young 1990). For exam-

ple, it may be perfectly legitimate to argue for the government to establish academic positions that only women (or some other disadvantaged group) could apply for given the gender inequality that exists in higher academic positions. However, once such a position is announced and a number of women apply, the impartiality norm takes overhand since those who have argued for such a quota system usually wants the most qualified in the preferred group to get the position. This conditionality in the application of impartiality as a justice principle goes in fact all the way back to John Stuart Mill:

> Impartiality, in short, as an obligation of justice, may be said to mean being exclusively influenced by the considerations which it is supposed ought to influence the particular case in hand, and resisting the solicitations of any motives which prompt to conduct different from what those considerations would dictate (Mill 1992 (1861), 154).

As stated by Rawls, "a just system must generate its own support" (Rawls 1971, 261). The argument presented here implies that such just political system must be based on two completely opposite norms which, moreover, must be handled simultaneously in the very same system. At the "input" side of this machinery, partisanship (partiality) is to be seen a fully legitimate. Political parties, interest groups and civil society organizations are in their full right to argue for the enactment of laws and policies that cater to their specific and often very partisan political ideologies. This is, after all, what democratic politics is about – a competition by various economic, ideological and/or cultural interests who wants the state to deliver policies that cater to their interests. However, as shown above, when policies and laws are to be implemented, political legitimacy as well as overall human well-being is best served if policies and laws are implemented by the opposite norm, namely impartiality. To continue with Rawls, the institutions "must be not only just but framed so as to encourage the virtue of justice in those who take part in them" (1971, 262). As the empirical results presented above indicate, this is precisely what QoG as impartiality does since it increases both human well-being *and* political legitimacy.

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