

COMPARING TRUST IN GOVERNMENT ACROSS COUNTRIES: WHAT ROLE FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?

A Performing Public Sector: The Second TransAtlantic Dialogue
Leuven, Belgium
1-3 June 2006

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ABSTRACT

Trust in government is increasingly investigated by scholars. In the picture of trust in government, a special place is given to trust in civil service. Several public administration reforms have been motivated by a willingness to strengthen trust in government. However, the relationship between civil service performance and trust in government is hard to investigate. In this paper we look into some difficulties in comparing trust in civil service and government across different countries. Based upon Eurobarometer and World Values Study (WVS) data, we argue that trust in government is not a good indicator of civil service performance, and that it is hard to assess what a ranking of trust ratings actually means.

1 INTRODUCTION¹

For the past decades there has been an explosion on literature regarding trust in government (Van de Walle, 2004). Citizens' trust in the public sector has come to take a central place in the public sector reform discourse (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). The reason is threefold. First there is empirical and theoretical literature suggesting that low trust in government may have several consequences that are undesirable. Second, there is the changing relationship between citizens and government. And third, there is the (disputed) observation by some that trust in the public sector is declining.

1.1 Some possible consequences²

Despite the fact that there are some doubts about the actual impact of (low) trust in government (Langer, 2002; Moore, 2002) most authors suggest low trust has an effect on several things. Nye (1997) sees three consequences of distrust in government, namely less willingness to obey the law, to pay taxes and to work for government. Several empirical studies support his claims. Scholz & Lubell (1998) investigate the effect of trust in government on taxpaying. They find clear evidence that higher trust increases tax compliance, even after controlling for duty, fear, selection bias and potential endogeneity.

Since most taxes are grounded in laws, it is just a small step from paying taxes to obeying the law in general. Government policies are often described in terms of convincing citizens or working with a carrot or a stick. The easiest way to implement a policy obviously is convincing people to do something. A second path to implementation is working with a carrot. This is essentially a form of convincing people, but with a compensation that attracts citizens to follow government regulations. An expensive and labour-intensive way towards implementation, is using coercive methods (the stick). Gamson (1968) states that trust enables governments to act without having to repeatedly resort to coercion or the use of force. In the long run, this may result in a reverse relationship: high levels of public trust stimulate public sector productivity, since trusting citizens are more willing to comply, which lessens the need for enforcement (Levi, 1996), thereby lowering transaction costs (Fukuyama, 1995). If this is true, then the potential benefits of trust in government are significant.

¹ This paper is partially based upon Van Roosbroek & Van de Walle (2006) and Van de Walle, Van Roosbroek & Bouckaert (2005).

² We will not discuss the possible political or economic consequences.

Lastly, low trust may influence the willingness to make sacrifices during a crisis (Tyler, 2001), or to serve in the military (Levi, 1997). Public distrust leads to a shrinking policy agenda, as policy leaders do not dare to take lead on initiatives when trust is low, as they fear public resistance (Hetherington, 2001).

1.2 Changing role of the citizen

Since the 1980s we have seen a wave of public sector reforms, with a clear goal of promoting efficiency. A lot of these reforms have been characterised as part of the 'New Public Management' (NPM) philosophy. The OECD (1995) describes the characteristics of NPM:

"a greater focus on results and increased value for money, devolution of authority and enhanced flexibility, strengthened accountability and control, a client- and service-orientation, strengthened capacity for developing strategy and policy, introducing competition and other market elements, and changed relationships with other levels of government".

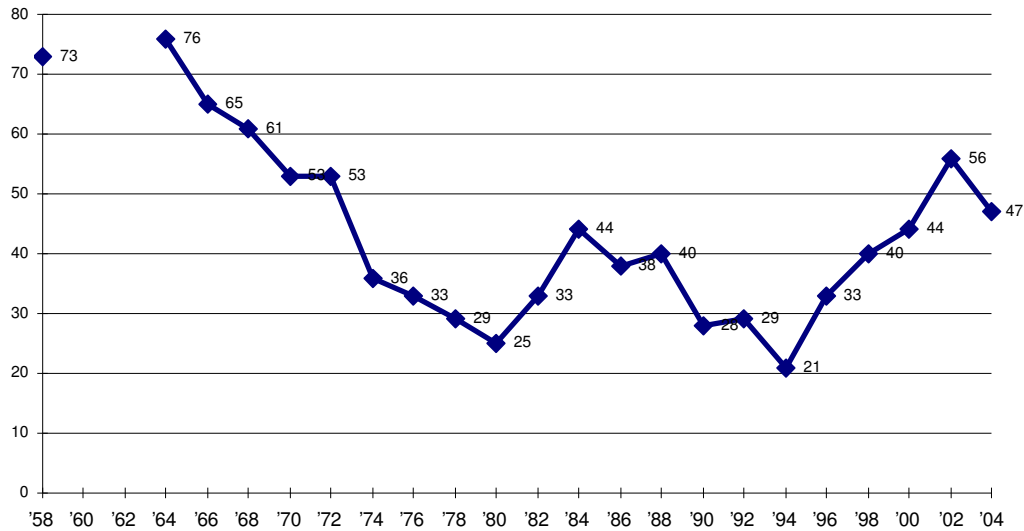
Fundamental to NPM was the changed role of citizens. Consumer sovereignty is seen as a key element of NPM by a.o. Aberbach & Christensen (2005). Less attention is given to obligations towards the community. This was clearly visible in the UK's Citizen's Charter, where choice and competition were key elements. In contrast to the republican tradition, citizens were primarily seen as self-interested individuals and not as a part of a community that transcends their individual interests (Aberbach & Christensen, 2005; Drewry, 2005). Even though NPM is often highly contested (e.g. Box et al., 2001) it is clear that there is an increased focus by governments on the citizen as a whole, and on the citizen as consumer in particular.

1.3 Declining trust

As Van de Walle et al. (2005) state, participants in the 'trust' debate often take low levels of public satisfaction with service delivery and permanently declining citizens' trust in the public sector for granted. The basis for the latter is often found in the American National Election Studies. This well-known source of empirical results on trust in government is based on the following question: *"How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right: just about always, most of the time or only some of the time?"*

This survey evidence suggest a quasi permanent decline in the percentage of Americans indicating they trust government 'most of the time' or 'just about always' between 1962 and 1980, and 1984 and 1994 (all time low). This has resulted in numerous publications assessing the causes and effects of this decline (e.g. Nye, Zelikow, et al., 1997). Less attention has however been given to the sharp rise in trust between 1994 and 2002.

Figure 1: Trust in government (US)



Source: American National Election Studies

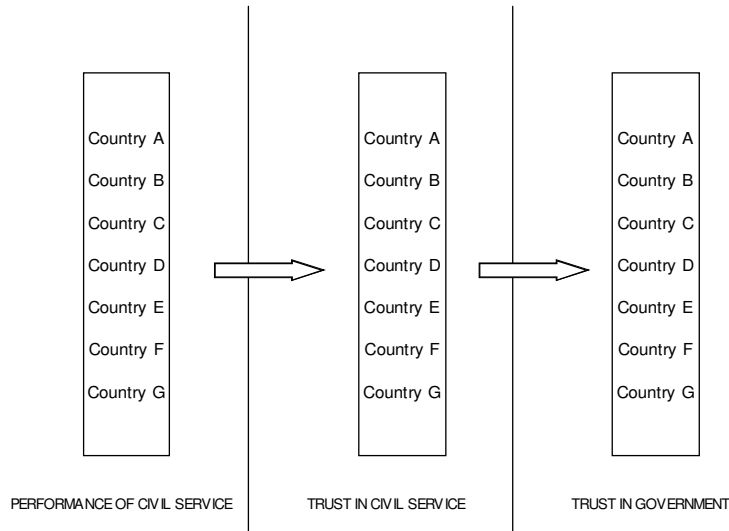
1.4 Conclusion

In short, we see a combination of three evolutions. In the NPM philosophy, the citizen has been given a new place. He (or she) is seen as a rational agent that mainly pursues his self-interest. Moreover, the citizen is increasingly (declining trust) said to be convinced that government is not to be trusted. Logically, he will find that government can not be relied on to defend the citizen's interests. This would - as empirical literature has shown - lead to severe consequences, such as a lower willingness of citizens to pay taxes, to obey the law,... It is for these reasons that trust in government has been the focus of research for quite some time now.

In reaction to this, several initiatives have been taken to measure or strengthen trust in government (see Van de Walle et al. (2005) for a brief overview). Ideally, governments hope that better performance will lead to trust in civil service, which in turn will have an effect on trust in government (see Figure 2). In this paper we want to assess some reasons why it is so difficult to

use trust in government and/or civil service as an indicator for administrative performance in international comparisons. We argue that survey results are influenced by several forces that make it hard to assess what trust rankings actually mean.

Figure 2: An ideal model for comparing rankings



2 TRUST IN GOVERNMENT: COMPARISONS THROUGH TIME AND ACROSS COUNTRIES

Existing surveys allow us to compare across time, countries and institutions. The World Values Study (WVS) is undoubtedly the oldest and biggest survey examining trust in civil service internationally³. It allows us to examine evolutions of trust in civil service and to compare across countries. In the last column, we compare the first and the last measurement. A gap of five percentage points is considered to be a significant (upwards or downwards) evolution.

³ Philosophers and sociologists have often distinguished between 'trust' and 'confidence' (Bouckaert et al., 2002). However the concepts are frequently used interchangeably in polls and surveys, and are often meant to measure citizens' overall attitude towards institutions. Some languages do not have different words for 'trust' and 'confidence'. For these reasons, we will consider both concepts to be synonyms.

Table 1: Confidence in civil service (OECD members), by country

<i>% confidence</i>	1981	1990	1995-1997	1999-2000	
Australia	47		38		↓
Austria		42		42	→
Belgium	46	42		45	→
Canada	51	50		50	→
Czech Republic		34		22	↓
Denmark	47	51		55	↑
Finland	53	33	34	41	↓
France	52	49		46	↓
Germany	32	38	48	39	↑
Greece				14	
Hungary ⁴	74	50		50	↓
Iceland	34	46		56	↑
Ireland	54	59		59	↑
Italy	27	25		33	↑
Japan	31	34	38	32	→
Luxembourg				59	
Mexico	23	28	41	22	→
Netherlands	44	46		37	↓
New Zealand			29		
Norway	58	44	51		↓
Poland		79	35	33	↓
Portugal		36		54	→
Slovakia		30		39	↑
South Korea	88	61	78	67	↓
Spain	39	35	42	41	→
Sweden	46	44	45	49	→
Switzerland			46		
Turkey		50	67	60	↑
Great Britain	47	46		46	→
United States of America	58	60	51	55	→
Northern Ireland	59	57		52	↓

Source: World Values Study

In some countries trust rises sharply (e.g. Iceland, Portugal). Other countries display a decline in trust in civil service (e.g. Norway). In a last group trends in trust levels are stable or not linear. In a country like Mexico trust rises between 1980 and 1997, but is back at its original level in 2000. The overall conclusion is that there is no clear pattern across nations as regards to trust in

⁴ It is of course possible to question the results in some countries. Hungary and South Korea can not be described as democracies at the time of the first measurement. An unreliable survey climate, together with possible manipulation, may help to explain the extremely high trust ratings (74 and 88%, higher than any other OECD country at that time).

government. A universal decline has not taken place, as far as available data allows us to conclude (see also Stoyko, 2002).

When comparing countries, we see that there are large differences between the OECD member countries. Confidence is rather low in countries as Greece, Japan, Mexico and the Czech Republic. On the other hand, we see very high levels of confidence in the civil service in Turkey, Korea, Luxemburg and Ireland.

3 DIFFICULTIES IN CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISONS

Above we compared trust ratings between different countries. But what do they tell us? Can comparisons of this type be useful to make cross-country links with performance? On an individual basis, theoretical and empirical studies have investigated the link between performance and trust. Van de Walle & Bouckaert (2003) indicate that there are several possible relations between these two variables. The micro-performance approach - that is frequently used (implicitly or explicitly) in government reforms - states that performance leads to satisfaction, which will lead to trust. There are however several other possible models (disconnection, dominant impact⁵, multiple influences, moderated reversed causality and reversed causality). Theoretically, a direct link between performance and trust is problematic.

Empirical studies support the claim that the relationship performance → trust is not straightforward (Kampen et al., 2003). Bouckaert et al. (2002) mention a meta-analysis of customer surveys in the USA by Miller and Miller (1991). One of the conclusions of the analysis was that fire services always get a better grade than road repair services. The implication of this finding is that a fire service which, according to objective performance measures, performs bad will still receive a higher subjective rating than a well performing road repair service.

Clearly, the link between an individual's trust in government/civil service and 'objective' performance is problematic. What are the consequences for making comparisons across countries? We argue that comparing trust across countries is equally difficult, and identify some problems⁶ in comparing trust ratings across countries.

⁵ These first two models take a.o. into account that some citizens do not perceive all public services to be a part of 'government'. They may make independent judgments of governments as a whole and its individual agencies. Moreover some particular agencies have a very strong impact on citizens' opinion on government.

⁶ There are other problems (e.g. methodological problems of doing cross-country research like data analysis and translation), that we will not discuss within this framework.

3.1 A 'trusting' attitude?

Describing trust in a specific institution as part of a broader feeling within society has been a key topic in the literature about 'social capital'. Several empirical studies have already shown the link between trust in different institutions. Christensen & Lægveid (2005) find that Norwegians trust in institutions is of a 'general' nature: "*a high level of trust in one institution tends to extend to other institutions*". The observation that citizens do not distinguish sharply between institutions is relevant because it is a very strong argument against the hypothesis that trust in civil service is a mere evaluation of the functioning of this institution.

The World Values Study shows some more evidence. Table 2 proves that there is something like a 'trusting attitude'. We see some moderate/strong correlations between e.g. confidence in major companies and confidence in civil service. At first sight there seems to be no logical connection between the actual performance of civil service and the image of institutions like the women's movement. The relatively high correlation can only be explained by a factor that lays behind all trust questions, a general ('trust') attitude.

Table 2: Correlation between confidence in civil service and confidence in other institutions (OECD members)

	Correlation coefficient	Low	High	N
Major companies	.34	.15	.52	31457
The women's movement	.33	.17	.54	15775
Labor unions	.32	.15	.46	41513
The environmental protection movement	.32	.16	.53	16175
The press	.24	.14	.41	43526
Television	.21	.15	.35	16768
Churches	.20	.10	.32	43158

Source: World Values Study, most recent wave

This would not be problematic if this general attitude would have the same effect on trust in civil service in each country. However, this is not the case. The extent to which citizens make separate evaluations of political (or other) and administrative institutions depends from country to country. This is clearly shown in Table 2. There is a big difference between the lowest and the highest Spearman correlations, suggesting that in some countries citizens make a more 'experience-based' evaluation of civil service, while in others the evaluation is mainly based on general feelings.

We also conducted an analysis of correlations between confidence in civil service and confidence in parliament. The extent to which both were linked, varied. Correlation was highest in Japan (0.72) and lowest in South Korea (0.16). Both examples are listed below.

Table 3: Trust in parliament and civil service in Japan and South Korea

Confidence in civil service		Japan				South Korea			
		A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much	None at all	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much	None at all
Confidence in parliament	A great deal	<u>1.3</u>	0.4			<u>0.4</u>	0.5	0.4	
	Quite a lot	0.2	<u>17.5</u>	2.1	0.1	0.7	<u>6.8</u>	1.8	0.2
	Not very much		10.4	<u>45.2</u>	0.9	3.0	32.4	<u>13.5</u>	0.8
	None at all	0.1	1.5	6.9	<u>13.3</u>	2.6	20.4	11.1	<u>5.2</u>

Source: World Values Study, 2000-2001

In Japan more than three quarters of the citizens had exactly the same amount of trust in parliament as in civil service (underlined). In South Korea, this is only one quarter. 26.2% of the South Korean respondents give an answer that is clearly⁷ different (in bold), compared to only 1.7 in Japan. It appears as though the South Korean citizens can make a sharper distinction between civil service and parliament.

To conclude, it should be clear that trust in civil service is globally embedded in a larger attitude. Therefore, trust in this institution cannot be reduced to the objective performance of civil service. This does not mean that there is no link at all between trust and performance. We argued however, that the effect of the general attitude differs from country to country. This seriously hampers the extent to which trust in civil service can be described as an indicator of performance. Theoretically it is perfectly possible to imagine situations where civil service performs excellent, but trust is low due to a low trust in other institutions.

3.2 Differing expectations

It is common knowledge that countries have an own history and culture. Take the example of Central and Eastern Europe. Being on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain resulted in a poor democratic tradition and an equally poor economic record. The GDP/capita in the 'old Europe' is still almost twice as large as in the new member states. But on the other hand, the economies of these countries recently have grown at a much faster pace. The 'trust'-framework has also changed in some countries: *"Where trust in government used to refer to the belief that*

⁷ With 'clearly' we mean the following combinations: 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot', combined with 'none at all'; or 'a great deal' combined with 'not very much'.

government will not become autocratic or allow people to be arrested unjustly, it now refers to more down to earth matters such as the reliability of service delivery or the expectation that policy will correspond to one's wishes" (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2003). All these things will have an effect on trust in government (Chanley et al., 2000).

Different historical and cultural backgrounds lead to differing expectations. In the classic view, (dis)trust is the result of a confrontation between citizens' expectations and government's actual performance (Pharr & Putnam, 2000: 21). In international comparisons, it is shown that citizens of different countries have different expectations. Again, the World Values Study provides the best available data. It contained a question on the most important aim for the country in the next ten years. Respondents could choose four answers: 'maintaining order in the nation', 'giving people more say in important government decisions', 'fighting rising prices' and 'protecting freedom of speech'.

Over 40% of all citizens in OECD member countries saw maintaining order in the nation as the single most important priority for the country. Almost 30% thought giving people more say in government should be the top priority. 'Fighting rising prices' and 'protecting freedom of speech' is the number one priority for 15% of all respondents. There are important differences between countries.

Table 4: Most important aims for the country (OECD members)

<i>% most important</i>	<i>Maintaining order in the nation</i>	<i>Fighting rising prices</i>	<i>Giving people more say</i>	<i>Protecting freedom of speech</i>
Australia	23	11	40	26
Austria	36	7	33	24
Belgium	38	17	25	20
Canada	22	16	40	22
Czech Republic	56	10	26	8
Denmark	59	3	17	22
Finland	52	13	24	11
France	43	19	24	14
Germany	42	16	32	10
Greece	40	15	36	9
Hungary	53	28	17	2
Iceland	57	9	25	9
Ireland	37	18	36	8
Italy	32	12	39	17
Japan	34	16	45	5
Luxembourg	45	11	30	14
Mexico	32	30	22	16
Netherlands	41	6	17	37
New Zealand	33	9	44	14
Norway	66	4	14	16
Poland	40	27	28	4
Portugal	33	32	26	9
Slovakia	48	30	18	4
South Korea	43	35	18	4
Spain	36	21	25	18
Sweden	45	3	32	20
Switzerland	32	18	16	34
Turkey	26	28	27	19
United States	33	10	32	25
Northern Ireland	41	21	28	11

Source: World Values Study, most recent data for each country (1995 and 1999/2000 wave)

Some patterns are visible. In all Scandinavian countries (Sweden, Denmark and Norway, Iceland and Finland) as well as the Czech Republic and Luxemburg 'maintaining order in the nation' is seen as the top priority for the country. Few people selected 'fighting rising prices' as first priority. In countries like Hungary, Slovakia, South Korea and Poland on the other hand, fighting rising prices is high (on average 30%) on the citizens' agenda. The inflation rate in these countries is higher than in most other OECD member countries. In all four countries protection of freedom of speech is not considered a top priority (< 5%). This situation is opposite to the expectations in the Netherlands and Switzerland. For over one third of the respondents in these countries, the protection of freedom of speech is a top priority.

These (and other) differences in expectations and culture are reflected in the way measures are taken in the field of public administration (administrative culture). Bouckaert (1995) compares the citizen's charters of Belgium, France and the United Kingdom. He concludes that the charters are embedded within the administrative culture of each country. In the United Kingdom, the market clearly was the general framework of the charter. Within the NPM logic, the citizen was seen as a consumer. On the other hand, in the French 'Charte des services publics' and the Belgian 'Charte de l'Utilisateur des Services Publiques - Handvest voor de Gebruiker van Openbare Diensten' the citizen was seen as a subject with rights and duties.

Conclusion: the environment and culture in which governments operate will have an effect on the working of government. When governments take the same measures (e.g. introduce a citizen's charter) cultural differences will be reflected in the final outcomes. And even when the outcome is the same, citizens will evaluate it differently.

3.3 Does size matter?

The question what the ideal size of a country, region or municipality should be, is one that has been investigated by academics throughout the ages (Dahl & Tufte, 1973; Alesina, 2003). In 'The Laws' Plato even calculates the optimal size of a polity, which (according to him) equals 5040 citizens. Several scholars have defended a certain level of territorial decentralization. Tiebout (1956) states that central government is a monopolist, that delivers compulsory services in various fields. Citizens do not have the opportunity not to pay taxes, unless by breaking the law. One option to escape this, is to move to another geographic entity. Competition on the local level ensures that local governments deliver services that more or less fit the preferences of citizens.

Another frequently cited argument pro territorial decentralization can be found with Oates (1972). His claim is that there are economical, cultural, social and demographical differences between

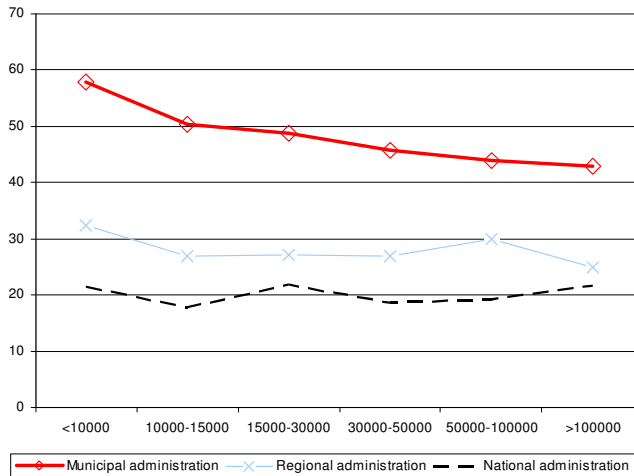
local communities. This results in differing preferences between these communities. Furthermore, local authorities are thought to be better informed about the wishes of the local community. Based on the principle of 'perfect correspondence' Oates states that it is desirable that the authority deciding on the distribution of public goods is geographically the same as the users (and (tax)payers) of these services. Making central decisions about local needs, will result in suboptimal solutions (Baldwin & Wyplosz, 2004). We can extend this theoretical viewpoint by assuming that policy makers in smaller geographical units are more capable to know the opinions of citizens. This would result in a better fit between public goods and citizen demands.

Denters (2002) reviews some other reasons why (political) trust and size of 'politicoadministrative units' (in his case: municipalities) might be related. The 'personal trust' approach states that social trust is based on strong personal ties. Increasing scale will result in lower social trust. This will extend into lower political trust. Furthermore, the communication between citizens and representatives may be easier in smaller democracies⁸.

Empirical studies consistently find a link between the size of municipalities and trust in local government. Survey evidence in Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom suggests that "*variations in size have a modest negative effect on political trust*" (Denters, 2002). In Flanders, a postal survey was conducted with 3168 citizens (Van de Walle et al., 2004). This high number allowed us to examine the results by size of the municipality. Below we show the percentage of citizens satisfied with the way different levels of administration work, by size of municipality.

⁸ Denters (2002) also discusses some reasons why trust and size might be positively related. In larger communities, there may be a larger pool of political talent, less favoritism (see also Prud'homme, 1995) and stronger civil society.

Figure 3: Satisfaction with the way administration works, by size of municipality (Flanders)



Source: 'Werken aan de Overheid', 2002-2003.

While in the smallest municipalities 58% of the citizens were satisfied with the way the municipal administration works, this was only 43% in the three largest cities of Flanders. It seems as though the relationship is almost linear. Furthermore, this relationship can not be contributed to a general attitude towards public administration, since we do not see the same effect with the regional and national administration.

A multilevel analysis of public trust in 55 American cities concluded that population size is inversely related to trust in local government (Rahn & Rudolf, 2005). Would it be possible that the relationship between country size and trust in national government is similar? In practice the difference between a country and a city/region is a man-made construction. Seven of the 25 EU countries are smaller in (population) size than the largest city in the Rahn and Rudolph (2005) study.

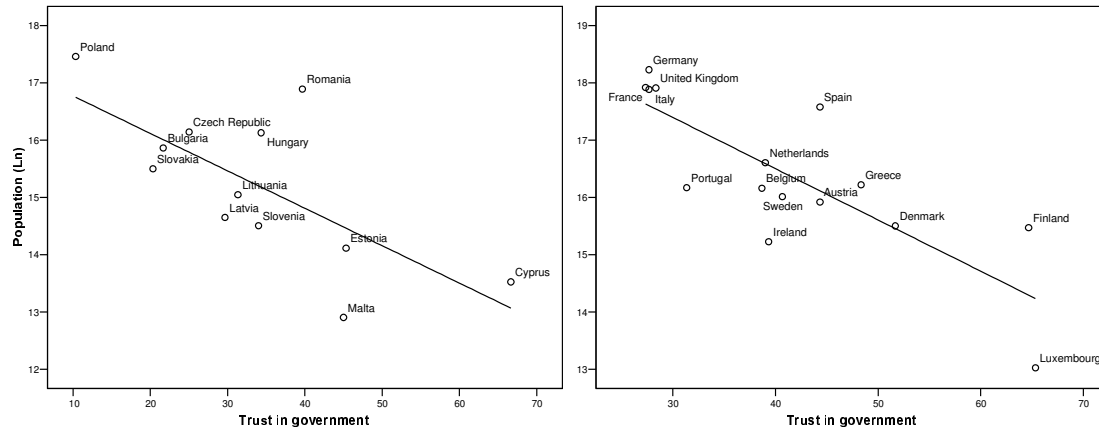
To examine the possible effect of differences in country size, we used Eurobarometer survey data. We took the mean of three surveys⁹ that examined trust in government ratings in 27 countries¹⁰. The indicator for 'population' is the natural logarithm (ln) of the actual population¹¹. In line with our reasoning in 3.2, we give separate graphs for the 'new' and the 'old' member states.

⁹ More specifically, we looked at EB 61, 62 and 63. Fieldwork was conducted between February 2004 and June 2005.

¹⁰ The 25 current member states, and Romania and Bulgaria (these countries will soon enter the European Union).

¹¹ Taking the natural log of a variable is a meaningful way to reduce differences between small (e.g. Malta: +/- 400000 inhabitants) and large numbers (e.g. Germany: +/- 82500000 inhabitants).

Figure 4: Trust in government, by country population size (Ln; Old and new European member states)



Source: Eurobarometer, 2004-2005

The correlation between both variables is truly remarkable. For the new member states the correlation is $-.703$ ($p = 0.011$). In the old member states this rises to $-.805$ ($p = 0.000$). Even when we drop the difference between old and new member states, the correlation ($-.549$) remains significant ($p = 0.003$). When taking size into account, we would have to draw radically different conclusions about the level of trust in government. With an average trust of 39.3, Ireland was the 8th (out of 15) in the list of countries from the 'old' Europe. However, in Figure 4 Ireland is a negative outlier. When examining the relation between trust in civil service and size between 1997 and 2002, the correlation is $-.566$ ($p = 0.028$). Data supports our hypothesis that trust in government/civil service tends to be higher in smaller countries¹².

Again the question remains: if trust in government and civil service is influenced by variables like the size of countries, what role remains for using trust as an indicator of performance in cross-country comparisons?

3.4 Civil Service → government

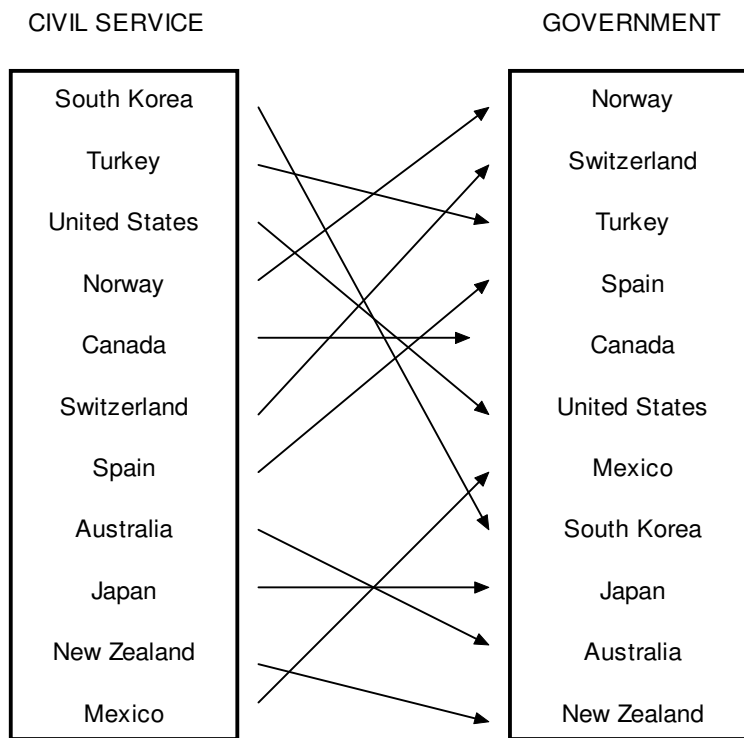
A last issue we discuss, is the link between trust in government and trust in civil service (Figure 2). We already mentioned that in the NPM philosophy, citizens were increasingly defined as consumers of public services. But 'government' is also a political term. Logically, trust in government will be influenced by political circumstances and events. In their study Christensen &

¹² For the last wave of the WVS, correlation between size and trust in the 'old' and 'new' Europe was $-.457$ and $-.391$. These values were however not significant. This does not necessarily mean that our hypothesis is not valid, since N is very small.

Lægreid (2005) find that “*political-cultural variables have the strongest overall effect on variations in people’s trust in government*”.

World Values Study data allow us to compare trust rankings. Unfortunately the ‘trust in government’ question has only been asked in 11 OECD countries. Yet comparing the rankings, tells us a lot about the validity of the ‘ideal model’ in Figure 2.

Figure 5: Trust in civil service and government: Comparing rankings



Source: World Values Study, most recent wave

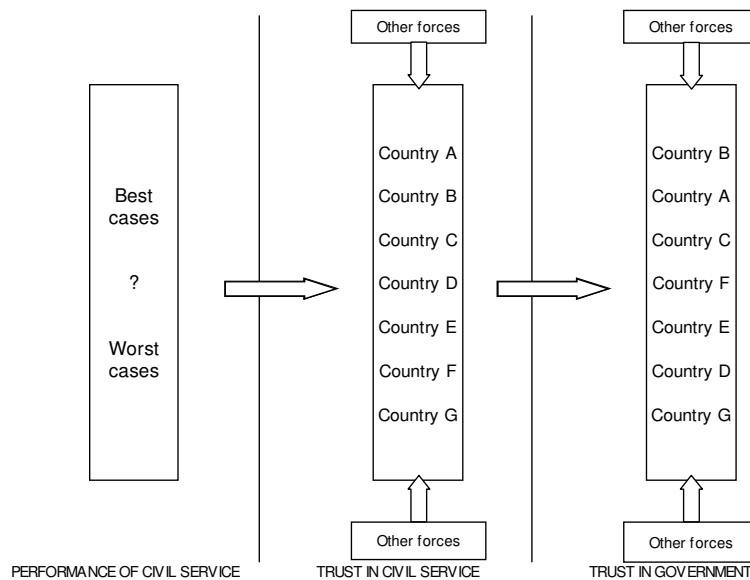
The picture is quite clear: rankings of trust in civil service and trust in government are hard to compare. South Korea is first in the civil service ranking, but only eighth in the trust in government ranking. The large divergence between both rankings allows us to conclude that other (political) factors must play a role as well.

4 WHAT ROLE FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?

Trust in government has become an increasingly popular topic within political and administrative science. Reforms of civil service are often motivated by a focus on the citizen as consumer and a

perceived decline of trust. The often made link between performance and trust is however not an easy one. In this paper we focused our attention on rankings of countries by level of trust. Ideally, a performing civil service would result in high trust in civil service and government. This model is however plagued by a number of difficulties.

Figure 6: Actual model for comparing rankings



First there is the actual performance of civil service. Even though we did not discuss this issue here, it is equally hard to find reliable figures on the performance of civil service. No single government performs extremely good or poor on all fields. There is no black and white difference between 'good' and 'bad' performers. Most countries are in the grey area that does not allow for simple and clear comparisons. Several attempts have however been made to measure objective performance, but they are often vigorously disputed (e.g. Lall, 2001). As Van de Walle (2006) argues:

“it is hard to determine what these indicators actually measure, and often they only give a partial and biased view of the public administration’s role and functioning. Furthermore, several datasets are plagued by quality problems”.

So, rankings in the first column of our model are not entirely satisfactory. And the second and the third column are plagued by problems as well, as we have shown in this paper. It is hard to analyze what the rankings actually mean. It seems as though they are influenced by several variables, some of which we discussed within this framework. Aspects like the general attitude

within society, culture, expectations, and the size of a country may have an effect on trust in government and/or civil service. Lastly, rankings between trust in civil service and trust in government are vastly different.

Making a cross-country link between trust in government and the actual performance of public administration is therefore hard, if not impossible. The role of civil service in comparing trust in government across countries is at best limited.

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