

KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT LEUVEN

**FACULTEIT SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN
DEPARTEMENT POLITIEKE WETENSCHAPPEN**

Perceptions of Administrative Performance: The Key to Trust in Government?

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Co-promotor: prof. dr. B. MADDENS

Proefschrift tot het verkrijgen
van de graad van
Doctor in de Sociale Wetenschappen
aangeboden door
Steven VAN DE WALLE

2004

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**Perceptions of administrative performance:
The key to trust in government?**

Preface

Critical reflection is guided by the need to scrutinize the de jure validity of human institutions and significations, but as much as it is devoid of foundations other than its own impetus it also lacks a point of destination. It is not foreclosed (it refuses to be foreclosed) by either a preceding brief or telos given before the take-off point. It builds and dismantles its own foundations and targets as it goes.

(Zygmunt Bauman, In Search of Politics, 1999, p. 84)

One thing is certain when embarking on a Ph.D. on citizens' perceptions of the public administration: your environment will react with disbelief ('why would anyone want to write about that?'), but more probably with laughter ('you don't know what you've started' or 'well, in that case I have some good stories for you'). Many dissertations are produced every year. Many of these deal with topics that are obscure to the average citizen, or have titles that need a team of experts to decipher their meaning. No matter what the case is, odds are few friends and relatives will feel the urge to discuss about your dissertation topic. My topic, on the other hand, is one everyone *claims* to know something about. It was often hard to convince people they had it wrong (and, more important, that I was right of course...). It is difficult to say what option is best for one's mental health when producing a dissertation.

As always, a quite substantial number of people should be mentioned in this preface. First and foremost Geert Bouckaert, who acted as my supervisor for stimulating me to actually work on a Ph.D., and for his pragmatism. The two Wittgenstein quotes are no coincidence, Geert. Bart Maddens, as co-supervisor merits praise for his critical and meticulous readings of my writings. Marleen Brans, Per Lægheid, Wim Moesen and Arthur Ringeling acted as members of the Jury, and had the dubious honour of reading pages and pages of my often-impossible style of writing.

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Then comes a list of colleagues: I shared an office with Jarl for four years, working on the same project. He taught me about statistics, and without him the only numbers in this dissertation would have been the page numbers. Thanks to all those who were always open to discuss the Ph.D., because they had prior experience or because they had a particular interest in the topic, or both. Especially in the

early and late-2004 period, with its frequent “what’s the sense of all this” days, it was sometimes nice to spoil other people’s time. Some even had the particular disadvantage of having an office on the stretch between my office and the kitchen-slash-printing room. Thanks also for our daily Alma lunches, and our applied organisational behaviour talk there with the Public Management Institute as a case.

A number of people read and commented on chapters or on the papers and articles that later became parts of the dissertation, or discussed some of my findings. In alphabetical order: Joel D. Aberbach, Tom Christensen, Tony Bovaird, Melvin Dubnick, Per Lægheid, Elke Loeffler, Eric Uslaner, and Eran Vigoda. I should also include all other participants of the EGPA Study Group on Productivity and Quality in the Public Sector, for the long discussions on trust and public sector performance.

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A final word of thanks should go to those who made the research possible, by assisting me with many practical issues. Silke Devacht of the Institute of Social and Political Opinion Research, for her assistance in organising the data-collection and training the interviewers. Kristien Hermans for her knowledge of the procedures and regulations of the doctoral programme and for organising the public defence. Anneke Heylen, Christel Vandeurzen, and Annelies Vanparijs at the secretariat of the Public Management Institute for their assistance in all possible matters. Also, thanks to Erica Lutes for correcting grammar and spelling.

And a final final word of thank goes to my friends and family who supported me during the past four years. Mama, Papa, Yves, Kris & Peter, Annette, and Els, thank you. They not only supported me mentally, by, well, simply being friends and family, but were also surprisingly open to discuss all kinds of Ph.D.-related issues (ranging from theories and methodology to more mundane questions such as ‘how long yet?’). Yves, thanks for reading ‘het boekske’ and for the liquid catering during our discussions. There is no need for you to wait another decade to finish your ‘boekske’. Annette and Els: with mine finished, I now have time to read your proposals and first drafts. When you read this, my months of splendid isolation will be over. Yes, you were all right, someone with so many of his friends working on Ph.D.’s must be living in an ivory tower.

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Introduction

Chapter 1 PERCEPTIONS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

...a wide gap exists between bureaucracy's reputation and its record.

(Charles T. Goodsell, The Case for Bureaucracy, 2004: 4)

1.1 GENERALISING THE BUREAUCRATIC EXPERIENCE?

Civil servants and public administrations seem to suffer from a very negative image among the general population. The public administration is seen as inefficient, slow, uncaring and expensive. Obviously, not all the blame for this phenomenon can be put on Kafka's writings. At closer inspection however, we find many instances where citizens are actually quite satisfied with services and goods delivered by their public administration. At the same time, there are growing worries about citizens' distrust in government. Despite lack of proof, the idea that the malfunctioning of the administration is a major reason for citizens' distrust seems to have taken solid ground. This failing state apparatus is identified as one of the main causes for the crisis of distrust in government in many Western countries. Citizen pressure in the form of low trust and dissatisfaction is identified as a motive for public sector reforms (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000). Low trust may serve as a stimulus for reform in some cases, but overall countries where dissatisfaction and distrust is the most dramatic are not seen to engage in public sector reforms more often. Many countries where citizens are rather satisfied have launched ambitious reforms (Suleiman, 2003: 88).

Even though the public sector reform discourse is said to relate the functioning of public services and bureaucratic encounters to citizens' overall appreciation of government (see 2.2), research on the issue is scarce. A relationship is more often taken for granted than actually found in research. Blaming low trust in government on failing performance of public services is popular, but sound empirical research backing this claim is usually absent (Elchardus and Smits, 2002: 39). Research shows that a relationship between the functioning of the public administration and trust in government is far from obvious. MORI research in the UK found that "...the available data suggests the relationship between views of public services and views of government is weak. So even if the public does notice that services are delivering, it may not directly improve their views of the government" (MORI Social Research Institute, 2003: 1). Zussman wanted to know "whether attitudes toward specific characteristics of public servants based on personal experience are generalized to include attitudes

about the public service as a whole" (Zussman, 1982: 63), and concluded that favourable personal experiences were not carried over to a favourable view of the public service.

Katz et al. found that even though users were satisfied with the way service agencies handled their problem and with the fair treatment, this opinion was not necessarily generalised to all agencies or government offices. However, when citizens felt they were treated badly, they generalised their experience to the public sector as a whole. One of the conclusions was "that general attitudes toward administrative agencies have little specific experiential basis and derive from the cumulative impact of the mass media and the accepted beliefs in the culture. These stereotyped conceptions are not impervious to certain types of personal experiences. Unpleasant occurrences result in lowered evaluations, whereas pleasant encounters have little impact. Another interpretation would be that those who have a very negative orientation toward government offices interpret their specific encounters negatively no matter how well they are treated" (Katz, Gutek, Kahn, and Barton, 1977: 126).

The sources of citizens' perception of the public sector therefore clearly need in-depth study. Two examples illustrate why merely studying citizen attitudes toward specific public services may not be sufficient. The first example is taken from the Eurobarometer surveys and deals with the perceived quality of public services in Europe. The Spring 1997 Eurobarometer 47.0 contained the following question: *For each of the following services in (country), could you tell me if you consider it to be of good quality, bad quality, or neither good nor bad?* This survey is one of the few available allowing for comparing perceived quality of public services in the EU (INRA, 1997; ZUMA: Zentralarchiv fuer Empirische Sozialforschung, 2000).

Table 1: Perceived quality of public services in the EU countries¹

% good quality	F	B	NL	DW	I	L	DK	IRL	GB	NIRL	GR	E	P	DE	FIN	S	A
Water supply	51,4	65,4	91,5	78,7	50,0	81,4	90,0	64,8	57,7	80,3	39,5	62,2	49,4	69,4	93,1	92,8	86,7
Gas supply	76,5	70,4	96,9	83,7	63,1	82,2	92,1	84,9	82,8	66,7	31,4	67,2	52,2	76,5	83,7	59,6	80,5
Electricity supply	85,0	81,6	97,3	88,2	69,5	88,9	97,8	95,4	86,8	87,9	54,7	74,6	65,8	81,7	96,6	95,3	87,2
Telephone services	80,8	70,9	80,9	77,7	64,6	83,5	79,1	88,9	83,2	90,3	34,3	71,0	60,5	73,2	93,7	92,0	78,4
Access to television channels	63,9	73,0	75,4	82,6	57,6	74,4	83,0	70,8	77,2	83,4	47,4	63,2	62,9	85,2	81,9	82,6	80,1
The motorway network	60,4	57,7	68,7	82,4	39,1	71,5	84,4	51,3	54,8	61,1	9,7	43,0	49,0	46,6	65,0	66,2	62,8
Maintenance of roads and pavement	31,6	28,2	40,7	55,2	8,5	47,8	52,7	13,1	15,8	34,6	9,7	28,9	15,7	15,4	46,1	32,8	53,6
Collection of household rubbish	54,2	54,7	80,8	74,8	20,9	68,6	79,4	60,2	71,6	85,2	21,8	62,6	34,6	51,2	74,1	61,6	68,2
Health services such as hospitals, etc.	55,4	60,5	74,8	62,2	14,6	69,5	56,9	45,8	38,0	54,2	12,9	34,9	15,8	45,5	73,4	52,4	72,6
Ambulance services	69,8	66,8	89,4	75,0	33,3	83,4	76,8	65,8	63,0	75,9	18,7	52,1	34,6	70,8	90,7	75,1	83,5
Courts, Justice	16,6	15,7	55,8	45,3	9,2	51,2	59,0	40,9	38,8	59,3	26,4	16,7	15,6	23,9	64,0	52,3	53,9
Postal services	59,9	57,0	82,0	53,0	21,0	77,9	83,5	80,6	76,0	85,0	49,9	50,8	57,2	43,9	59,5	51,1	63,0
Rail travel	46,9	52,7	58,7	56,7	17,4	73,2	84,1	60,5	39,6	62,9	40,7	57,7	39,8	38,6	78,7	46,5	58,3
Air travel	57,8	63,5	83,8	74,4	34,3	84,1	90,4	87,8	77,3	86,7	41,1	63,3	52,6	55,7	59,6	79,4	72,5
Bus and coach travel between cities	51,8	52,2	48,1	52,1	27,0	66,0	75,9	69,7	60,1	68,7	40,7	54,7	40,4	38,8	88,0	59,9	55,1
Urban transport such as the underground, bus, tram	50,7	48,8	64,8	57,2	27,9	74,3	78,8	58,3	48,3	62,5	26,3	58,1	35,5	46,2	76,8	72,8	67,8

Source: Eurobarometer, 1997

¹ DE = East Germany, DW = West Germany, NIRL = Northern Ireland.

We show the percentage of respondents indicating 'good quality' for the service in each of the countries. In the table, the top-three services in terms of perceived quality are marked in grey, the bottom-three in black.

Overall scores seem to be very low for Italy, Greece and Portugal. In Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands, average scores are considerably higher for most services. What is remarkable, is that there is a striking similarity between the best and worst rated services in most of the EU countries: In all countries but West Germany, maintenance of roads and pavements is rated very low, as are the courts. Electricity supply, gas supply and telephone services feature on top of the list in most countries.

A similar finding was reported by Miller and Miller (1991) who analysed 261 citizen surveys in the US. They found that fire services, trash hauling and libraries tended to receive overall higher ratings than e.g. street repair and planning/zoning, which scored the lowest. If something similar is found in a single case or a small number of cases, satisfaction and quality ratings can easily be attributed to objective quality characteristics. If however, as is the case for the 261 American surveys, and for the survey in the EU-15 countries, these findings are being generalised, we may have to look far deeper for an explanation.

One possible explanation relates to *reasons* citizens may have for rating a service in a negative way. A citizen evaluating services such as gas or electricity supply has in fact only one ultimate reason to be deeply dissatisfied, and that is when supply fails. There are more reasons to be dissatisfied with road maintenance: the road may look bad, there may be potholes in it, the potholes may be big or small, etc. This broader array of reference points or quality elements makes the probability for being dissatisfied much larger. These findings show us that caution is needed when interpreting absolute satisfaction scores. The question, however, remains unchanged: where does this satisfaction come from?

A second example is taken from a general survey among the inhabitants of the Belgian city of Lokeren in 1998 (n=14.147; Van Speybroeck, Van Hecke, and Claeys, 2000). Every inhabitant older than 16 received a questionnaire. One of the questions was: *To what extent do you experience in your neighbourhood hindrance from the following*. Respondents were shown a list of possible problems, some of them related to public service and municipal policy issues. When the answers are summarised for each of the neighbourhoods, an interesting pattern emerges (CIBE - Bureau voor Communicatie, 1998). The crosses in the table indicate whether something was perceived as a problem in a certain neighbourhood.

Table 2: Perceived neighbourhood problems in the city of Lokeren

	Neighbourhood									
	Doorslaar	Centrum	Bergendries	Bokslaar	Everslaar	Heirbrug	Kop	Oude Brugl.	Rozen	Spoele
Traffic noise		X				X		X		
Freight traffic								X	X	
Litter		X				X		X		
Dogs		X	X			X	X	X		X
Smell				X	X			X		X
Noise at night		X				X		X		
Parked trucks						X		X		
Bicycles on the pavement		X	X			X		X		
Neighbours		X						X		
Vandalism		X	X					X		
Waste processing plant				X	X			X	X	X
Pigeons		X			X			X		
Music		X						X		
Parties		X				X		X		
Pollution (companies)					X			X	X	
Drugs	X	X					X			
Public drunkenness		X			X			X		
Fights		X	X					X		
Noise (companies)				X				X	X	

It is remarkable that inhabitants of two neighbourhoods (Centrum & Oude Bruglaan) ticked almost all problems on the list, while this is not the case for the other neighbourhoods. There are two possible explanations. The classic explanation would be that all of these problems do occur more frequently in these two neighbourhoods. This is possible, but somehow sounds improbable. An alternative explanation could be that there is a certain degree of generalised dissatisfaction in these neighbourhoods, what lowers the threshold for expressing oneself in a negative way.

These two examples show that it is dangerous to approach citizens' evaluation of public services as a rational evaluation of the quality of these services, where lower quality will result in lower satisfaction.

Administrative reforms are often motivated by a desire to improve citizens' trust in government (Kettl, 2000: 54). Trust must be one of the most fashionable words in current political and administrative research. But actually, very little is known on the relationship between citizens' experience with the public sector/public services and their general evaluation of government. The perceived malfunctioning of the administration has become a key factor in political and academic discourse to explain low levels of trust in government (Panel on civic trust and citizen responsibility, 1999; Sims, 2001; Bok, 2001). Despite the growing attention for citizens' perceptions of the public sector, very little research is available. Very often, the same research is repeated over and over again, and very little theoretical innovation can be observed. Research and data leave many gaps:

- Citizens' attitudes towards the public sector have not often been subject to an in-depth analysis. Customer surveys do exist for specific services (see Bouckaert, Kampen, Maddens, and Van de Walle, 2001 for an overview) but are by no means an established practice. General social surveys have never included more than just a limited number of items on the public administration or public services, but focused on politics instead.
- Good data for comparing public sector performance are hard to find. Service-specific comparisons sometimes are available, but aggregate government-wide indicators lack. The public administrations in Belgium certainly have their deficiencies, but selective information does not allow us to determine how good or bad the administration is doing compared to other countries. Most, if not all, of the existing data relies on perceptions of this performance, not on more objectivated measures.
- Citizens' negative attitude towards the administration and towards government is taken for granted, even though the numbers do not always correspond to this view. Often, time-series data lack to analyse long-term trends in these attitudes.
- The relationship between the performance of the public administration and citizens' overall perception of the public sector and government is not generally accepted. Empirical proof for such a relationship is limited.

We are not concerned with how well public services actually function. Our focus is on how the public sector is perceived to function, where this perception comes from, and how this perception persists and is diffused. More specifically, we are interested in the impact of citizens' image of specific public services on citizens' overall perception of the public sector and government. In this research, citizens' perception of the public administration is studied to explain general attitudes towards government, and not the political system. More than voting, paying taxes or discussing politics, most citizens have an almost daily contact with public services (Hill, 1976). In a similar way, Rouban motivated his research on attitudes of civil servants by referring to the sheer number of bureaucrats in society, making them an important societal actor (Rouban, 2003). Katz et al., in their path-breaking study on bureaucratic encounters, motivated their choice in a similar way: "... is it possible that what helps to keep the system going is not trust in national leadership, but the confidence people have in the public offices which touch their daily lives? If they feel they can rely upon the social security office for their monthly benefits, or upon the unemployment office to provide compensation, or upon some local leader to make a government agency responsive, they can accept a good deal of failure at the top levels in Washington without becoming alienated from the system." (Katz et al., 1977: 2). Back in 1981, Goodsell spoke about a *nonfield* status of the study of the public encounter (Goodsell, 1981: 7)². It is unclear whether this has changed.

Why would one want to focus on the public perceptions of the public administration?

- First, there seems to be a research tradition on the subject, be it a very limited one. There are sporadic articles and publications on the topic, but unfortunately these are hardly ever part of an encompassing long-term research project. The early and mid 1980s were promising in this respect, but attention seems to have shifted to citizen participation. Also, governments appear to

² Goodsell defines the public encounter as: "the interaction of citizens and government officials as they communicate to transact matters of mutual interest" (Goodsell, 1981: 3)

have realised the importance of citizens' perceptions, and are increasingly engaged in measuring these attitudes, both by promoting customer satisfaction surveys and by organising general opinion surveys.

- Second, contemporary public opinion research on the public administration is often limited to the public administration itself. Explanatory variables are hardly ever looked for outside public administration and citizen-government encounters. Citizens' opinion, however, is also grounded in societal evolutions. We will try to integrate research on PA public opinion into a broader framework.
- In a review of research on client-PA relations, Grunow stated that "Important -but unexplained- within these studies is the inconsistency of the public reactions toward public administration: besides the high level of general satisfaction we find strong responses of dissatisfaction about bureaucratic terminology [...], inefficient functioning [...], injustice in decision-making [...], and lack of responsiveness to clients' preferences [...]. In contrast to this critical reaction the reported experiences of the population are very positive [...]" (Grunow, 1981: 228). This difference between general evaluations and concrete experience remains intriguing. We will try to offer some satisfying explanations for this phenomenon.
- Most research thus far is of US origin. Hardly any research on the Belgian situation exists; also on a European scale, initiatives remain scattered. Even if our attempts in identifying the role of service encounters in the formation of attitudes towards the PA and government fail, this study will at least have contributed to a better understanding of present public opinion towards the public sector in Belgium. This is important, as the dominant opinion among policy-makers seems to be that citizens' attitudes towards the public administration are very negative and that discontent is growing. This debate urgently needs empirical backing.

This study explores the sources of citizens' perception of the public sector, and more specifically analyses the impact of the performance of specific individual public services on this perception. It contains three main parts: a description and framing of the problem, an analysis of the impact of administrative performance on general attitudes towards government and the public sector, and a development of the hypothesis that perceptions of the public sector are embedded in broader social attitudes.

Part one defines the problem and starts by giving an overview of recent debates about administrative performance in public administration literature and in the political discourse. It indicates why and how citizens' perception of the public sector has gradually taken its place in policy and research practice. Chapter 3 explores whether the worries about citizens' negative attitude towards the administration and concerns about declining levels of trust in government are supported by the empirical facts, by using the main international comparative surveys. Discontent, discourse about this discontent, and statistics about this discontent are analysed in detail for Belgium in Chapter 4. Absence of clear downward tendencies is demonstrated, and a strong interrelatedness between political crises and administrative discontent is established. The relative position of the public administration in this public opinion towards government is examined, and an attempt is made to design a profile of the dissatisfied citizen.

Part two tests the dominant explanatory model for citizens' perceptions of the public sector. This (micro) performance model gives the performance of specific services a central role. Chapter 1 frames the debate about the performance-trust relationship and reveals that many different relations may exist between the performance of public services and overall trust in government. It also shows there actually are many reasons why the perceptions of specific services do not necessarily aggregate into a perception of the public sector in general. A straightforward aggregation of attitudes towards specific public services into an attitude towards government at large requires a number of conditions to be valid.

Assessing the impact of administrative performance on perceptions of government requires that we have solid performance indicators. In Chapter 6, performance and perceptions of this performance are presented as two different realities, and the reasons for the difference is illustrated both at the micro-level of specific services and at the macro-level of government-wide performance indicators. Existing government-wide performance indicators are shown to be defective and therefore as not useful for our purposes.

Chapter 7 deals with the problem of aggregation: how do perceptions of specific public services aggregate into a perception of *the public sector* or *government* in general. The concept of high impact agencies is introduced and expounded in an empirical test. The test highlights some of the fundamental difficulties in determining the importance of certain *objects of trust* or concrete institutions in general attitudes towards government.

The findings of part two lead us to reconsider the direction of causality in the relationship between perceptions of specific services and attitudes towards the public sector and government. Certain predispositions influence the attitudes about the public sector. Part three deals with their nature and impact.

In Chapter 1, we show how stereotypes and a-priori attitudes towards government determine perceptions of the performance of individual services and hence how the hypotheses in put forward in Chapter 7 lose relevance. Attention is given to how these stereotypes persist and get diffused and to how the dominant attitude or even social norm in society may influence the attitude towards the public sector citizens will express.

Chapter 9 goes one step further and gives social factors a central role in explaining perceptions of administrative performance and trust in government. It shows how general predispositions have a fundamental impact on attitudes towards the administration, and how this attitude is integrated into a broader attitudinal framework.

The final chapter, Chapter 10, contrasts the performance model with an alternative model that treats attitudes towards the public administration as social opinions rather than as evaluations of experienced performance. It is shown how context determines which model dominates at a given moment. Key challenges for policy-makers and for research are also addressed.

1.2 RESEARCH MATERIAL

A substantial part of this research will be of a theoretical nature, but a variety of data-sources will be relied on extensively to support the hypotheses. This dissertation is part of a broader research project and was made possible by a policy research grant from the ministry of the Flemish Community, for the project 'citizen governance: quality and trust in government' (2000-2004). Within this project, three surveys have been organised (2002/2003), one face-to-face, the two other mail surveys. Most of our material comes from the "Werken aan de Overheid-WADO" face-to-face survey ('Working on Government')³. The mail surveys are adapted or shortened versions of the face-to-face survey. The core survey contained 4 main parts:

- Socio-demographic variables
- Attitudes towards the administration and public service delivery
- Political attitudes (trust, alienation, voting behaviour, role and characteristics of politicians)
- Social attitudes (individualisation, social capital, ethnocentrism, traditionalism...)

	<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Response rate</i>	<i>Type</i>
Face-to-face survey	WADO F2F 2002	Spring 2002	1248	68.2%	House-visits by trained interviewers
Mail survey 1	WADO mail 2002	Second half 2002	2166	61.9%	14 waves
Mail survey 2	WADO mail 2003	Second half 2003	3168	60.3%	15 waves

1.3 NOTE ON LANGUAGE AND TERMINOLOGY

Trust in government is quite popular nowadays as a research topic, and the increased attention for *trust in the public administration* is a logical consequence. This popularity means that the word *trust* is used as a buzzword in all possible contexts. Numerous studies have been written about the exact meaning of the word, and trust is now an established term in political, sociological, economic and psychological research. There is no agreement on the meaning and nature of trust, and consensus about the best way of measuring it does not exist. We will regularly use the concept *trust in government*. By it, we mean no more than citizens' general attitude towards government. This may not correspond to the accumulated knowledge in the theoretical literature, but it does correspond to the empirical practice. We realise this issue needs clarification, but this is not indispensable for our research. Some clarification is needed for the words *public administration* and *government* as well. It would be perfectly possible to write a dissertation about the three concepts trust, public administration and government, but as it is our aim to study the sources of citizens' perception of the public sector, we opted for a pragmatic approach.

Measuring trust

The literature on the meaning of trust and trust in government abounds (Bouckaert, Van de Walle, Maddens, and Kampen, 2002). One of the first to develop an encompassing theory on political support was David Easton. He developed a two-dimensional framework, the first dimension containing the political community, regime and authorities, and the other ranging from specific to diffuse support. The

³ See appendices for a detailed description of the WADO surveys and the other data.

idea behind it is that one can withdraw one's support for the current government, without withdrawing it for government. Alternatively, one can fully support the democratic values and at the same time be very critical about the way democracy *works* (Easton, 1965). According to Easton, specific and diffuse support are different concepts, which means they will have independent determinants as well as different consequences for the functioning of a system (Easton, 1975). However, the two concepts are mixed frequently. Low output and performance only have an effect on diffuse support in the long term, but in periods of scandals, specific and diffuse support often decrease both. This is because diffuse support has been under pressure for quite a long time because of continued low performance. The event or scandal simply serves as an outlet for adapting to new levels of support. Similarly, a continued increase in specific support may eventually spill over into increased diffuse support. If diffuse support is low, it can however influence the evaluation of the output of authorities, "because authorities are no longer thought worthy of trust" (Easton, 1975). It is sometimes difficult to determine where cognitive evaluations stop and affective ones begin, and this will be a recurrent theme in our research about perceptions of administrative performance as well.

Clarke, Kornberg, et al. (1984) utter a number of criticisms on Easton's framework. According to them, the difference between diffuse and specific support cannot be established empirically. This is partly because diffuse support has a symbolic content, and can as such not be measured. According to Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995), Easton's reasoning is tautological: he states that measures of affect (diffuse support) cannot covariate with performance-based satisfaction. If however he finds a relation, he takes this measure away from diffuse support and places it under specific support. Furthermore, they argue that Easton is too output-oriented and devotes too little attention to the processes. Kuechler made a categorisation of the types of support according to Easton and concluded that a cognitive/evaluative assessment of the political system was lacking in Easton's framework (Kuechler, 1991).

Theoretically, many dimensions can be distinguished in the concept, but major problems remain when attempts are made to measure these dimensions. The actual practice of measuring trust is disputed. Schedler complains that most items on trust in government are phrased in a negative way. In this way, it may seem to respondents that agreeing is a matter of common sense (1993: 422). Weatherford (1992) regrets that much of the trust research and resulting questionnaire construction is measurement-driven rather than theory-driven: the desire for imitating existing questionnaires often is a driver of the design. Despite these comments, it remains hard to find truly comparable material that allows for combining research on time-trends and on cross-national differences.

Two classic approaches are dominant. The *European approach*, as we call it, presents respondents with a list of institutions (most of these government-related institutions, but often also institutions such as trade unions, the Church, etc.) to which they can indicate their level of (dis)trust on a 4- or 5-point scale⁴. Such an approach does not give much insight into *reasons* for distrust, and some

⁴ European Values Study 99: "Please look at this card and tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, is it a great deal, quite a lot, not very much or none at all?" 4 point scale (Q58)

Belgian General Election Study 99: Now I'm going to read you a list of institutions. Could you tell me, for each of these institutions, whether you trust them a lot or a little (5 points scale) (Q113.1-Q11.16) (Meers-seman, Billiet et al., 2001).

respondents fill out the questionnaire in a routine way, resulting in absence of variation in their answers. Additionally, satisfaction with the functioning of democracy is often used, due to the availability of a cross-national time series in the Eurobarometer surveys (see footnote 75 for a comment).

The *American approach* is the one that originates in the National Election Studies (<http://www.umich.edu/~nes/>) and uses a five-item construct of political trust-political distrust/cynicism. It consists of the following items:

- 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?
- Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?
- Do you think that people in the government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it or don't waste very much of it?
- Do you feel that almost all of the people running the government are smart people who usually know what they are doing, or do you think that quite a few of them don't seem to know what they are doing?
- Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are a little crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked at all?

The problem with the US questions is that they contain a cognitive element that not only inquires into affective *trust*, but also into an evaluation of how work is done. The focus in the American National Election Studies (NES) on *the people running the government* encourages respondents to confuse trust in the regime with trust in political incumbents (Mishler and Rose, 1997). In some instances it also tends to confuse measurements of trust and its putative causes (Owen and Dennis, 2001: 210). Even though the NES five-item construct is often summarised into a single *trust* indicator, it does not cover the same content as the items as used in European research. Furthermore, focusing on *government* in the question ignores variations in trust across different political institutions (Mishler and Rose, 1997).

The differences between the approaches are probably due to historical evolutions and different purposes of the initial measurement. The *American approach* was originally integrated into an election research, hence the importance for politicians and for a number of hot political debates such as big interests, wasting tax money and political corruption that could help to explain the vote. The *European approach* can be scaled back to a sociological project, where the first aim was not to explain something about politics and government, but about values in society, including respect for authority and conflictual/consensual attitudes.

The fact that a diverse number of indicators is used for *trust* suggests that it is not just trust as such that one wants to measure, but instead a general positive or negative attitude towards government. On the one hand there are claims that a considerable degree of variation can be found between the different indicators (e.g. satisfaction with democracy, trust, the way politicians work), which indicates that they are not measuring the same (i.e. a general negative/positive attitude towards government). Citrin (1974) for instance finds support for this in the fact that distrust is not accompanied by the will to make changes in the system. On the other hand, this claim is disputed vividly, by e.g. Kaase (1999) who states that satisfaction with democracy and trust in government are indicators of the same. Comparing the results of different measurements of trust may therefore not be a particularly

useful exercise, either because they are not comparable, or because they cannot be distinguished. According to Kuechler (1991) *mass political support* is a general theoretical idea that does not lend itself for measurement by a single indicator. Using a single item trust question, by adding an affective element to the cognitive evaluations, does not give any indication of possible reasons for (dis)trust, and perhaps a combination of affective and cognitive measures of both specific and diffuse support is the best way to deal with the rather mixed and intangible attitude of citizens towards the political system.

The empirical practice suggests that much research on trust in government can be about practically anything. In general, when trust in government is used, researchers are concerned with general attitudes towards government or specific institutions. We are, as are most political scientists, concerned with citizens' general attitudes as such, and not with many of the specificities and dimensionalities of the concept *trust* that have been developed by philosophers and sociologists. Differences between confidence and trust (Luhmann, 1979), a difference that does by the way not exist in Dutch (*vertrouwen*), or between orientations to the future, past and present, are, because of limitations of research time and money, not at the core of our concerns. Citizens' general attitude towards, their general image of or trust in government and the public administration are used interchangeably. Also, we sometimes use *confidence* because it is exactly this word that was used in the question wording of the survey, or because it is part of an established word-pair (e.g., *confidence gap*).

Public administration

When we speak about *administrative performance*, we mean the performance of the public administration. This is a problematic concept, as there are no real criteria to determine the exact scope of the public administration. We therefore don't know exactly what institutions or services citizens think about when referring to the public administration (see also 7.5 for an elaboration). In many cases, citizens feel they interact with specific public services rather than with 'public administration'. For some services, this disconnection will be larger. The public sector is often equated to the public administration, but discussion could exist on the validity of doing so, as public sector is often seen to explicitly include the public administration and the educational system, the health sector etc. Distinguishing public sector and public administration would in theory probably be possible, but we doubt a clear distinction exists in practice. To complicate things even further, *the administration* is used in American English for the executive branch of government, e.g. *The Bush administration*. In Dutch, citizens use innumerable words when referring to the public administration: *uitvoerende macht*, *administratie*, *openbare dienst*, *openbaar ambt*, *openbaar bestuur*, "*de overheid*", *de bureaucratie*, *de overheidsbureaucratie* (Dewachter, 1995: 234). The choice of a word often conveys a different meaning on the concept, e.g. *civil servant* vs. *bureaucrat*.

Government

When we use *government*, we are concerned with the general concept. In English, there is just one word *government*, which is used both for the individual members of the government (=ministers) and for "the system by which a state or community is governed" (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1999). In German, a distinction between *Regierung* and *Staat* is made, as is the case in Dutch: *regering* vs. *overheid* or *staat*. In French, *gouvernement* can again be used to signify both concepts, though *les*

autorités can be used for the latter. When we use government, it refers to the general concept in its broadest sense. We realise this can cause confusion, as the literature we use comes from different traditions. An American referring to government may mean something else than a European.

**I. Perceptions of administrative performance:
is there a problem?**

Chapter 2 GROWING ATTENTION FOR CITIZENS' PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

*But to the family tradition, trade and industry were interesting hobbies
but not serious vocations.
State service remained the only conceivable path.*

(Michael Ignatieff, The Russian Album; p. 92, 2001 edition)

In this dissertation, we study the sources of citizens' perception of public sector. Why would doing so be relevant? It is a concern embedded within the research community about the seemingly dominant anti-bureaucracy stream in research, and in a growing recognition among policy-makers that fostering a positive bureaucratic image may have positive effects on policy-making capacity.

As it is the research community's task to critically analyse bureaucracies, it should not come as a surprise that it has discovered many bureaucratic dysfunctions. The negative characteristics even are at the centre of the public choice approach. Much of the older PA research studied civil servants' negative attitudes towards users (Sjoberg, Brymer, and Farris, 1966; Lipsky, 1980; Stone, 1981), attitudes that almost automatically had effects on citizen attitudes towards the public administration. From the 1980s on, a number of academics have taken on the challenge of *defending bureaucracy*, mainly by their choice of research topics. Their writings should be seen as a response to the vigorous anti-bureaucracy that was often thought to be dominating the discourse. We give an overview of the most interesting recent *anti anti-bureaucracy* publications, and describe the techniques used.

At the same time, attention for the administration's negative image seems to have increased among government officials. It is increasingly recognised that a well-functioning administration is indispensable for a society, and that bureau bashing is not necessarily the best description of reality, nor the best stimulus for reform. Public sector reforms based on a firm anti-bureaucratic ideology are apt to fail (Williams, 1990). We briefly discuss how in official documents concerns for citizens' attitudes towards the administration gradually seem to have taken a place. We also discuss how in these documents and in the public discourse, public sector reform is being motivated by the need not only for better services, but also for a more positive citizen attitude towards government.

This chapter ends with a brief overview of the growing, but still relatively small, body of research on citizens' attitudes towards the public administration. Especially within the public administration itself, measuring public opinion has become an important sector.

2.1 A REVALORISATION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN PA LITERATURE?

Bureaucratic dysfunctions and criticism of bureaucracy have been a constant theme in academic and other writings (e.g. Drucker, 1980; Caiden, 1991). Our focus in these paragraphs will be on the (academic) proponents of bureaucracy: those who defend it against -possibly unfair- criticism. A detailed examination of *anti-bureaucracy* falls out of the scope of this study. It is important to note that few, if any, writers give uncritical support to the public administration. Instead of taking a pro-bureaucracy stance, they merely adopt an anti-anti-bureaucracy attitude. We can identify two main *lines of defence*. The first analyses the performance of the public administration, and finds that, when using criteria such as efficiency, the public administration does not necessarily perform worse than other organisations. The second justifies the failed performance because criteria for evaluation should be different. According to private sector performance criteria, the public administration probably performs inadequately, but such an approach disregards that the public administration may have other aims. The first group of defenders would use new public management paradigms, while the second would resort to the ideas of new public service (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2003). It would, however, be incorrect to treat all critics of NPM as bureaucracy proponents.

We will focus on the first line of defence, even though most writings contain elements of both approaches. In general, we see that a number of strategies for defence are used in most publications. One strategy emphasises government accomplishments. The second strategy is to identify contradictions in citizens' opinions on public administration. The third strategy then identifies world-views of anti-bureaucrats and integrates anti-bureaucracy into evolutions within society.

The Blacksbury manifesto

In a period when anti-bureaucratic rhetoric was fashionable, Wamsley, Goodsell, Wolf, Rohr and White wrote *The Blacksbury Manifesto* around 1982 (see also Wamsley, Goodsell, Rohr, White, and Wolf, 1984; Wamsley et al., 1990; Wamsley, Goodsell, Rohr, White, and Wolf, 1992)⁵. It was in those days that Ronald Reagan proclaimed, "Government is not the solution to our problems. Government is the problem" (Reagan, 1981). They called for a revalorisation of the bureaucracy, and this required a new research tradition. The predominance of political science and its then behaviourist approach over public administration (or public bureaucracy) with an institutionalist explains why the majority of research focused on the negative aspects of bureaucracy (Hill, 1992). Political scientists were said to be obsessed with controlling bureaucracy, not by studying it (Goodsell, 1994: 16). The manifesto was a response to the anti-bureaucratic and anti-governmental stream dominating much of the American discourse, and wanted to "outline a normative framework for the development of a legitimate role in governance for the bureaucracy and the bureaucrat" (Wamsley et al., 1992: 59).

⁵ The document's original name is "The public administration and the governance process: shifting the American political dialogue"

The manifesto's key elements were summarised as follows by Hill, in a chapter with the appropriate title *Taking Bureaucracy Seriously* (taken and adapted from Hill, 1992: 45).

1. We should place public bureaucracy in a broad political, economic, and historical perspective
2. We need to clear out the pejorative, antibureaucratic underbrush so prevalent in our culture, and to recognize that public agencies and workers make positive contributions to American political life
3. We should adopt value premises that assume that public administration is a social asset
4. We ought to rescue the concept of the public interest from the positivist critique, which focuses on the content of particular policy situations, and focus instead on the concept as an idealized value, whose attainment may remain problematical
5. We should attempt to clarify the extent to which a politics-administration dichotomy does or does not exist – understanding that the answer may depend on the level of abstraction chosen
6. We should explore critically the relationship between capitalism, which has succeeded reasonably well in fulfilling the economic and the unconscious emotional needs of most individuals, and public administration, which has been used insufficiently as a vehicle to fulfill unconscious, collective needs
7. We must develop a more favourable interpretation of the public administration's constitutional role in which administrators are viewed as implementing a covenant between them and citizens to pursue the public interest
8. We should recognize that public bureaucracy is a highly representative institution - even in comparison with elected institutions - and is, thus, highly legitimate
9. We should reconceptualize the role of individual public servants so that they are expected to exercise discretion as trustees of the public interest rather than pursue instrumentally the dictates of a narrow professionalism.

The central element in the Blacksburg manifesto is its normative view on the role of the public administration in society. It stresses the constitutional principles of public administration, public interest, participation, legitimacy etc. Excessive attention for management and efficiency as the foundations of public administration only opened up the way for bureau bashing. Public administration, for the authors, is a vocation and a moral enterprise (Evans and Wamsley, 1998). Government and the public administration have a unique position in society. The manifesto should thus be seen as a reaction against the predominance of management approaches in PA research, and against the proponents of excessive privatisation. We find similar principles in the *New Public Service* paradigm, though this paradigm came mainly into existence as a reaction to NPM (see e.g. Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000; Denhardt and Denhardt, 2003). The premise of the Blacksburg manifesto was expressed years before Osborne and Gaebler wrote their *Reinventing Government* (1992). Its attention for values places it in a neo-traditionalist school, but the Manifesto is claimed equally as a landmark in post-modern approaches of PA research (for a brief overview of one view on this post-modern *turn* see Harmon, 2003).

The Blacksburg Manifesto calls for a revalorisation of the *bureaucracy*, and it should not come as a surprise that Charles Goodsell, who wrote *The case for bureaucracy: a public administration polemic*, was one of its authors (Goodsell, 1985). The Blacksburg group's approach is a very interesting one, since it both rejects bureaucracy because it is seen as a vehicle for exclusion, but also attributes the

public administration an important role in the emancipation of certain groups in society by promoting new modes of governance.

Goodsell's 'The Case for Bureaucracy'

The Case for Bureaucracy: A Public Administration Polemic was first published in 1983. The book has been entirely rewritten in 2004 (fourth edition), mainly to include more examples and stories. Goodsell's famous *polemic* expresses a deep discontent both with bureau bashing, and with public administration research that is too often focusing on bureaucratic vices. In it, he describes "the very substantial merit and record of achievement and democratic responsibility associated with American public administration" (Goodsell, 1994: xii). This book focuses on the positive experiences many citizens have: most citizens evaluate concrete encounters in a positive way, even though the general public attitude vis-à-vis the *bureaucracy* remains negative. He promotes a general view that government *does* perform. Analysis of subjective evaluations drawn from a multitude of surveys is matched by a presentation of business process data and indicators. Most show a rather positive picture. He also responds to specific accusations of the bureaucracy discriminating against underprivileged groups. He explicitly attacks the treatment of the public administration as a *homogeneous monolith* (p. 53), by referring to substantial differences between agencies and units with comparable missions.

The baseline of his findings is that the general image of the bureaucracy does not correspond to the evaluation citizens make about their own experience. He certainly was not the first to observe this apparent incompatibility, but he was one of the first to devote an entire book to it. Most of Goodsell's observations are found in other research and articles as well. Hill (1992:20), for instance, in his chapter entitled *Taking bureaucracy seriously* wants to know why citizens state they were treated fairly by the administration, while they don't think governmental offices are giving fair treatment. Just as Goodsell, he wonders,

"How is the finding that Americans usually are satisfied with their bureaucratic encounters related to the negative attitudes toward government and bureaucracy that seem to be the predominant element of our political culture? Obviously, the finding conflicts with a uniformly antigovernmental, antibureaucratic cultural interpretation. Although the negative cultural interpretation of bureaucracy is strong enough that its detractors know they are unlikely to be criticized for expressing their views, the following evidence indicates that our ideas on the subject are complex, ambivalent and contradictory." (Hill, 1992: 19).

Hill's evidence found that citizens tend to agree with negative statements about the bureaucracy when these are unrelated to bureaucratic performance and vague enough to serve as an outlet for the stereotypical anti-bureaucratic images (Hill, 1992: 22). Although Hill uses some new survey material, his approach does not introduce much more than Goodsell. Despite Goodsell's claims on the difference between evaluations of concrete encounters and the evaluation of the bureaucracy in general being the most quoted ones, he is not the only one to have noted this paradox. Klages (1981) also referred to German research indicating differences in citizens' evaluation of civil servants in general and employees of specific public services. Goodsell's theoretical explanations do not differ greatly from Katz et al.'s research on bureaucratic encounters. Still, his book certainly was more important when it

came to balancing the anti-administrative bias, mainly because it was also read outside a PA research inner circle.

The trouble with government. But is it really government?

Bok combines a number of elements in his *The trouble with government* (2001). He finds that the situation progressed, but that the United States' achievements are hardly spectacular when compared to that of other nations (Bok, 2001: 50). Even though public sector performance and the quality of politicians have improved, governments' effectiveness seems to have declined. Policy, not performance, seems to fail. He does not try to emphasize qualities of government, but wonders why citizens fail to recognise these achievements.

His concludes that it is not necessarily government that is to blame, but evolutions in society that have equally contributed to the discontent: "If there is any persistent theme that emerges from this book, it is that many of the governments' failings are not primarily the result of scheming politicians, incompetent bureaucrats, or selfish interest groups; they have their roots in attitudes and behaviors that are widely shared among the people themselves. Much of the fault, in other words, lies not in Washington, but in ourselves" (Bok, 2001: 13). Earlier, he stated that "The very fact that trust and confidence have dropped substantially in the past thirty years for almost all major institutions in our society suggests that something more far reaching than poor performance in Washington must be responsible." (Bok, 1997: 56). This leads him to conclude that analysing public opinion is *not* the best way to measure government's performance: "Some observers might say that the best index of the government's performance is the verdict of public opinion. In a democracy, after all, the ultimate aim of the government is to satisfy its citizen. According to this view, a democratic regime that has so completely lost the confidence and trust of the people must, ipso facto, be doing a bad job." (Bok, 1997: 55-56).

Praising government's great achievements

In his book *Government's Greatest Achievements: From Civil Rights to Homeland Defense* Paul Light (2002) lists the greatest endeavours and achievements of the US Government since the end of WWII. He wants to challenge the belief that many Americans have that government creates more problems than it solves. Light makes no effort to explain the existence of this belief, despite the impressive achievements of government. Nevertheless, the book offers sufficient amounts of ammunition to tackle prejudices of a malfunctioning government.

Ringeling makes similar efforts to support his claim that government's image is not necessarily related to government efficiency or effectiveness. He demonstrates this by referring to specific policies and to the functioning of certain agencies (police, environmental policy, social security, economic policy) (1993: 38-63). The first part of his book is devoted to methods which determine the efficiency and effectiveness of government actions. Again, there seems to have been a need to demonstrate that government actually performs, and that its image does not necessarily correspond to reality. In the second part of the book efforts are made to explain the reason for this negative image, with substantial attention for socio-psychological factors.

World-views of anti-bureaucrats: Paul du Gay's 'In praise of bureaucracy'

A more theoretical-philosophical pro-bureaucratic (or better, anti-anti bureaucratic) piece of work is Paul du Gay's *In Praise of Bureaucracy* (2000). He is a critic of managerialism, as it is difficult to determine where policy ends and management begins. His defence of bureaucratic ethos is something he shares with the authors of the Blackburg manifesto. Like many authors, he observes a wide-spread anti-bureaucratic attitude: "The bureau carries a very hefty 'charge sheet', inscribed with multiple offences, ranging from the relatively banal – procrastination, obfuscation, circumlocution and other 'typical products' of a 'red tape' mentality – to the truly heinous – genocide, totalitarianism, despotism" (2000: 1). But du Gay's approach is of a different character than that of the other authors we discussed above. Instead of merely focusing on internal contradictions in citizens' views of the public administration or on achievements of government, he tries to analyse the worldviews of bureaucritics. Often, he points to inevitabilities in bureaucratic functioning, that necessarily have lead to perceived inefficiency: "The citizen who scoffs at the elaborate record keeping undertaken by government offices might well be equally annoyed should an official lose track of her affairs through relying on memory and telephone conversation" (2000: 1).

He distinguishes between three streams of bureaucritic sentiments

- Popular conception: defects of large organizations applying rules to cases. Here the anti-bureaucratic sentiment is often based on facts of experience, but it combines two contradictory bureaucratic characteristics: the bureaucrat and his lust for power vs. the lazy bureaucrat
- Philosophical variant: bureaus as an expression of *instrumental rationality*. Bureaus follow their own logic, and find their foundation in a number of dichotomies (public-private; reason-emotion etc.), which lead to exclusion. Many bureaucritics of this kind are found to be among postmodernists and poststructuralists, as they share a "romantic belief that the principle of a full and free exercise of personal capacities is akin to a moral absolute for human conduct" (du Gay, 2000: 3).
- Entrepreneurial managerialism: this approach is found in entrepreneurial governance, public choice and contemporary managerialism adherents: these approaches do not only criticise, but also offer a list of 'universal' principles that may contribute to a better functioning administration.

The populist and philosophical views make a distinction between personal and collective morality, while the entrepreneurial approach seems to suggest that goals and values should not be different at all between the private and public sector. The core idea in these approaches is that there must be a single source of moral values, that is to be found in the ideal of the fully developed person:

"Through an engagement with the work of three influential, but very different, contemporary 'anti-bureaucrats', Alasdair MacIntyre, Zygmunt Bauman and Tom Peters, I trace the presence of an abiding philosophical assumption: that ultimately there must be a single source of moral value and that this source is to be found in the ideal of the fully developed person – in the principle of complete, all-round human development. Whether this ultimate ethical comportment for human beings is articulated in terms of an Augustinian Christian-theological frame of reference (MacIntyre), in relation to the inner conviction of the person of conscience (Bauman), or the libertarian romanticism of the maximally 'businessed' person (Peters), it nonetheless functions as a moral absolute against which the general inadequacy of bureaucratic norms and procedures is to be registered.

In their very different ways, these three critics demand that all areas of life should be united, and that the individual overcome the alienating distinction between the different social roles she is forced to inhabit. They seem unable to abide the idea that what is relevant in one domain of existence need not be so in another. It is this religious and romantic ideal of a whole expressed in each of its parts that shapes their respective anti-bureaucratic visions" (du Gay, 2000: 10-11).

This means it is impossible in this view to imagine that what matters in one domain, might not do so in another (a good example is e.g. the public-private sector dichotomy), i.e. a Weberian pluralism of value spheres with their own ethical domains.

A need for new approaches?

Our brief overview of anti-anti-bureaucracy literature reveals two major trends. Many authors defend the public administration by referring to the PA's and government's achievements, even when they seem to be aware this will not be sufficient to change citizens' views. This strategy takes a central place in Light's and Bok's writings. Goodsell takes a similar approach, but realised merely stressing achievements does not necessarily contribute to a better image of the bureaucracy. This suggests that it is necessary to take government's image and its performance as two separate objects of study. Goodsell's comments stimulated us to study the importance of bureaucratic encounters in the formation of citizens' evaluation of the public administration. A second observation is that of a certain theoretical anaemia; most research is limited to a replication of the Katz, Gutek et al. and Goodsell findings. Very often, the observation of a difference between evaluations of specific services and of government/the public administration is repeated over and over, using different data.

2.2 WHY PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS STARTED TO CARE

Distrust and denigrating attitudes towards the public administration are not new. Why is it that governments only recently started worrying about it?

- The rise of extremist or protest parties in many Western countries made legitimacy problems of the state visible. In Belgium the discourse on the *gap between citizens and politics* started only after the breakthrough of the extreme right (Van de Walle, Thijs, and Bouckaert, 2003). In the Netherlands, the rise and murder of a populist politician released massive discontent with the public institutions (Kleijer, 2003).
- An economic boom in the second half of the 1990s disrupted public sector recruitment, as government was not the most popular employer (Äijaälä, 2002). The issue of public sector image also took a prominent place in the Volcker Commission reports in the USA. This negative image is a potential threat to public service pride (Bouckaert, 2001).
- From the late 80s on, administrative reform unfolded in most OECD countries, often after long periods of standstill. Referring to citizens' dissatisfaction with public services was a useful argument to motivate unwilling civil servants. This strategy features prominently in the National Performance Review (NPR) in the USA and in the Copernicus reform in Belgium from 1999 on (Gelders and Van de Walle, forthcoming).

- Extreme incidences of bureau bashing occurred under the Reagan and Thatcher governments in the USA and the UK respectively, and probably in other countries.

Other explanations are possible as well. Johnston relates the rise of citizens' discontent to the fall of communism. The disappearance of the communist system removed an important competing system with which citizens used to compare their own governmental system (Johnston, 1993).

It cannot be denied that public services often enjoy low levels of public esteem. To what extent this image rests on actual performance of these administrations or on pre-established stereotypes remains unclear: "Apparently, the present opinion on government performance has more to do with the image of government than with an observation of facts. It is this image that subsequently becomes the starting point for actions of political actors." (Ringeling, 1993: 225, own translation). Adams & Marini speak about a *bureaupathology*:

"The popular understanding of bureaucracy portrays the essence of bureaucracy in terms that a serious student might characterise as bureaupathology. That is, the word "bureaucracy" commonly conveys none of the theory of bureaucracy and its functionality; rather, it conveys the perversions and dysfunctions of bureaucracy as though these were its essence" (Adams and Marini, 1995: 70).

Policy makers and opinion leaders worry about low levels of citizens' trust in government. These worries are often based on *feelings* or hearsay. Objective information on the state of trust is used only in rare occasions, or is simply not available. Statements on the level and evolutions of trust in government are often grounded in concrete events (e.g. a scandal), or have to be interpreted as a strategic move in the political game. Van Gunsteren & Andeweg describe the situation strikingly:

"The 'gap' [between citizens and the state] seems to be a multi-layered phenomenon: indicators, symptoms, causes and remedies intermingle. From this the metaphor of the gap between citizens and politics derives its rhetorical power: everybody recognises the metaphor, and can accept it, just because it can be interpreted in so many different ways. At the same time, and for the same reason, the gap-metaphor is a weak instrument for diagnosis and analysis. The danger exists that the diagnosis is being adapted to the remedy that is en vogue at the moment, or that remedies based on false diagnoses aggravate the problems." (van Gunsteren and Andeweg, 1994: 24, own translation)

These authors of course do not deny that a certain degree of dissatisfaction exists. They only want to make clear that the current debates on trust in government do not allow for an in-depth analysis of causes, consequences and remedies of the phenomenon. The *political* discourse is clear however: People do not trust government because government, and the public administration more specifically, does not function properly, because public services cost too much, because civil servants are lazy, because administrations do not deliver, etc. Or as Clinton & Gore state in the Blair House papers: "How can people trust government to do big things if we can't do little things like answer the phone promptly and politely?" (Clinton and Gore, 1997: ix).

Recent government modernization rhetoric reflects the opinion that failing government performance is at the basis of distrust. This is a topic that receives increasing attention, among academics (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000: 123-6; Bok, 2001), but also in government institutions and think-tanks (Ryan, 2000; Barnes and Gill, 2000; Sims, 2001). The OECD declares that "public service

involves public trust. Citizens expect public servants to serve the public interest with fairness and to manage public resources properly on a daily basis. Fair and reliable public services inspire public trust..." (OECD, 2000: 9).

In the USA, the GPRA starts by asserting that "The Congress finds that waste and inefficiency in Federal programs undermine the confidence of the American people in the Government and reduces the Federal Government's ability to address adequately vital public needs" and further, that "The purposes of this Act are to improve the confidence of the American people in the capability of the Federal Government [...]" (Government Performance and Results Act, 1993). At the same time, restoring trust was one of the main aims of the National Partnership for Reinventing Government in the USA. The FAQ section of their (former) website even claims the following (see Kettl, 1998 for a comment):

"Overall, accomplishments like these have been important steps in restoring trust and faith in the government by improving the delivery of service to the public. After a 30-year decline, public trust in the federal government is finally increasing. When last measured by the University of Michigan in 1998, the public's trust in government had nearly doubled within a four-year period to 40 percent. While this cannot be totally attributed to the results of reinvention, NPR believes reinvention has made an important contribution in raising the public's trust in the government and creating a better workplace for federal employees." (National Partnership for Reinventing Government, 2001)

The US Government 2001 Budget explicitly takes the relationship between government performance and trust in government for granted:

"Americans believe that Government can deliver better results and improve their quality of life and the lives of their families. A generation ago, when the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research asked "Do you trust the Federal Government to do the right things most of the time?" 76 percent of Americans expressed confidence in the Federal Government. By 1994, that number had declined to only 21 percent. Analyses of the underlying causes of distrust of Government by The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Council for Excellence in Government, leading universities and other groups suggest there is a key link between confidence in Government and Government's performance." (Office of Management and Budget, 2000: 161)

The question remains whether a better functioning of the administrations will actually contribute to restoring trust in government remains a big question. According to McCurdy, the necessary measures and solutions proposed in the US *reinventing government* exercise are a social construct that are barely based on a solid argumentation: "The reforms seem attractive to government officials and the public at large because they appeal so profoundly to the general distrust of bureaucratic government in the United States" (McCurdy, 1995: 503). In New Zealand, large-scale reforms of the administration coincided according to the OECD (2001f) with a *decline* in trust for three reasons: the new transparency created new expectations, the scope and speed of the reforms made them unpopular, and the citizens did not understand the reforms due to a lack of communication. Trust in government,

at the same time, is also a prerequisite for governmental reforms. Without trust, reforms are not supported, even though they aim to stimulate trust (OECD, 2001f).

Restoring trust is part of many modernisation initiatives. In a survey on government-citizen relations, the OECD asked its member states to briefly explain “the key problems or issues to address in your country in order to strengthen government-citizen connections” (OECD, 1999). Many replies explicitly referred to low levels of trust. The Czech republic mentioned the lack of political interest and the existence of political apathy (OECD, 2001e) and Finland observed an alienation from politics, declining voter turnout and less respect for public institutions (OECD, 2001b). Reform in Flanders sought to close the gap between authorities and citizens (OECD, 2001c) and in Portugal protocols of administrative modernisation were made in order to “develop quality and modernisation, enhancing public trust in public services” (OECD, 2001d: 22). “Improving the image of public service and raising its prestige” was identified as one of the main characteristics of Portuguese administrative reform (OECD, 97). Denmark is quite an exception, as it states that levels of trust are high as is election turnout and tax compliance; therefore this does not pose any problems (OECD, 2001a).

2.3 STUDYING PUBLIC OPINION TOWARDS THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Research on the public opinion towards the public administration

Most research on values and opinions in public administration focuses on the political-administrative elites. Surveying citizens is not a widespread practice, except in evaluation research. In a number of cases, citizens have been the object of study, be it that research was often limited to certain aspects of the public administration, e.g. local government (Rose, 1999; Rose and Pettersen, 2000), or to specific regions (Swianiewicz, 2001).

The need for thorough research on citizens’ opinion on the public administration has been identified on several occasions, but this did not give rise to a real research tradition. Rainey (1996) even designed an ideal framework for survey research on public opinion towards the civil service, and Soós (2001) explicitly included citizens’ political culture into his research design on indicators of local democratic governance.

Nevertheless, a number of studies with a theoretical approach towards public opinion on the PA have been written (Ott and Shafritz, 1995; Rainey, 1996). Recently we detected an increased use of opinion data in PA. In most cases however, this use is limited to the national context, e.g., repeated citizen assessments of the Israeli public sector (Vigoda and Yuval, 2001), analysis of public opinion data on Spanish citizens’ attitudes towards the public sector (del Pino, 2002; del Pino, forthcoming), Finnish citizens’ trust in their ministries (Harisalo and Stenvall, 2002), Norwegians’ trust in government (Christensen and Laegreid, forthcoming), attitudes towards the public services in Flanders (Kampen, Van de Walle, Maddens, and Bouckaert, 2002), and citizen-local government relations in several Central-European countries (Swianiewicz, 2001).

Mapping trust in Western countries: government initiatives

Perceived declines in trust and low public esteem for the public administration have stimulated many governments to initiate projects and commission reports on trust in government. For instance, the present study is the result of a research project commissioned by the ministry of the Flemish

Community, to look into the relationship between the quality of public services and citizens' trust in government. That one's country is doing worse than most Western countries and that trust is low seem to be the basic assumptions in most of these projects. If of course all countries start to think this, it is clear that something is wrong with the basic assumption.

Monitoring citizens' attitudes towards government and the public administration is new and flashy. It remains to be seen whether it will be more than a caprice, and whether we will find genuine policy behind the pompous declarations. Indeed, "*citizen governance* may be a euphemism for image management" (Miller and Nunemaker, 1999: 303). In some countries however, the administration's practice of measuring attitudes towards the public administration is more embedded than in others.

The measurement practice seems to be best established in the Canadian government. All kinds of surveys (citizen surveys, customer satisfaction surveys, employee surveys) are theoretically related in a single *service value chain* (Heintzman and Marson, 2003). Recently, a government tradition of regular large-scale surveys has emerged. Within the Service Improvement Initiative, departments and agencies are required to establish documented baseline measures of client satisfaction for key services to the public using a Common Measurements Tool (CMT, see e.g. <http://www.iccs-isac.org>). The bi-yearly *Citizens First* survey, deals with what citizens think about the services they receive, while the *Listening to Canadians* surveys deal with government communication and measures Canadians' views on public policy priorities. It also addresses how the Government of Canada serves Canadians in response to these priorities. Communication Canada also coordinates public opinion research for the Government of Canada (www.communication.gc.ca). Harvey Sims prepared a review of literature to determine whether there is a link between the efficiency of government services and citizens' trust in government, and integrates this presumed causal link within a broader framework of public perceptions and value change in society. He suggests it would be unwise "to justify service improvement efforts in terms of possible effects on confidence" (Sims, 2001).

Concerns for perceived rising distrust in government stimulated a number of organisations to engage in research and in giving advice to restore the citizens' trust in government and the administration. In the USA, the American Customer Satisfaction Index contains indicators for over 100 public agencies (www.theacsi.org), and several non-profit initiatives exist to measure citizens' attitudes towards public service(s), such as the PEW Research Center for the People and the Press (1998) and the Council for Excellence in Government's and Ford Foundation's Partnership for Trust in Government (1999). In 1999, the Panel on Civic Trust and Citizen Responsibility, with Paul Volcker as chairman, issued *A Government to Trust and Respect: Rebuilding Citizen-Government Relations for the 21st Century*. This attention did not come out of the void, as is was the NPR's explicit aim to "address [...] the public's disenchantment with government" (Moe, 2003: 121).

The lack of data makes it difficult to map trends in Australia, but concerns about trust certainly exist. This is seen by discussion at the Office of the Auditor General of Western Australia on public confidence in the public sector (Ryan, 2000). In New Zealand, Barnes & Gill wrote a Working Paper in 2000 for the State Services Commission, entitled *Declining Government Performance? Why Citizens Don't Trust Government*. It replicated Bok's study in the US, which found that government performance and quality of life had improved over the past 30 years, while trust in government had declined. It found that trends were similar in New Zealand.

The Flemish government monitors trust on an annual basis and regularly organises customer satisfaction surveys (Bouckaert et al., 2001; Kampen, Maddens, and Vermunt, 2003). The Belgian

Federal government had an instrument for measuring satisfaction with and trust in the federal public services (Legrand and Staes, 1998). Since 1996, the Administration for Planning and Statistics of the Flemish Government has organised an annual survey covering policy issues and attitudes towards government (www.vlaanderen.be/aps).

In the UK, the People's Panel is (or better, was) a valuable source of information (www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/servicefirst), and the Strategy Unit recently (March 2004) organised an expert seminar on *Engagement in Public Institutions in the UK and Internationally - Trends, Drivers and Lessons from Innovations*. Earlier, several documents had been published on satisfaction with public services at all levels of government (Moore, Clarke, Johnson, Seargeant, and Steele, 1998; Donovan, Brown, and Bellulo, 2001). At the local level, the Audit Commission launched a broad project on trust and corporate governance in public institutions (Audit Commission, 2003; Audit Commission and MORI Social Research institute, 2003). As part of the review of Public Administration by the Northern Ireland Executive (<http://www.rpani.gov.uk>), a number of omnibus surveys have been organised to examine the public's views of and experiences with public services in Northern Ireland (Knox and Carmichael, 2003).

In the Netherlands, a *Belevingsmonitor* was launched in 2003. It is a monthly survey on several topics: trust in government, the evaluation of government information and communication, the public agenda vs. agenda perceived by citizens, evaluation of government policy on a number of issues and the match between the public agenda and the government agenda⁶. Recently however, the political desirability of the project was a matter of dispute, especially after a number of results that were not flattering for the government, had been published (x, 2003). Recently, the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Office released a study on citizens' trust in the courts and the justice system (Dekker, Maas - de Waal, and van der Meer, 2004), and similar material exists for e.g. the image of provincial governments (Hendriks, van den Berg, and Van Beurden, 2003).

Trust and satisfaction indicators have permeated the Finnish public sector (Alam, 2002; Holkeri and Nurmi, 2002), while the Danish Ministry of Finance had organised a survey in 1998 on citizens and the public sector.

The next chapter looks at some of the available international survey material, and describes the main trends in citizens' attitudes towards the public sector and government.

⁶ http://www.regering.nl/actueel/dossieroverzicht/42_15165.jsp?ComponentID=15165&SourcePageID=7496

Chapter 3 TRUST IN GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS: AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

*Nach dem Aufstand des 17. Juni
Ließ der Sekretär des Schriftstellerverbands
In der Stalinallee Flugblätter verteilen
Auf denen zu lesen war, daß das Volk
Das Vertrauen der Regierung verscherzt habe
Und es nur durch verdoppelte Arbeit
Zurückerobern könne. Wäre es da
Nicht doch einfacher, die Regierung
Löste das Volk auf und
Wählte ein anderes?
(Bertold Brecht, Die Lösung, 1951)*

The tendency to attribute citizens' perception of the public sector to the performance of public services takes a negative perception for granted. The concept of an ever-widening gap between citizens and government occupies a central place in much of the political discourse. The growing attention for citizens' attitude towards government in general and the public administration more specifically should not be taken as proof there actually *are* much lower levels of trust and satisfaction now. In this chapter, we provide a *state of the art*, and an overview of empirical data outlining the present state of trust in government and attitudes towards the public administration as well as evolutions. The focus will be on the main OECD countries, and on the countries composing the EU15. First, we look for evidence whether the crisis of confidence actually exists, and describe a number of general trends. Subsequently, we focus on attitudes towards the public administration, relying on internationally comparable survey data, mainly the Eurobarometer and the European Values Studies. In this chapter, a first attempt will be made to support or reject the hypothesis of the Belgian exceptionalism, i.e. the tendency to describe the Belgians as a people with exceptionally low levels of trust and with a hostile attitude towards their administration.

3.1 IS THERE A CONFIDENCE GAP IN THE OECD COUNTRIES?

Politicians refer to a crisis of democracy due to a generalised and constantly declining trust in government. Also among academics, referring to declining trust is common (Nye, 1997). Loss of trust in government is often presented as part of a broader framework of declining trust in institutions, both governmental ones and others (Blendon et al., 1997). Anti-government sentiment shows evolutions similar to anti-business ones, and therefore probably is part of the same syndrome (Lipset and Schneider, 1983b). For others, the decline is limited to authoritarian institutions (Inglehart, 1997).

It is not entirely certain whether empirical facts support this conclusion. The scientific diagnosis on the syndrome shows a certain evolution: in the 60s and 70s, there was a *crisis* and the cause was government overload. The 80s described the 70s *crisis* not as a trend, but as a mere *fluctuation*; and the democratisation in a number of countries softened fears of the end of democracy. “Malaise, disengagement, ennui, flight from politics and *Politikverdrossenheit* became the key words of research in the 90s (Norris, 1999b). This shows there have been worries about distrust in government for decades or even longer, which made Dahrendorf conclude that:

“It appears that democracy is always in crisis. Twenty-five years before the present volume, in 1975, the Trilateral Commission published a report on its Kyoto Conference entitled *The Crisis of Democracy*. [...] Thirty-five years before that, Harold Laski described the democratic crisis vividly in his *Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. In fact, the topic is of classical parentage. Tocqueville’s ambivalence toward what he called democracy was coupled with the hope that it would not last. And Aristotle, of course, the father of all such theories, regarded democracy as intrinsically unstable and therefore preferred a polity that mixes democratic and oligarchic elements. So what is new today?” (Dahrendorf, 2000).

American authors constantly refer to the results of the National Election Studies (NES), which show that up to 70% of the respondents trusted the government in the 60s. Comparing these to recent results, they point at the dramatic decline of trust. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995), however, do not refer to the NES but to Gallup polls in the late 40s. These showed only 15-20% thought Congress was doing a good job. When one compares present numbers to these figures, trust did not really decline. So the question remains: has trust in government really disappeared? Dalton sees a declining trend in most countries, except for Norway and the Netherlands, be it that measurement started in the latter (Dalton, 1999). Deschouwer (1998a) analysed Eurobarometer data (satisfaction with the way democracy functions), but did not find any trends, just fluctuations. At the same time the differences between countries remained stable, leading him to conclude that we should look for explanations in structural and historical factors. Dierickx, Gijssels et al. (1996) also used Eurobarometer data and found strong differences, but not trends. They found that alienation is subject to fluctuations. The data showed the Germans to be very distrusting in the 50s, while they are now some of the least alienated citizens. Newton and Norris (1999) on the other hand, working on World Values Studies data, find a decline in trust for all public institutions with rare exceptions. Levels of satisfaction with democracy tend to fluctuate very strongly in all of the countries, but still a similar direction can be discerned in it (Huseby, 2000). For Listhaug and Wiberg (1995), there is “no general trend either in the direction of declining or increasing confidence in institutions” (303), but there is some decline in confidence in order institutions.

There seems to be, however, a decline of confidence in political institutions, but this did not affect support for democracy (Dalton, 1999). If there is a problem, it is certainly not one of a crisis in democracy: there may be dissatisfaction, but this does not extend to challenging the core of the democratic system (Klingemann, 1999: 31-32). For these authors, declining trust refers to marginal elements of the political system, and in no case to a genuine loss of confidence in the system.

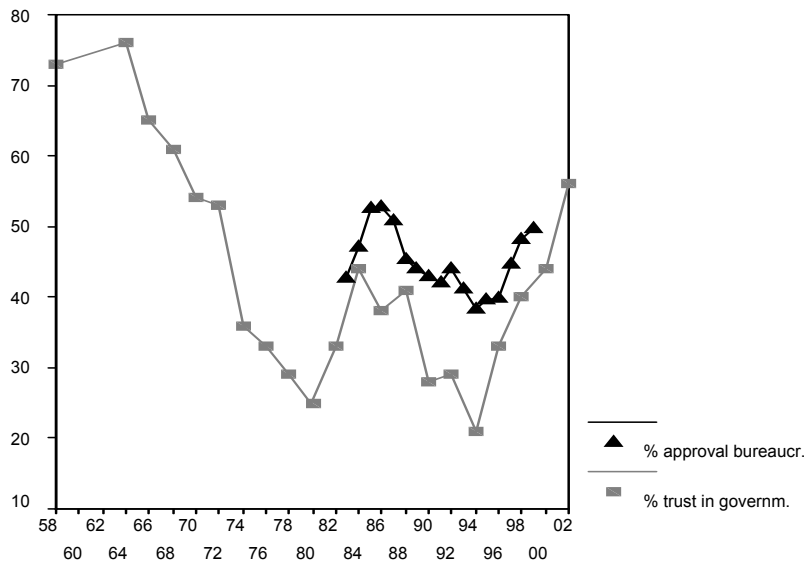
Finally, because citizens' attitudes towards government are mainly based on subjective evaluations, we have to take great care when dealing with the statistics. First, there seems to be quite some fluctuation in the numbers, and the results depend on context (both methodological and societal). Second, it is not necessarily the numbers that are important, but the reception of the numbers. It may very well be that the objective level of trust as measured in surveys has not changed, but that there is an increased sensitivity for the issue. After all, a problem is only a problem if defined as such. Increased attention given to trust in government may create awareness of reasons for distrust. For O'Neil, "there isn't even very good evidence that we trust less". Our actions do not provide evidence that we stopped trusting. "There is good evidence that we say we trust less: we tell the pollsters, they tell the media, and the news that we say we do not trust is then put into circulation" (2002: 44). While many respondents agree with a number of negatively phrased items, they are equally found to agree with many positively phrased ones. Due to the focus on certain specific elements of the political system and selected findings in polls, Schedler (1993) describes much of the discussion on Politikverdrossenheit as a "demoskopisch Artefakt", i.e. created by pollsters. This argument will be dealt with more in detail in 9.3.

Is there a confidence gap in the OECD countries? This is a question that is very difficult to answer, as comparable long-term data often lack. We were not able to find many detailed statistics, and for most countries, we have to rely on the internationally comparable social surveys such as the European Values Study and the Eurobarometer. For Australia, we only have a limited number of measures at our disposal (Ryan, 2000). For the Central- and Eastern European Countries we can use the Candidate Countries Eurobarometer, the New Democracies Barometer (Mishler and Rose, 1997) and a number of books and articles (Steen, 1996; Swianiewicz, 2001), but most material has been collected only recently. In the following pages, we have collected some of the essential statistics on trust in government, and citizens' attitudes towards the public administration in a number of countries. Most of the examples relate to EU and Northern American countries, as it is these countries most information is available for.

USA

The National Election Studies in the United States have been measuring trust for over 40 years. Every two years, respondents answer the question *How much of the time can you trust the government in Washington to do what is right?* The figure shows the percentage *just about always* and *most of the time* answers. A problem with the US measurement is that it is supposed that the answer *only some of the time* gives an indication of levels of distrust (Moore, 2002). Webb Yackee and Lowery (2003) have constructed an aggregate measure of approval for the bureaucracy, based on 4 different opinion poll questions that were used frequently between 1983 and 1999. Their *approval for the bureaucracy* indicator is shown next to the trust in government indicator.

Figure 1: Trust in government index and approval of the bureaucracy, USA



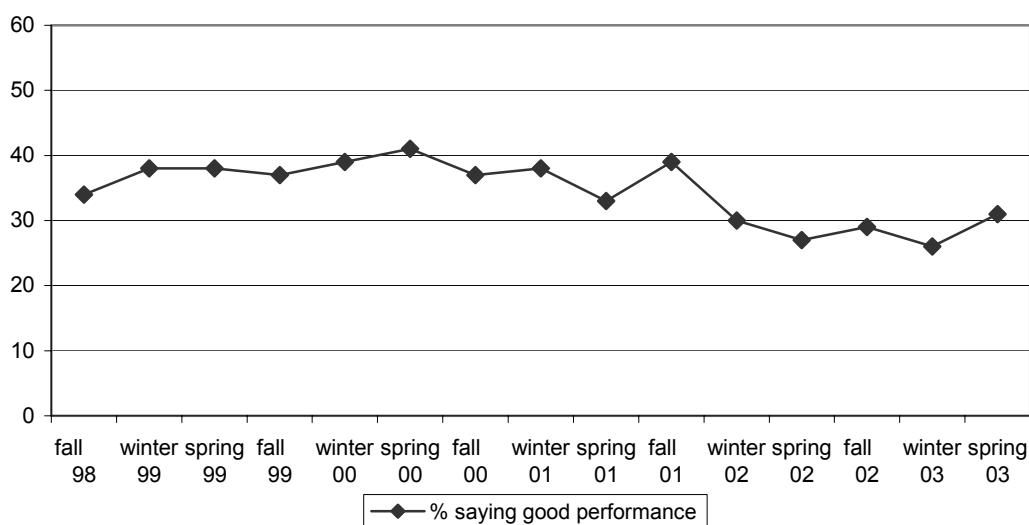
Source: National Election Studies (<http://www.umich.edu/~nes/>); Webb Yackee & Lowery, 2003

American studies tend to refer to the high levels of trust in the 50s and 60s, and to the sharp decline since. Most studies also mention the increase in trust during the Reagan presidency, often attributed to the presidents' charisma and the economic situation (Citrin and Green, 1996). The recent recovery since 1994 is nonetheless often neglected. More worrying is the observation that the US is one of the few Western countries where interpersonal trust is rapidly declining, while it rises in most of Western Europe (Newton, 1999). This possibly helps to explain the popularity of social capital research. The indicators of bureaucratic approval and trust in government show remarkable resemblance.

Canada

Measurement in Canada is rather recent, but over the past few years, Canadian government has adopted the habit of measuring citizens' opinion on the functioning of the public services. It mainly uses the *Citizens First* surveys of the *Institute for Citizen-Centred Service* and the *Communication Canada's Listening to Canadians Communications Survey*. The figure shows citizens evolutions in citizens' answers on the question *Generally speaking, how would you rate the performance of the Government of Canada* (Communication Canada, 2003).

Figure 2: Evaluation of Canadian government performance



Source: Adapted from Communication Canada, Listening to Canadians Communications Survey (spring 2003)

The Netherlands

Every two years, the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Office publishes a social and cultural report containing information on government-citizen relations, such as satisfaction with the functioning of government. The 2000 data did not indicate any structural dissatisfaction, but from 2001 on, some opinion data indicated a change in public opinion, which would become clearly visible in 2002 (Veldheer, 2002: 211). EB indicators for satisfaction with the functioning of democracy show only a limited decline in this period.

Table 3: Satisfaction with government, The Netherlands

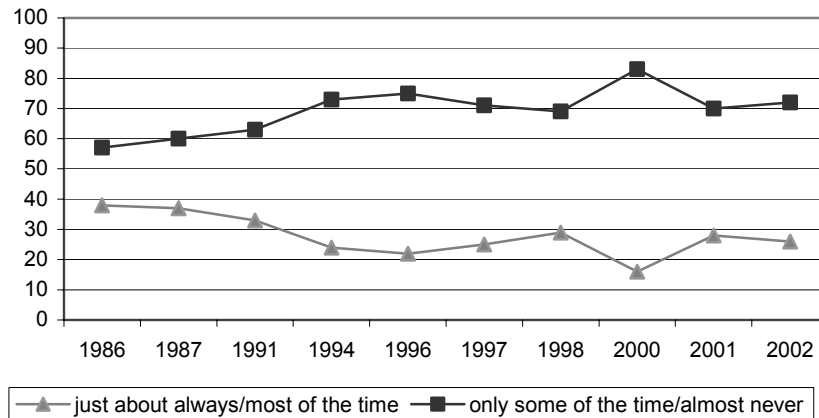
	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	2000
How satisfied are you with what government does (% satisfied)	66,6	76,5	76,7	78,3	79,5	77,1
The Dutch government functions well (% agree)		56,1	58,3	62,8	65,3	64,7

Source: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau

United Kingdom

Analysing the question *How much do you trust British governments of any party to place the ends of the nation above the interests of their own political party?* in the British Social Attitudes, we see a clear negative trend. Other data on satisfaction with government, collected by MORI, show that satisfaction is related to economic conditions and that the popularity of governments follows an (electoral) cycle (MORI Social Research Institute, 2003). Satisfaction with democracy does not show a permanent decline (see below).

Figure 3: Trust in British governments, 1986-2002



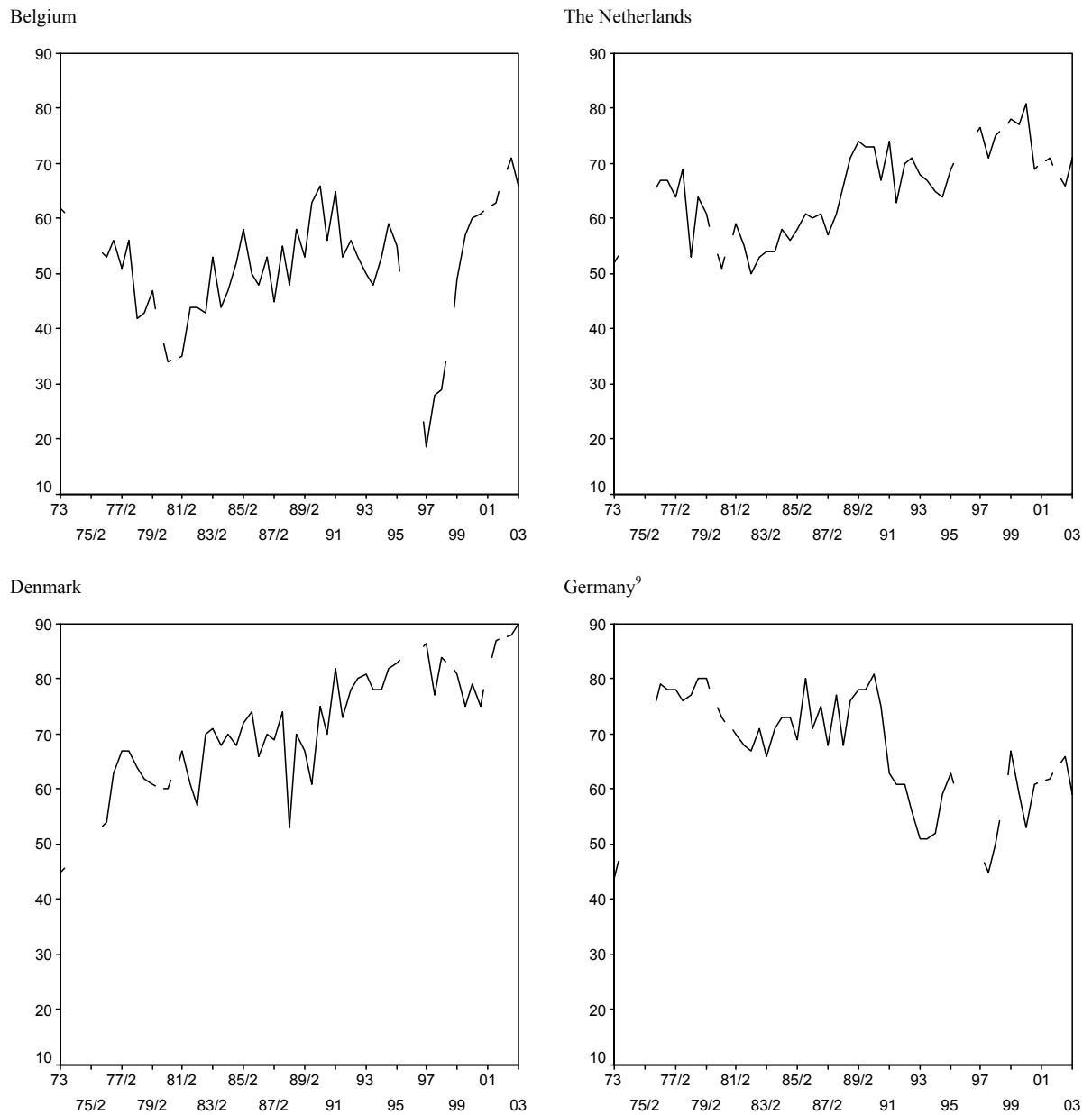
Source: British Social Attitudes: *How much do you trust British governments of any party to place the ends of the nation above the interests of their own political party?*

Comparison between EU countries

Since 1973, the Eurobarometer survey has contained a question on *satisfaction with the way democracy works*⁷ (in the respondent's own country, in the EU), thereby providing one of the few long-term data. In the next figures, evolutions in satisfaction for the EU countries are shown. It is not our aim to analyse all evolutions in all countries, but simply to highlight some trends and events. The drop in satisfaction in Belgium (autumn '97 – spring '98) is most likely due to the Dutroux paedophilia crisis and the resulting 300.000 people *White March* the country had to go through. Unfortunately, we do not have data from autumn 1995 through 1996. German data reflect lower levels of satisfaction in East Germany compared to the West, which influences German levels of satisfaction (Niedermayer, 2001). In the Netherlands, there was a recent sharp decline in satisfaction, possibly related to the rise of the populist politician Fortuyn and the *Leefbaar* political parties. In Spain, there was an unexplained drop in 1993-1994. There were a number of scandals in that period, but for Montero et al. (1999) the decline is not significant. We find a similar unexplained decline in Ireland some years earlier. Satisfaction in Italy is very low, and the decline in 1993 could be explained by the corruption scandals related to the *Tagentopoli* investigations (Suleiman, 2003: 77). The Swedish timeline is a very limited one, but other data reflects an ongoing decline in political trust (Holmberg, 1999). In Ireland, Luxemburg, France and Denmark there seems to be a trend of rising satisfaction, bringing Denmark to an astonishing 87% level of satisfaction in 2003. The high and rising levels of trust in Denmark allow Nye and Zelikow (1997:279) to suggest that studying this country may offer new insights in the phenomenon of trust.

⁷ In most cases two question: satisfaction with the way democracy works in the respondent's own country, and satisfaction with the way democracy works in the EU.

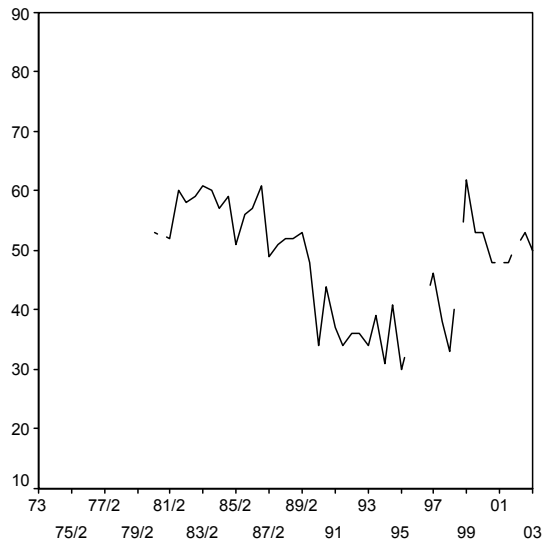
Figure 4: Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in EU countries, Eurobarometer⁸



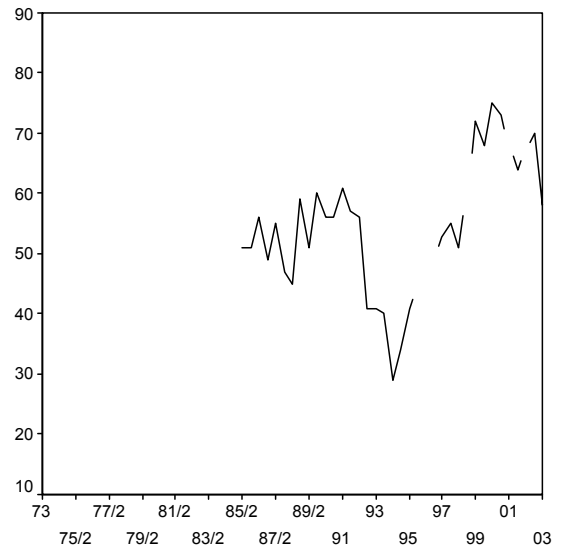
⁸ Figures indicate % of respondents that is very or fairly satisfied (4-point scale). Data are available from 1973 on (one measurement). From 1976 on more continuous measurement. EB 44.3 (1996) not used in the time-series as satisfaction with democracy was asked among other items, which could endanger comparability. Years are indicated as e.g. 89 for spring 1989 and as 89/2 for autumn 1989. 1975 data not used because 11-point scale was used. Differences in scales and question wording in 1988-9, but these did not seem to generate major changes.

⁹ Numbers for West-Germany till spring 1990; East and West from 1990 on, what explains the dip in satisfaction.

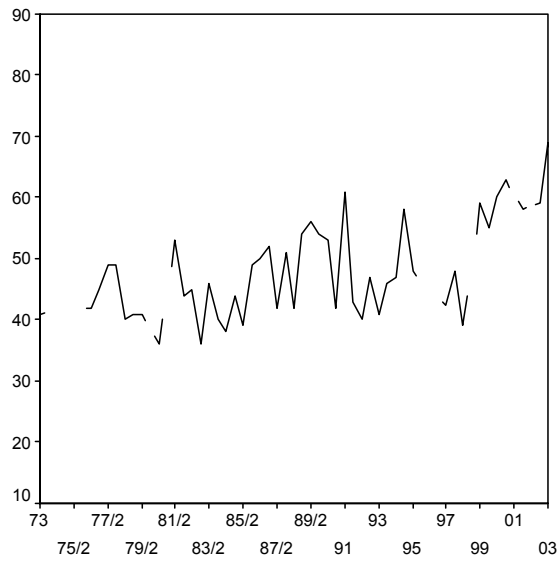
Greece



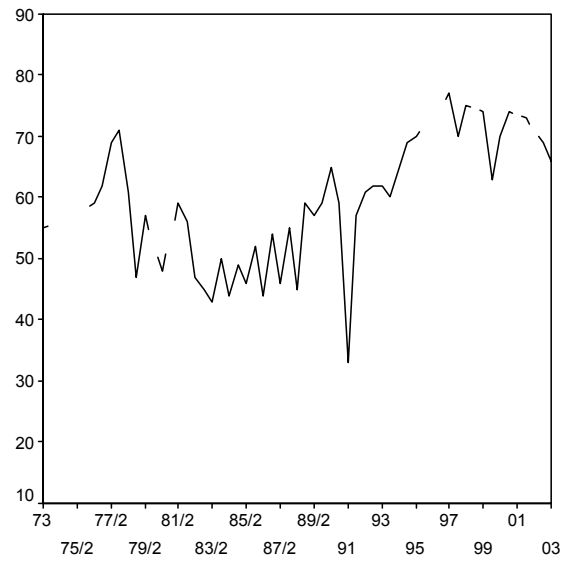
Spain



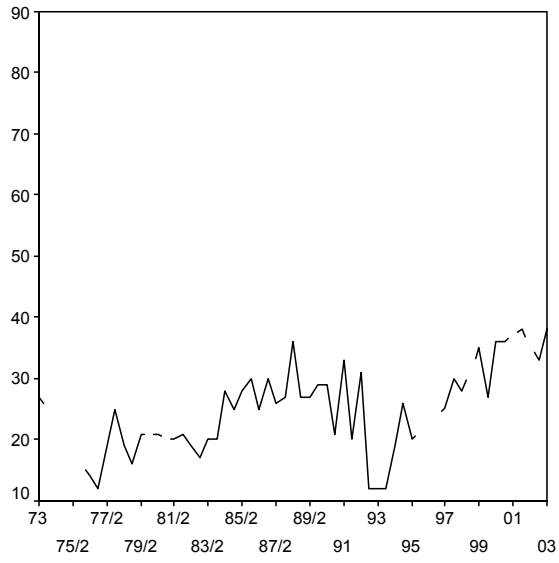
France



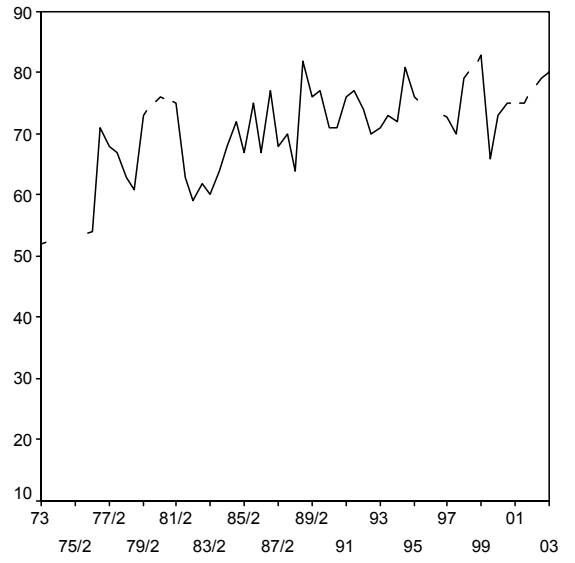
Ireland



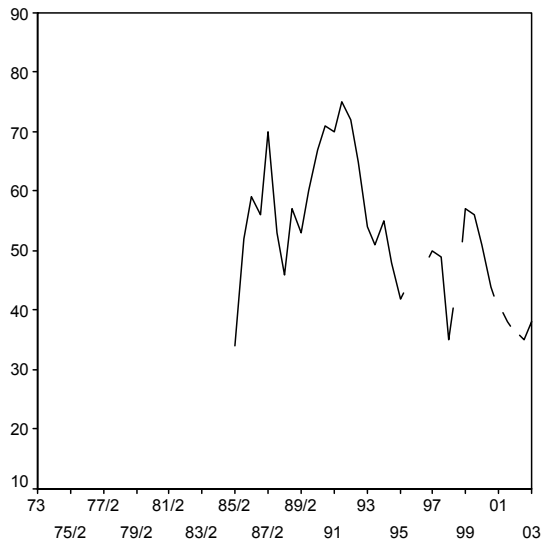
Italy



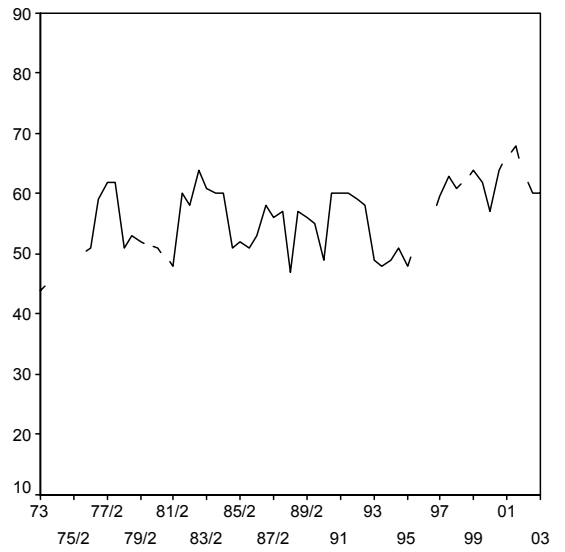
Luxemburg



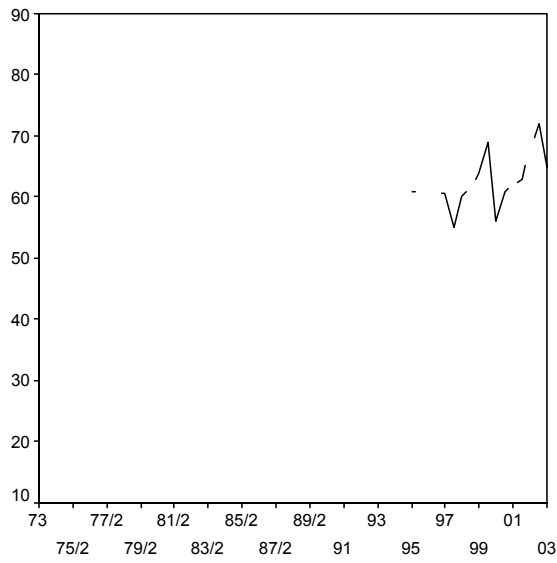
Portugal



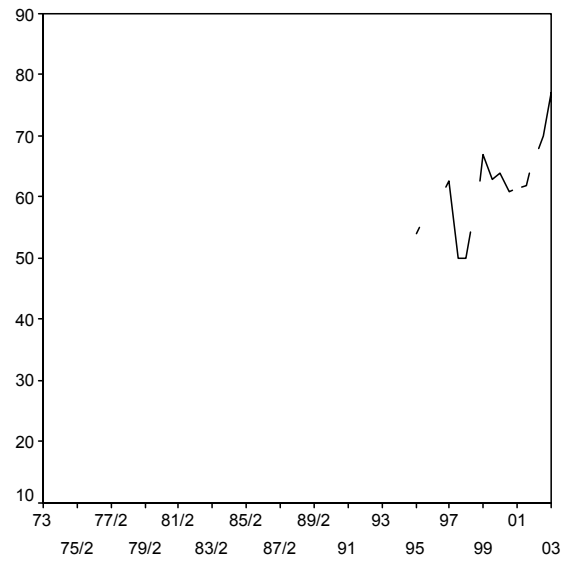
UK



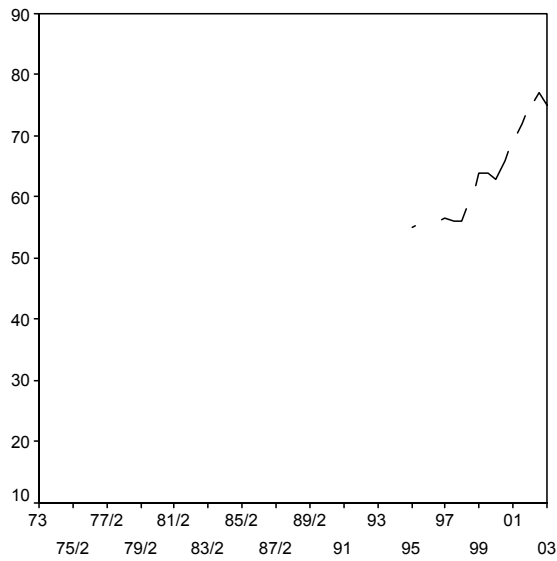
Austria



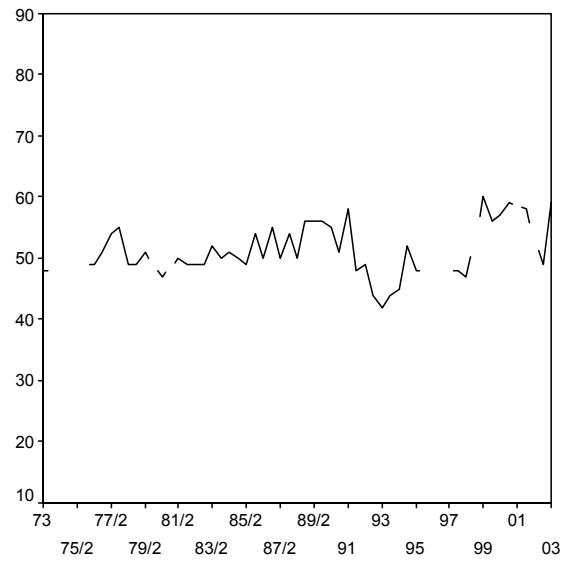
Finland



Sweden



EU average



Source: Eurobarometer

The following three tables show the levels of confidence in the institutions in the European countries, as measured in the three consecutive waves of the European Values Study. We indicate Belgium's rank among the European countries. The tables show that the Belgium social security and health care system score an excellent rating in 1999-2000 as compared to the other countries.

Table 4: Trust in the institutions, European Values Study 1981¹⁰

% confidence, 1981	Church	Armed forces	Education system	Justice system	Press	Trade unions	Police	Parliament	Civil service	Major companies
France*	53,2	53,9	56,6	56,4	33,5	40,3	63,6	54,8	52,1	48,7
Great Britain*	46,0	80,9	59,3	65,8	28,3	25,5	85,4	31,4	47,0	50,5
Germany (West)*	43,0	51,3	43,3	66,5	30,3	38,8	68,8	51,4	32,3	33,9
Italy*	57,0	54,3	53,9	42,4	31,6	28,8	64,5	30,0	26,8	32,4
Netherlands*	38,8	41,9	73,0	65,1	28,2	39,6	72,3	44,5	44,4	35,0
Denmark*	46,0	39,3	65,3	79,1	29,9	53,0	84,4	36,2	46,9	33,9
Belgium*	62,9	42,7	79,1	57,8	35,5	33,1	63,5	38,2	46,3	43,5
Spain*	49,5	61,5	50,4	48,9	47,3	32,5	63,2	47,9	39,1	37,8
Ireland*	77,8	74,6	66,7	57,5	43,0	37,1	85,8	52,0	54,4	49,8
N-Ireland (Ulster)*	70,4	76,4	72,8	67,5	33,0	23,5	83,5	45,3	58,5	53,5
Norway 1982	50	68	80	84	41	56	89	78	58	45
Sweden 1981	39	61	62	73	27	49	80	47	46	42
Finland 1981	49	71	83	84	34	56	88	65	53	45
Iceland 1984	69		69	69	16	46	74	56	48	34

* Countries in original EVS

Source: NIWI. 1981. *European Values Study, P0830 Steinmetz Archive Documentation Set*, Version 1.0; Listhaug, O. & Wiberg, M. (1995). Confidence in Political and Private Institutions. In: *Citizens and the State*, eds. Klingemann Hans-Dieter & Dieter Fuchs. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 298-322; own calculations.

¹⁰ Cross-year comparisons have to be done with care, since there are differences in the calculations due to the use or absence of the 'don't know' category and of weight factors. Some number come from the official survey, others from comparable instruments.

Table 5: Trust in the institutions, European Values Study 1990

% confidence, 1990	Church	Armed forces	Education system	Justice system	Press	Trade unions	Police	Parliament	Civil service	Major companies
France	50	56	66	58	38	32	67	48	49	67
Great-Britain	43	81	47	54	14	26	77	46	44	48
Germany (West)	40	40	54	65	34	36	70	51	39	38
Italy	63	48	49	32	39	34	67	32	27	62
Netherlands	32	32	65	63	36	53	73	54	46	49
Denmark	47	46	81	79	31	46	89	42	51	38
Belgium	49		80	67	20	51	85	53	46	40
Spain	53	42	62	45	51	40	58	43	37	49
Ireland	72	61	73	47	36	43	86	50	59	52
Portugal	57	47	51	41	36	29	44	34	32	45
Norway	45	65	79	75	43	59	88	59	44	53
Sweden	38	49	70	56	33	40	74	47	44	53

Source: European Values Study; Listhaug, O. & Wiberg, M. (1995). Confidence in Political and Private Institutions. In: *Citizens and the State*, eds. Klingemann Hans-Dieter & Dieter Fuchs. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 298-322

Table 6: Trust in the institutions, European Values Study 1999-2000

% a great deal – quite a lot															
	Church	Armed forces	Education system	Press	Trade Unions	Police	Parliament	Civil Service	Soc. security system	European Union	NATO	UNO	Health care system	Justice system	Major Companies
France	45,7	63,0	68,4	35,6	34,7	66,2	40,6	45,9	66,9	48,5		53,9	77,4	45,8	47,6
Great Britain	34,4	83,6	66,3	15,8	28,1	69,6	35,5	45,9	36,4	26,4	58,9	60,2	58,7	49,1	40,1
Germany	39,5	55,1	72,6	36,0	37,8	73,6	35,7	38,7	44,3	37,1	51,2	52,1	53,0	61,5	36,2
Austria	38,9	39,3	86,2	31,9	31,3	75,7	40,7	42,4	66,7	37,5	27,9	41,7	86,3	69,0	41,2
Italy	67,1	51,6	53,2	35,3	28,7	67,2	34,1	33,2	34,1	68,7	55,7	67,9	36,7	31,5	49,6
Spain	41,8	43,6	67,6	41,4	27,4	54,9	46,4	40,5	62,7	50,4	30,6	42,2	65,6	42,3	34,6
Portugal	79,9	70,9	59,8	65,7	47,0	65,5	49,2	53,6	50,6	68,5	67,7	71,3	44,0	40,7	52,8
Greece	64,4	74,0	37,0	31,4	12,1	37,4	29,0	20,2	24,7	24,8	8,8	17,1	26,8	46,5	19,6
Malta	83,4	72,8	84,8	36,5	49,2	64,1	52,3	49,2	76,8	55,8	52,3	63,1	86,9	45,0	
Belgium	42,9	39,8	77,9	38,3	37,8	55,4	39,1	46,1	69,4	50,2	46,5	46,4	82,6	36,4	
rank	24 / 32	28 / 32	11 / 32	16 / 32	12 / 32	16 / 32	14 / 32	11 / 32	4 / 32	9 / 32	12 / 26	23 / 32	5 / 32	23 / 32	/
Netherlands	29,6	39,1	73,1	55,4	58,6	63,6	55,3	37,5	64,4	33,4	50,4	55,0	75,1	48,2	
Luxemburg	47,8	54,1	67,8	46,0	52,2	72,4	62,7	59,5	78,6	57,8	62,3	65,0	77,9	58,7	40,0
Denmark	59,2	61,4	75,0	32,9	48,0	90,9	48,6	54,9	67,1	26,7	59,2	64,2	69,6	78,4	
Sweden	45,4	44,3	67,8	45,8	42,5	75,6	51,1	48,8	50,9	28,8	41,3	73,7	76,3	61,0	
Finland	58,1	84,3	88,8	36,3	53,5	90,1	43,7	40,9	70,6	24,5	47,1	44,2	84,4	65,8	42,6
Iceland	64,5	40,1	82,4	39,3	49,0	83,0	71,6	55,9	49,5	45,0		72,4	85,0	73,6	41,7
Ireland	52,2	58,8	86,4	34,8	46,3	83,6	31,1	59,3	55,8	60,2		62,6	57,5	54,5	
N.-Ireland	63,6	56,2	82,7	18,5	37,6	63,0	40,4	52,5	54,1	39,8		52,7	67,9	47,9	
Estonia	44,0	34,7	73,9	42,0	32,4	34,2	27,0	40,4	50,7	31,3	36,7	43,5	61,8	32,3	
Latvia	66,6	47,8	73,7	44,8	32,2	39,9	27,5	49,2	57,4	34,9	35,8	47,9	67,0	47,2	
Lithuania	71,0	50,1	66,6	76,8	40,0	24,3	10,6	20,6	32,2	30,6	35,8	47,1	36,9	19,3	17,1
Poland	69,3	67,4	81,2	46,8	34,0	55,0	32,8	32,6	38,9	43,1	56,8	58,1	56,6	41,9	
Czech rep.	19,5	25,2	54,6	37,6	22,0	33,0	12,2	21,8	33,4	42,6	43,8	48,3	42,9	23,3	19,6
Slovakia	68,8	77,0	76,3	49,0	43,3	44,5	42,8	38,7	36,6	54,6	35,6	52,2	51,1	35,6	
Hungary	47,5	46,0	64,3	30,7	23,7	45,4	34,0	49,6	42,3	58,7		58,9	43,9	45,3	
Romania	82,7	82,6	79,4	38,5	27,1	45,4	19,2	27,3	30,5	39,1	34,9	44,3	58,9	40,1	

	<i>Church</i>	<i>Armed forces</i>	<i>Education system</i>	<i>Press</i>	<i>Trade Unions</i>	<i>Police</i>	<i>Parliament</i>	<i>Civil service</i>	<i>Soc. security system</i>	<i>European Union</i>	<i>NATO</i>	<i>UNO</i>	<i>Health care system</i>	<i>Justice system</i>	<i>Major companies</i>
Bulgaria	35,4	57,8	57,5	26,2	15,4	46,7	27,4	23,9	25,5	43,5		40,4	34,1	27,8	
Slovenia	35,4	41,6	80,3	61,1	31,3	50,1	25,3	25,3	46,7	36,9	36,9	48,9	68,4	43,7	
Croatia	61,6	62,3	58,4	15,5	25,8	46,3	20,0	31,3	27,9	41,1	51,4	40,9	39,0	30,6	23,9
Belarus	70,5	69,8	84,0	40,6	27,9	40,3	37,5	23,0	55,8	47,0	21,2	53,2	67,2	46,5	58,6
The Ukraine	65,7	68,8	71,7	46,5	37,7	32,5	26,9	38,9	44,1	45,4	31,8	55,3	47,7	32,3	21,4
Russia	61,0	66,8	71,3	30,0	30,5	29,0	19,4	37,8	45,3	25,7	20,3	26,9	56,2	36,2	20,6

Source: Halman, L. 2001. *The European Values Study: A Third Wave: Source Book of the 1999-2000 European Values Study Surveys*. Tilburg: WORC, Tilburg University; own calculations. See also <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.com>.

3.2 DECLINING TRUST IN THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?

European Values Study

Internationally comparable survey material is limited for comparing citizens' attitudes towards the public administration. We used the European Values Study and the Eurobarometer, as these surveys offer the most extensive material for comparison. The European Values Study is a survey organised approximately every 10 year since 1981 in a large number of European countries. Respondents indicate their level of confidence in a number of institutions on a 4-point scale (no neutral category). The table below shows evolutions in levels of trust in the civil service.

Table 7: Confidence in the civil service in a number of European countries: evolution

% confidence	1981	1990	1999	90 vs. 81	99 vs. 90	99 vs. 81
France	52,1	49	45,9	-3,1	-3,1	-6,2
UK	47,0	44	45,9	-3,0	1,9	-1,1
Germany	32,3	39	38,7	6,7	-0,3	6,4
Italy	26,8	27	33,2	0,2	6,2	6,4
Spain	39,1	37	40,5	-2,1	3,5	1,4
Portugal		32	53,6		21,6	
<i>Belgium</i>	<i>46,3</i>	<i>46</i>	<i>46,1</i>	<i>-0,3</i>	<i>0,1</i>	<i>-0,2</i>
Netherlands	44,4	46	37,5	1,6	-8,5	-6,9
Denmark	46,9	51	54,9	4,1	3,9	8,0
Sweden	46	44	48,8	-2,0	4,8	2,8
Finland	53		40,9			-12,1
Iceland	48		55,9			7,9
Ireland	54,4	59	59,3	4,6	0,3	4,9

Source: European Values Study

The European average hardly changes. In Germany, Italy, Denmark and Iceland there is a substantial rise in confidence¹¹. In France, The Netherlands and Finland, confidence decreases. For Belgium, the numbers remain unchanged.

Eurobarometer¹²

Since the autumn of 1994, the European Commission's Eurobarometer (EB) has regularly contained survey questions on trust in the institutions. After 1997, it irregularly included questions on trust in the civil service. Levels of trust are the highest for Austria, Ireland, Luxemburg, Denmark and the Netherlands, where resp. 66.2, 62.3, 60.2, 56.3 and 55.5% of the population trusts the civil service. Trust is the lowest in the Central- and Eastern European countries, except for Estonia and Hungary. The extremely low trust in Italy is something that has been found in previous studies. The most recent measurement (spring 2002) shows trust in Belgium slightly above the EU average. However, this has

¹¹ When reading the EVS tables, please note that sample size varies. E.g., for Belgium 1981: n=972 and 1990: n=2741 (Deschouwer, 1998a).

¹² For more information on the organisation of the Eurobarometers, see http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion

not always been the case. In the autumn 1997 EB just 29% of Belgian respondents expressed their trust in the Belgian civil service. Only Italy did worse. Since 1997 was the first measurement, it is not clear whether this 29% reflects trust in the civil service in the 1990s, or whether this measurement represented an all-time-low at that moment. Nevertheless, the Flemish APS surveys also showed very little trust in the public administrations during that period.

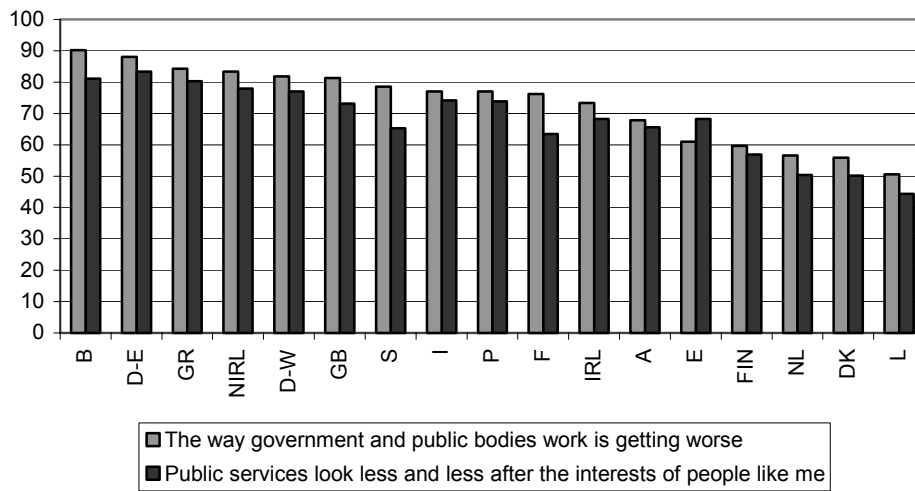
Table 8: Trust in the civil service in the European countries (Eurobarometer)

% trust	autumn 97	spring 99	autumn 00	spring 01	autumn 01	spring 02	autumn 02	spring 03
AT	65	65	64	69	68	66		
BE	29	37	41	46	52	51		
DE	37	43	46	48	45	45		
DK	58	50	55	57	58	60		
ES	37	39	51	44	46	43		
FI	38	43	50	46	43	43		
FR	47	44	51	49	46	45		
GB	46	44	46	45	45	48		
GR	42	43	31	31	34	31		
IE	61	61	64	62	62	64		
IT	24	27	31	27	28	29		
LU	57	51	65	63	61	64		
NL	58	57	52	52	59	55		
PT	34	44	37	44	50	47		
SE	50	45	52	51	56	60		
CY					50	52	51	
CZ					36	28	29	
EST					44	50	54	
HU					42	46	44	
LT					26	36	38	
LV					30	28	36	
MT					53	48	57	
PL					28	34	30	
SI					33	31	26	
SK					30	29	37	
BG					22	20	16	
RO					32	33	30	
TR					52	21	27	

Source: Eurobarometer

In general, we do not see trends in the data, simply fluctuations. Still, Belgium is an exception. Levels of trust in the civil service in Belgium show a constant increase till spring 2001, and then stabilise. Belgium is the only country experiencing a strong increase. Trust in the other institutions also increases, except for that in the press. Eurobarometer no. 47.1 in spring 1997 asked about the functioning of public services and public bodies. Belgians gave the most negative ratings.

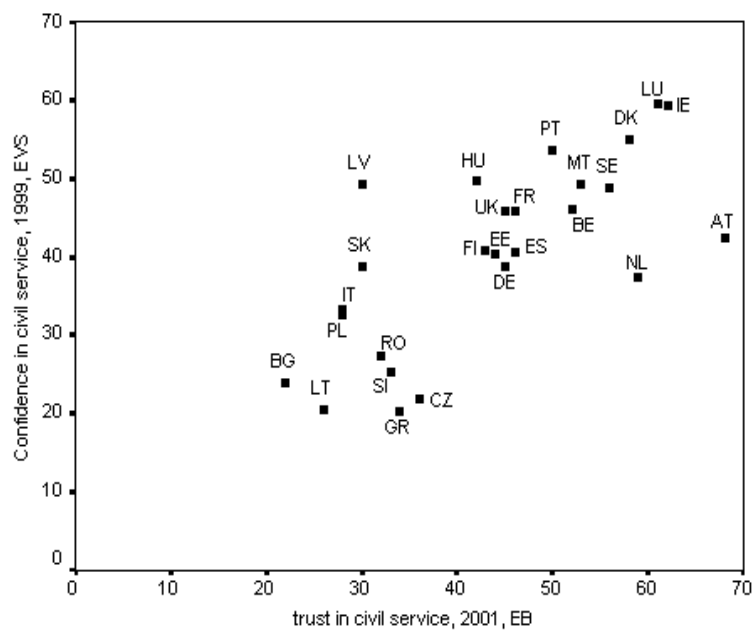
Figure 5: Perception of the functioning of public services in the EU15, 1997 (% tend to agree)¹³



Source: Eurobarometer 47.1, 1997

Confronting Eurobarometer data (2001, the last year when measures are available for the EU15 and the enlargement countries) and the European Values Study 1999 reveals a strong similarity between both ($r=.72$). Belgium is found somewhere in the middle.

Figure 6: Trust in the civil service in European countries (EB & EVS)



Source: Eurobarometer and European Values Survey

¹³ D-E= East Germany; D-W=West Germany; NIRL=Northern Ireland.

3.3 TRUST IN THE INSTITUTIONS: GENERAL TRENDS

The data we have presented thus far (trust in the institutions, satisfaction with the functioning of democracy, trust in the civil service) show that there is no conclusive evidence that the European countries have suffered from severe declines in institutional trust. Despite the popular and political conviction there is a permanent decline, many researchers came to conclusions similar to ours (Suleiman, 2003). There is no general and overall trend of declining trust in the public administration or civil service. Certainly, some countries do worse than others (notably Greece and Italy in EU15), but the overall trend seems to be stability, rather than decline. As for Belgium, the findings are far from dramatic: it is one of the few countries where there is a positive trend of trust in the civil service over the past 5 years.

We do, however, see differences between the European countries. The Eurobarometer surveys contain data for levels of trust in a number of core institutions of governments/states, such as:

- Justice/the (nationality) legal system
- The police
- Political parties
- Civil service
- The (nationality) government
- The (nationality) parliament

An analysis of levels of trust in these six institutions clusters 28 European countries into four groups¹⁴:

Group 1 (Belgium, Spain, France, Italy, Portugal, Malta, Turkey, Hungary):

Trust institutions is around the European average, except for that in the legal system, that is on average 5 percentage points below the European average. It concerns, with a possible exception of Hungary, **countries with a Latin culture**.

Group 2 (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, Cyprus):

Trust in all of the institutions is above average. It concerns **Northern countries**, with the exception of Cyprus (and to a lesser degree, Luxemburg).

Group 3 (Austria, Germany, United Kingdom, Ireland, Greece):

Levels of trust are slightly above the European average. This group has **no clear regional profile**, but resembles group 2.

Group 4 (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia):

Trust in the institutions is below the European average for all institutions. It concerns **Central and Eastern European countries**. Hungary is the only country in the region that does not belong to this group.

¹⁴ Hierarchical cluster analysis for the autumn 2001 data. Autumn 2001 is the only period where the trust items were included in the EB surveys in the EU15 and in the (then) enlargement countries.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Despite the rhetoric in political and journalistic discourse and many casual references even in the PA literature, few indications were found in the data that there actually is permanently declining trust in government and in the public administration. Definitive proof of a constantly declining trust in government was not found. If trends were found they showed negative evolutions just as often as positive ones. Often, the absence of quality statistics prevents us from coming to any conclusions at all. Furthermore, no proof was found that Belgium consequently features at the lower end of the statistics. In the following chapter, we focus on the Belgian case, as most of the empirical data we will use in the analyses in this study were collected in a Flemish-Belgian context.

Chapter 4 DISCONTENT AND REFORM IN BELGIUM

Ce qui passe en Belgique aux alentours des années 1990 est à la fois un aggiornamento, qui s'attache à réaliser un ensemble de choses devenues nécessaires depuis longtemps, et une rupture, par le recours à des concepts qui n'avaient jamais eu cours dans la culture politique et administrative du pays.

(A. Stenmans, La transformation de la fonction administrative en Belgique, 1999)

In the early 90s, a new issue entered the political debate in Belgium: the *gap between citizens and politics*. Belgium is certainly not the only country where a similar debate emerged during that period, but as our analyses will mainly be based on survey data collected in Flanders/Belgium, an in-depth background analysis seems appropriate. Framing the debate and discovering trends requires first and foremost that we map sources of administrative discontent throughout the administrative history of Belgium, and that we show how administrative performance and trust in government have recently been related in the political discourse. Subsequently, own and secondary survey material on citizens' perception of the public sector and general attitudes towards government is presented, and the position of the public administration in these general attitudes is analysed. Before going to part I where we analyse how bureaucratic encounters influence the perception of the public sector, we conclude this chapter by attempting to profile the dissatisfied citizen.

4.1 BELGIUM: A CENTURY OF ADMINISTRATIVE DISCONTENT?

Appeals for administrative reform in Belgium are hardly new. Administrative discontent emerged every now and then, and there has been little evolution of its focus. According to François, the same debates have emerged over and over again, and still no real attempts have been made to tackle these problems. This has resulted in "une administration peut-être solide, traditionnelle mais non pas brillante, un peu dépassée dans sa culture et ses procédés de gestion" (François, 1987a). Reform proposals often found their inspiration in earlier proposals, and the same deficiencies of the public administration were consistently identified. Indeed, "la réforme administrative est un vieux problème, un

très vieux problème.” (Crabbe, 1954: 870), and “l’idée de réforme administrative est loin d’être neuve” (Molitor, 1982: 17).

Discontent originally had an internal focus: proposals and criticism came from civil servants and policy-makers. The administration was found to be slow and inefficient, and these deficiencies could be solved by restructuring departments and by curtailing political influence in the recruitment of civil servants. The expansion of the administration was a perpetual concern. It is only in recent years that we can speak about a *public* opinion towards the administration. In the late 1980s concerns for service delivery to the citizens entered the discussions. From the 1980s on public opinion data has become available, and in the 1990s, attempts were made to make administrative reforms a central theme in the political discourse.

In this first section, we give a historical overview of administrative reform in Belgium. This overview should give readers the necessary background, and outline the evolutions in the general debates on the functioning of the public administration. It should give an indication on the scope and content of administrative discontent, and should help to put recent developments into a broader perspective. Our focus will mainly be on the central administration. In the 1990s we will have a look at developments in regional administrations as well. Unfortunately, hardly any public opinion data is available before 1980, and little historical research is available on the evolution of attitudes towards the Belgian public administration¹⁵.

Ducpétiaux’ ‘étude sur la réforme administrative’

In 1848, it probably was the first time that the functioning of the public administration became a focal point in Belgian politics, because changed political circumstances made such an attention necessary: the end of *Unionist* politics turned the relationship between politics and administration into a problematic issue (Depré, 1973). The rise of a party-political system led to an increasing meddling of politics in the functioning of the administration, and, above all, an increase of recruitment in the civil service on political or electoral grounds. Complaints were already being heard in parliament on the mediocrity of the civil servants (Crabbe, 1954: 873). The role of civil servants in politics was equally substantive, since many senior civil servants had a political mandate, a consequence of the relatively small size of the elite in those days. The first reforms touching upon the administration were in fact parliamentary reforms, forcing parliamentarians to resign from their employment as civil servant (the law on incompatibilities) (Depré, 1973: 74-85).

Edouard Ducpétiaux wrote one of the first studies on administrative reform in Belgium in 1859¹⁶. A civil servant himself, he was a severe critic of what he considered the excessive centralisation of the Belgian central administration, which he saw as a threat to individual liberty. Studying administrative reform, he states, implies reflection on the mission and status of the state in society. He called for the

¹⁵ Most sources are Francophone, and written by the same 2-3 people, which is a result of the relatively small public administration community in Belgium. As for the colonial administration in the former Belgian Kongo, the situation is absolutely dramatic, as there exists almost no research with a PA focus.

¹⁶ Since the original work *Etude sur la Réforme administrative*, Librairie Polytechnique de A. Decq, Bruxelles (1859) was difficult to retrace, we rely on a reprint by Victor Crabbe in *Revue Internationale des Sciences Administratives* in 1955.

installation of a commission for administrative reform (Ducpétiaux, 1955 (1859): 575). The overall image he gives of the functioning of the administration is not flattering:

“C’est là surtout qu’existent les anomalies, les complications, les superfétations, les lenteurs et les entraves qui ne peuvent être bien appréciées que par ceux qui, nourris dans le sérail, en connaissent les détours” (Ducpétiaux, 1955 (1859): 568).

He compares the central administration to a malfunctioning and even redundant machine:

“Ce qu’est cette machine, il serait assez difficile de se le figurer au premier abord; si elle pouvait être représentée graphiquement, on y verrait nombre de roues qui marchent à vide, des pistons qui s’agitent sans donner de force, des courroies qui se déroulent indéfiniment pour aboutir à de simples chevilles, beaucoup de combustible et d’huile dépensés en pure perte. L’ensemble surtout fait défaut ; les mécaniciens qui devraient régler uniformément le jeu du puissant appareil ne s’entendent pas et travaillent chacun de leur côté ; les instructions qu’on leur donne varient à l’infini et souvent se contrarient réciproquement” (Ducpétiaux, 1955 (1859): 569).

His criticisms, and proposals for reform, mainly dealt with three aspects: First, a reform of recruiting practices, which should allow for a recruitment of the most competent people and to push back political interference in the recruitment. Alternatively, if politicians want to interfere in the hierarchical day-to-day functioning of the administrations, they should change the present civil service system to a spoils system. A second series of proposals dealt with a restructuring of the existing ministries to allow for a better coordination. The third aspect moved beyond mere administrative reform: if the administration is to function properly, legislative reform is required. Excessive and confusing regulations should be abolished, and the legislator should reflect on the necessity of regulation in the field in question, and on the desirability of state interference at the central level, rather than at provincial or municipal levels. A glance at the present PA research and reform agenda in Belgium shows how stable the core of the debate has remained. Overall, the late 19th and early 20th centuries were characterised by debates on the statute of civil servants (recruitment, syndicalisation, stability of employment etc.)

Mémoire Wodon (1915)

Louis Wodon, a Belgian high-ranking civil servant, in 1915 wrote his *Mémoire sur la Réforme administrative*¹⁷, which proposed encompassing administrative reforms. In the public administration, he makes a distinction between *départements de contrôle* (justice, foreign affairs, sciences and arts, home affairs, agriculture, industry and labour) and *départements de gestion* (finance-tax administration, railways, post, etc.). The latter could, according to him, be organised as industrial or commercial enterprises.

The problem with the public administration is two-fold: not only is the institutional organisation of the administration very complicated, with scattered competences and task allocations, and confusing lines of command, but there also is the problem of political influence in the recruitment of civil servants.

¹⁷ The *Mémoire* was never officially published. In 1986, Victor Crabbe published the entire *Mémoire* as an annex to an article on its importance (Crabbe, 1986)

This political influence is a corrupt and demoralising force in the civil service, which threatens the general interest by stimulating the representation of different sources of political influence in the administration. Ministerial cabinets are “un rouage aussi inutile que dangereux” (Crabbe, 1986: 286). The discussion on ministerial cabinets would become constant (see e.g. Gérard, Cattoir, and Henin, 1935: 44-45; Vandezande, 1999; Pelgrims, 2001).

The Wodon Mémoire shows, according to Victor Crabbe, that just after the First World War, and probably before it, there was a growing support for reform of the public administration (Crabbe, 1986: 279). G. Theunis, Prime Minister from 1921 to 1925, stated in his ministerial declaration at the beginning of his government that “everybody will agree to recognise that the actual working conditions are defective, that the output of certain administrations is not proportionate to the number of staff employed, and that modern procedures would at the same time be more economical and effective.” (quoted in: Gérard et al., 1935, own translation). The report by Royal Commissioner Camu in 1937 would find part of its inspiration in this memorandum. François (1998) observes that Wodon’s findings were not at all new: “les propos sont dans l’ensemble les mêmes que ceux que l’on retrouve dans le mémoire de Ducpétiaux de 1859”.

The De Haene (1922) and Halleux (1926) Commissions¹⁸

Although Wodon urged for a fast reform of the administration after the War, in order to make it suitable to tackle the problems in the post-War period, it was only in 1922 that a *Commission technique pour l’étude des services administratifs de l’Etat*¹⁹ was installed, that had to prepare proposals for improving business processes, savings and simplification (K.B. 10/03/1922). One of its first conclusions was, however, that a *radical* reform of the general organisation of the public administration was not recommended (Gérard et al., 1935: 95). It should thus not be a surprise that the Commission had little tangible impact (François, 1998). On a similar note, Henry (1923) considers much of the discourse on administrative reform superfluous, as most problems were in fact political rather than administrative issues.

A new commission was installed in 1926, the *Commission chargée d’étudier le fonctionnement des services de l’Etat*, better known as the *Halleux Commission* (K.B. 23/02/1926). This Commission was dissolved in 1928 leaving around 100 general and specific reports (Commissie belast met de studie van de werkwijze der Staatsdiensten, 1928). Most conclusions dealt with a reengineering of processes and a restructuring of certain agencies and ministries. The influence of Henri Fayol and his pleas for rational organisation can be clearly discerned in the proposals (Crabbe, 1954: 881). Calls for recruitment based on capacity were also present in both Commissions’ reports, as were general recommendations on the remuneration of civil servants.

In 1923, Henry wrote that “Il est de mode de dénoncer l’envahissement du fonctionnarisme” (1923: 4). Still, the growth of the administration had not followed population growth (Henry, 1930: 355). Both Commissions urged for action to reduce the size of the public sector. In their analysis of the report by the De Haene commission, Gérard et al. describe the following situation “Le juge des Enfants de

¹⁸ For the discussion of these commissions, we use the summaries in Gérard et al. (1935) and not the report as published in Belgisch Staatsblad/Moniteur belge.

¹⁹ These Commission also have a Dutch name, and quotes taken from reports in this chapter are in most cases available both in Dutch and in French. We have, however, chosen to use the French names and quotes, in order to allow for the international reader to follow our historical overview.

l'arrondissement de Bruxelles, à l'occasion de la maladie de deux des employées de son greffe, a constaté que les autres suffisaient" (1935: 117). Even though the De Haene commission recommended that the Office des Métiers et Négoces be abolished, the Halleux Commission in 1926 noticed the Office's staff had increased by 50% in just 3 years (Gérard et al., 1935: 128). Nevertheless, in 1927 a decision was made to reduce the number of management functions in the administration, among others to allow for changes in the benefits policy (B.S. 16/12/1927).

The Camu Commission (1935-1937)

It was clear that the commissions in the 1920s did not manage to solve even the most pressing problems. Gérard et al. complain in 1935 about the slowness of the administration: "Dans les services administratifs, l'expédition des affaires courantes prend trop de temps. C'est de notoriété publique. Les retards que l'on dénonce dépassent souvent toute mesure" (58). Still, the size of the administration, and therefore the cost of the public services, was at the core of the discussions. The constant enlargement of the administration was not only a result of political nominations and the tendency of administrations to expand, but also of the expansion of social and fiscal laws and of the educational system (Gérard et al., 1935: 11). The expansion of the public sector is mainly a result of political decisions and of the public's demand for government action on new domains. Since the War, the state began to evolve into an *interventionist state* (Molitor, 1974: 22). Departments suffered from frequent changes in competences prompted by the turnover and personal interests of the political personnel. At the same time, a gradual move away from the centralism started, which was expressed in a functional decentralisation of agencies.

The most important reform of the administration was that initiated in the mid-30s, were it was just one of many initiatives in the reform of the state itself. Administrative reform had become a topic for many publications and congresses. Public opinion about the administration was negative. Henry, a former high-ranking civil servant and political advisor, devoted a separate chapter to this aspect in his 1930 book *Administration et Fonctionnaires: Essai de Doctrine Administrative* (240-255). This discontent was, according to Henry, often caused by disagreement with government policy, and thus because of a confusion of government and administration. This discontent was difficult to refute because it was not up to the administration itself to respond to its critics. The popular image of the bureaucrat in the arts and literature was also identified as a possible source of this public opinion, as was the fact that the administration's output was not always tangible. Public discontent was not, as in the case of France and Germany, about the power of the bureaucrats and their condescending attitude towards citizens, but about the administration's incompetence and inefficiency: "En Belgique, le régime de liberté et de décentralisation qui constitue une tradition nationale a empêché les fonctionnaires de prendre une idée trop haute de leur importance et, de leur influence" (Henry, 1930: 254).

In the 30s the *Centre d'études pour la réforme de l'Etat - Studiecentrum tot Hervorming van den Staat* was founded by, among others, Prime Minister Van Zeeland, as a private institution that acted as a brain trust for the reforms. The reforms at both the political and the administrative front were meant to restore confidence in the governmental system (Molitor, 1982: 20). Its commissions dealt with a broad range of reforms: the executive power, the functioning of parliament, constitutional liberties and the press, local government, the court system, elections, etc. (Studiecentrum tot hervorming van den Staat, 1937; Studiecentrum tot hervorming van den Staat, 1938). The activities of the study centre can be

integrated in the general tendency towards a technocratic government. The Centre was said to have had moderate views, but it was definitely influenced by the authoritarian tendencies present in those days (Van Nieuwenhuysse, 1997).

The zeal for reforms in all fields of government led to the nomination of nine royal commissioners²⁰, one of them Louis Camu, Royal Commissioner for Administrative Reform from 1936 to 1937 and from 1938 to 1940. During the brief interlude between his two missions, the function of royal commissioner was filled by M. Halewyck de Heusch. His tasks were broadly defined (organisation of departments, business processes, material conditions, staff... - K.B. 10/10/1936) but his main issues were with the statute and recruitment of public servants, and with the administration's working conditions, since, "La réforme administrative est avant tout un "problème d'hommes"" (Camu, 1937: 116). While previous writers on the public administration complained that university-trained people were often recruited but did not always have the required competences, discussion now was on the underrepresentation of people with a university degree in the administration, and the resulting lack of technical competence, often a result of political influence in the recruitment. Many of the ideas brought forth by Camu were hardly new as they originated from the Mémoire Wodon and Ducpétiaux' writings. A profound distrust of politics was a central aspect in many administrative reform proposals in those days (Depré, 1973: 133), as was the attractiveness of the private sector. Fayol was compulsory literature in the 20s, and many reformers in the 30s and early post WWII period had previous private sector experience, mostly in the banking field.

Camu's first, and most important, report in 1937 dealt with the statute of civil servants, which found a great deal of its inspiration in the British Civil Service (Camu, 1937). The new statute of public personnel, issued in 1937, often referred to as *Statut Camu* was a ground-breaking innovation and tried to bring more transparency into public sector recruitment by curtailing political influence (Belgisch Staatsblad, 1937). Since then, this statute was subject to permanent incremental changes, but more fundamental changes in fact only came in 2000. One of the main achievements of the new statute was the installation of the Permanent Secretariat for Recruitment. In the same period, though not by Camu, the *Inspection des Finances* was founded (1938).

While his first mission was mainly one of study, his second one from 1938 on largely dealt with the implementation of the new statute and with organisational matters, among which initiatives that would eventually lead to the building of the *Cité administrative* to relieve the miserable working conditions of the administration. During his second mission, Camu *de facto* had a quasi-ministerial status. André Molitor, who was one of his assistants, wrote about his experience in administrative reform in his book *Servir l'Etat* (1982):

"Mes années de présence à la Réforme administrative sont, je crois, avec celles où je fus à l'Instruction publique chef de Cabinet de Pierre Harmel, les moments où j'ai donné à l'Etat les plus longues journées. C'est alors que j'ai commencé à savoir que l'image donnée par certains de l'administration n'est pas toujours vraie: se la couler douce toute la journée et

²⁰ Commissioners for, among other things, simplification of fiscal procedures, urbanisation, public procurement, reorganisation of municipal and provincial budgets, the situation of regions suffering from the crisis, the status of *de facto* monopolies.

partir à 16 h. 30 vers des cieux plus cléments. C'est alors que j'ai commencé à connaître ce que j'ai retrouvé ensuite tout au long de ma vie: le labeur des fins de journées qui se poursuit dans des bureaux progressivement désertés, le dialogue avec les nettoyeuses qui voudraient bien vous voir partir et leur céder la place, la sortie dans des rues désertes ou que ranime le flot des gens allant au spectacle, le tram que l'on attendait interminablement parce que l'heure de pointe était de longtemps passée, le taxi qu'on hélait en désespoir de cause, le repas mal réchauffé qu'on avalait à demi-hébété, après le reste de la famille... Car tel est souvent l'envers du décor pour la graine de "grands commis"..." {Molitor 1982 #314 /ft ": 23"}

Why did Camu succeed where others did not? Camu operated in an environment that was gradually preparing for reforms, as many proposals had been written and commissions installed in preceding years. A state of political and economic crisis reminded all actors of the need for reform. Prime Minister van Zeeland had a personal interest in administrative reform, as had many other important personalities, shown by the activities *Centre d'études pour la réforme de l'Etat*. When Camu issued his first report, Louis Wodon, author of the *Mémoire Wodon*, was *Chef de Cabinet* of the King (1926-1938). Camu's good relations with the labour unions further contributed to his success. Resistance came from the Socialists, who were afraid of being deprived from their possibilities for political nominations in the administration, since they had only entered government during the First World War, and had thus to catch up with the other parties (Molitor, 1982: 38-40).

The size of the central administration remained on the agenda. The royal decree instating the *Service d'Administration Générale - Dienst van Algemeen Bestuur* as successor to the Commissariat royal à la Réforme administrative in 1939, proclaims "reduire les effectifs administratifs au strict nécessaire" as one of the most important aims of this agency (K.B. 30/03/1939). The report to the King related to this royal decree speaks about an excessive expansion of the number of civil servants.

Post-War developments

In his book *La réforme administrative est-elle un mythe*, written in 1944, Omer Molle presents a number of suggestions to improve the functioning of the public administration (Molle, 1947). Molle had been a member of Camu's staff from 1938 on. Though he has a positive view on the administration and the civil servants, he observed abuse and saw civil servants concerned with self-interest. He is not pessimistic: administrative reform is perfectly possible, and does not require ingenious actions or plans: "La réforme administrative ne requiert ni grands mots, ni formules complexes. Conduite méthodiquement, service par service, elle n'implique pas la réalisation de choses extraordinaires, ni la solution de problèmes particulièrement difficiles" (Molle, 1947: 83). His discourse on a rational organisation of the administration is an expression of a very modernistic and optimistic state of mind. A great deal of material centralisation would solve most of the problems. The centralisation of the administration in the already planned *Cité administrative* would help solve one-third of all problems by installing order, systematic working procedures and better supervision.

As in most writings on the administration, no mention is made of citizens or users of the public services. The motivation for reform is mainly to reduce waste. Administrative inflation, i.e. an ever-increasing number of civil servants is identified as the main problem: in twenty years time, the number of civil servants had doubled.

The end of the Second World War also meant new attempts at administrative reform. These attempts materialised in a large number of commissions dealing with specific aspects of the organisation of the public administration (Crabbe, 1954: 895-7). Two commissions were of a general nature. In 1949, the Belgian parliament made a decision to install the Commission Philippart or Matton (both names are used), that had to do research on how to introduce reforms to increase efficiency and economy in the public services (Law of 01/07/1949). It was the first time such a commission was installed by law instead of by royal decree²¹.

The parliamentary debates on the law reveal some information on the public opinion towards the public administration in those days. Senator Ronse states that “Lorsqu’on se pose la question: L’Etat est-il bien administré en ce moment, il faut répondre [...], par la négative” (Belgische Senaat, 1948: 1699). Indeed, the minister for the budget, Mr. Merlot speaks about “bruits systématiques qu’on reproduisait dans la presse, dans les assemblées délibérantes et dans le pays, à propos de la mauvaise administration de l’Etat” (Belgische Senaat, 1948: 1700). The installation of the commission was for the minister, however, a means for putting these rumours and legends in the right context, as the parliament, the press and the population, according to him, often had imprecise and false ideas about the functioning of the administration.

The successor to this commission was installed in 1953 (K.B. 25/03/1953). Again, the tasks of this *Commission d’étude pour la réforme des administrations de l’Etat* were defined very broadly: it could deal with the statute of public personnel; structure and competences of departments, techniques for management, coordination and control, etc. There was resistance against this decision, as the functioning of the administration was said to be defective only because it found itself in a period of transition, and because the bad post-war economic situation simply did not allow for many of the much-needed changes. The reduction in the number of civil servants was again part of the discussions, since many temporary agents had been recruited during the War. Some thought this excess would normalise itself in the post-war years. This commission presided by Max-Léo Gérard would only lead a short life.

Both commissions did not generate many results, among others because many reforms ultimately depended on political decisions. For Crabbe, the commissions were mainly window-dressing (Crabbe, 1954: 902-3). The post-war period saw a gradual shift in the focus of attention from the statute of civil servants and the size of the public administration to concerns of economy and efficiency. The Matton Commission was the first to have economy and proper use of public money as one of its core tasks (François, 1987b: 358-9). Most reforms in the 1950s failed. Only the early 60s saw a revitalisation of the reform zest culminating in the Gilson reform.

1961 saw the installation of still another commission (K.B. 15/02/1961) and the early 60s also knew problems of integration of former colonial administrators into the Belgian administration as a

²¹ This has several explanations: first, there is a political dimension: the choice for a law could indicate the importance given to administrative reform. Second, the commission also dealt with the *para-étatiques*. Founding such institutions is a competence of the legislator, and not of the executive. However, the law only concerned the installation of a commission, not the reform of any of these institutions. Finally, the decision could be motivated by budgetary considerations or by the parliament’s wish to receive adequate reporting about the commissions’ activities and to initiate a public (parliamentarian) debate on the topic.

result of the independence of the Belgian Congo. On February 13th 1961 *De Groep voor het Herstel van de Openbare Functie* (Group for the restoration of the public function) published a manifest. It spoke about a crisis in the administration. Crabbe (1965), referring to the same period spoke about a *déclin de la fonction publique*, and noted there was significant unrest among civil servants and that the public administration was in a state of *malaise*.

Belgium had to wait till the end of the 1950s to see emergence of separate minister dealing with the public administration. Before that date, ministers were responsible for their own departments, and the prime minister for the general administration. Surprisingly, this minister (A. Lilar) had *administrative reform* in his title. Since this Eyskens III government, public administration seems to have been institutionalised as a distinct function in government, though often in combination with other competences (Home Affairs, scientific policy, SMEs).

In 1961, Arthur Gilson became minister of the Interior and the Public Service and his term of office indicated the second time since the foundation of Belgium that serious attempts at large-scale reforms were made. The main result of the Gilson reforms was a reform of the statute of civil servants in 1964 (K.B. 16/03/1964). Still, the reforms mainly dealt with problems that were already defined in the 1930s, and Gilson took up many issues that were also at the core of Camu's proposals. The Gilson reforms focused on:

- The introduction of a human resources policy
- Increasing public sector productivity
- Restructuring of the government and ministerial administrations

Despite disappointing implementation, the Gilson reforms indicated the start of a HR policy in the public administration. The founding in 1962-63 of the Institute Administration-University indicates the augmented attention for civil servants' training. Few profound reforms were actually initiated (François, 1998), and it became a habit to speak about the *Statut Gilson*, because of his reform of the statute of civil servants, and not about the Gilson *reform*. The main topics of discontent remained the same: a politisation of the administration and a continuing expansion of the public sector.

The end of the 60s saw some attempts to introduce PPBS, but by the end of the 70s almost all experiments had ceased (de Borchgrave and Van Den Heede-Lybaert, 1979). The state-reform gradually transformed Belgium into a federal state, and dominated the political agenda. Institutional reforms seem to have been detrimental for administrative reform²². The 1970s remain notorious for culmination of the expansion of the public sector, where public sector employment was used as a substitute to unemployment. From 1971 to 1981, public sector employment increased with 30% (François, 1999). The 1970s hardly saw any proposal for administrative reform of the central administration. The Martens II government in 1980 (which lasted not even three months) did not even have a member with a specific responsibility for the public service included in the official title. At the local level, discussions on productivity and governability of municipalities culminated in 1976 in a large-scale merger of municipalities.

²² "In our country, 'Institutional reform' often merely invokes the idea of a reform of the state structures. [...] Less attention, and certainly less energy goes to the reform of our administrative apparatus that is getting increasingly complicated, but not necessarily more effective" (Staatssecretariaat voor Hervorming der Instellingen, 1977: introduction - own translation).

The 1980s: Administrative reforms back on the agenda

In a speech in 1982, former minister for the interior and the public service Arthur Gilson identified the politisation of the administration as a major cause for declining public confidence in the public administration and politics (Cepess, 1981). Financial strains and budgetary problems brought the functioning of the public administration back on the agenda. The Martens V government declaration in 1981 was one of the first in a long time to mention administrative reform (François, 1999: 11). In the 1960s and 70s, administrative modernisation was limited to rather specific initiatives, such as the training of civil servants. Now, the budgetary crisis helped to restore the spirit for encompassing reforms. Nevertheless, in 1980 the Institute Administration-University was one of the victims of budgetary restraints, and the use of public employment as a socio-economic instrument remained a bad habit (François and Molitor, 1987).

The gradual return of administrative reforms to the political agenda found its expression in a reform of the budgetary system and the first moves towards informatisation of the public sector (Rapport Bodart). State Secretary for the Public Service Waltniel introduced measures promoting increased civil servant mobility, with little success, however. Guy Lutgen, State Secretary for the modernisation and informatisation of the public services from 1985 on was one of the first ones to stress the central position of clients in the administration. The first objective of the Lutgen reforms was putting public services at the service of the population (Lutgen, 1986: 14). Citizens had to be considered as clients, and not as subjects. The other core pillars of his approach were productivity and effectiveness. His plans focused on client-administration encounters: informing users, service quality, corporate image etc. In this period we see the first strong appeals for an *école nationale* for training civil servants.

Modernisation would follow a gradual and bottom-up path by installing, in 1987, Modernisation Cells/Cellules de Modernisation in each ministry. ABC (Advies Bureau Conseil), the new internal organisation consulting office of the federal administration would coordinate these efforts.

Minister Langendries made efforts to change the civil servants' statute, but these changes would only be implemented years later. A gradual X-ray of the business processes of the federal public services, the Radioscopie, from 1991 on, would eventually lead to a reorganisation of the Federal administration²³. Though it was aimed at a reform of the administration, it mainly resulted in a reduction of public sector staff (Bouckaert and Thijs, 2003).

The 1990s: citizens move to the core of the administration

In his influential *Burgermanifest* (citizen manifesto) in 1991, liberal politician Verhofstadt called for an emancipation of the citizen from political, administrative, and fiscal powers that suffocated him, and he was one of the first to speak about a gap between citizen and government (*kloof met de burger*) (Verhofstadt, 1991). The rise of the extreme right in the 1991 elections was a shock for the political establishment. The citizen became the focus of political discourse, both as a rhetorical device and as an expression of genuine concern for quality service delivery. From the early 90s on, the motivation for reform was no longer only to make the public sector perform better, but to remedy citizens' distrust in government. The 1990s saw not only the introduction of a service charter, but also of laws organising

²³ For a detailed discussion of quality initiatives in Belgium in the 1990s, see Bouckaert & Thijs (2003)

the right of access to official documents, the protection of privacy, formal motivation of administrative decisions, the possibility for action for a preliminary injunction before the Council of State (administrative court), and the installation of a Federal ombudsman.

The ongoing federalisation of the state, culminating in a state reform in 1993 also meant the start of administrative renewal in many of the newly born ministries and public administrations in the regions. The ministry of the Flemish Community turned out to be a particularly active reformer.

In 1993, the *Charter of the User of Public Services* was introduced (Belgisch Staatsblad, 1993). The introduction of the charter was motivated by concerns for the apparent gap between citizens and government. The introduction of the charter seems to have been a political reaction to the 1991 elections (Staes and Legrand, 1998: 12). Political need made that the charter was developed rather fast, with only little contribution by the administration. This explains why serious efforts had to be made to communicate the content of the charter. Though still in force, little is heard about it now, and it certainly does not have the same status as most charters in other countries.

1993 was also the start of a project for administrative simplification. This concept, aimed at reducing the administrative burden for companies and citizens, would retain a central place in the reforms in the 1990s. A *Federal Agency for Administrative Simplification* was founded in 1998 (K.B. 23/12/1998). In 1999-2000, the government appointed a government commissioner for administrative simplification, and in 2003, the new government had a State Secretary for administrative simplification as one of its members. This agency for simplification focused not on individual citizens but on SMEs in order to stimulate entrepreneurship. In the Walloon region a *Commissariat* for administrative simplification was created in 2002, while the ministry of the Flemish Community opted for a *Kenniscel/Wetsmatiging*, which had to examine ways to deal with excessive regulation.

In 1994, changes were made to the statute of civil servants. Only in 1995, a Ministry for the Public Administration was founded, as a horizontal ministry providing services to other ministries and preparing and executing human resources policy.

The introduction of the Quality Barometer in 1997 meant a further orientation towards the users of public services. This instrument was to be used as a means for permanent monitoring of client satisfaction, but despite many applications in its early years, it now is hardly used.

At the federal level, the *Copernicus* reform programme started in 1999 and initially focused on citizen-oriented reform-initiatives. The project started with a nation-wide survey annex PR-initiative informing and consulting citizens on the federal reinvention initiative. Attention had somewhat shifted from strict managerial reforms to aspects of citizen involvement and quality of service delivery towards government *clients*. Even though a User's Charter has been introduced already in 1993, attention for the *citizen*, be it in reality or only in political discourse, has coincided with the dominance of a liberal-socialist-green government in 1999. In fact, the name of the federal reform initiative *Copernicus* was chosen for its symbolic value: whereas Copernicus claimed that the earth was rotating around the sun instead of the other way around, the Copernicus reform initiative wanted to stimulate awareness that the administration is rotating around the citizen, and not, as had been the case in the past, that the citizen rotates around the administration: *Without citizens, the administration has no reason to exist*. At the regional level, the governmental agreement adopted by the government parties had administrative reform as its first chapter (VU/ID21, VLD, AGALEV, and SP, 1999)

In 1999, the Verhofstadt I government had a minister for the civil service and the *modernisation of the administration*, a title indicating the attention for the *reform* of the administration. In 1999, and in

2003 (Verhofstadt II government) we see a emerging a new terminology: a government commissioner (1999-2000) and state secretary (from 2003 on) for administrative simplification. This is due to the entrance of the liberal party (parties) in government, which had made administrative simplification a major point in their programmes. At the same time, these governments also had a government commissioner or state secretary for the simplification of fiscal procedures. Surprisingly, modernisation of the administration disappears from the title of the minister for the civil service in 2003, reflecting the demise of the Copernicus reforms, and the opposition by the Walloon Socialist Party, the minister's party.

4.2 DISTRUST AND DISSATISFACTION: RECENT MOTIVATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM IN BELGIUM

Reforming for creating trust

In her *Report on the implementation of the 2001 Broad Economic Policy Guidelines*, on the implementation of the Stability Pact, the European Commission sees "improving the efficiency of the public administration" as one of the key economic policy challenges for Belgium. Belgium is the only country receiving such a warning (Moesen and Schollaert, 2002; European Commission, 2002). In the political discourse we do find numerous referrals to the malfunctioning of the administration.

In Belgium, restoring trust became a motivation for reforming services rather late. Due to the extreme quietness on the reform front in the 1970s and 80s, it was only from the early 90s on that the topic appeared on the agenda. The introduction in Belgium of the *Charter of the User of Public Services* was motivated as a reaction on the growing gap between citizens and the state (Staes and Legrand, 1998). In December 1992, the Charter of the User of Public Services was introduced, and eventually officially published in 1993 (Belgisch Staatsblad, 1993). The introduction of the charter seems to have been a political reaction to the 1991 elections (Staes and Legrand, 1998: 12). In 1998, the then Minister for the Civil Service André Flahaut, in an introduction to a book on the charter, defined the charter as "a landmark in the history of federal government. At that moment there existed an important gap between the citizen and the public services. The Service Charter has emerged from a need to deepen the functioning of our democratic institutions and to give them a solid functional basis" (Staes and Legrand, 1998: 7, own translation). Special attention should be paid to the use of 'democratic institutions' in this quote.

The mid- and late 90s saw a number of scandals. The political power balance changed in 1999 after a food safety crisis. It should therefore not come as a surprise that restoring trust came to take a central place in the political discourse. The Federal government agreement in 1999 was presented as a *project to restore the citizens trust in government*, referring to the events that had undermined citizens' trust in the institutions, the courts more specifically (Federale Regering, 1999a). In 2000, the Federal policy declaration proclaimed the government wanted to *further strengthen trust* (Verhofstadt, 2000).

Reform pledges as lightning rods for discontent

Administrative reforms appear on the political agenda every now and then. Mostly however, they are just a marginal aspect and do not take an important place in the political discourse. The 1990s clearly are an exception. The functioning of the public administration has been a political topic throughout this decade, though it still did not feature as important as many other political issues (state reform, safety, migration,...). But the 90s were the first time when appeals for administrative reform had an external outreach. Before, discussions on administrative reform were of an internal nature: civil servants, experts, and policy makers participated. This new public outreach is not only exemplified by the content of the reforms (Service Charter, Right of Access, ...) but also by the communication strategy on the federal Copernicus reform initiative. Policy-makers would soon notice that keeping administrative reform on the citizens' political agenda was extremely difficult: quality newspapers devoted attention to the Copernicus programme, but the federal reform initiative quickly became a non-issue in the popular press. A quick-scan of the *Mediargus newspaper article archive* (<http://www.mediargus.be/vowb>) in the period 1999 to 2002 returned 24 articles mentioning the word Copernicus for the popular newspaper *Het Laatste Nieuws*, while the quality newspaper *De Standaard* had 166 articles in the same period (Gelders and Van de Walle, forthcoming).

Nevertheless, the conviction that, making an analogy with Nicolaus Copernicus, the earth (*administration*) rotated around the sun (*citizen*) and not vice versa had clearly entered political discourse. Reform of the administration was no longer motivated by an internal need for a better functioning administration, but by a pressing need to restore citizens' trust in government.

Not only were policy-makers convinced that citizens had a very negative perception of their public administration, they also seemed to be convinced that the actual functioning of the public administration was one of the main reasons for citizens' distrust in government. Well-functioning public services, especially those citizens have frequent contacts with, would contribute to bridging the gap between citizen and government. Attempts at political reforms were also taken in this period, such as the *Overleggroep Langendries* and the installation of a *Commission on Political Renewal* in the federal parliament (<http://www.fed-parl.be/politics>; Maesschalck, Hondeghem, and Pelgrims, 2002). A number of decisions were taken that were motivated by these concerns to bridge the gap, but that had in fact little to do with the gap between citizens and politics (direct election of mayors, reform of the national electoral system, ...). The demise of the Parliamentary Commission on political renewal shows that political reforms disappeared quickly from the political agenda. Administrative reforms managed to stay on the political agenda at least till early 2003.

The Verhofstadt I government (1999-2003) identified improving the quality of service delivery as the first challenge in the process of turning Belgium into a *model state*, as a response to a disturbed relationship between citizen and politics (Federale Regering, 1999b). This disturbed relationship was expressed in the massive White March in 1996 as a reaction to the Dutroux-phaedophilia scandal, which made the malfunctioning of the courts and the police system apparent. Failure of the administration to tackle the dioxin food safety crisis just before the 1999 elections further strengthened the conviction that the state apparatus had to modernise.

There clearly were administrative crises. But even more there were political crises. Focusing on administrative reform and its role in restoring trust seems to have been used a flare for public discontent. The occurrence of a crisis or otherwise focusing event two times in the 1990s preceded a boost in attention for administrative reform. The first time, a crisis in 1991 due to the breakthrough of the extreme-right in the elections and a number of political scandals soon gave rise to *the gap between*

citizens and government, and set the stage for the introduction of the User Charter. The second time, a food safety crisis, and the memory of the 1996 Dutroux paedophilia scandal that exposed the malfunctioning of the police and the courts, stimulated or at least facilitated the launch of the Copernicus reform project. This second time however, the change of political personal facilitated defining the problem, as we will show in the section on political realignment.

Black Sunday: how a political crisis becomes an administrative challenge

The 1991 elections were soon to be referred to as Black Sunday, and were retroactively defined as the expression of a wide gap between citizen and politics. This political definition of the situation called for a response to the crisis. Genuine political reform proved to be impossible, as the government was at first not very stable, and had to devote most of its attention to the balancing of the budget.

The crisis of distrust in Belgium emerged from a political event, but discussion quickly shifted to administrative reform, among other things because these reforms were deemed to be more feasible (or easier) than political reforms. The way the problematic situation had to be understood was transformed by the central actors in the situation, where the party that was supposed to give account started to make its own accounts by highlighting alternative aspects in the debate (i.e. the malfunctioning of the public administration: Dubnick, 2003: 22).

The vanishing urgency of the crisis shifted the introduction of the User Charter in 1992/3 from being a political issue to an administrative issue. The strong political content and interference in the design of the charters explains why the prospects for reform disappeared so fast from the political agenda. The User Charter was designed without much cooperation from the administration. Once published, there was no structure in place to do the follow-up. The absence of *organised attention* made the probability that the charter disappeared from the agenda rather high (Laegreid and Roness, 1999: 310). Once introduced, political attention, and therefore practically most attention for the charter, had vanished, except for a small group of civil servants active in the Office for Modernisation and Organization (ABC), who tried to keep things on the agenda, but finally failed in doing so due to the lack of resources (Dierickx, 2003).

Dioxin chickens as election agenda setters

A second series of triggering events consists of the Dutroux-paedophilia crisis, exposing the malfunctioning of the police and the courts, and the *dioxin* food safety crisis, that indicated the failure of food inspection services and lead to a massive contamination of poultry. Both crises pushed the functioning of public services to the core of the political agenda. Reform of the police forces and courts, however, was seriously hindered by political disagreement. The outbreak of the dioxin crisis just before the 1999 elections contributed to an electoral loss of the ruling Christian-Democratic and Socialist parties. The strong party in the new government (VLD) immediately announced that reform of the administration would be one of the main challenges.

The crises in the second half of the 1990s caused profound distrust. Politicians interpreted the massive *White March* in 1996 as an expression of profound distrust, and as a call for structural reform of the police and justice system. Research by Walgrave and Rihoux (1998) on the participants of the *White March*, however, revealed that most participants motivated their participation by referring to solidarity with the parents of the murdered children. Only a small number of the participants claimed

their motivation for participating was an expression of political distrust (18%) or as a call for reforms of the justice system (25%).

There obviously was a crisis, and that crisis was soon interpreted as a political crisis, calling for a new *contract* between politics and the citizen. The emergence of the food safety scandal just before elections, and the entry into power of the VLD, made administrative reform a rallying point in the last weeks of the election campaign. Again, what essentially was a political crisis was just after the elections re-defined from a political crisis between citizens and politics/the state to a crisis between citizens and the functioning of the state apparatus, i.c. the public administration. The new Copernicus administrative reform programme was presented as an encompassing reform that would make Belgium a *model-state*. Guy Verhofstadt, in an interview some months after becoming prime minister declared: "If there is one thing I have experienced over the past two months, it is the malfunctioning of the public administration. There are of course fantastic people working there, but the Dutroux-crisis, the dioxin-scandal, and many small stories you can read about every day, show how defective government works. Changing this will be the gigantic task for the years to come." (Verhofstadt, 1999 - own translation).

Crises as opportunities? Narrowing citizen charters to customer charters

Both charters (the User Charter and the Copernicus reform) were created in the direct aftermath of a political crisis. This is not as remarkable as it may seem, as most administrative reforms in Belgian history were propelled by political events: the 1848 elections and the change it brought to the political landscape stimulated the first discussions on political-administrative relations in Belgium. Ducpétiaux in his classic study on administrative reform in the 19th century used *administrative* reform to refer to reforms both in the political and in the administrative sphere (Ducpétiaux, 1955 (1859)). The reforms in the 1930s, resulting in the path-breaking civil servants statute, the *statut Camu*, were also to a large extent motivated by the discontent with the organisation of the political system at large. The reforms came at the height of internationally turbulent political and economic times. The economic crisis made reform necessary and possible, since the large bureaucratic apparatus was draining much of the state funds. Increased attention for administrative reforms from the 60s on coincided with appeals for granting more autonomy to the regions. The re-appearance of reforms on the agenda in the 1980s was made possible by the pressure of large budgetary deficits.

Even though the reform-*renouveau* in the early 90s culminating in the User Charter and the Copernicus reform were presented as customer charters, these *two charters* should in fact be regarded as citizen charters. Where a citizen charter between citizens and politics or between citizens and the state was needed to remedy the crisis, the *citizen charter* was narrowed down to a customer charter between citizen/customer and administration. Attention for administrative reform should mainly be seen as an attempt to reframe the debate. General discontent had to be reframed, and reduced to manageable problems, one of them administrative reform. Tackling these newly defined problems could then serve as symbolic actions, symbols that "fulfil important functions in the maintenance of political order and stability" ('t Hart, 1993). Such a reframing strategy comes not without dangers. Lock et al. (1999: 258) suggest that the supply side of public opinion should not be underestimated, this supply side meaning what elites are saying and doing. Political discourse is therefore central to changing citizens' evaluation of government. The malfunctioning of the administration has always been present and citizens in Belgium have always treated their public services in a condescending way. It

was, however, only in the 1990s that it managed to become a public issue or a public problem. Politicians' role in *putting it on the agenda* should not be underestimated.

The emergence of a gap between citizen and politics, be it created or not (see 9.4), required politicians to take action. The principal aim of the charter was not, as was for instance the case in the UK, to provide an instrument for service improvement. Instead, it mainly had a symbolic function. A *contract* or *pledge* was made between politicians and citizens, in the form of a charter that also outlined relations between client and administration. The problem that was mainly one between citizen and politics became redefined as one between citizen and administration. The consequence of reframing this debate is that often-superficial action is taken. Crises in one sphere are countered by (re)actions in another. In our example: a political crisis is responded to by promoting well-publicized administrative reforms (e.g. the introduction of a charter, the announcement of a large-scale reform). This gives an impression of high performance, but does not necessarily create the desired results, or is not even intended to do so (Dubnick, 2003: 25). Administrative reform rhetoric, certainly after 1999, came to take a central position in the discourse on restoring trust, even though little was known on the actual contribution of administrative malfunctioning to citizens' trust, a contribution that was certainly of another order than that of the functioning of the political system. Laegreid & Ronnes' observation may therefore be correct here as well: "Solutions are reforms proposals that may be considered as relevant, though they may not necessarily solve any problem if implemented" (1999: 305). This shows that government and politics does not only respond to crises, it also defines the crises (Hay, 1996: 1192).

Bringing administrative ailments to the centre of political discourse mainly served as a distraction. Suleiman found the same process in the US: "In difficult times of inflation, deficits and economic instability, the political authorities in the U.S. and in European societies found themselves severely rebuked by their citizens. To ward off attacks and to deflect criticism of their incapacity to solve society's pressing problems, they turned their wrath on their own state and on the way it was being managed" (2003: 4).

The realignment of political forces

Why did administrative reform suddenly emerge in the late 80s, and why did 1999 see a pledge for administrative reform in the announcement of the Copernicus reform? In the previous paragraphs, we have discussed the impact of political crises. In this paragraph, we will discuss the realignment of political forces that helped administrative reform to occupy a prominent place on the political agenda, and thus made the *proclamation* of the two charters possible.

As for the administrative reform we can identify two antipodes in Belgian politics: the approach of the VLD (Flemish Liberal Democrats) on the one hand, the PS (Parti Socialiste) on the other. Both exemplify a different approach to the role and function of the public administration. As such, our VLD and PS in this paragraph should be regarded as ideal-types of these approaches, and not necessarily as the political parties the acronyms stand for. The first approach generally corresponds to a New Public Management approach, the second corresponds to the dominant approach towards the public administration in 1980s in Belgium, where the administration is a political instrument.

The Flemish Liberal Democrats (VLD, PVV up to 1992) are a Flemish centre-right political party. A classic liberal party, they are in favour of small government and free enterprise. *The state against the citizen* was the topic of their 1973 conference. In his influential *Burgermanifest* (citizen manifesto), liberal politician and later prime minister Verhofstadt was one of the first to speak about a gap between

citizen and government (*kloof met de burger*) (Verhofstadt, 1991). Their support for administrative reform is mainly ideological, as reforms and administrative simplification are a first step towards a liberation of the citizen.

The PS, or the Walloon (French-speaking) socialist party takes in a dominant position in Southern Belgium. It stands for a paternalistic state system in socialist tradition, and secures its power by building a web of clientelist relations in public administrations by using public sector jobs as political rewards. This has always been common practice in the Belgian political-administrative system. The PS, however, is probably the only remaining party that is still practising this at the lower levels of administration, while most parties have scaled this practice back to securing public sector functions for party affiliates at management level. Their power structure is therefore the first one to suffer from administrative reforms, notably the abolishment of life-long tenure for civil servants.

Political attention for administrative reforms has shifted since the late 80s. While the VLD attempted to put administrative reform on the agenda, the PS tried to avoid having the topic on the agenda. A general trend of increased attention for reform can be observed, though this trend is mainly based on observation rather than on empirical proof. At certain stages, we see sudden changes in political attention.

The dramatic budgetary situation and international evolutions had their impact on the Belgian public sector and we gradually see more reform initiatives in the 1980s. Despite internal reform, the dominant approach to the function of the public sector remained the one we have summarized in the PS ideal-type. The policy monopoly thus had to be challenged to allow for change (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993; Maesschalck, 2002). Verhofstadt's citizen manifesto helped to give administrative reform a place on the political agenda, as did the economic situation that called for savings. Administrative reforms in the 1980s and early 90s mainly had an internal focus and moved only gradual, what made these reforms acceptable for the PS.

VLD had been in the opposition since 1987, and could thus not profit from the public administration in its dominant definition, namely the administration as an instrument for rewarding partisans. As prospects for government membership were bleak, they could opt for an alternative strategy by trying to change the dominant definition of the public administration by stressing service delivery and quality. Such an approach would not necessarily directly help them, but it could help undermine the position of the government parties. Speaking about a gap between citizens and politics is a possible strategy for pushing one's own definition.

The introduction of the User Charter and a series of customer-oriented reforms brought administrative reform to the political agenda and gave them an outward outlook. This open challenge of the PS approach probably stimulated them to claim the function of minister for the civil service after the 1995 elections, a function they had not held anymore since 1980. The early-90s crisis forced the party to accept broad reform, and also forced them into a defensive strategy, because reforms were publicly announced, whereas they merely had an internal character previously. The elections in 1995 signalled the end of the reforms dynamic that already suffered from a lack of political interest very soon after the introduction of the User Charter.

At the same time, successful administrative reforms were implemented at the Flemish regional level. One of the leading figures was Luc Van Den Bossche, a Flemish socialist, and minister for the civil service. At the regional level, the Flemish socialists were able to implement reforms, while at the

federal level they were dominated by their French-speaking counterpart and sister-party. This shows that party's attitudes towards the administration cannot just be reduced to ideological differences: We just mentioned the different approach of the Walloon and Flemish Socialists. But also the Liberals take a different approach to administrative reform in the Flemish and Walloon part of the country: whereas VLD is in Flanders the main promoter of reform, its Walloon counterpart MR has always neglected the issue: it never actively supported nor hindered any reforms.

The 1999 elections brought the Liberals to power. The Socialists also entered government (as did the Greens), but had suffered defeat in the elections. This dramatically reduced their power and bargaining position in the government. This allowed liberals to push through their approach to administrative reform, supported by strong popular support for reform due to the recent crisis (cf. supra). Without this crisis, and the loss of influence of the PS, reforms would, probably, have been implemented as well, but they would not have had such a public outreach as they did by presenting the reform as a genuine promise or charter. The new prime minister was liberal Guy Verhofstadt who had a strong personal interest in administrative reforms. The new minister for the civil service and the modernisation of the public administration was Van Den Bossche, who had successfully reformed the Flemish administration. Only in this combination of political forces the much-publicised Copernicus reform could be presented to the public as a *new charter*. The Copernicus survey and communication initiative made it impossible for the PS to voice their protest, because a socialist (be it a Flemish one) would lead the reform. A reform project with a mere internal orientation (i.e. reforms without embedding them in a new charter) would have been much more easier to sabotage (but there would have been less need to do so).

The initial strengths of the Copernicus reform -a prime minister that identified himself with the success of his brainchild, and a bulldozer-type minister for modernisation of the administration to push through reforms- would soon prove to be its weaknesses. The style of the minister for administrative modernisation was effective though not always appreciated. Criticism of the Copernicus reform was considered as an attack on the prime minister, for whom the success of the reforms became a fetish.

Discontent about the reforms swelled and the PS managed to increase its power. The Copernicus reform gradually lost its charter characteristics as the first massive communication initiative was soon forgotten, and a new marketing initiative turned out to be impossible due to intra-government disagreement. Press attention for the reform declined and the Copernicus project soon became an inward-looking reform project (Gelders and Van de Walle, forthcoming). A number of politically motivated high-level appointments took away most support Copernicus initially had among the main opposition party.

Opposition against Copernicus increased and culminated before the 2003 elections. The PS, and the socialist group at large, strengthened its influence, and claimed the function of minister for the civil service, this time, significantly, without *modernisation of the public administration* in the title. One of the first acts of the new minister was to declare Copernicus dead, but in the meantime administrative reform had conquered a permanent place on the political agenda. Dropping Copernicus should therefore be seen as having a symbolic function, because, internally, reforms gradually continued. External communication and marketing of the reforms was no longer present, which allowed the PS to save its face.

Reform rhetoric and actual reform are thus clearly different. Copernicus focused on the reform rhetoric (e.g. the pledge for reform) while present rhetoric is mainly anti-Copernicus. Actual reform, however, has not changed dramatically. The PS has political reasons not to put administrative reform on the agenda, as reforms would estrange part of its supporters. But it is unable to uphold its initial positions, as it will probably not manage to take it again off the agenda. Therefore, its new strategy of stressing the social functions of public services seems to be an attempt not only to safeguard these social functions, but also to hinder reforms in other fields and to preserve a central position in the reform debates. Such a central position requires ownership of the main topics, something that was not the case in the Copernicus project.

4.3 TRENDS IN THE PERFORMANCE – TRUST DISCOURSE

Administrative reform has worked itself to the centre of the political agenda on several occasions. The analysis of the problem showed little variation. Nevertheless, we can clearly distinguish a number of evolutions in the organisation of the administration. Hondeghem (2000) distinguished three periods in the development of the Belgian administration: 1830-1930: civil servants as public servants; 1930-1980: civil service as protected service and professional service; 1980-now: federalisation and modernisation. This does not mean that modernisation was not on the agenda before the 1980s.

The brief historical overview revealed two main trends:

1. Political and administrative reforms seem to coincide. The most ambitious reforms were initiated in times of political change.
2. From the early 1990s on, 'citizen' and 'client' seem to have become the main buzzwords of reform. It is not the content of the reform proposals that changed, but the way in which these reforms were motivated.

Administrative reform, it seems, does not enter the political agenda on own merit. Its entrance is stimulated by other factors. The elections in 1991 showed a dramatic rise of the extreme right, resulting in a cry for a *new political culture*, including a depolitisation of the administration. An appeal for simultaneous political and administrative reform is not new. Ducpétiaux in his study on administrative reform in the 19th century used *administrative* reform to refer to reforms both in the political and in the administrative sphere (Ducpétiaux, 1955(1859)). The reforms in the 30s resulting in the *statut Camu* were also to a large extent motivated by the discontent with the organisation of the political system at large. The reforms came at the height of internationally turbulent political and economic times. The economic crisis made reform possible, since the large bureaucratic apparatus was draining much of the state funds. Increased attention for administrative reforms from the 60s on coincided with appeals for granting more autonomy to the regions. The re-appearance of reforms on the agenda in the 1980s occurred because of large budgetary deficits. The abduction and murder of a number of children in the mid 90s revealed the malfunctioning of the courts and police, and support for reforms of these institutions certainly spilled over to support for administrative reform in general. A number of food safety crises in the late 90s stimulated reforms of specific public agencies. It should not come as a surprise that heightened political attention for the civil service in the late 90s coincided with the entrance of the

liberal party into power. In-depth study of party-programmes, political speeches and government declarations is necessary to provide conclusive evidence for this statement.

Despite current reform rhetoric focusing on citizens, service delivery etc., these issues entered the debate rather late. Before the mid 80s, reform proposals had a predominantly internal focus: reorganisation of departments, recruitment and training of civil servants etc. If mention was made of discontent with the functioning of the administration, it concerned discontent of civil servants and policy-makers. From the 1990s on many decisions were taken to improve accountability, transparency, and service quality. Reform proposals were also increasingly motivated by referring to citizens: reforms are needed because of client dissatisfaction and citizens' distrust. This reorientation of the discourse does not automatically mean that (the need for) reforms has also changed. The main change is a change in the motivation for reform. Almost all authors made comparable analyses of public sector deficiencies, but while the reason for reform was first motivated by a concern for an ever-growing public sector and for an increasing political influence, motivations later shifted to a response to budgetary pressure (80s) and to concerns for citizens' trust in government. We have seen that the crisis of distrust in Belgium emerged from a political event, but that discussion rather quickly shifted to administrative reform, among others because these reforms were deemed to be more feasible (or easier) than political reforms. The way a problematic situation had to be understood was transformed by the central actors in this problematic situation, where the party that was supposed to give account started to make its own accounts by highlighting alternative aspects in the debate (i.e. the malfunctioning of the public administration, Dubnick, 2003: 22). Our examples of the Belgian situation, of the bureau bashing in the US etc. suggest that the debate on distrust has recently been reframed. So what was changing were the "views and theories about the causes and sources of inefficiency in government, what efficiency meant, and how it was to be achieved" (Cheung, 1996: 37). Actual modernisation and political attention for administrative modernisation seem to be two different streams (Van de Walle et al., 2003). The consequence of this reframing of the debate is that often-superficial action is taken. Crises in one sphere are countered by (re)actions in another. In our example: a political crisis is responded to by promoting well-publicised administrative reforms (e.g. the introduction of a charter, the announcement of a large-scale reform). This gives an impression of high performance, but does not necessarily create the desired results, or is not even intended to do so (Dubnick, 2003: 25).

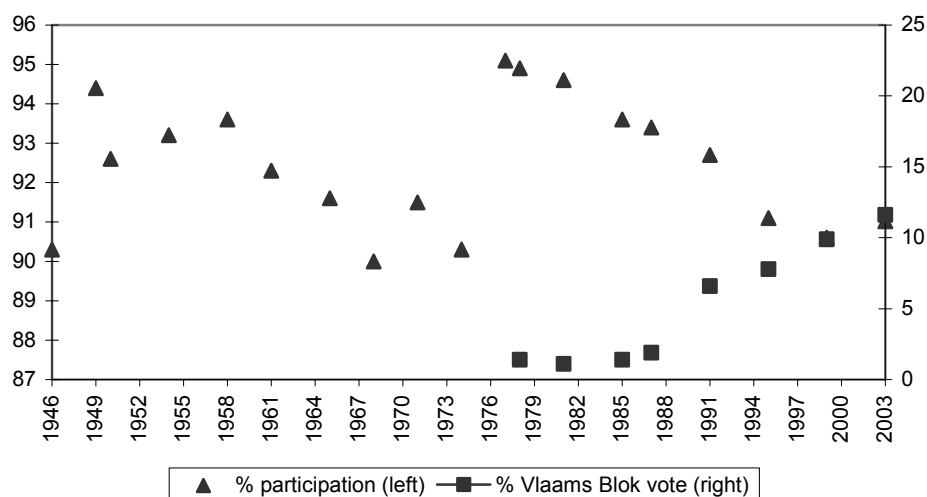
4.4 IS THERE A CONFIDENCE GAP IN BELGIUM?

The *gap between citizens and politics/government* became one of the main political buzzwords in Belgian politics in the 1990s. *The gap with the citizen, distrust in government* and the like are hardly ever related in a causal chain, but are used as synonyms instead. Distrust in government has come to be defined as one of the basic characteristics of Belgian society, a country that was in the past, after all, part of many empires and subject to many rulers, and therefore, according to some, occupied. In this approach, high levels of distrust are no more than a normal attitude of citizens.

The debate on distrust is often fuelled by flashy events and postulated long-term trends, but research made clear that the availability of data is substandard. A historical perspective often lacks, and tends to give too heavy a weight to current events. Polls, surveys and events help us to observe problems, but do not often tell us whether these problems have worsened or not. There are some facts

that should worry us. Despite the compulsory nature of the vote in Belgium, participation in the parliamentary elections is declining. Since 1977, we have known a quasi-permanent decline²⁴. At the same time, Belgium (Flanders) has experienced a rise of the extreme-right Vlaams Blok (share of votes for the House of Representatives is shown in Figure 7).

Figure 7: Trends in electoral participation and extreme-right vote in Belgium



Source: Billiet (2001), www.verkiezingen.fgov.be, www.idea.int

In the 1990s, trust became a central concept in the political discourse. Still in 1999, *restoring trust* became one of the main aspirations when a new government entered into power (Federale Regering, 1999a). At the same time, researchers produced evidence of low levels of trust. Dierickx (2003) found that political alienation is also high among the Belgian senior civil service. Systematic research on citizens' trust in government in Belgium started rather late, despite the centrality of trust in 1990s (Elchardus, 1998a; Elchardus and Smits, 2002).

Nevertheless, there is no data that allows for a satisfying answer on the question whether there is or was a crisis of trust. Some long-term data does indeed suggest there was a problem at some time in the 1990s, but these do not show overall long-term declines in trust. The European and World Values Studies cover a period starting in 1981 but have long time lags between two subsequent measures and do -for Belgium- only give us three moments of measurement, rather than a time series. The Flemish APS surveys only started measuring trust in 1996. Apart from the Eurobarometer item on *satisfaction with the functioning of democracy* (cf. supra), the three-monthly opinion polls organised by the *La Libre Belgique*²⁵ newspaper are actually the only -be it imperfect- data that allow us to study evolutions. Measurement started in 1982. This poll contains the following question *to solve the actual problems in Belgium, do you have confidence in the Federal government of [name prime minister]*. From 1998 on, a

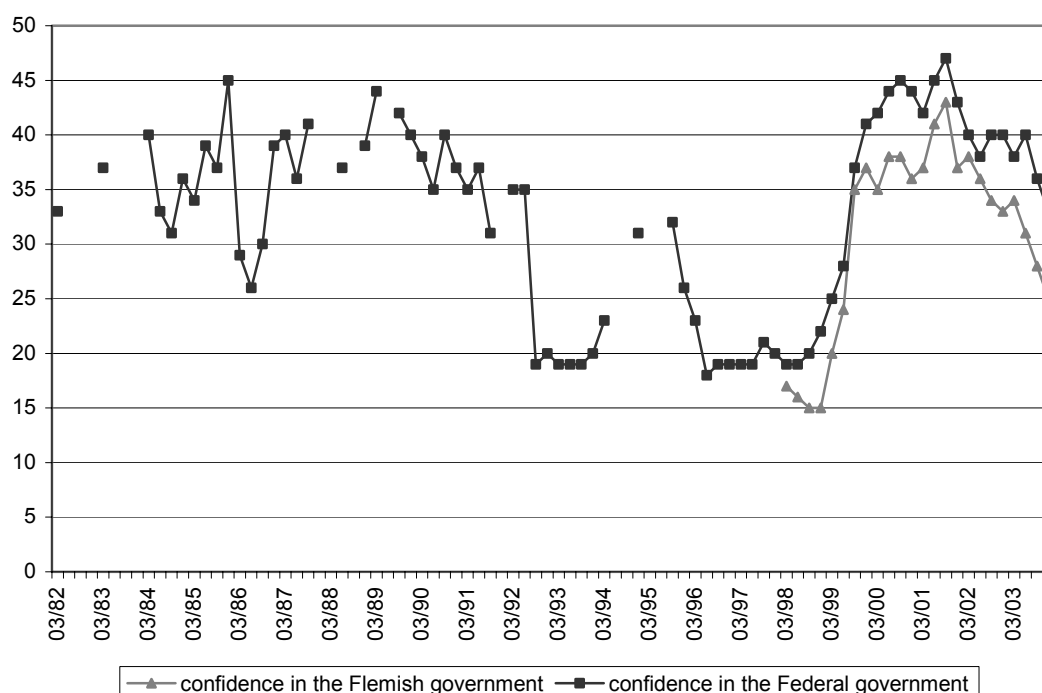
²⁴ The increase in 1977 is due to better registration. See also Billiet (2001).

²⁵ The *La Libre Belgique* poll is first and foremost a political opinion poll. In total 2000 Belgians older than 18 participate (750 in both Flanders and Wallonia, 500 in Brussels, of which 100 Dutch speakers). Selection is based on a random walk, with a pre-determined starting point in a sample of municipalities with different degrees of urbanisation. For selecting the respondents, the 'last birthday' method is used, and further differentiation is made based on a number of criteria (sex, age, type of employment and social class).

similar question was introduced on the Flemish government. The question is far from perfect for our purpose, but is still the most detailed material available. The question certainly contains more than just *confidence* and does perhaps not give appropriate information to analyse trends at the system level. The item could be interpreted as a mere popularity poll for the prime minister but could also probe for the government's policymaking capacity.

Figure 8 shows evolutions in the levels of confidence in the Flemish and the Federal government. The poll is normally organised every three months. Where this has not been the case, the line is interrupted.

Figure 8: Confidence in the Federal and Flemish government in Belgium since 1982 (% confidence)



Source: La Libre Belgique

The perhaps most remarkable finding in this data is the gap in the 1990s, starting in 1991-1992. The emergence of the debate on the gap coincides with the electoral success of the extreme right in the 1991 elections. To what extent the one has caused the other will be dealt with more in detail in later chapters. Definitive proof will possibly never be given, as the bulk of survey data only came available from the mid 1990s on. Lamot (1997) related the end of the Cold War to the emergence of the gap between citizens and politics and of the crisis of democracy. The end of the Cold War meant the end of a single frame of reference for understanding the world²⁶. He also related the Belgian government's decision not to take into account massive demonstrations in the 1980s against the posting of new nuclear missiles to the emergence of the gap, because these demonstrations indicated the start of a mobilisation of a broad spectrum of the population as had not been seen before. The latter point, however, seems to be less convincing. Nevertheless, it remains interesting to see the comparatively

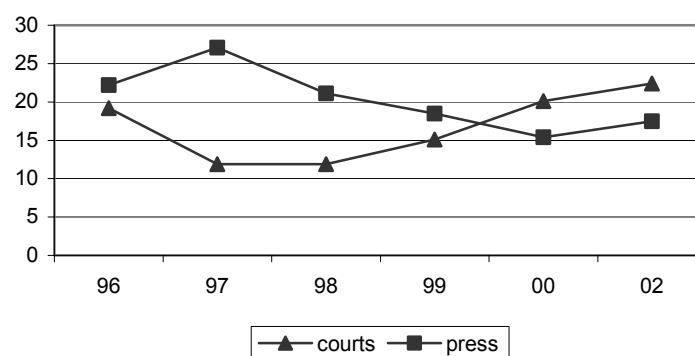
²⁶ This point has been made in other countries as well. For Johnston (1993), the disappearance of Communism also meant the disappearance of a competing system American citizens could compare their own political system to.

high levels of trust in the 1980s, which was a period with instable governments, a bad economic situation, increasing government debt, and a number of terrorist bombings and violent robberies.

Apart from the bleak situation in the 1990s, we observe a number of spikes and dips in the data. One dip is in mid-'86, possibly caused by a number of communautarian hassles (including the annulment of José Happort's appointment as mayor of the language- and power struggle ridden municipality of Voeren by the Supreme Administrative Court of Belgium), supplemented by a series of strikes and demonstrations in the month of May. The Martens VI government had to make budget cuts, and was in conflict with the opposition on a number of special powers.

A very obvious dip in the data follows the 1996 Dutroux-crisis. This collapse is also visible in other data. The APS surveys show increase in trust in the press and a decrease for trust in the courts in 1997. Later however, trust in the courts is restored, possibly because the immediate effects of the crisis had disappeared, because of the announcement of reforms, and because of the popularity of the new Justice minister who entered office in summer 1999. Trust in the press, however, did not manage to remain high and started to decrease rather fast.

Figure 9: Impact of the Dutroux crisis: trust in the courts and the press (% trust)

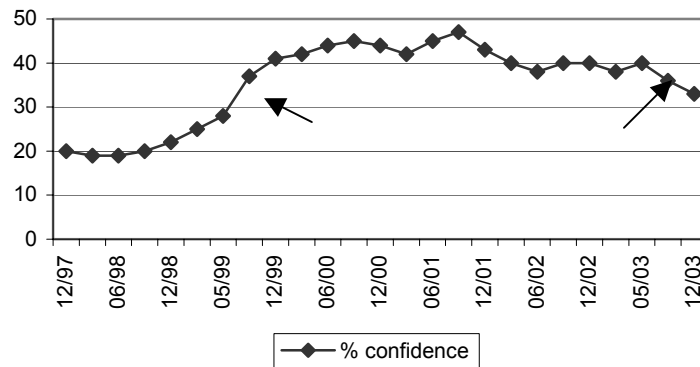


Source: APS

Another interesting spike is the one in September 2001. This could be related to the effects of the WTC attack in New York and the accompanying *rallying* effect, as a similar fact can be observed in US data as well (Mackenzie and Labiner, 2002). Data for the September poll in Belgium was collected 4-14 September. Other factors that could explain this divergence are measurement errors, and the heightened visibility of the government and the prime minister as Belgium held the EU presidency in that period.

The Verhofstadt I government came into power after the June 1999 elections (arrow in figure), what coincided with a strong increase in confidence, actually the strongest ever. When we look at the statistics more in detail, however, we see that this increase is rather a continuation of a trend that had started late 1998 - early 1999, be it more outspoken. The positive trend did not prevent the Dehaene government from being re-elected. The Verhofstadt government was re-elected in 2003 (arrow) despite declining trust.

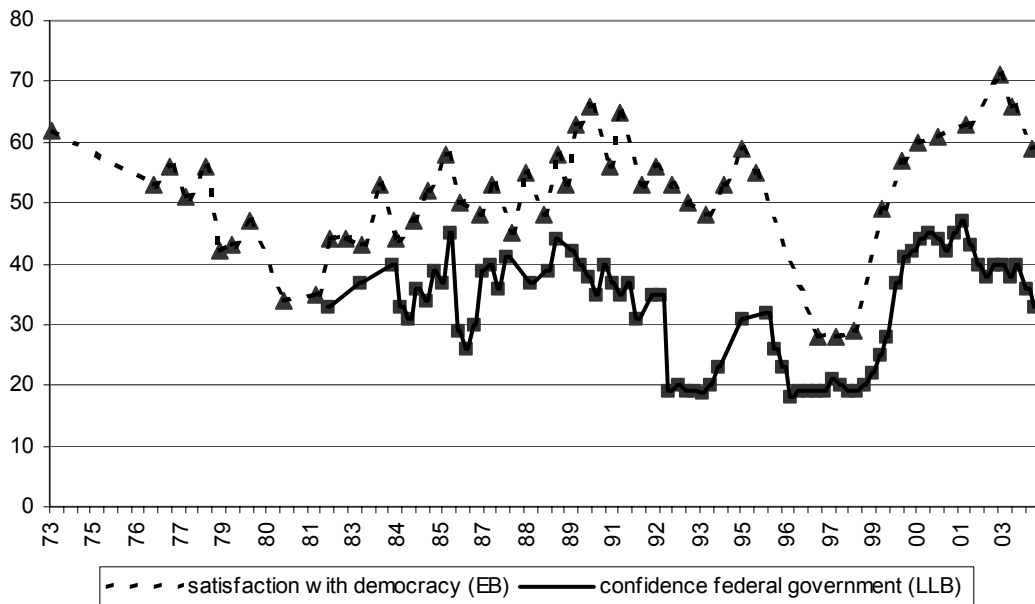
Figure 10: Resurgence of trust in 1999?



Source: La Libre Belgique

As we have mentioned, the LLB poll is not entirely suitable for our purpose, as it is not entirely clear what the question exactly means. Confidence in the ability to solve actual problems could decrease towards the end of the term of office of a government, because there is little time left to actually solve a problem. A comparison of the LLB data with the Eurobarometer (EB) satisfaction with democracy indicator reassures us, as we can distinguish roughly similar evolutions²⁷ (Figure 11). The EB measures in the end of 1997 and early 1998 show an indisputable collapse in satisfaction. Unfortunately, no measure exists for 1996, and there was just one measurement in 1995 and 1997. The incompleteness of the data does not make it very easy to attribute these changes to the 1996 Dutroux paedophilia crisis, as the first post-crisis data were collected only one year after.

Figure 11: LLB and EB indicators for trust (1973-2003)



Source: La Libre Belgique & Eurobarometer

²⁷ Eurobarometer surveys are organised twice a year (n~1000, face-to-face interviews).

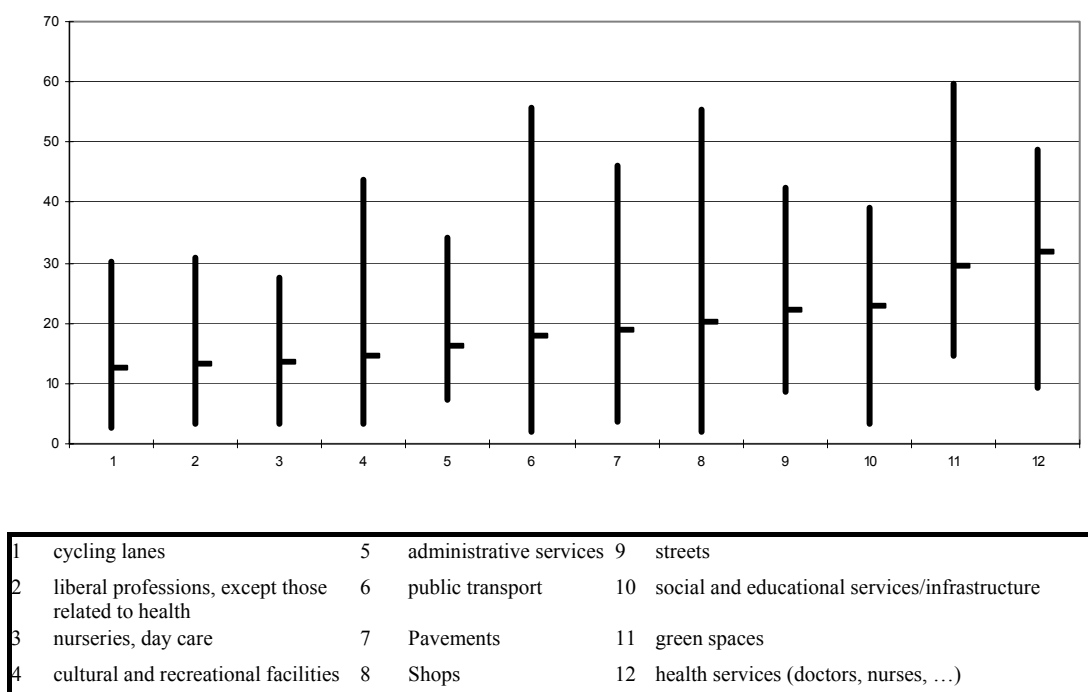
4.5 PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN BELGIUM

In the previous paragraphs, a number of time-series statistics on citizens' trust in government were shown. Some data on attitudes towards the public administration were given as well. In this section, the available material for mapping citizens' attitudes towards specific public services is analysed, and attitudes towards the public administration are located in time and context. Apart from specific customer satisfaction surveys, truly comparable data on a number of services proved hard to find, as researchers' attention in Belgium tended to focus on attitudes towards political institutions.

Evaluation of the availability of facilities

In the Belgian General Socio-Economic Survey 2001, a number of questions were included on citizens' ratings of certain facilities in their neighbourhood (well provided, normally provided, badly provided)²⁸. In the Flemish Region, all 2.354.942 households received a questionnaire. Figure 12 shows the mean percentage of *well-provided* answers for all facilities, aggregated at municipality level, as well as the maximum and minimum scores. Cycling lanes, liberal professions (e.g. lawyers) and nurseries received the lowest number of *well-provided* scores, while health services and green spaces received the highest numbers. Overall, opinions on public transport and shops differed most between municipalities, while these on nurseries/day care and administrative facilities differed least.

Figure 12: Citizens' rating of facilities in their neighbourhood (NIS, 2001, % well provided, mean + high/low aggregated at municipal level)



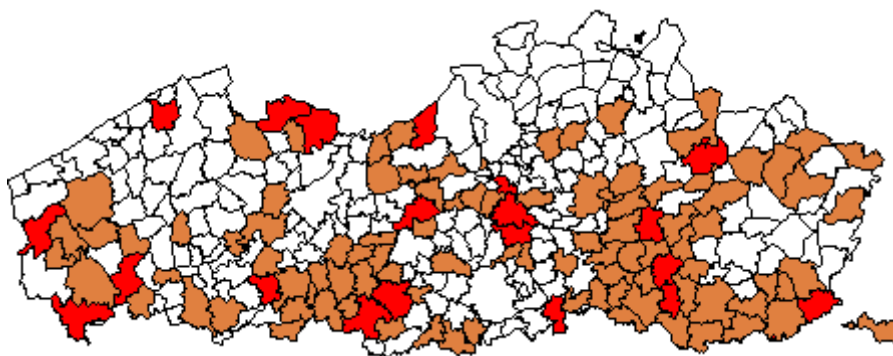
Source: NIS, 2001

²⁸ Original question (Dutch): Wat vindt u van de faciliteiten (voorzieningen) die in de buurt worden aangeboden? heel goed voorzien, normaal voorzien, slecht voorzien.

Apart from a questionnaire for every household, there was a questionnaire for every citizen older than six that included questions about levels of education, employment etc. Relating these personal-level data to the household survey is not yet possible, as data is still being processed. In-depth analysis at the municipal level is possible, as we can theoretically relate objective indicators to the evaluations. However, question wording is far from perfect. What does *administrative services* refer to? And what do citizens define as their neighbourhood? The aggregated statistics at the municipal level also obscure the fact that many municipalities are composed of a number of local entities, among which substantial differences may exist. Nevertheless, the general socio-economic survey has the potential of becoming a path-breaking resource for research in service delivery, once all data will be available for use.

We can refer to a number of preliminary analyses at the municipal level. Evaluations clearly differ between rural and urban municipalities. We exclude a number of municipalities at the edge of Brussels from the analysis for technical reasons related to coding municipalities as rural or urban. Strongest relations are -not surprisingly- found for the availability of public transport, pavements and shops: citizens are considerably more negative in rural areas (in rural areas, 36,17% thinks that public transport is insufficiently provided vs. just 7.75% in the two biggest cities). In cities, citizens tend to complain about the availability of green spaces. Naturally, inhabitants of rural areas are satisfied with green spaces, as are inhabitants of the hinterland of the biggest cities, which tends to be of a residential nature. Inhabitants of the hinterland/suburbs of the big and medium-sized cities tend to be more satisfied with administrative facilities, possibly because they combine advantages of cities with those of the countryside, without suffering from their respective disadvantages.

Figure 13: Households' evaluation of availability of administrative facilities in neighbourhood

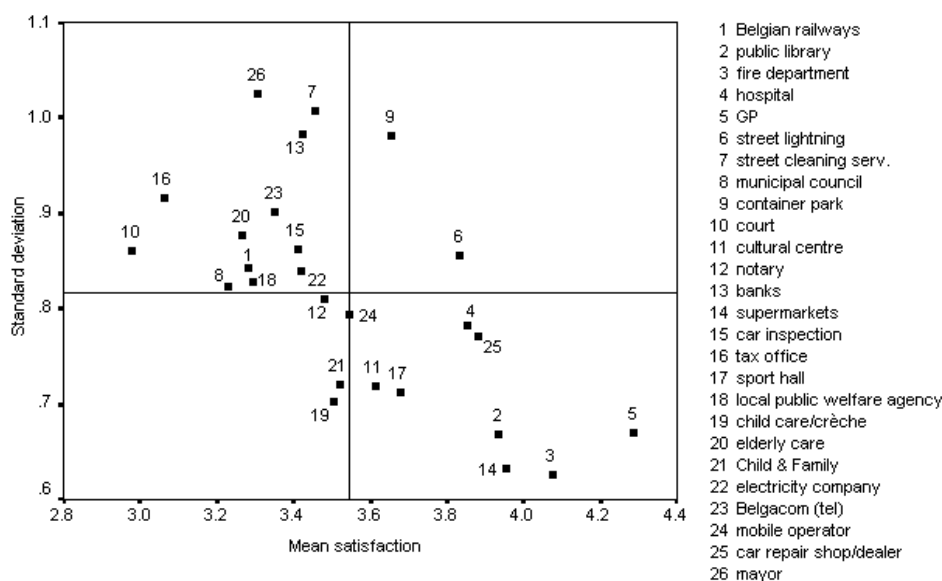


In colour: municipalities where more households give a negative evaluation than a positive one. Red (dark) = negative evaluations exceed positive ones with at least 15 % points. Brown = negative evaluations exceed positive ones with 5-15 % points. Source: NIS, Algemene Socio-Economische Enquête 2001

Satisfaction with services in Flanders

Our 2003 WADO postal survey asked respondents to rate a list of institutions and services. Answers vary from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). Figure 14 shows the mean²⁹ score for each of these services as well as the standard deviation. The crossing lines indicate the mean of standard deviations and means for all of the services. Low standard deviation means there is a considerable degree of agreement among respondents on how a service is to be rated, while a high standard deviation indicates a certain degree of disagreement. Deviation is very low for the fire department, supermarkets, and GP's, and each of these services enjoys high levels of satisfaction. A combination of high disagreement, and low satisfaction is found for courts, the tax office, and mayors, what probably indicates that these items are scored in a more extreme way. Child care/crèches and the Child and Family agency have a mean satisfaction rating that is neither high nor low, and deviation is also limited. This seems to indicate there is a certain agreement on the rating for these services. Still, citizens tend to be more satisfied rather than dissatisfied. An alternative explanation could be that, compared to the other services, this service is less known to a number of people (i.c. respondents without children) inducing them to mark the neutral category. Other interesting services are container parks and street lightning: both receive a very positive satisfaction rating, but variation is rather high. This could suggest that these facilities perform insufficiently in certain regions or for certain groups. Overall, there are no services where the negative ratings outnumber the positive ones.

Figure 14: Satisfaction with institutions and services in Flanders



Source: WADO mail 2003

Because of these different levels of satisfaction, it would be interesting to know whether the socio-demographic profiles of those who trust also differ depending on the service under study. For each of the twenty-six institutions and services we fitted an ordinal regression model containing a series of

²⁹ Means are not the best indicators for describing tendencies when using ordinal variables. For our purpose however, which is giving a visual summary, the mean is more useful than the median scores, as these would obscure much of the variation.

socio-demographic variables: sex, age, education, employment, degree of urbanisation of place of residence, religiosity, individualism, authoritarianism/traditionalism, and ethnocentrism. Four items on immigrant and Muslims measure the latter. Individualism refers to defending one's own interests and pursuing personal pleasure rather than thinking about others. Traditionalism/authoritarianism refer to items on obedience and respect for authority as important values for children and a need for strong leaders.

One general observation is that socio-demographics only explain a marginal degree of the variation. Explained variance does not even come close to .10. Individuals scoring low on ethnocentrism and high on traditionalism/authoritarianism are more satisfied with the services, as do women. Education drops everywhere, but would resurface in some cases when individualism, traditionalism/authoritarianism, and ethnocentrism would not be in the models.

Table 9: Socio-demographic determinants of satisfaction with public services

	sex	age	employment	urbanisation	Religiosity	individ.	authorit. /tradition.	ethnocentrism	R ² ³⁰
Belgian railways	F		student				high	low	.044
public library	F							low	.058
fire department							high		.035
hospital							high	(low)	.016
GP ³¹									
street lightning									
street cleaning serv.								low	.038
municipal council				mixed, but highest in rural areas			high	low	.065
container park							(high)	low	.039
court	F					high!	(high)	low	.063
cultural centre	F							low	.045
notary		Older					high		.039
banks	F					high	high	low	.041
supermarkets	F						high		.024
car inspection	F	Older					high	low	.050
tax office		Older					high	low	.079
sports hall								(low)	.026
local public welfare agency				higher in rural areas			high	low	.086
child care/crèche							high	low	.050
elderly care				higher in more rural areas	religious/visiti ng church		high	low	.044
Child & Family				lower in urban areas	(non- religious dissatisfied) ³²			low	.051
electricity company	F						high	low	.051
Belgacom (tel)							high	low	.041
mobile operator		(young er)					high		.023
car repair shop/dealer							high		.019
mayor							high	low	.065

Ethnocentrism and traditionalism are significant in almost all models, what suggests there is more to satisfaction than just the quality-level of service delivery. Different thresholds for satisfaction seem to exist.

In the 2002 face-to-face survey, we also included questions about the image citizens have of a number of professions and functions related to government. We asked whether one had a positive or negative image of the professions (5-point scale). A small number of professions unrelated to government were added as a control factor. No further professions were added to avoid the kind of

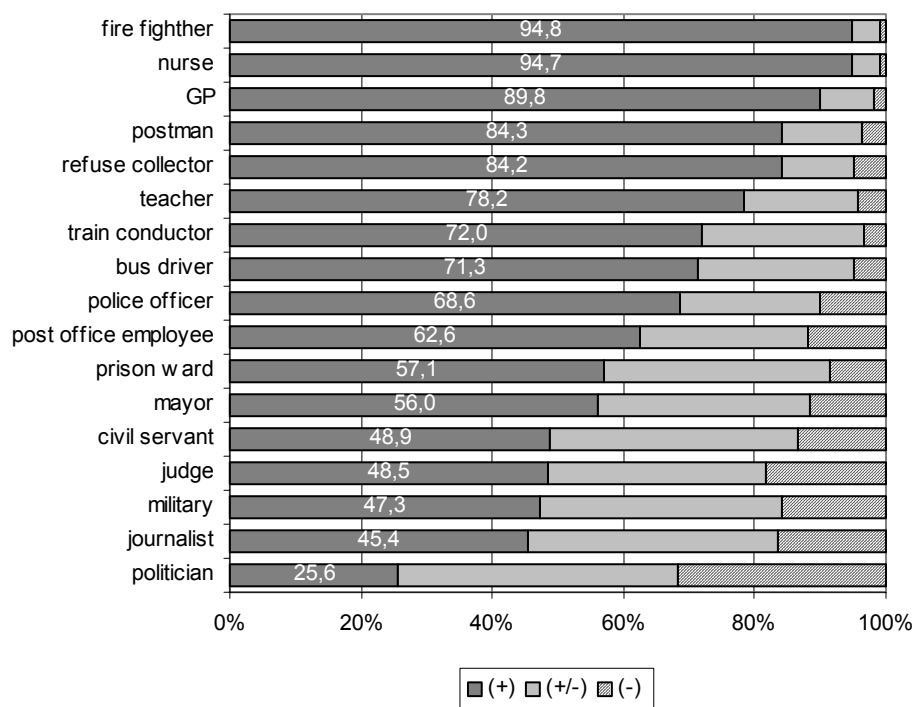
³⁰ Nagelkerke R²

³¹ Not a single variable was significant in the models for GP and street lightning.

³² We consider free-thinkers (vrijzinnigen) as religious.

rankings popular in the media showing that e.g. politicians enjoy as much trust as used-car salesmen (Ekos Research Associates Inc., 1997).

Figure 15: Citizens' image of civil servants and government-related professions



Source: WADO F2F 2002

Almost all respondents have a positive image of fire fighters, nurses, and GPs. Many other functions also enjoy a very positive image among citizens, many of them so-called 'street-level bureaucrats': postmen, refuse collectors, teachers, bus drivers etc. Despite the favourable rating for these street-level bureaucrats, citizens' image of civil servants is considerably more negative: only about half of the respondents have a positive image of civil servants. Judges, the military, journalists, and politicians do worse. Citizens' image of politicians is the only case where there are more negative evaluations than there are positive ones. Mayors, though also politicians, get considerably better ratings.

4.6 HOW DOES THE PERCEPTION OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION RELATE TO THAT OF OTHER INSTITUTIONS?

We have thus far mapped citizens' satisfaction with public services, but these statistics do not tell us anything about the relative position of the public administration: how is the public administration doing compared to other institutions? Do citizens distrust the bureaucracy more than they do other institutions?

Distrust: a political problem?

Since 1996, the Administration for Planning and Statistics of the ministry of the Flemish Community has organised a survey on social and cultural change. In most cases, a number of items on trust in the institutions have been included in the survey. Table 10 shows the percentage of respondents that indicated having much or very much trust in an institution.

Table 10: Trust in the institutions

<i>% much or very much</i>	<i>aps 96</i>	<i>aps 97</i>	<i>aps 98</i>	<i>aps 99</i>	<i>aps 00</i>	<i>aps 02</i>
municipal police	50,0					
police & gendarmerie		29,6	27,7	35,4	43,6	46,9
schools	70,9					
educational system		70,4	62,3	73,6	72	77,7
Flemish administration	28,5	27,2	25,7	24,3	29,3	35,0
Rank	4/12	6/17	6/17	6/17	6/18	6/19
municipal administration	42,1	39,0	36,5	36,4	43,2	44,8
courts	19,2	11,9	11,9	15,1	20,1	22,4
Flemish press	22,2	27,1	21,1	18,5	15,4	17,5
Flemish government (regering)	17,5	16,0	19,4	19,7	24,0	25,7
Flemish political parties	10,0	9,6	13,4	11,7	15,2	14,5
the Church	24,4	18,8	20,1	17,9	24,5	22,2
employers	28,1	27,2	34,1	30,1	38,7	35,6
Flemish Parliament	17,8	16,6	18,6	18,8	24,7	23,7
trade unions	22,8	19,6	23,3	22,7	27,3	28,9
King		42,0	42,7	43,3	51,1	39,6
Belgian Parliament		13,7	15,1	17,7	24,5	23,0
European Commission		14,8	16,6	16,2	16,9	20,3
Belgian government (regering)		11,4	13,9	16,6	25,0	22,2
Walloon political parties		3,1	4,3	5,7	6,3	6,9
armed forces					28,4	29,5
Federal administration						15,1

Source: APS surveys 1996-2002

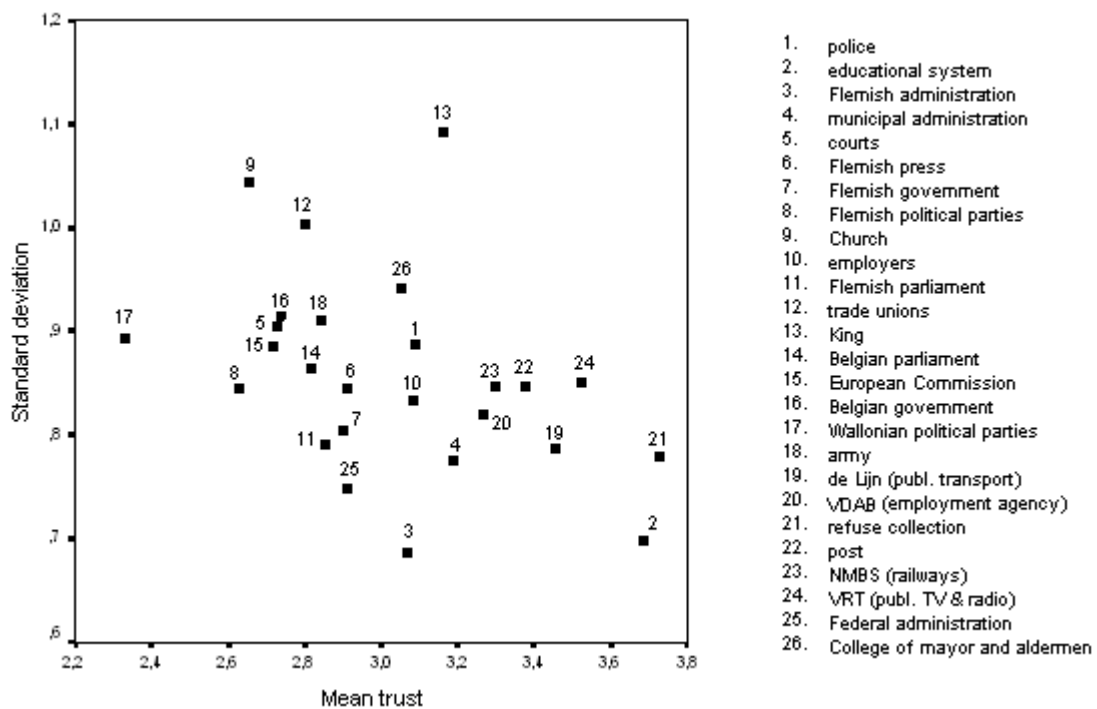
The numbers reveal that the Flemish administration (unfortunately the survey did not contain a general item on the public administration) is among the most trusted institutions. Trust in the municipal administration is even higher. In Belgium, the educational system traditionally enjoys the highest levels of trust. Political parties fare very badly, with trust in the Walloon political parties at the bottom of the list. The latter score should be interpreted by taking into account the fact that our data comes from a survey among *Flemish* citizens. The score for the Federal Administration is disastrous. It enjoys not even half the level of trust than does the Flemish administration. It is true that the Flemish administration has for a long time been considered as more modern and progressive than the Federal one, mainly because the Flemish administration could be created more or less from scratch as a result of the federalisation of the country.

Trust in the institutions is often measured in surveys, but the methods that are used contain a considerable number of shortcomings (see 1.3 for related methodological problems). The method that is used most frequently in Belgium is that in which the respondent is shown a list of items, with the possibility to indicate his or her level of trust on a 4 or 5 point scale. Items that are lower or at the bottom of the list tend to receive more answers in the middle category, less in the *very much trust* and

more in the *very little trust* category as compared to items at the top of the list. None of these observations are truly significant. This effect is probably due to a number of more extreme items on which some respondent have a more outspoken, and mostly more negative, attitude (Walloon political parties, the King). Another observation is that respondents tend to limit variation in their answers when the list of items is very long (Kampen, Van de Walle, Bouckaert, and Maddens, 2003). These factors should be taken into account when reading the results in this section (see 9.2 for a more detailed discussion).

In our own survey, we also included the traditional list of institutions, and expanded it with some public services traditionally not included in this kind of lists. The list also contains a number of institutions not related to government. They are included to allow for comparison. For Figure 16, we have used the 2003 mail survey, and not the 2002 face-to-face survey, because the 2003 survey also contains an item trust in the federal administration.

Figure 16: Trust in the institutions³³



Source: WADO mail 2003

As in Figure 14, mean trust ratings and standard deviations in the answers are plotted. In this way, not only levels of trust are shown, but also the level of agreement between respondents. High standard deviations indicate that there is a considerable degree of difference in how institutions are evaluated. There seems to be considerable agreement on how the educational system and the Flemish administration are to be rated. Opinions on the King, the Church, and the trade unions on the other hand are open to more controversy. The rather high mean level of trust in the King hides a great deal of disagreement: we find some 10% of the respondents in the extreme negative category, and some 10% in the extreme positive category. Refuse collection, the educational system, the public radio and TV,

³³ Trust measured on a 1→5 scale, where 5 is *trust very much*.

and public transport enjoy high levels of trust. Political parties, courts, the European Commission and the Church suffer from low levels of trust. The more general *administration* is trusted less than most of the specific public services in the list. The federal administration is trusted less than the Flemish administration and both enjoy less trust than the municipal administration. It is remarkable that for all three, there is a rather low standard deviation, which could mean that respondents do not really know how to rate the administration and that many do not have an outspoken attitude. In all three cases, trust in the *government* is lower than that in the administration (Belgian government, Flemish government, and College/Board of Mayor and Aldermen respectively).

A general observation is that political institutions receive lower ratings than administrative ones. Specific public services are among the most trusted institutions. It is therefore no surprise that Suleiman wonders in his study why the bureaucracy is the first institution that is attacked in calls for a more democratic state, when this bureaucracy is certainly not shown as the most distrusted of governments' institutions (Suleiman, 2003: 2).

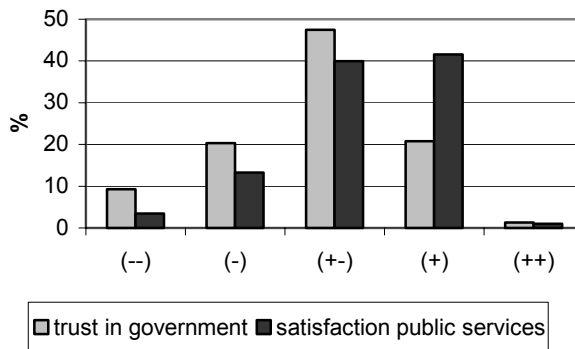
Trust in government vs. satisfaction with the functioning of public services

One of the principal aims of this research is to analyse the relationship that may exist between citizens' attitudes towards the public administration and their general trust in government. We will in this research focus on two important items in our questionnaire:

To what extent do you trust government?	
Very little	<input type="radio"/> (1)
Little	<input type="radio"/> (2)
Not little, not much	<input type="radio"/> (3)
A lot	<input type="radio"/> (4)
Very Much	<input type="radio"/> (5)
To what extent are you satisfied with the functioning of the public services?	
Very dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> (1)
Dissatisfied	<input type="radio"/> (2)
Not dissatisfied, not satisfied	<input type="radio"/> (3)
Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> (4)
Very satisfied	<input type="radio"/> (5)

Both items were placed at the very beginning of the questionnaire, directly after the socio-demographics. In general, 43.0% claimed to be satisfied or very satisfied with the functioning of the public services. A further 40.3% neither was dissatisfied, nor satisfied. Quite a difference with the generally held opinion that citizens are not satisfied with the public services! The situation is a little bit more negative for trust in government. Still, only 29.4% expresses little or very little trust.

Figure 17: Trust in government and satisfaction with the functioning of the public services



Source: WADO F2F 2003

Table 11 shows how the answers on both questions relate. The variables have been recoded into three categories (+, neutral, -). This results in nine categories:

Table 11: Trust in government and satisfaction with the functioning of the public services

Trust in government	Satisfaction with the functioning of public services		
	Low (16,7)	Medium (40,3)	High (43,0)
A lot, very much (22,4)	1,0 %	3,7 %	17,7 %
Not little, not much (47,9)	4,0 %	24,8 %	19,1 %
Little, very little (29,7)	11,7 %	11,8 %	6,2 %

The three largest groups are these where medium or high trusts are combined with medium or high satisfaction. Satisfaction with public services is almost always higher than or equal to the level of trust in government. In less than 10% of the cases, the level of trust in government is higher than the level of satisfaction with public services. In the neutral categories, there is an overrepresentation of the higher educated, while we find the combination low trust and high/medium satisfaction among the lower educated.

Evolutions in citizens' image of the administration

We saw in the previous chapter that according to the Eurobarometer polls, trust in the civil service has gone up sharply over the past few years in Belgium. How this evolution fits into a long-term trend is not known however. There are indications that the Eurobarometer measurements started at a moment when trust was very low. There obviously is need for confirmation of these data, but only few sources are available. We have two methods for doing this: mapping trends, or measuring perceived evolutions.

Confidence in the civil service remains remarkably stable at around 46% in the European Values Study measurements in 1981, 1990, and 1999. Similar data dating back to the 1980s could not be

found, with the exception of a number of single polls, often organised by newspapers or magazines³⁴. In 1989 a Dimarso-Gallup poll was published in *De Morgen* (17/10/1989: p. 9) on the negotiations between government and the civil servants' unions about pay rises³⁵. The same newspaper organised a poll in 1991 on the attitude of the Flemings towards the civil service: In it, it was shown that political interference in the recruitment and promotion of civil servants was perceived as one of the main problems in the administration³⁶. Even further back in time, in 1981, two thousand Belgians participated in a short GfK Belgium poll on the image of civil servants (satisfaction with service delivery, personal interest in working as a civil servant, general image of civil servants, ...) ³⁷. Unfortunately, the results have not been published, and the polling company does not have them in their archives anymore. Still, one thing is clear: civil servants are not ranked among the most powerful decision-makers in Belgium: top civil servants rank far behind trade unions, employers' organisations, the press, industry, the financial world, political parties, and so on (Dewachter and Das, 1991)³⁸. The questions in these surveys and polls clearly indicate that the issues at stake in those days: the 1975 GLOPO poll contained a question on the limitation of the right of strike in public services, and political interference in the administration is a recurrent theme. Probably the most notorious *poll* was the so-called Copernicus *referendum*, where almost all Belgians received a questionnaire on their attitude towards the reform of the Federal administration. Presented as a poll, it mainly served as a PR instrument, and the nature of the questions made that citizens' opinion could only be interpreted as being in favour of the reforms (see also 4.2).

These polls do not allow us to map trends, and they often contain just a very limited number of items, or do not allow for in-depth analysis. To do so, we have to rely on other material, which is naturally limited (see the overview in Table 50, Appendix 4). In fact, three sources can provide us with info: the Eurobarometer polls, the APS survey on socio-cultural change in Flanders and the ISPO Belgian General Election Study. The Eurobarometer data have been dealt with before. The APS survey contains items on trust in a number of institutions that could be interpreted as public administrations or as delivering a public service. Trust in the educational system is very high, and trust in the police

³⁴ It is not our aim here to provide a full overview. The historical data are just a minor aspect in our research. Providing more data is time-consuming as indexing of polls goes back only to 1972. Useful sources are the Belgian Archives for the Social Sciences, which are unfortunately not at the same level of foreign institutes, and the yearly overview in the Belgian political science journal *Res Publica*. Herwig Reynaert made an overview of polls 1974-1991 (Reynaert and Steunpunt Sociopolitiek Systeem, 1992) and Dewachter refers to some of the very early polls (Dewachter, 1974). Responsibility for archiving recent polls is scattered. In Flanders the Administration for Planning and Statistics is at least collecting information on all research commissioned by or paid for by the the Flemish administration or government. It is to be expected that the current disrespect for archiving data will have very important negative consequences for future researchers.

³⁵ Dimarso-Gallup poll, n=1002 (Belgium), 2 questions, 2-6 October, published in *De Morgen* 17/10/1989, p. 9).

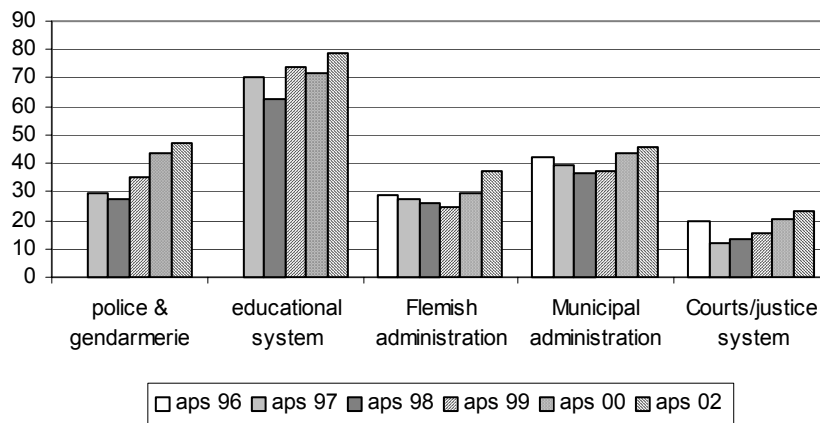
³⁶ Commissioned by *De Morgen*. Dimarso, n=1004 (Flanders), published in *De Morgen* 06/11/1991.

³⁷ GfK Belgium, May-June 1981, n=2000 (Belgium). Not published. Source: overview of opinion polls in Belgium in *Res Publica*.

³⁸ e.g. AGLOP-GLOPO survey March-April 1975 by U.N.I.O.P., n=1521, I.A.O- I.C.S.O.P. poll November 7-12, 1980; Knack-SOBEMAP najaarspeiling 1984.

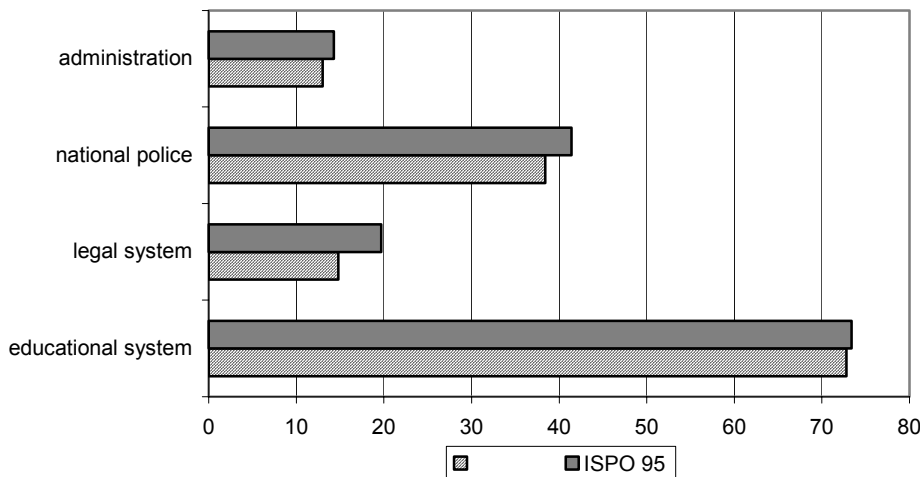
seems to be rising, the latter probably due to the impact of the Dutroux-events³⁹. Also trust in the courts seems to have recovered.

Figure 18: Trust in the institutions: public administration and public services



Another source are the ISPO election studies, organised in 1991, 1995, and 1999. Trust in institutions was not measured in 1991. Figure 19 shows levels of trust in some administrations and public services. Again, the educational system does very well. Comparing trust in *political* institutions between 1995 and 1999, there seems to have been a slight increase in trust.

Figure 19: Trust in the institutions (% trust)⁴⁰



Source: ISPO General Election Study Belgium, 1995 and 1999

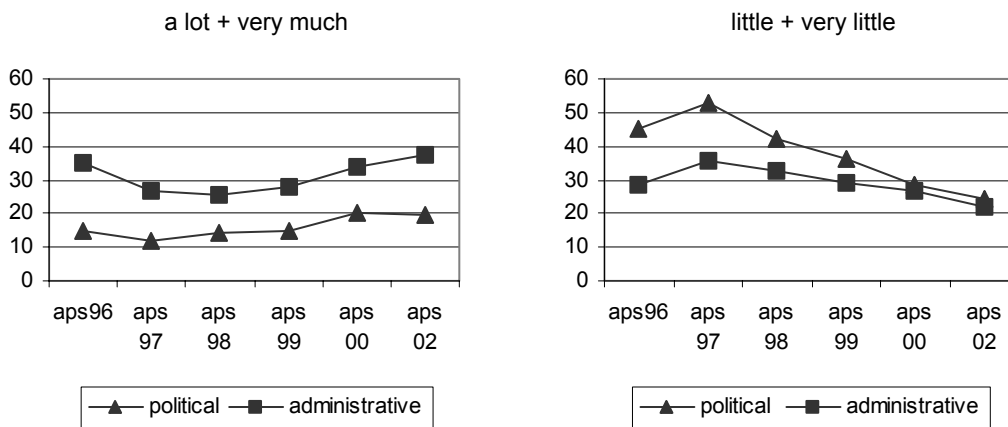
As the APS data is one of the few which allows us to map some basic trends, we have created two trust indicators, one for trust in political institutions and one for trust in administrative institutions. The

³⁹ In 1996, *police and gendarmerie* was not included in the list of institutions, yet *municipal police* was. In 1996, 50% trusted the municipal police, while in 1997 26% trusted the police and gendarmerie. This sharp decline is probably not only due to the Dutroux scandal, but also to the change in wording. Also, in 1996 there was an item on trust in schools. Later this was replaced by the educational system ('onderwijs').

⁴⁰ Note that for *administration*, *de overheidsadministratie* was used in 1999, and *de administratie* in 1995. See also Figure 39, p. 8-174.

first category contains the Flemish parliament, government and political parties, the Belgian parliament and government, and the Walloon political parties⁴¹. The second category is composed of the Flemish administration, the municipal administration, the police and Gendarmerie, and the courts.

Figure 20: Trust in political and administrative institutions, evolutions



Source: APS surveys, 1996-2002

When we compare the number of people expressing much or very much trust, we see similar tendencies for administrative and political institutions, with trust in administrative institutions higher than that in political ones. When, however, we look at the number of respondents that indicate having little or very little trust, we see that the number of people having little trust decreases faster for the political institutions. The main evolution therefore seems to be one of decreasing distrust in political institutions.

An alternative approach to interpreting trends and evolutions could be to rely on perceived evolutions rather than by comparing year-to-year data. In our WADO survey, a number of questions were included about evolutions in the functioning and image of the public administration. The general tendency is that citizens think the public administration now functions better than five years ago, and that the public administration's image did not really deteriorate over the past few years.

⁴¹ We did not include *the King* in the political indicator, as trust in the King will probably also contain elements related to the desirability of having a monarchy.

Figure 21: Public administration works better now as compared to 5 years ago

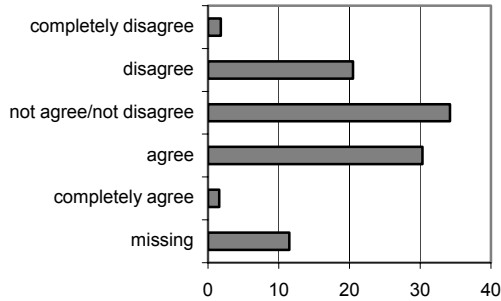
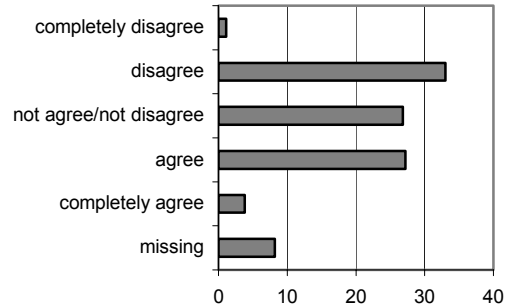


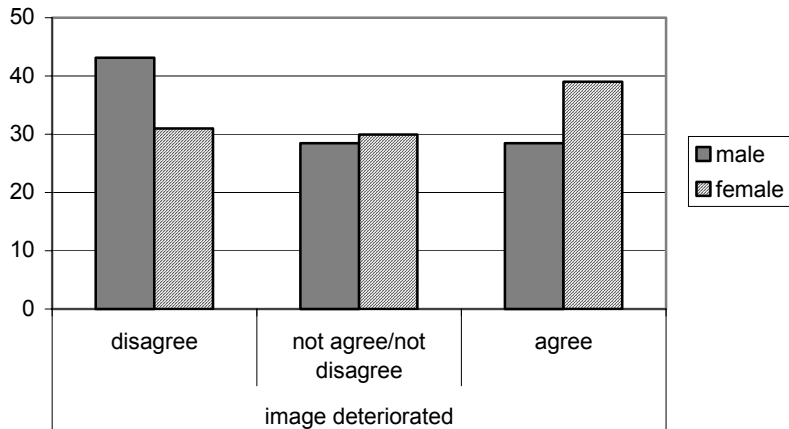
Figure 22: The image of our public administration has deteriorated considerably



Source: WADO F2F, 2002

Older respondents tend to think the administration's image has deteriorated. The higher educated disagree that the image of the public administration would have deteriorated, but we do not find a relationship between level of education and opinions on whether the administration now works better than 5 years ago. The relationship between *image has deteriorated* and *administration works better now* is modest ($r = -.392$). Some 7% of the respondents think that the administration works better now, but at the same time indicate its image has deteriorated. Men and women have a different opinion on the evolutions in the administration's image: women tend to think that the image has deteriorated, while men think the image has grown more positive ($\chi^2 = 20.79$, $df = 4$, $p = .000$).

Figure 23: Evolution in the image of the public administration according to sex



Source: WADO F2F 2002

There seem to be some indications that citizens' perception of the public administration has grown to be more positive over the past years. This should not entirely come as a surprise, as in this period many administrative reform projects have been launched (see 4.1). Nevertheless, some of the statistics presented here suggest that this progress is far from undisputed. Absence of long-term data makes conclusions difficult. We will show in subsequent chapters that measures of perceived progress or regress in the administration's image of perceived functioning are not particularly useful in our attempts to establish trends, as these measures tend to be heavily influenced by *current* opinions.

4.7 THE PROFILE OF THE DISSATISFIED CITIZEN

Socio-demographic profile

In the previous sections, we have mapped levels of trust in government and attitudes towards the public administration. All of the statistics referred to the general population. It is unlikely that trust and distrust are evenly spread over the population. It is to be expected that certain groups in the population will display higher or lower levels of trust in government and satisfaction with public services than do other groups. There are numerous theoretical reasons why this could be the case (Rose and Pettersen, 2000). Much of the empirical studies about trust in government and attitudes towards the public administration, however, show that socio-demographic factors are not terribly helpful in explaining trust. Socio-demographic variables often drop from explanatory models at an early stage (Marlowe, 2003: 18), or their effects are at best weak and mixed (Rose and Pettersen, 2000: 34). Socio-demographics in most cases are of limited explanatory value in models on trust in government (Jacobs, Janssens, and Swyngedouw, 2003). Newton and Norris (1999) even suggest that trust could be a personality trait on its own. Trust then is an affective orientation, which makes there are trusters and cynics.

Furthermore, analysis is complicated because a single survey does not really allow distinguishing permanent socio-demographic features from cohort effects. The older generation, born before or during the war, had other experiences than younger generations. From the 70s on, generation X, which seems to have a more negative attitude, came to take an important position in society, since older people are dying and declining birth rates limit the number of young people (Brehm and Rahn, 1997).

Socio-economic status seems to have a rather weak and changing influence on trust, and except for income and educational level, most socio-demographic variables have little explanatory power (Citrin and Green, 1996). The impact of education could perhaps be explained by the fact that better education helps to replace cynicism by political realism. However, there is no reason why political realism would lead to more positive evaluations, and not to more negative ones (Rose and Pettersen, 2000). Steen found that the higher educated have less trust in institutions, but that there is no effect of education on trust in the leaders of these institutions (Steen, 1996). This is surprising, since it are those with a lower education that trust less in most cases. According to Elchardus and Smits (2001), this is one of the challenges for future research on trust in government: most research provided answers for the low levels of trust among the lower educated (e.g. less political sophistication, different media use, socio-economic situation...), but these theories are not able to provide answers for the distrust among the *higher* educated. In Turkey, those with a higher education seem to have more trust, while in Lithuania they have less trust (Newton, 1999). The relationship between education and trust therefore is not direct or one-dimensional. Since distrust seems to originate in all segments of the population, the recovery of trust will have to happen in exactly the same way (Citrin and Green, 1996).

Newton (1999) found that *social* trust is highest with those who have a central position in society, which leads him to conclude that trust is a prerogative of winners. He, however, also found that *political* trust is randomly distributed in society, and that it mainly correlates with political variables. Other observations show a strong relationship between the strength of religious ideological/philosophical orientations and trust: religious people trust more (Elchardus and Smits, 2001).

The evidence is scattered and the findings are contradictory. This requires us to test the validity of socio-demographic variables in explaining trust, and, if we do not find relevant relations, to reject this explanatory path. Apart from the classic socio-demographic characteristics, we will also test a number of personal value orientations. This latter aspect requires a careful approach. In the literature on discontent, optimism & pessimism, feelings of insecurity etc., we find that many evaluative attitudes are interrelated. Brehm and Rahn (1997) for instance found that happiness with one's own life tends to be transferred onto evaluations of institutions. We therefore try to exclude items similar to trust attitudes (feelings of insecurity, ethnocentrism, ...) with an evaluative content from the analysis lest the analysis be tainted by near-tautologies. Even the inclusion of the variable on the evolution of one's standard of living as compared to the one five years ago is disputable, as it may be that this evaluation depends on one's current mood.

Apart from the classic socio-demographics, we use five different personal value orientations: individualism, traditionalism/authoritarianism, discomfort/uprootedness/alienation, postmodernism, and uncertainty avoidance. These variables are based on eighteen items in our survey, and build on Swyngedouw's and Billiet's (2002) research. Even though these 18 items can be summarised into the five groups, it remains difficult to give these groups an encompassing name that covers all of their composing elements. The variable *I always do what I want, even when this runs counter to all conventions*, will not be used in the analysis, since it only has a very weak factor loading, and can therefore not clearly and unambiguously be attributed to one of the five factors. It is related to both individualism and traditionalism

Table 12: Personal value orientations

Individualism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'Humanity', brotherhood' and 'solidarity' are all nonsense. Everybody has to take care of himself or herself first and defend their own interests. ▪ People should always pursue their personal pleasure, and shouldn't think too much about others. ▪ It is in the first place important to aspire after a prominent position for oneself. ▪ Those who have many skills can use this in the first place to become better themselves.
Traditionalism/authoritarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I think that customs and habits are there to be observed. ▪ Customs and habits should remain unchanged as much as possible. ▪ Obedience and respect for authority are the two most important virtues children have to learn. ▪ Most of our social problems would be solved, if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked people. ▪ What we need is strong leaders who tell us what to do.
Discomfort, uprootedness, alienation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nowadays everything is changing so fast that I don't know how to behave anymore. ▪ We're confronted with so much information, that in the end we don't understand anything anymore. ▪ It seems as if there are no simple solutions to many social problems. ▪ Making choices is becoming increasingly difficult nowadays.
Postmodernism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is good and evil fully depends upon the circumstances at the time. ▪ People who insist upon a yes or no answer just don't know how complicated things really are ▪ Progress in society is only possible by means of societal conflicts

- Uncertainty avoidance
- I always want a clear reason for every decision.
 - If I have a problem I cannot solve, I feel bad.

In addition, we test for the impact of media use, news media more specifically. For more information on the variables, see Appendix 2. We will test the impact of socio-demographic variables on a number of dependent variables: satisfaction with the functioning of public services, trust in government, citizens' image of civil servants, and citizens' perceptions of evolutions in the functioning of the public administration.

Table 13: Socio-demographic determinants for 'trust in government' and 'satisfaction with the functioning of public services' (ordinal regression)

	trust in government			satisfaction with the functioning of public services		
	Estimate	Std. Error	Sig.	Estimate	Std. Error	Sig.
sex	.047	.127	.711	-.040	.128	.752
education	.025	.054	.649	-.118	.055	.032*
age	-.031	.029	.283	-.015	.029	.614
urbanisation of domicile	-.045	.025	.072	-.009	.025	.716
respondent is civil servant	.158	.197	.422	-.055	.199	.781
self-employed	-.078	.226	.731	-.570	.229	.013*
free profession	-.636	.443	.151	-.755	.436	.083
labourer	-.077	.192	.688	-.317	.195	.104
management employee	.040	.112	.725	.112	.115	.333
student	.140	.194	.471	.058	.197	.769
retired	.263	.309	.394	.388	.312	.214
housewife/-man	.056	.213	.793	-.122	.217	.575
unemployed	-.124	.237	.602	-.140	.242	.563
irregular churchgoing	-.288	.277	.299	-.286	.276	.299
regular churchgoing	.181	.222	.414	.856	.228	.000**
marginal Catholic	.288	.223	.197	.775	.230	.001**
not religious	-.067	.149	.652	.167	.149	.261
free-thinking	-.151	.188	.421	.169	.189	.370
traditionalism/authoritarianism	-.097	.236	.681	.180	.236	.445
individualism	.095	.069	.167	.236	.070	.001**
postmodernism	-.110	.066	.094	-.049	.066	.460
uncertainty avoidance	.112	.070	.107	.015	.070	.827
discomfort	-.124	.063	.050	-.104	.064	.103
watching TV news freq.	-.365	.074	.000**	-.252	.074	.001**
listening to radio news freq.	-.045	.057	.429	.066	.057	.249
reading newspaper freq.	.037	.027	.166	.015	.027	.582
	.058	.026	.026*	.028	.027	.286
	R ² =.089			R ² =.073		

Source: WADO F2F 2002

A first general finding from our analysis is that the explanatory value of the models is, as expected, very low. Almost none of these variables help us to explain trust in government, satisfaction with the functioning of public services, and, as we will see below, citizens' evaluation of progress made in the

functioning of the public administration. Rising discomfort coincides with declining trust and satisfaction. This is the only truly significant variable in the trust in government model, which suggest that a great deal of the roots of feeling of distrust may be found in society rather than in government. Citizens who distrust government don't know how to behave anymore, because everything is changing so fast. They fear not understanding anything anymore because they are confronted with so much information. They feel it seems as if there are no simple solutions to many social problems, and they think that making choices is becoming increasingly difficult nowadays. The only other relevant related variable, be it modest, is the newspaper-reading frequency: those who read newspapers daily trust government more than those who never read them.

Overall, explained variance for satisfaction with the functioning of public services is comparable to that for trust in government, but more socio-demographics are found to be relevant. Being self-employed results in considerably lower levels of satisfaction, as does having a higher education, be it that the latter variable is only border significant. By far the most important determinant is religion: being Christian or Catholic and visiting church at least weekly, several times a month or monthly, results in a higher satisfaction with the functioning of public services. Not surprisingly, higher levels of traditionalism and authoritarianism also correlate with higher satisfaction.

Table 14: Socio-demographic determinants for image of civil servants and public administration works better now as compared to 5 years ago (ordinal regression)

	<i>public administration works better now as compared to 5 years ago</i>			<i>image of civil servant</i>		
	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
sex	.101	.130	.439	-.282	.132	.033*
education	.013	.056	.816	-.346	.057	.000**
age	.030	.030	.315	.015	.030	.612
urbanisation of domicile	-.013	.026	.618	.035	.026	.177
respondent is civil servant	.160	.203	.430	1,364	.212	.000**
self-employed	.142	.235	.545	-.382	.234	.102
free profession	-.354	.432	.413	-.300	.438	.494
labourer	-.096	.201	.634	-.073	.204	.722
management employee	.061	.115	.596	-.073	.120	.545
student	.009	.200	.966	-.175	.201	.383
retired	.419	.325	.197	.434	.313	.165
housewife/-man	-.437	.221	.048*	-.020	.224	.928
unemployed	-.419	.247	.090	-.014	.250	.955
irregular churchgoing	-.119	.278	.669	.062	.288	.829
regular churchgoing	.265	.228	.246	.339	.235	.149
marginal Catholic	-.110	.233	.637	.429	.240	.074
not religious	-.001	.153	.997	.165	.154	.284
free-thinking	.081	.193	.674	.046	.191	.811
traditionalism/authoritarianism	.356	.241	.140	.088	.238	.713
individualism	-.012	.071	.868	.170	.071	.016*
postmodernism	.012	.069	.862	.136	.069	.048*
uncertainty avoidance	.059	.074	.427	-.065	.074	.384
discomfort	.064	.066	.336	-.064	.066	.328
watching TV news freq.	-.172	.075	.022*	.033	.075	.657
listening to radio news freq.	.108	.059	.066	.013	.058	.830
reading newspaper freq.	.000	.028	.995	.029	.028	.308
	-.026	.027	.339	.012	.028	.670
			R ² =.036			R ² =.166

Source: WADO F2F 2002

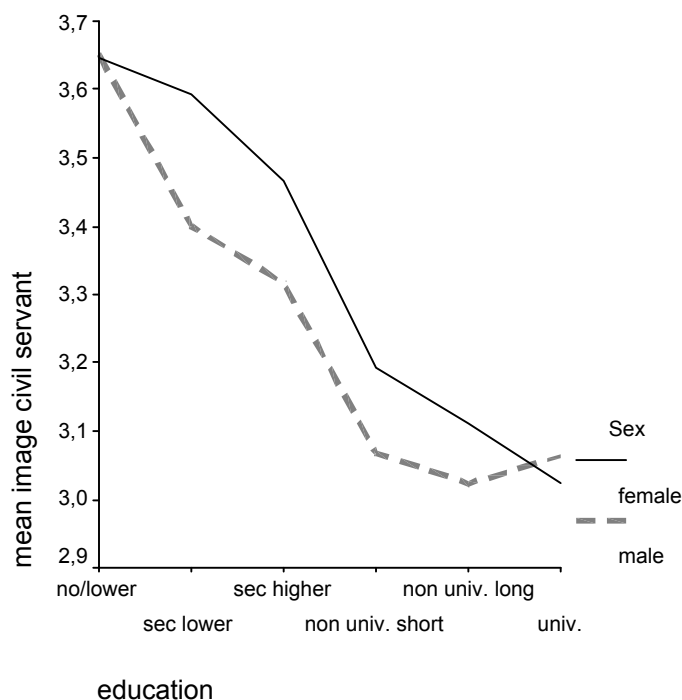
A similar situation emerges for evaluations of progress in the functioning of the public administration: *The public administration works better now as compared to 5 years ago* (agree/disagree scale). Again, feelings of discomfort emerge as an explanatory factor. Retired people tend to think that there has been no progress, but with a .048 significance we refrain from attributing this variable too much weight.

An entirely different picture comes into view when we take citizens' image of civil servants as dependent variable: discomfort drops from the model and is replaced by two other personal value orientations: traditionalism and individualism. These are not, however, strong determinants. Women and people with a lower education have a much more favourable image of civil servants: between half and two thirds of respondents with lower education have a positive image of civil servants, while this is just one quarter among those with university level training. Not surprising, but worth mentioning, is that people who work for the government have a much more favourable image of civil servants. This

obvious finding becomes intriguing when we see that being a civil servant or not does not seem to influence general satisfaction with the functioning of public services. The model has an R^2 of .166, which is considerably higher than in the other two models. This conjures up many questions that will, at least partially, receive an answer in 7.4.

The figure below presents the average image respondents have of civil servants, depending on sex and the level of education and sex (scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is very negative and 5 very positive).

Figure 24: Socio-demographic determinants of civil servants' image



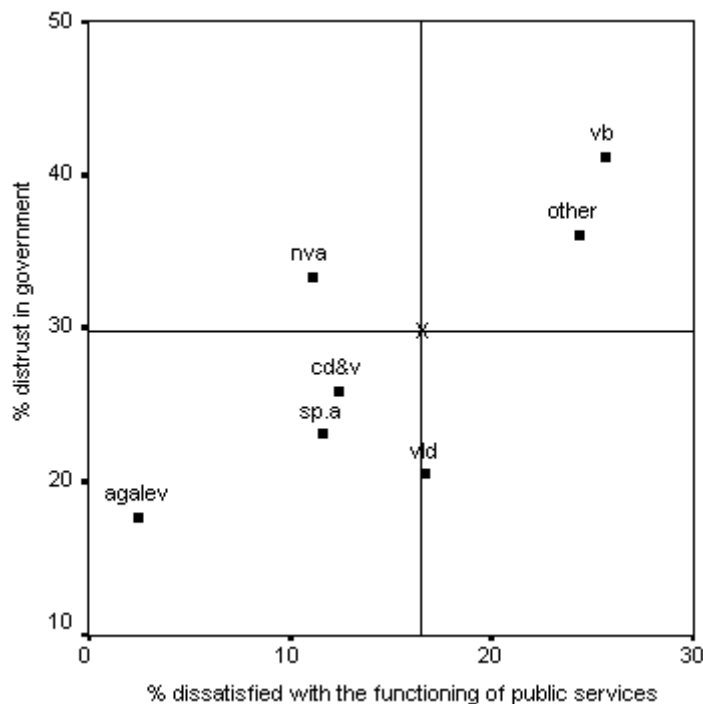
Source: WADO F2F 2002

Party-political and media-profiles

There exists a need among policy-makers to address these groups in the population with the highest levels of distrust and dissatisfaction. Socio-demographics were shown to not be very helpful in doing so. In this section, we will try to trace back the political parties that the distrusting groups are affiliated with, and the media they use (Kampen, Van de Walle, Maddens, and Bouckaert, 2004).

In Figure 25, the vertical axis shows the percentage of respondents that distrusts government, and on the horizontal axis the percentage that is dissatisfied with the functioning of public services. The X indicates the average for the entire sample, meaning that 29.7% of the sample distrusts government, and that 16.7% is dissatisfied with the functioning of public services. The electorates for the six main political parties in Flanders are plotted. This was determined by probing for the respondents' party preference would there be an election the next Sunday. This question resulted in 16.7% missing variables (refused to answer question, or answered *don't know yet*). See the glossary for an overview of parties and an explanation for the abbreviations. Some of the smaller parties were excluded from the analysis.

Figure 25: Distrust, dissatisfaction and party preference



Source: WADO F2F 2002

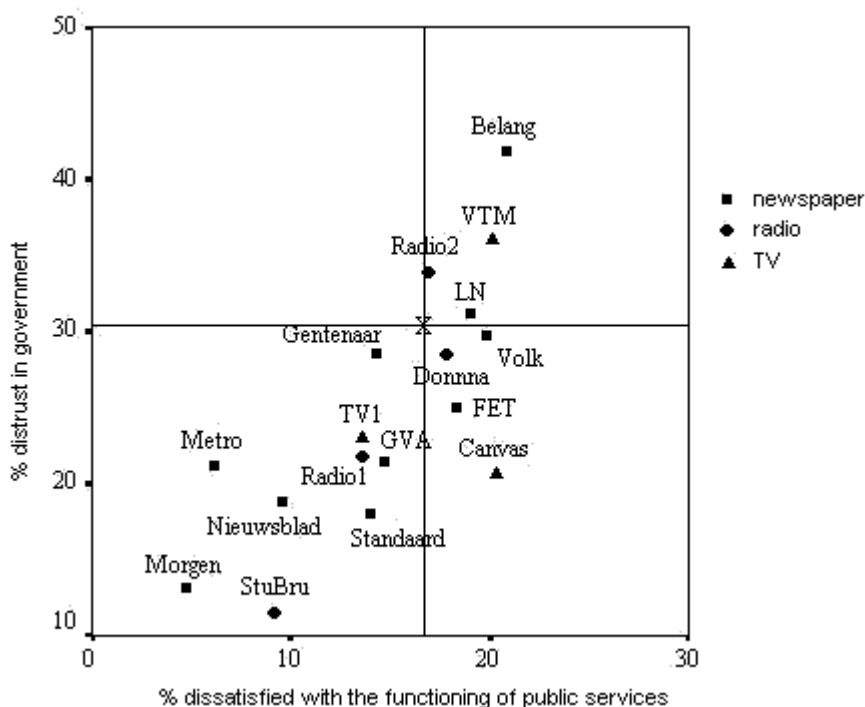
The figure shows that the Vlaams Blok (vb) electorate (far- or extreme right) is considerably more distrustful and dissatisfied than the average citizen. Those respondents who had indicated to vote for *another* party have a very similar profile. This is possibly explained by the fact that many extreme-right voters do not like to admit this to the interviewer in front of them. Instead, they opt for selecting *another party* when answering the question on voting intention. The position of the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) is also remarkable: this group is exceptional because it combines high levels of distrust in government with normal levels of satisfaction with public services. The N-VA voter thus has an outspoken distrustful profile. The green party AGALEV's voters seem to be both trusting and satisfied.

The two big parties, the Christian Democrats and Socialists, seem to have a comparable voter profile. Because of their share of the vote, this profile is near that of the general sample. Voters for VLD, the second largest party in our survey (2002), tend to be more dissatisfied with the functioning of the public services than could be derived from their trust-profile. This is not surprising, as VLD is one of the few parties that has some attention for administrative reform and administrative simplification, and because it was in government when the survey was organised. Also, we have seen that self-employed respondents have lower levels of satisfaction with public services, and the group of the self-employed has traditionally been one of the strongholds of this party (though this is changing).

As the distrustful and dissatisfied have no clear socio-demographic profile, reaching and convincing this group is a particularly difficult exercise for government. One possible approach would be to analyse media-use of the distrustful. It is important to note, however, that the distrustful and dissatisfied indicate not to trust *any* source of information (TV, radio, newspaper). Newspapers are especially untrustworthy to them. TV is the most trusted source of information.

In our survey, no questions were included about general media use, but only about the most frequently used channels for watching the TV news and listening to the radio news. The reading of newspapers was also included (multiple answers), and the frequency of use of all three media. In Figure 26, the percentage of distrusting or dissatisfied users is mapped for a number of TV channels, radio stations, and newspapers.

Figure 26: Distrust, dissatisfaction and media use



Source: WADO F2F 2002

Distrust and dissatisfaction are seen to increase simultaneously. The number of distrusting and dissatisfied is higher among commercial TV (*VTM*) viewers, *Radio 2* listeners and *Het Laatste Nieuws* and *Het Belang van Limburg* readers. All but the *Belang van Limburg* have an exclusively popular profile⁴². The extreme position of *Het Belang van Limburg* remains unexplained. It is interesting to notice the position of the *FET* newspaper and the *Canvas* TV station. Both are considered top quality media. What is remarkable is that their readers or viewers are less distrusting than the average citizen, but they are more dissatisfied with the functioning of public services. This suggests that a critical attitude towards services can actually be distinguished from a generalised negative attitude. The impact of education in the *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* model (the higher educated are less satisfied) may also be seen as an indication of the existence of *two types of dissatisfaction: negative attitudes towards public services as part of a general negative attitude towards government, and negative attitudes towards public services as a result of an unfavourable evaluation of the way these function.*

⁴² *Het Belang van Limburg* is a popular newspaper, but it has a strong regional profile (the province of Limburg), which means it also attracts readers that would otherwise not belong to the clientele of a popular newspaper.

4.8 CONCLUSION

Administrative reform has almost never been featured prominently on the Belgian political agenda, but administrative discontent was always present in the margin. Only from the mid 1980s on, citizens' satisfaction with services became a motive for reform. It is noteworthy that administrative reform often coincided with (calls for) political reform. In the 90s, the data shows a genuine *gap between citizens and government*, but trust seems to have recovered since. No data shows a permanent decline in trust, but declining voter turnout and a rise of the extreme right suggest something may be wrong. An important finding, however, is that citizens' attitudes towards the public services are not generally negative. Many citizens seem to be satisfied with their public services. Political institutions on the contrary are the ones that are distrusted. Still, explaining trust in government and satisfaction with public services by relying on socio-demographic variables does not bring us far. The absence of a consequent trend of declining trust and satisfaction, and the observation that many citizens are quite satisfied with their public services, challenges the most basic assumptions in the political discourse. A correct analysis of the problem should precede the suggested solutions of the problem.

In part II of this research, we explore one possible source of citizens' perception of the public sector. The (failing) performance of public services is often identified as a key reason for dissatisfaction with the public sector in general. We have just seen that it would be incorrect to take a widespread dissatisfaction for granted. In part II, we show how the perceptions of the performance of specific services may be theoretically related to the overall attitudes towards the public sector and government, and why we should look at perceptions and not performance *per se* in explaining this relation. Chapter 6 shows how perceptions of specific services may be aggregated into a perception of the public sector and government in general, and what the problems in doing so might be.

II. The impact of administrative performance

Chapter 5 THE UNEASY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE AND IMAGES OF GOVERNMENT

disaffection may occur not because of what each succeeding set of authorities is supposed to have done but simply because they are perceived to be authorities - and authorities are no longer thought worthy of trust.
(David Easton, *A re-assessment of the concept of political support*, 1975)

Failing administrative performance is often identified as a key aspect in explaining citizens' attitudes towards the public sector and government. The relationship is, however, not as straightforward as one may think. The centrality of bureaucratic encounters is probably overemphasised, and explanatory frameworks fail to look beyond the administration itself and ignore many of the findings of earlier research on trust in government in political sociology. While a direct causal relationship between administrative performance and citizens' trust in government is taken for granted, this is not obvious. Far more relations between performance and trust can be imagined.

The implicit model behind this reasoning, the micro-performance model, is outlined, and subsequently deconstructed. First, we look at the objects of the attitude-formation: how to determine which, if any, institutions or specific services contribute to the overall evaluation of the public sector, and subsequently government. Second, closer inspection is made of the causal relations in the model. These aspects will be analysed in detail in Chapter 1 and part III respectively. A crucial aspect in this chapter will be how the performance of individual institutions has to be aggregated into *government performance*, and to the exact place and weight of the public administration in citizens' conception of government (Chapter 1).

5.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF BUREAUCRATIC ENCOUNTERS

Bureaucratic encounters are popular as explanations for perceptions of administrative performance. It is not hard to motivate the need for reform, as many examples offer well-substantiated reasons for immediate and solid reform: citizen A in village X has been waiting for a building permit for 12 months now, administration Y has lost citizen B's application and now that citizen has to wait

months longer to receive an unemployment benefit, etc. It is easy to find attractive examples and horror-stories to support claims or viewpoints about the administration. Much of the modernisation literature takes a caricature of the bureaucracy as a starting point, and subsequently attacks this image with new ideas. We cannot, however, use special cases and caricatures as measures of government performance. Focusing on encounters in reform is also a fast way to get credit. Hence the disproportionate attention for administrative simplification and e-government front offices in the political administrative reform debate.

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapters, government performance and citizens' trust in government are often placed in a causal relationship. Indeed, "the global reform movement is a symptom of -and a reaction to- the decline of public confidence in governmental institutions and performance" (Kettl, 2000: 57). In the classic approach to the performance-trust relation, distrust follows from government's failure to deliver what citizens expect. (Dis)trust is the result of a confrontation between citizens' expectations and government's actual performance (Pharr and Putnam, 2000: 21). Miller and Listhaug's took this classic approach as their basic thesis: "failure of government performance may erode confidence in government institutions" (1999: 206).

Relating failing government performance and declining trust suggests a straightforward relationship between both aspects, while this is not necessarily the case. Perceptions of government performance do not necessarily correspond to actual performance, performance consists of several aspects, and rising demands may let performance increases pass unnoticed. Reliance on citizens' perceptions implies that the relationship between performance and perceptions of performance is not a direct one: "it might take long and sustained government improvement to register with citizens and to be reflected in higher confidence in government" [...] "Public confidence is a lagging indicator of reform" (Kettl, 2000: 56-57). It is hard to define what good performance versus bad performance is, and how pervasive performance change should be to allow for a switch from bad to good performance. Thresholds for defining something as 'good performance' may differ. The performance approach to trust in government seems to regard performance as an easy-to-measure and unchanging set of characteristics of an organisation. Organisations have either good or bad performance. A government performs good or bad.

Measuring government performance or administrative performance in a comparative way is not an easy thing to do. This difficulty has resulted in an expanding list of domains that are used for mapping performance. It is difficult to determine what belongs to government performance and what does not. Many changes in society may be related to government actions, but it often remains unclear whether certain actions have actually been relevant in instigating those changes. Government performance at the macro-level or in very specific areas is taken as the object of study. Three measures of government performance are often used: GDP, short-term changes in inflation and unemployment, and government budget deficit. Miller and Listhaug (1999) gave medical care, unemployment insurance and pension benefits as examples. Huseby (2000) used public health care, pensions and unemployment benefits. Bok (1997) focused on possible broad societal outcomes of government interventions, such as prosperity, quality of life, equal opportunities, personal security and values; but he faced considerable problems in actually mapping the *overall* performance of the US government over the years (Bok, 2001). Despite the casual reference to government services and administrations in many introductions to the subject (e.g., distrust as a result of cumbersome bureaucracy, unfriendly and lazy bureaucrats) we hardly ever find studies that take this administrative performance exactly as a measure for government performance.

Negative experiences of course meet with a wide response. Citizens use buses, the mail service and other public services quite frequently, but actual encounters with traditional administrations and *bureaucrats* remain rather limited for most, with the exception of those with the municipal administration. (Media-mediated) encounters with politicians and policy are much more substantial. How is it then possible for administrative encounters to have such a profound impact on general attitudes towards the administration and even government? “We think it very likely that public approval of bureaucracy has far more to do with the citizens’ broader assessments of the performance of public officials and affective attitudes about government than with specific experiences with public agencies per se.” (Webb Yackee and Lowery, 2003: 9). This also seems to be confirmed by citizens themselves: “Few people report that their views of government derive from personal experience with it; rather, such attitudes are informed by the media and politicians” (Nye, 1999: vi).

Notwithstanding the possible relationship between government performance and general attitudes towards government and the public administration, two observations stand out:

- 1) There is ample attention for performance theories, but these are not able to explain the trend of decreasing political support (Nye, Zelikow, and King, 1997).
- 2) Citizens combine a negative attitude towards the bureaucracy with respect for the public employees they interact with (Webb Yackee and Lowery, 2003: 1)

Bok observes that “The very fact that trust and confidence have dropped substantially in the past thirty years for almost all major institutions in our society suggests that something more far reaching than poor performance in Washington must be responsible” (1997: 56). He nevertheless goes on by explaining this (absence of a) link between performance and trust by referring to the interplay of expectations and performance and to errors in citizens’ perception due to absent or faulty information. Even though he suggests that other factors may be responsible for poor levels of trust, this does not mean he rejects the validity of a relationship between performance and trust. He is, however, correct in suggesting that something more far reaching must be responsible.

In political culture approaches to attitudes towards government, these attitudes are seen as rather static, as characteristics of a society, or as a result of the socialisation of citizens in dominant norms. Almond and Verba probably are the best known representatives of this approach (Almond and Verba, 1965). The political culture approach is for this reason (attitudes towards government as social characteristic) often rejected, as such an approach does not of course help to explain declining levels of trust.

Del Pino (forthcoming) has noticed that while public administration students tend to focus on the performance of the public sector to explain citizens’ attitudes towards government, they often do not give sufficient attention to political and social factors in their explanatory models. Political scientists, on the other hand tend to disregard the public administration in their explanations for trust in government. Public administration students far too often take it for granted citizens actually *have* an attitude about public services and the public administration.

Discussions about the exact relationship between bureaucratic encounters or the performance of specific services and overall perceptions of the public sector and government are in fact related to the discussions in the political sociology literature about specific and diffuse support. For instance how attitudes towards the incumbent head of state relate to overall trust in government or even satisfaction with democracy. It is generally recognised that if perceived outputs are not seen to match articulated

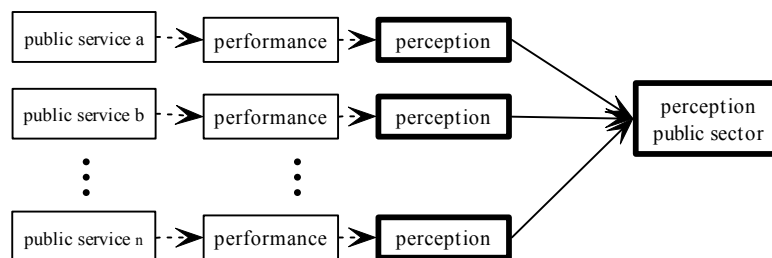
demands, specific support may suffer (Easton, 1965). It is unclear how specific and diffuse support are actually related, but many claim the two types of support can be distinguished empirically: Muller and Jukam (1977) relate the terms incumbent and political affect to effectiveness and legitimacy. A lack of trust in the incumbent is then a result of a lack of effectiveness, while this does not have an influence on the legitimacy of the democratic system. Tyler focused on courts and the police and states “[...] whether people feel that the police and courts are doing a good job does not influence whether they feel that those authorities ought to be obeyed, or whether they actually are voluntarily obeyed by those citizens” (2001: 231). This is partly because feelings of obligation or diffuse support develop during childhood socialization, while performance evaluations occur on an ongoing basis. This means that bad performance does not necessarily have an influence on diffuse support. A favourable evaluation of the performance of public services will not necessarily spill over into general trust in government. Easton already made these remarks, and stated that it is possible for people to “lose their trust in the ability of authorities to run the country yet not be prepared to deny the authorities in general the moral right to rule and to expect obedience to outputs” (1975). If there is a lack of support, generation of specific and diffuse support is necessary. Only the authorities can generate specific support, by distributing benefits (outputs) to the members of the system. *Any member or group in the system, however, can generate diffuse support*, special attention being given to opinion leaders and mass media (Easton, 1965; 1975). Therefore, actions taken by the authorities (i.e. outputs) only take a limited place in the repair of diffuse support. That is, if the hypothesis that diffuse support is in short supply in many Western countries is correct. Chapter 3 suggested this is not necessarily the case.

5.2 RELATING PERFORMANCE AND TRUST: MODELING OBJECTS AND CAUSALITY

The micro-performance approach

We have outlined the broad debates in the PA literature on citizens’ image of the public administration and the role of encounters in the formation of such an image. Subsequently, we have sketched the political discourse that relates the functioning of public services and the so-called crisis of confidence in Western countries. The implicit model behind this discourse, which we will call the *micro-performance hypothesis*, is actually quite simple.

Figure 27: The micro-performance approach



Public services delivering quality services will enjoy a positive perception among citizens. Specific public services delivering quality result in a well-performing public sector. The positive perceptions then accumulate into a positive perception of the public sector, stimulating higher trust in government.

Government is, in this approach, a summation of its constituting elements and has no separate identity: government = (police + courts + schools + parliament + ministry A + ministry B + ...). Negative experiences with public services will lead to a more negative evaluation of government in general. Positive experiences cumulate to a positive image of government in general.

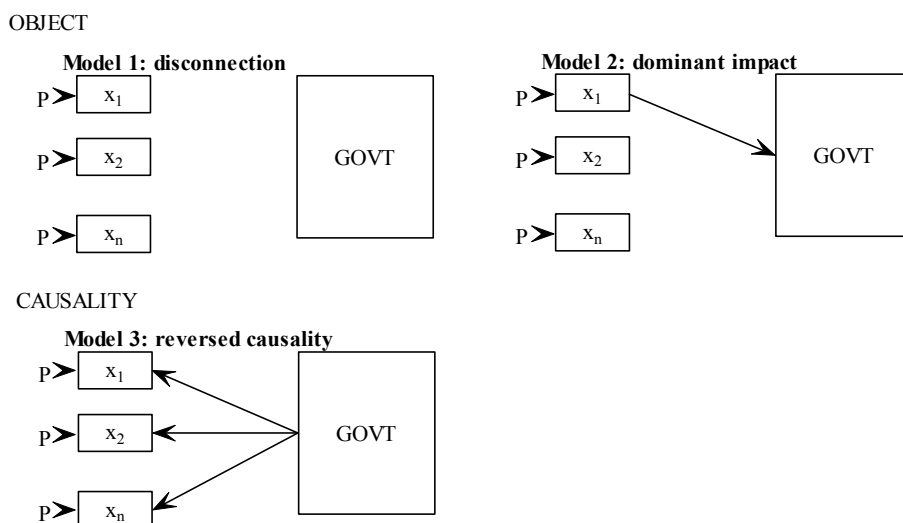
This congruence approach is also used for government policy: government makes policy in a number of domains: health, safety, traffic, environment, labour, etc. When the citizen evaluates any of these policies in a negative way, the appreciation of government will suffer. Not all policies are equally important to all citizens: older citizens will be concerned with the policy related to retirement benefits, the younger with employment policy. Some would prefer government to pursue an active macro-economic policy while others prefer a *laissez-faire* approach. We also know that citizens sometimes tend to disapprove of policy, just because they are not in favour of the party in power. Accumulating policies can therefore not be done without attributing citizen-specific weights. Aggregating preferences is a problem that has bothered economists and political scientists alike (Arrow, 1963). Why would this problem not exist for the relationship between evaluations of public services and of government in general? The main element in the performance-trust relationship requiring clarification is how the aggregation of perceptions of specific institutions into a perception of 'the' public sector or even government actually comes about.

To analyse the relationship between the functioning of public services, or better, citizens' perception of it, and citizens overall opinion on the public administration and government, we have to clarify both the biases and the gaps in this approach, as it contains a large number of shortcomings and offers at best only a partial explanation of the relationship.

Alternative models

We will deconstruct certain elements of the basic model that each explain part of the relationship between citizens' perception of public services, and their general attitude towards government (Van de Walle and Bouckaert, 2003). All models may be at work simultaneously when citizens are asked to express an opinion about government or the public administration. It seems there are strict preconditions for the micro-performance hypothesis to be valid. The first precondition states that specific public services should actually be an *object* of evaluation when citizens construct their opinion on the public administration, and that the public administration takes a certain place in citizens' mental map of government. The second precondition relates to *causal relations* in the formation of an opinion: it is not just the negative image of a specific service that makes citizens adjust their general attitude towards the public administration and government. A negative attitude towards government or the public sector in general may also reflect on attitudes about all what government does. The models consist of a number of units: at the left side, there are a number of public agencies, and at the right side, government in general.

Figure 28: Three models relating the evaluation of specific services and of government



Objects of evaluation

Determining what role the public administration takes in citizens' general evaluation of government requires that citizens' perceptions of the public administration be distinguished from perceptions of other institutions. For analysing citizens' trust in the public administration, it is necessary that there is for citizens a discernable institution of public administration, and that the public is able to identify and assess trust in that institution (Marlowe, 2003: footnote 1). Similarly, for determining the sources of citizens' attitude towards the public administration, it is necessary that we know what specific public services citizens use of for formulating their opinion.

There may exist a disconnection between evaluations of certain services and evaluations of government, because the service is not perceived as a government service. If a public organisation is not perceived as such, quality and performance improvement efforts will do little to improve trust in government. We will discuss this issue more in detail when dealing with model 1. An alternative is what we call *dominant impact*: government should not be regarded as just a summation of all its constituting parts (agencies, institutions), but instead it could be one or more core institutions that determine citizens' overall image of government.

Model 1: Disconnection

Dramatic performance of a certain public service does not necessarily result in negative attitudes towards government, nor does impeccable performance lead to positive attitudes. For perceptions of a specific public service to have an influence on citizens' image of government, this service should be seen as a part of government. There are a number of reasons why the performance of certain services and agencies will not have an impact on overall evaluations of government. The fact that not all services are actually used by all citizens is insufficient as an argument here, as we have seen that citizens do have opinions on services they do not use (see 6.1).

Perceived responsibility

When citizens use a service, they are not always aware government provides for this service, or, they perceive a service as government while in fact it is not. *Perceived* status, and not *real* status is the key word. This confusion is especially relevant in sectors where government and the private sector or the non-profits cooperate, such as health and education. Defining what is a government service is difficult as different levels of government involvement may be used as criteria for deciding: does government execute, regulate or control. Citizens' perceptions of government may be influenced by services government is actually not or hardly involved in. Comparing data on citizen perceptions of government requires that citizens use a comparable concept of government. It is not always clear what people see as *government* or as public services. Are schools part of government? Is the post-office? The railways? Research by the European Commission in its Continuous Tracking Survey showed a number of important differences between European countries (Direction Générale "Information, communication, culture, audiovisuel", 1997). Differences in the judgement of telecommunications, radio and television or public transport as being public services can be explained by a different history of privatisation, political influence and the structure of the market. What is surprising, however, is that there are -be it small- cross-country differences between judgements of police, justice etc. as public services.

Research on what citizens see as government is important to discover what kind of agencies are considered as part of government, and can thus be supposed to have an influence on the perceptions of government. The public has increasing problems distinguishing between the public and private sector (Dinsdale and Marson, 1999). Therefore, a lot of *errors of attribution* therefore occur (Hoogland DeHoog, Lowery, and Lyons, 1990; Swindell and Kelly, 2000).

If a large part of a population does not consider e.g. the post office or railways as a public service one could conclude that the evaluation of the functioning of and the general attitude towards this post-office does not have an influence on the perception of government in general, though very often one would find a relationship.

Attribution of responsibilities

Perceiving a certain government agency as part of government is one thing, attributing its bad performance to government another, even though both are not easy to distinguish. An example where this is not always the case could for instance be the Central Bank: if economic prospects are bad, is this then due to the performance of this Central Bank or to external factors? Uslaner (1999) finds a relationship between the state of the economy and trust in government, but only when respondents thought government could actually exert influence on the state of the economy. If citizens do not hold government responsible for something, it is unlikely this will influence evaluations. We do see however that citizens hold government responsible for quality of life and numerous economic and social concerns (Glaser and Denhardt, 1997). Lipset and Schneider (1983a) found a relationship between budget deficit and confidence, and found that citizens relate budget deficit to political performance, and do not consider it as an effect of the general economic conditions. Comparable research has been done by Anderson (1995) who claims that levels of inflation and unemployment will only influence trust in government if government is considered able to influence these. Variations in trust across countries and over time are often explained by referring to variations in unemployment rates, economic growth,

inflation, the stability of governments etc. (Kuechler, 1991; Kornberg and Clarke, 1994; Anderson, 1995; Miller and Listhaug, 1999; Newton and Norris, 1999; Huseby, 2000).

According to Huseby (2000), this performance hypothesis is only valid when applied to issues on which there is a consensus that government should perform them, and people should see them as an important and not just as a secondary task of government. On the other hand, government could also be blamed not for delivering substandard services, but for not delivering a certain service when citizens think it should, or for delivering it when citizens don't agree this should be a government task. Resistance against big government therefore could for instance motivate evaluation of a certain service, or dissatisfaction may be due to the failure of government to have a policy on a certain issue. The new politics hypothesis states that new value orientations create new or other societal demands government does not yet respond to (Inglehart, 1990). Post materialists do not want less government, but want government to devote attention to other priorities (Dahrendorf, 1994; Borre, 2000). There could be a policy distance between citizens' demands and government's offerings. Dissatisfaction is then a result of disagreement with general policy or ideology. Perceived policy distance is not always an evaluation of the policy as a whole, or of the ideological leanings of the parties in power. Instead, this evaluation can be a factor of a limited number of critical policy issues that determine the attitude towards government. Holmberg (1999) refers to the Swedish membership of the EU and immigrant policies as critical issues. Borre (2000) observed a distance between a cosmopolitan political elite and a nationalist/isolationist mass in Denmark on a number of critical issues such as EU, NATO, immigration, asylum seekers etc. This means that on issues having to do with these values, there will be a considerable amount of disagreement, and it explains why people can feel alienated *within* their own party.

Citizens don't look at services

An extreme consequence of the disconnection model we discussed so far could be that perhaps citizens just don't look at public services at all when evaluating government. Policy or political bodies may take a much more important place. Citizens' evaluation may even be unrelated to government, but based on societal elements. A survey in the UK asked citizens which organisations they considered to be public services. Some 55 % spontaneously mentioned Council services, 51% public transport, 29 % police, while only 13% spontaneously mentioned central government (Public Management Foundation, 1996). This could mean central government is conceptualised in political terms and not so much in administrative ones.

Model 2: Dominant impact

Whereas in the previous model it was suggested that not all public services actually influence citizens' image of the public administration or government in general, it is suggested here that certain services are more important than other in the formation of a general opinion. Weights given to the different objects of reference are not equal. Certain services will take a central place in citizens' concept map of government, while others will only take a marginal role.

In the United States for example, the President is sometimes seen as government in person, and this will have an influence on the image of government in general (Citrin and Green, 1996). Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, in their book *Congress as Public Enemy* (1995), state that it is Congress that determines the (negative) attitude towards government in the USA because of its visibility. A conceptualisation of

the commonly made general semantic connections in the public mind between the various parts of the national government showed members of Congress as part of the (pejorative) *Washington system*, while the president, and certainly the members of the Supreme Court, leaned towards the *constitutional system*. A similar point is made in Canadian research: feelings about parliament and assessments of MPs have significant effect on levels of support for the national political community and regime, because parliament is the most salient and dramatic symbol of the representative character of politics (Clarke et al., 1984). Certain parts of government seem to take a more prominent place in people's mind, but as the American examples show; it seems difficult to attribute the entire attitude/image to the effect of one institution.

Keywords in this dominant impact model are visibility, events, and scandals. Relying upon this model could make research difficult, since it could happen that the object of study (i.e. what do citizens see as government) is changing *during* the research. This model allows for bringing in a wide range of existing research on the impact of scandals on political trust. The main question is why certain events become widely publicised, and are thus supposed to have an influence. This is not just a passive approach. It also has importance for government communication initiatives: what issues does crisis management have to focus on and how can it be arranged so that certain government activities, e.g. major reforms or quality initiatives are actually promoted to *dominant impacts*?

A dominant impact of a single institution or agency or of a small group of institutions/agencies on trust in government is not necessarily permanent. A number of factors determine which dominant institution can exist. There are cultural and symbolic factors, such as the role of parliament in transition countries, which symbolise democracy, and we could refer to the role of strong leaders symbolising the nation, to the role of the army in periods of war, etc. Changes over time can occur due to certain events. In Belgium, a number of scandals suddenly made the court system and the food safety agencies dominant bodies in the perception of government, whereas this impact (certainly in the case of the food safety agencies) was much lower in the past. In the US, citizens' attitudes towards public administration became much more positive because of the events on the 11th of September. It can be expected that in a period of scandals, the moral integrity of politicians becomes important as a factor for constituting one's attitude towards government.

Which factors, agencies or even policies become dominant is often a matter of (conscious or unconscious) choice. Beck (1992) gives the example of the commotion on (small-risk) nuclear plants, while traffic accidents have a bigger impact on society. The latter has not been accepted as a major problem. A malfunctioning environmental protection agency will probably not take an important place in the assessment of government when the police and justice system are unfair. Similarly, participation in decision-making only becomes important once there is security and material safety. Another question is whether it are the institutions as such which have an impact, or that these just symbolise criteria used for judging government. In certain periods or areas, more or less importance is given to efficiency, legitimacy, participation etc. When the pendulum swings to participation, perhaps parliament weighs stronger, while the administration or strong leaders weigh stronger when importance is given to efficiency. The same could hold for process or output orientations in performance evaluations.

The dominant impact model can be approached at two different levels: first, what specific public services, agencies or functions determine citizens' image of the public administration? Are certain *high impact agencies* at the core of this mental map, or do traditional paper-shuffling entities determine citizens overall image of the bureaucracy, neglecting most public services near at hand? Second, what

is the exact place of the public administration in citizens' perception of government? Does it matter, or is this perception entirely dominated by politics?

Causal relations in the formation of an opinion

The main dispute in the study of citizens' perceptions of public services relates to whether these perceptions reflect an actual experienced performance or whether these perceptions are steered by the general attitude towards government. Services may be evaluated negatively, not because of the way in which they function, but because they are perceived as being part of government. There may exist a generalised negative attitude towards government that makes that all actions of government are evaluated in a negative way, just because they are government actions. This can also have positive effects on evaluations of services. This would for instance be the case in a state where a strong national identity is fostered, and where as a result, none of the state-related agencies can do wrong in the citizens' eyes.

Causality is thus reversed: perceptions of government in general influence perceptions of its constituting public services, and not the other way round. We will describe some of the characteristics of such a process, and will also show that the direction of this causality is context-specific.

Model 3: Reverse causality

Are citizens' perceptions of public services accumulated into a general image of government, or are attitudes towards specific services influenced by attitudes towards government in general? Huseby tried to relate government performance and political support, and found that:

"the survey data on the relationship between evaluations of government performance and political support is incapable of establishing the direction of causality. It is uncertain whether citizens give negative responses to questions on government performance because they do not trust the government, or if they loose faith in government because they evaluate the economic performance as poor" (Huseby, 2000).

There are many indications that citizens generalise when expressing opinions. The main question is whether the attitude towards government is a generalised one or whether it can be differentiated, and, if it is generalised, why and how does this influence perceptions of the agencies? A number of authors have noticed a process of *generalisation*. There seems to be a common factor behind the evaluations of all institutions that are related to *government* (Stipak, 1979; Herzog and Claunch, 1997; Loveless, 1997; Mishler and Rose, 1997; Norén, 2000; Uslaner, 2002). By generalisation we mean that the attitude towards government refers to one amorphous unity. In most surveys, respondents are shown a list of institutions and they are asked how much trust they have in each of the institutions separately (scale from 1-4, or 1-5). It turns out that not all of these trust opinions correlate perfectly, and that a number of clusters can be found in the list. Even though there are differences, trust in one institution often means trust in all institutions (Elchardus, 1998b). This would mean that there is just *one* perception of government, because people do not make conceptual distinctions. Glaser and Denhardt (1997) find that *government is government regardless of level*. Performance ratings of (US) *federal* and *state* government have a very strong influence on perceptions and evaluations of *local* government. This observation could lead to the conclusion that government is approached as if it were one

amorphous concept. There is, however, no agreement among researchers on this issue. The extreme viewpoint is Klingemann (1999) who states there is no generalisation, and that all depends on actual performance. If there are similarities, this is due to similar performance. The performance hypothesis also takes this as an implicit assumption. If on the other hand people see government as one amorphous entity, it seems improbable that specific experiences with specific services will have a strong impact on the perception of *government*. Another observation is that the evaluation of government in general differs from the summation of evaluations of all agencies separately (Princeton Survey Research Associates and Pew Charitable Trust, 2000). How government is differentiated or generalised is part of political culture: in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, the state as such does not exist as a legal entity, but rather as *government* and *government departments*. Continental European traditions on the other hand do not consider the authority of the state as divisible or bargainable (Peters, 2000).

Concerning satisfaction with urban services, Stipak (1977) states that there is generalisation, i.e. that specific attitudes are based on general evaluations, for instance due to a lack of information and knowledge and because political objects are in many cases rather impalpable. The Canadian Center for Management Development finds that indeed general attitudes towards government affect perceptions of service quality (Erin Research inc., 1998). Therefore, belief system differentiation (meaning that less general evaluations are used) should occur more when respondents are better educated and politically more informed⁴³. Most examples on the process of generalisation relate to political institutions and we will turn to this literature for further examples. Steen (1996) did research in the Baltic States and found there was more trust in newer institutions. Institutions producing a symbolic and /or diffuse output (church, army, press...) enjoyed more trust as compared to those with a very specific output. This is probably because it is easier for people to have clear criteria to judge specific outputs and because the actual outputs have deteriorated. Hetherington (1998) finds that it is the level of political trust in general that influences trust in the president, and not so much trust in the president that influences political trust in general. He finds the opposite is true for the relationship between trust in Congress and political trust in general. The process of generalisation, or better, differentiation, is part of socialisation, and requires a learning process (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Generalisation can therefore point at a lower level of political sophistication, or at a (deviant) form of socialisation, where people are taught to see government as a monolithic bloc without any differentiation, thus making it easier to attribute government extremely good or bad characteristics.

Negative attitudes towards government do not necessarily have an influence on the stability of the political system or the behaviour of the citizens. One possible explanation could therefore be that the attitudes of the citizens are not a result of a personal negative attitude vis-à-vis government, but because expressing a negative attitude towards government is a fashion, prejudice or cultural element. Citrin (1974) considers denigrating speech on politicians and institutions as ritualistic negativism, and does therefore not see any reason to be worried. He compared political distrust with the rhetoric used in a baseball game: everyone yells at the referee and accuses him of mistakes, while this rhetoric never threatens the game. Distrust, and not trust, then becomes the basic attitude towards

⁴³ Converse defines a belief system as "a configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence" (Converse, 1964: 207)

government, and there is certain social pressure to comply with this attitude. Sztompka (1996) speaks about a *culture of distrust*. Explanations for existing negative perceptions of government and the public administration are therefore no longer to be found in public administration or political science theories, but rather in very basic sociological theories, though these do not explain the origins of these images.

These examples show that performance does not always matter when such a *culture of distrust* comes into being. At that moment perceptions of government become theory- rather than data-driven (Augoustinos and Walker, 1996). Negative attitudes towards government seem to be self-supporting. Examples of good performance are just not noticed anymore. The examples illustrate why recent attention for government communication, public services marketing and for external accreditations and evaluations will not necessarily contribute to a more *objective* observation of government performance.

The impact of context

Relying on the reverse causality model would deny citizens the possibility to evaluate performance in an independent way. In most cases, a realistic, i.e. fact-driven, perception of the separate agencies remains possible. Customer surveys indeed show that citizens are able to assess the performance of public services in an objective way, without constantly referring to stereotypes. The impact of the government stereotype (e.g. culture of distrust) on service evaluations depends on the context in which this evaluation is made.

Goodsell (1994) found that citizens take a negative stand towards government as a whole, but when *government* becomes more specific in surveys, this negative attitude largely disappears. In fact, this symptom can be found practically everywhere: parents evaluate their children's school as good, but are sceptical about the educational system. People evaluate their own family and (working)community as good, but they still think these social institutions are disappearing (Loveless, 1997).

Allport's research on stereotypes states that people always choose groups and not persons as out-groups. The abstractness of groups allows for changing one's attitude towards certain persons in that group. When one does encounter a fact that is not reconcilable with the stereotype, it is not necessary to alter the stereotype, but one can just attribute it to a difference of the *specific* person or fact (Allport, 1958). People are very critical of government and its service delivery in everyday speech (e.g. gossip, discussions in pubs etc.), but this is not always reflected in trust- or customer satisfaction surveys. This suggests the presence of a social norm. These observations have important consequences for the measurement of performance evaluations. It seems that very broad and general surveys will return answers reflecting the existing stereotypes rather than evaluations of performance.

5.3 THE UNEASY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITIZENS' TRUST AND GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Government discourse takes it for granted that increased administrative performance is a prerequisite for citizens' trust in government, and one seems to be convinced that reform will restore citizens' trust in government. Whether citizens' main motivation for distrust is vested in the functioning of the public administration rather than in the political functioning of government or in societal developments remains an open question. Studying trust is complicated, as "it is both cause and effect"

(Ruscio, 1996: 473). Performance and trust may be intermingled in many ways. *Any* of the relations could in fact be considered as possible hypotheses for future research. We briefly discuss each of these relations.

- I. Public sector performance leads to citizens' trust.
- II. Citizens' perceptions of administrative performance differ from actual performance. These perceptions determine attitudes rather than actual performance.
- III. Performance leads to distrust. Focusing on certain aspects of performance often goes to the detriment of other values, and may thus create distrust. Increased performance monitoring is an expression of distrust.
- IV. High levels of trust in the administration increase performance as the need for monitoring and enforcement decreases. Trusted civil servants are also motivated civil servants.
- V. A certain degree of distrust can be creative by constantly reminding policymakers of the need for reforms
- VI. Positive or negative attitudes towards government and the administration may influence the threshold for evaluating the performance in a negative way

I. Performance leads to trust

A performing public sector may improve citizens' image of the public administration and consequently their trust in government. Distrust is then no more than a result of a gap between actual performance and expected performance (Orren, 1997). Patterns of distrust in Western countries do not seem to correspond to patterns of NPM reforms (Suleiman, 2003: 65). Bok compared the effectiveness of American government in the 1960s and the 1990s. He did so from an observation that trust and confidence have dropped. He found that performance has increased on a large number of domains but that in a few instances effectiveness has decreased. Effectiveness, however, is seen to lag behind that of other democracies (Bok, 1997). Barnes and Gill (2000) replicated Bok's study with New Zealand data. Their findings are rather similar: improved performance in most fields, yet a drop in public trust.

This mixed picture complicates relating government performance and government trust, as it is difficult to establish exactly what performance should be taken into account: overall absolute performance, absolute performance in certain specific fields, critical underperformance on a certain critical policy field (e.g., rising crime), comparative performance in relation to other countries, etc. Performance is multifaceted and may contain contradictory elements, and is therefore difficult to summarise into one single evaluation or indicator. The question whether citizens value process or outcome more highly is one of the main elements in this discussion (Tyler, 1990).

II. Perceptions of performance lead to trust

In the next chapter we will show that many of the performance indicators used in studies on trust in fact measure perceptions of performance. In concrete bureaucratic encounters it is rather easy for users to rate the performance. There are, however, many (central) government functions few citizens have contact with. Citizens will thus not always make a genuine evaluation, but base their performance assessment on image.

The rise of a quality industry and the development of highly proceduralised quality models does not necessarily stimulate organisations to deliver quality, but merely to comply with the formal requirements embedded in quality systems. Not performance *per se* but symbols of performance become central to the quality strategy. The focus shifts from being modern to appearing modern. We do not claim that symbolic quality has overtaken genuine quality in importance, but it may be clear that citizens' perception of quality depends to a large extent on these symbols (van Dooren and Van de Walle, 2004). Many recent developments in the quality literature focus on the external rather than on the internal elements of quality: account-giving, social reporting, externally publicised quality standards (e.g., ISO). Window-dressing may have a far greater impact on perceptions of performance than has actual performance. A focus on perceptions of performance overrates the exceptional and minimises the normal. Image, rather than performance according to a number of performance standards is important. Failure in one particular case has a stronger influence on perceptions than has a constantly high level of performance in the average case.

III. Performance leads to distrust

Contradictory aspects of performance

Political discourse presents the trust-performance relationship as if the two aspects are sides of the same coin. Strategies to achieve higher trust and performance may be quite different. Even a simple quest for *improving performance* raises the question: what performance? Excessive attention for efficiency may endanger values as equality and legality. Cigler (1990) speaks about a *paradox of professionalisation* when she observes that the public administration has professionalized tremendously, but that at the same time, bureaucracy's acceptance has decreased. Was all this performance improvement in vain? Can all citizens be satisfied at the same time? Is government actually able to perform in a way that pleases all and solve all problems that require a solution, or is this a too modernistic approach? Citizens do have a multitude of conflicting demands: they want to be better informed but want the flood of government information to stop. They want traffic safety but not speed bumps in front of their house. Cutting back paperwork is one of the key elements of public sector renewal and contributes to performance. Reduction of paperwork, however, conflicts with demands for accountability and transparency, and may hence lead to distrust (Dubnick, 2003: 15-6). Good governance does not automatically lead to trusting citizens, as the conditions needed for creating trust are not necessarily the same as those required for good governance. Whereas for instance clientelism may be not compatible with good governance, it could help citizens to trust their government and politicians (Bouckaert and Van de Walle, 2003).

Performance auditing as expression of distrust

Demands for increased audit and control are an expression of distrust (Power, 1999). The strong focus on audit and control mechanisms in NPM reforms actually institutionalises mistrust (Dubnick, 2003). Ill-designed audit systems may even actively contribute to distrust (Berg, forthcoming), and could eventually lead to a performance boycott by civil servants.

Reforms

According to the OECD, large-scale reforms of the administration coincided with a decline in trust in New Zealand, because the new transparency created new expectations, because scope and speed of the reforms made them unpopular, and because citizens did not understand the reforms due to a lack of communication (OECD, 2001f). Reforms create expectations and new demands and may therefore increase dissatisfaction (Aberbach and Rockman, 2000: 8). Long periods of reform may engender reform fatigue and therefore no longer result in increased trust. Increased transparency makes public sector deficiencies more visible to citizens. For Roberts, the corrosion of public trust may be a potential hidden cost of the public sector reforms. Performance improvements may corrode trust because centralisation leads to a concentration of executive authority. Contracting out leads to less openness and less means for control, making the public sector vulnerable to scandals. Attracting staff from the private sector may lead to a decline of public service ethics (Roberts, 1998). Reform may also fail, or be seen to have failed by certain groups. In the current tide, NPM reforms are often perceived as neo-liberal in nature, and thus rejected. Reform failure, however, has not received much attention thus far (Temmes, 2003).

IV. Trust leads to performance

Government performance is said to create trust in government, but high trust also facilitates performance. In the latter case trust is often studied at another level: not trust in government, but societal or interpersonal trust. The most seminal example of this approach is perhaps Putnam's: the performance of regional governments in Italy is facilitated by an infrastructure of civic communities (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti, 1993). Many studies on social capital consider citizens' trust as a determinant of the performance of society's institutions. La Porta et al. find that higher levels of interpersonal trust do not only increase government performance, but also the performance of large firms. An increase in trust raises judicial efficiency, anti-corruption ratings, bureaucratic quality and tax compliance, as well as the share of large firms in the total GDP. In other words, "trust facilitates all large-scale activities, not just those of government" (La Porta, Lopez-de Silanes, Shleifer, and Vishny, 1997: 335).

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). Tyler is concerned with the impact of citizen satisfaction on citizen behaviour. Satisfaction with government could be related to feelings of obligation towards government. These feelings of obligation can then influence the willingness to make sacrifices during a crisis (Tyler, 2001), to obey the law (Tyler, 1990), to vote, or to serve in the military (Levi, 1997). High levels of legitimacy increase elites' manoeuvring space (Kobi, 1998). Hetherington states that public distrust leads to a shrinking policy agenda, as policy leaders do not dare to lead on initiatives when trust is low, as they fear public resistance (Hetherington, 2001).

Absence of public trust on the other hand, when crossing a certain threshold, may lower civil servants' morale (Aberbach and Rockman, 2000: 21). Citizens approaching public services with very low expectations and acting accordingly in an assertive way, may be faced with a self-fulfilling prophecy, as his or her inimical attitude does not stimulate the front-level bureaucrat to deliver outstanding service. Satisfied customers motivate public sector staff, and having high satisfaction

ratings may strengthen an organisation in budget negotiations, budgets that allow them to perform even better. An organisation that is trusted becomes an employer of choice, and may this attract the best and the brightest what could eventually increase performance.

V. Trust leads to declining performance

Citizens' distrust may serve as an important stimulus for initiating reform. Pollitt & Bouckaert (2000) found that citizen pressure in the form of low trust and dissatisfaction is sometimes identified as a cause for public sector reforms. This motivation actually took a prominent place in the reform rhetoric. Citizens' acquiescence means absence of external pressure. Citizens' distrust and dissatisfaction cannot be mobilised to initiate reform. Not everyone is convinced about the role of (dis)trust in pressing for reform: "Data on public distrust do not adequately explain why reforms have been more comprehensive in some states than in others" (Suleiman, 2003: 88).

Having too much trust in the administration and in government can be potentially dangerous as it leads to absence of control. Whether trust is desirable and necessary for a political-administrative system to function actually depends on how this system defines itself. In a classic-liberal approach it would be inappropriate to actually trust a government (Parry, 1976). It may therefore be rational not to trust the government (Levi, 1996; Hardin, 2002). Performance requires a certain level of distrust, as it forces an organisation constantly to question its existence and procedures.

VI. Trust influences perceptions of performance

Citizens' reservoir of trust in government makes them take a more favourable view of government performance: "Satisfactory outputs stimulate trust, but trust itself predisposes a person to view outputs positively" (Aberbach and Walker, 1970). An initial favourable disposition towards the administration may increase thresholds for complaining. High levels of trust make citizens turn a favourable eye to the administration. Similarly, initial distrust may increase the threshold for expressing oneself in a positive way about administrative performance. Of course, this phenomenon only relates to *perceptions* of performance, not to performance as such. But perceptions matter, as they steer citizens' actions.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This theoretical introduction showed that the hopes for creating a more favourable image of government by stimulating public sector modernisation, as exemplified in better performance and more quality, are built on assumptions that are at least incomplete. Obtaining better knowledge on the relationship between the evaluation of public service performance and evaluations of government in general, requires a focus on the object(s) of evaluation and the causal processes in the evaluations.

These foci have been used to deconstruct the relationship between public service performance and overall attitudes towards government. This deconstruction showed that:

1. Not all public agencies are considered as being public by citizens, and influence of their performance on evaluations of government can therefore not be taken for granted.
2. Some agencies or bodies may feature stronger in citizens' image of government, which makes that government is not just a summation of agencies.

3. It is difficult to establish the precise impact of evaluations of specific agencies on citizens' overall attitude. Aggregation of the specific evaluations is not a mechanical process.
4. The direction of the causality is disputed. Why would it not be the general attitude towards government that influences the perception of agency performance?

In Chapter 1 we challenge one of the basic relations in the micro-performance model, that between performance and perceptions of performance. In that chapter, we show why looking at perceptions of performance is more important than looking at performance itself in explaining attitudes towards government. Chapter 1 will then tackle the problem of aggregating these perceptions.

Chapter 6 WHY STUDY PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE INSTEAD OF PERFORMANCE?

*“So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?”
It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the
language they use. That is not agreement on opinions, but in form of life.*

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical investigations)

When does government perform? When it works in an efficient way according to a multitude of indicators, or when citizens are happy, even when government is inefficient and wastes money? Causally relating perceptions of the performance of a public service to the actual performance of the service may be a gross simplification of reality. There are, of course, good reasons to believe that perceptions reflect actual performance, but there are just as many reasons not to consider perceptions as an accurate reflection of performance. This does not mean that these perceptions are useless. Differences between performance and perceptions of performance imply that different strategies exist for improving citizens' attitudes towards the public sector.

In this chapter, we differentiate between the performance-perception relationship at the micro-level (individual public services) and at the macro-level (performance and perceptions of the public sector at large). The choice for focusing on perceptions in the remainder of this study is motivated.

6.1 PERFORMANCE AND PERCEPTIONS AT THE MICRO-LEVEL

Producer and consumer views of performance

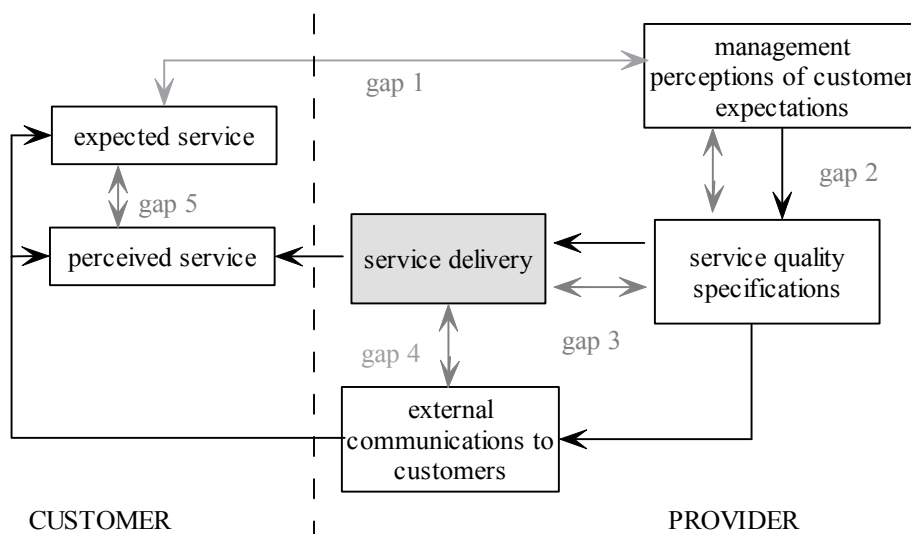
The interplay between quality, expectations, and perceptions is not the only reason why increased quality does not automatically lead to increased satisfaction. What is defined as quality may also differ: consumers and producers of a service may adhere to other quality standards. Quality as seen by the service provider and as seen by the client do not necessarily have to coincide. Parties may define other characteristics as more important. Moreover, well-functioning public services are not always advantageous to citizens: efficient police forces will result in higher number of fines. Consequently, drivers will not necessarily be satisfied as drivers, but perhaps they will be as citizens.

In the client satisfaction literature, many authors refer to the SERVQUAL model which, is extensively used in satisfaction surveys (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry, 1990). The basic philosophy of this model is that there exist a number of gaps that explain why consumer and producer views regarding quality differ. Better performance therefore does not necessarily lead to users that are more satisfied. The SERVQUAL model shows that satisfaction with a service is not just determined by the quality of the service: expectations and perceptions are important as well. The model identifies five gaps that help to explain customer satisfaction:

- Gap 1: Expected service vs. management perceptions of customer expectations
- Gap 2: Service quality specifications vs. management perceptions of customer expectations
- Gap 3: Service delivery vs. service quality specification
- Gap 4: External communications to customers vs. service delivery
- Gap 5: Expected service vs. perceived service

A disconnection between producer and consumer views may thus come into existence at different locations in the service process.

Figure 29: Gap analysis in the SERVQUAL model



Source: Adapted from Zeithaml et al., 1990

A public sector example perhaps makes this figure more comprehensible. Citizens expect to be able to deal with official paperwork outside the standard office hours, e.g., to register themselves in the town hall after moving, or to apply for a new passport or drivers' license. Some citizens may consider it very practical to deal with these issues on Saturdays, so that this paperwork can be included in the list of *Saturday chores* such as shopping, cleaning cars, bringing the children to music class or football training etc. Word has reached the management of the town hall that citizens, especially those with full-time jobs, complain about the nine to five opening hours of the town hall services. Management interprets these complaints as a demand for late-evening openings, so that paperwork can be done immediately after work: gap 1.

A decision is subsequently taken to launch a major *service improvement initiative* and to introduce late-evening opening hours, and this requirement is transferred to the head of unit. While management

was thinking about opening hours from 17-20h, on some day in the middle of the week, this is not made specific in the orders. The reinvention project manager may subsequently interpret this late-evening opening requirement differently and specify it as a prolonged opening on Friday-evenings till 18.30h. Gap 2. Of course, 18.30h is still very early for citizens who commute, and on Friday-evenings, just before the weekend, many citizens may have more pressing things to do.

Town hall staff may not be particularly excited about having to work late. Anyway, it is thought that not many citizens will take advantage of the new opening hours. So only few staff members man the front desk and only minimal services are offered. Indeed, by 18.00h on the first day of the late-evening opening, hardly anyone has visited the town hall, and the first staff members go home already. Actual service delivery vs. how service delivery had been specified in the operating procedures: Gap 3.

Just minutes later, a queue starts to form in front of the desk, as this is the earliest moment citizens can make it to the town hall. This is quite a disappointment for citizens who have read in the papers that a full service would be offered from now on on Friday-evenings. Even worse, the management relied on the newspapers for their communication and did not notice that one of the journalists' provided wrong opening hours. Some citizens arriving at the town hall at 19.30h thus found the door closed. Was the new *service improvement initiative* mere rhetoric? External communications and actual service delivery obviously did not match: gap 4.

Despite the improvement initiative, perceived service and expected service had drifted even further apart, leaving an immense gap.

Information and errors of attribution

Most people have never used the services of the fire department, but still they have an opinion about how the fire department works. Opinions on certain services are sometimes based not on recent experience, but on experience long ago, or on second-hand information. Sometimes, citizens lack the information to judge whether the service they have received is actually good or bad. Hearsay, rumours and memory are therefore important in the formation of attitudes of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Sometimes, certain agencies may be held responsible for services they do not even deliver. A well-known example is that of the British government that is blamed for trains that do not run on time. Differences between reality and perceptions may be due to errors of attribution (Swindell and Kelly, 2000). In a number of occasions, the public is not aware whether government provides a service or not. In the worst case, for the public administration that is, they see good performing agencies as private and bad performing ones as public services (see also 8.3).

Influence of the nature of the service

Perceptions of performance are influenced by how the user identifies with the service and by characteristics of the agency and customer-agency relations. Here, we will deal with the extent to which the user identifies with the mission of the agency involved, directness and frequency of use, visibility and homo- or heterogeneity. Satisfaction depends on whether one has sympathy for what the agency does (mission), and whether one thinks what the agency does is good for society. Research by the Pew Research Center found a relationship between satisfaction and whether one could identify with the mission of the agencies concerned (Princeton Survey Research Associates and Pew Charitable Trust, 2000). Similar relations have been found with the importance of a service for users (Schmidt and Strickland, 1998). On the one hand we have those who have a firm belief in what the agency does and

who have no criticism on the service delivery, and on the other those who think the agency is redundant and useless, who do not agree with the agency's policy, and who are critical about every aspect of service delivery.

Depending on service characteristics, users' opinions differ. Services can be categorised according to frequency of use (frequent/infrequent), homo- or heterogeneity, and directness (direct/indirect) (Roth, Bozinoff, and MacIntosh, 1990; Das, Das, and McKenzie, 1995). Heterogeneous user demands and high frequency of use seems to lead to less satisfaction. Satisfaction surveys in services with which most citizens only have an indirect contact lead to more convergence (i.e. less variance) in satisfaction ratings across users. A meta-analysis of customer surveys in the USA for instance showed that fire services always get a better grade than do road repair services (Miller and Miller, 1991). This means that a fire service which, according to objective performance measures, performs badly, will still receive a higher subjective rating than a well performing road repair service.

Directness and frequency of contact allow for distinguishing between high and low experience services (Das et al., 1995), a concept similar to the importance a service has for the user. A number of factors determine satisfaction: Customers who use a service only once, and for whom this fact is only of minor importance will often not bother to give a negative judgement, even if performance is objectively bad (Schmidt and Strickland, 1998). If, however, the user knows he or she will have to use the service again, he or she will judge this service as more important, and come to a more outspoken attitude. High experience services are called high impact agencies in the USA (Weather service, Food Safety Inspection, Veteran's Health Care, etc.), since they are supposed to have an important and visible impact on the lives of citizens. Importance of a service should not, however, turn into absolute dependence, something that is important in the discourse on -often social- services, and the extent to which this influences the attitude of the service providing professionals towards users (Soss, 1999). External factors such as the social position of the user in society probably define where to draw a line between importance and dependence (Fitzgerald and Durant, 1980). While it is often supposed that users of welfare services will express very low levels of satisfaction due to their feeling of subordination. Satisfaction and subordination may coexist, because this satisfaction reflects a sense of relief because clients' worst fears have not been realized (Soss, 1999: 85). Furthermore, this process is being influenced by the degree of identification and attachment of the user with the agency. On the opposite side of the coin, there are citizens with limited or absent contacts. It turns out that non-users often have a more negative opinion, which could be a consequence of a lack of knowledge of and attachment to the agency and the image that the agency has. Glaser and Denhardt (1997) found that those least likely to contact local government rated government performance higher. The precise impact of frequency of use is thus far from established.

Users of services provided by local authorities will be more satisfied with service delivery when they display a strong attachment to their local community, and when they value local autonomy over efficiency. This could of course have to do with the higher visibility of local service delivery. Visibility, however, should not necessarily lead to a higher satisfaction. Services one hardly knows, and whose function is not clear to most citizens (let alone that they know which level of government is responsible for it) often enjoy more favourable views than do visible services (Hoogland DeHoog et al., 1990). Increased visibility implies bad quality gets noticed easier as well. If and when this plays a role in judging public services is not entirely clear, because some authors state that government is approached as a homogeneous entity, making distinctions between services and their different

qualities useless (Stipak, 1977; Glaser and Denhardt, 1997). In this case, the a-priori attitude towards government takes an important place in the formation of opinions of satisfaction.

Citizens who identify with the mission of a service tend to rate it more favourably. Citizens' opinion about the most appropriate role of government in society influences their ratings of its performance in specific fields (Princeton Survey Research Associates and Pew Charitable Trust, 2000). This, we will show, is a crucial factor in explaining citizens' attitudes toward the public sector at large.

Aggregation of performance indicators

Studying the relationship between public sector performance, and how this performance is perceived is complicated. It is known that objective measures are often used incorrectly. The tendency to focus on those aspects that are easy to measure is particularly worrying (see Bouckaert and Auwers, 1999, for a number of pathologies, and Janssen, Rotthier, and Snijkers, 2003 for an analysis of the *easy-to-measure tendency* in creating e-government benchmarks). This results in a propensity to reduce complex performance to one single indicator, e.g., using the number of police officers for analysing police performance⁴⁴. A central difference in the SERVQUAL model deals with the difference between consumer and producer views on quality. Reducing the number of indicators used may therefore neglect this crucial distinction.

The aggregation of performance indicators and indeed perception indicators into service- or government-wide indicators is, though often necessary for research, an oversimplification of reality. It results in insufficient knowledge on the meaning of indicators such as satisfaction, because different *aspects* of performance appraisal are combined in one indicator (Stipak, 1979: 51). Comparisons between objective indicators and subjective evaluations are often made with aggregated indicators. This may mask individual differences and variations: "Citizens do not experience jurisdiction-wide average services. Rather, they experience services delivered in their own immediate neighbourhoods or workplaces" (Parks, 1984: 120).

Performance and perceptions of performance differ, and these perceptions constitute a separate object of study. Our choice for perceptions of performance rather than performance *per se* is motivated by the fact that government-wide performance indicators do not seem to exist, and, where they do, are often based on perceptions, as we will see below. It thus seems there are compelling reasons to focus on perceptions of performance.

Performance and perceptions of performance are different

Quality of services and how this quality is perceived and ultimately evaluated are different elements in strategies to alter citizens' attitudes towards the public sector. Objective indicators, e.g., process indicators, may show a shorter processing time for certain paperwork, but still complaints about the speed of service delivery may be seen to increase. In the international literature, comparing objective quality with subjective satisfaction is a popular topic. In their study on police service delivery, Brown and Coulter (1983) found no evidence that levels of citizen satisfaction reflect the quality of the police service. Expectations, however, seemed to be related to satisfaction. They recommended that policymakers do not base their decisions about resources or activity redistribution on satisfaction

⁴⁴ It may be interesting to note that the relation between the number of police-officers and citizens' trust is negative: the more police-officers per inhabitant in EU countries, the lower trust in the police.

measures, since this will probably produce no changes in the attitudes towards these services. Stipak (1979) casts similar doubts on the effect of objective performance improvements on subjective evaluations. Citizen satisfaction surveys are therefore useful only *in conjunction with* performance measurement programmes (Kelly and Swindell, 2002). Many of the early explanations (80s) for divergence between subjective and objective service evaluations have mainly focused on the difference between input-throughput/process-output-effect. An earlier stage does not necessarily relate to a later, and the objective and subjective indicators may refer to different stages. Differences between quality and satisfaction may therefore also be due to the misuse of the objective performance indicators, and not only to the subjective nature of the satisfaction scores.

Satisfaction with services is a complex outcome based on objective quality, the way how this quality is perceived, and expectation prior to the encounter (Bouckaert, 1995). Low satisfaction may then be due to:

- low quality
- expectations that are too high or different
- deficiencies in the perception

Bouckaert relates three fundamentally different strategies for improving satisfaction to these elements: service management, perception management, and expectation management.

Notifying a citizen by letter that the processing of his or her building permit was delayed, and indicating the reasons for delay will probably result in a level of satisfaction that is different from that in a situation where this citizen is waiting in vain for the permit to be granted. Citizens with low expectations are easier to satisfy than citizens with high expectations. And of course, citizens experiencing fast, timely, friendly and efficient service have a higher probability of being satisfied. In marketing research, disconfirmation theory is often used: $\text{satisfaction} = \text{perception} - \text{expectation}$ (Maister, 1985).

Satisfaction is more complex. Not every citizen considers all aspects of service delivery as equally important, and these aspects may differ for every service. Obviously, politeness of the fire service is important, but it is probably not what citizens care about when their house is on fire. Politeness does become important when the fire department is asked to do an inspection or to give fire prevention training. Low satisfaction is a problem when it concerns aspects that customers consider as important. Very high satisfaction with aspects customers do not consider important may suggest overinvestment in this aspect. Overall satisfaction may therefore suffer when managers improve their service on aspects customers do not care about and fail to improve aspects that are crucial to users.

It is unclear whether increases in service quality lead to higher satisfaction and lower quality to lower satisfaction. Indeed, there may exist thresholds of service levels that have to be reached in order to generate a perception-expectation disconnection with the customer (Stipak, 1979). It may also happen that certain additional improvements do no longer contribute to satisfaction. An additional late-evening opening in town hall may lead to increased satisfaction, but introducing a third or a fourth day probably does not. Services may in a similar way not be accounted for marginal declines in quality, as users could have sympathy for a service provider that in the past always delivered punctually and fast. Only with persisting underperformance, satisfaction will decline.

Performance and perception are often used interchangeably

Measuring the performance of a public service is different from measuring the perceptions of this performance. This difference troubles PA research, since it can happen that measures perceived as being objective turn out to be no more than a subjective perception. This is especially true in the case of aggregated indicators on *the performance of the public administration*, as we will show in 6.2. Many of these indicators contain serious flaws. Indicators that are said to be government-wide performance indicators are often of a subjective nature and actually measure perceptions (i.e. based on citizen, expert, staff, and management evaluations rather than on a more objectified set of input, process, output, and effect indicators). Relating government performance and overall opinions on government and the public administration therefore risks being self-referential. Unfortunately, the possibility for perceptions to diverge from actual performance is not always recognised, as perception measures are often seen as very practical performance measurement substitutes.

In their study on red tape for instance, Pandey and Scott (2002) suggest after careful review of the literature and an empirical study the use of an index measure of red tape. The index consists of one statement: *If red tape is defined as burdensome administrative rules and procedures that have negative effects on the organizations' effectiveness, how would you assess the level of red tape in your organization (0-10 rating)*. Such an index of red tape is useful, as long as one recognises that such a measure does not just measure the extent of red tape, but also personal opinions towards red tape, and possibly experience with it, both within the organisation where it is measured as on other places. Different actors do not necessarily interpret comparable numbers of forms and encounters in the same way. In ethics research as well, differences between perceived behaviour and actual behaviour troubles researchers. Perceptions of corruption are for instance frequently measured, but what is lacking are good measures of actual corruption.

Perceptions matter

In many cases, we are forced to rely on *perceptions* of performance, as measuring actual performance is difficult. Just as performance *per se*, perceptions of performance have their own logic. Even when citizens' perceptions of the public sector or specific public services do not accurately reflect the actual performance, these perceptions matter, because they are at the basis of citizens' actions, because they guide policy-makers' actions, and because they have an important symbolic function. Much of the evidence in research on trust in government points to the importance of perceptions (subjective opinion) rather than treating these perceptions as a straightforward response to objective performance (Nye et al., 1997: 256-7). Perceptions and opinions do steer citizens' actions. Policy makers also use these indicators. Brudney and England (1982:132) attribute different policy perspectives to subjective and objective measures: while objective indicators are mainly output oriented, subjective measures are impact oriented. Subjective indicators combine a broad array of attitudes (affective, evaluative...) in one single indicator. This advantage is also a disadvantage: it is not always obvious what these indicators actually mean. Low satisfaction ratings do not always give us information about the reasons for dissatisfaction. High levels of trust in government do not necessarily indicate there actually is *good governance* (Bouckaert and Van de Walle, 2003). It is increasingly recognised in the literature on quality that quality reforms and models have an important symbolic function (van Dooren and Van de Walle, 2004; Berg, forthcoming). What matters is not the quality as such, but the way in which this quality is perceived. All that is needed is a formal quality model, not

quality. TQM is the capacity to perform, and not actual performance (Dubnick, 2003: 27)! Actual performance is not strictly needed to create a perception of performance.

6.2 PERFORMANCE AND PERCEPTIONS AT THE MACRO-LEVEL

The performance of the public sector can be seen as an aggregation of performance of individual services composing this public sector, or, alternatively, as a different reality. Aggregating the performance, and, subsequently, the perception of public services, into the performance or perception of the public sector is difficult. It remains complex to establish which aspects of performance are to be measured, how these interrelate, and how they can be aggregated into overall performance. Measuring the overall performance of a public sector brings us to an even higher level of complication. Some attempts have been made, but they are imperfect for establishing a measure of public sector performance. Defining and delimiting the scope of government probably is the most complicated aspect of such an exercise.

Most existing public sector measures rely on e.g. performance of certain institutions or policy fields, or macro-economic indicators rather than on measures for the public sector at large. Often, perceptions of performance are used instead of genuine performance, still, these are treated as if they were objective indicators. It is not uncommon to actually use *trust in the civil service* or *trust in government* as a performance indicator. The lack of encompassing performance indicators forces researchers to substitute these for effects of public sector functioning (e.g. human development). In that case however, assumptions are made about the impact of government and the public sector on these issues. In this section we analyse a number of attempts for measuring public sector functioning, and point to possible dangers in interpreting these data.

Do we have indicators for measuring the performance of the Belgian public administration?

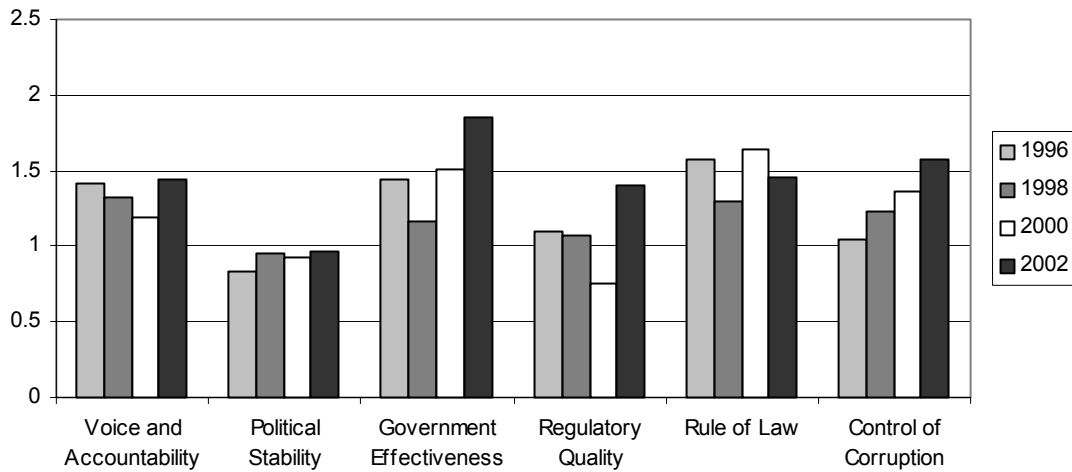
The Belgian public sector is generally seen as a laggard in the European context. Most Belgians will be able to recall stories that make such a conclusion plausible, but it is difficult to find hard proof for this thesis. Earlier, we have mapped citizens' perceptions of the public sector and of government in Belgium. In this section, we look at a number of indicators that are used for measuring the performance of the public administration Belgium. These illustrations serve as a stepping-stone to analysing these indicators' validity.

World Bank's Governance Indicators

The World Bank has developed a series of *governance indicators*, ranking countries on 6 criteria: voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption (<http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance>). These indicators are composed of 25 different data sources such as Freedom House, the Global Competitiveness Report etc. The first indicators were released in 1996, and are now recalculated every 2 years. The 6 indicators cover 186

to 199 countries, and give scores that range from -2.5 (lowest) to +2.5 (highest). Figure 30 shows the evolutions in Belgium on all six dimensions since 1996⁴⁵.

Figure 30: World Bank Governance Indicators scores for Belgium



Country rankings reveal that Belgium is not ranked among the best performing countries in the EU15. Most progress seems to have been made with regard to government effectiveness and control of corruption.

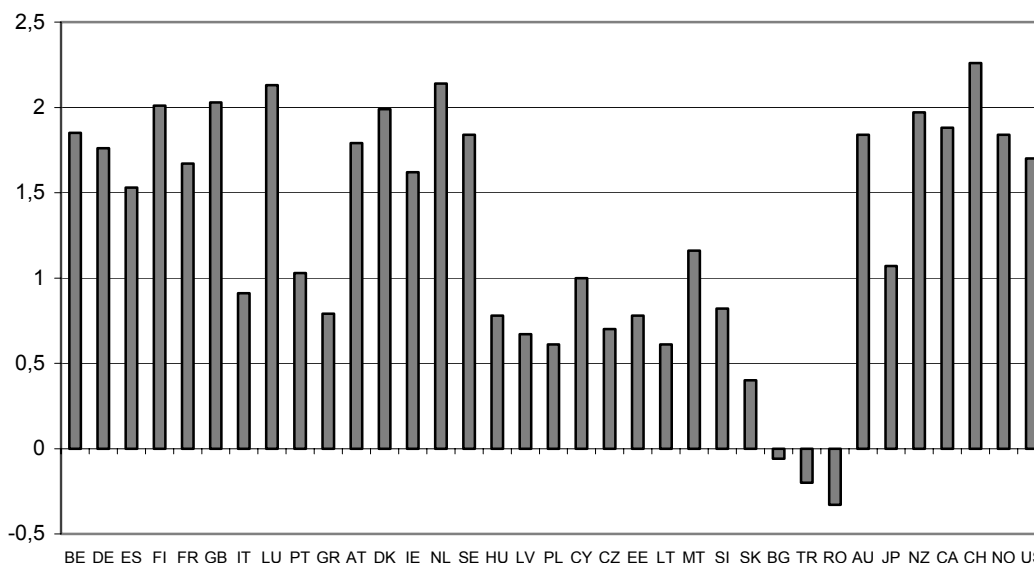
Table 15: Belgium's rank in the World Bank Governance Indicators

rank Belgium in EU15	Voice and Accountability	Political Stability	Government Effectiveness	Regulatory Quality	Rule of Law	Control of Corruption
1996	9	12	10	11	10	12
1998	10	12	13	12	13	13
2000	11	13	11	15	10	13
2002	7	10	6	12	10	10

Government effectiveness is perhaps the most useful indicator for us. In Europe, Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria have scores that are below zero.

⁴⁵ Note that changes can be due to the inclusion of new data sources in the calculation and to adding new countries that may influence the overall scores.

Figure 31: Country scores on the World Bank Government Effectiveness indicator (2002)



The World Bank Governance indicators dataset is one of the most complete datasets to assess the quality of governance. Many of its composing indicators, however, are of a subjective nature, and therefore do not necessarily present us with a correct picture. The number of data sources employed by the World Bank, however, softens this criticism.

European Central Bank

The European Central Bank developed a public sector performance indicator for the OECD countries (Afonso, Schuknecht, and Tanzi, 2003). One aspect of this indicator specifically dealt with the functioning of the public administration. Performance was calculated based on a number of sub-indicators, and efficiency was obtained by relating expenditures in that area (goods and services expenditures) to performance. Values are relative to the average that was set to 1: scores higher than 1 refer to an above-average performance. Relating performance to expenditures resulted in a number of considerable shifts in the countries' rankings. However, in both cases the situation of the Belgian administration is not flattering.

Table 16: Performance and efficiency of the administration in the OECD countries in 2000

	<i>public sector performance administration</i>	<i>rank</i>	<i>public sector efficiency administration</i>	<i>Rank</i>
CH	1.32	1	1.86	1
US	1.15	9	1.3	2
JP	0.87	17	1.25	3
FI	1.26	2	1.22	4
AT	1.21	3	1.22	4
AU	1.17	5	1.21	6
NZ	1.18	4	1.2	7
IE	1.06	11	1.1	8
LU	1.05	12	1.1	8
IS	1.02	13	1.06	10
DE	1.02	13	1.01	11
CA	1.11	10	1	12
ES	0.77	18	0.97	13
NO	0.97	16	0.95	14
GB	1	15	0.94	15
NL	1.16	6	0.9	16
DK	1.16	6	0.86	17
SE	1.16	6	0.81	18
GR	0.6	21	0.79	19
PT	0.54	22	0.74	20
BE	0.73	19	0.64	21
FR	0.72	20	0.61	22
IT	0.52	23	0.54	23

Source: ECB

The ECB also constructed indicators for other aspects of public sector performance and efficiency: education, health, public infrastructure, distribution policies, economic stability, and economic performance. Combining these indicators, it ranked OECD countries according to public sector efficiency. In a following section we discuss a number of drawbacks of this approach.

Human Development Index

The Human Development Index is a composite indicator assembled by the UNDP, and contains a series of indicators grouped around longevity, knowledge, and standard of living (<http://hdr.undp.org>). Detailed year-to-year HDI time series are not available due to changes in the calculation. UNDP does, however, offer a time series containing comparable data. It shows progress for Belgium, that was ranked 6th worldwide in 2001. In the EU15, Belgium is found on the 3rd place, behind Sweden and the Netherlands.

Table 17: Country rankings on the Human Development Index (top 20 - EU15-between brackets)

	rank 1975	rank 1980	rank 1985	rank 1990	rank 1995	rank 2001
Norway	8	6	7	7	4	1
Iceland	6	1	3	2	9	2
Sweden	6	9	9	10	4	3
Australia	12	11	11	14	2	4
Netherlands	5	6	5	5	3	5
Belgium	13 (5)	13 (6)	13 (6)	12 (6)	6 (3)	6 (3)
United States	4	3	2	3	6	6
Canada	3	4	1	1	1	6
Japan	9	8	5	4	8	9
Switzerland	1	1	4	5	12	9
Denmark	2	5	8	10	14	11
Ireland	21	22	22	20	21	11
United Kingdom	13	20	21	19	10	11
Finland	17	14	11	9	17	11
Luxembourg	17	19	17	14	11	11
Austria	15	16	15	13	15	16
France	10	10	10	8	12	17
Germany	..	11	14	16	15	18
Spain	19	17	16	18	18	19
New Zealand	11	18	19	21	20	20
total no of countries	99	113	122	136	140	175

Comparing public sector performance and efficiency in Europe

Apart from the indicators we have presented in this section, we could present many others that relate to specific aspects of government performance: corruption, business friendliness, e-government development etc. Many of these indicators have been integrated into the composite indicators. The most often used of these is perhaps the one constructed by the World Economic Forum. Its Growth Competitiveness Index contains a *Public Institutions Index* that is composed of a Contracts and Law subindex and a Corruption subindex. Even though politicians tend to use the Public Institutions Index to show how well or badly the public institutions function, it does not contain any indicators related to administrative functioning or performance, but only indicators related to bribe-paying, judiciary independence, organized crime, protection of financial assets and wealth, and government neutrality in procurement. All of these indicators are collected using a small-n Executive Opinion Survey. Even though items on bureaucracy, administrative burdens and red tape are included in the survey, these are not used for constructing the *Public Institutions Index* (World Economic Forum, Porter, Schwab, Sala-i-Martin, and Lopez-Carlos, 2004).

Comparing the performance and efficiency of *the public sector* is hard to do only using objective indicators. In practice we see that most databases and comparisons rely on subjective indicators: the World Bank Governance Indicators dataset relies to a large extent or almost exclusively on survey material (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Zoido-Lobaton, 2002). The European Central Bank, in determining the quality of the public administration, relies on indicators such as confidence in the administration of justice, corruption, and regulatory environment, all based on surveys. Three quarters of its indicators on

the quality of the public administration are actually of a subjective nature (for a more detailed comment on the ECB study, see Van de Walle, 2003).

Table 18 shows the ranking of the EU countries for what concerns public sector performance using three different approaches: two are predominantly or entirely subjective (World Bank & Eurobarometer), one only relies to a certain extent on subjective indicators (ECB). Countries are being ranked differently, but still certain similarities are discernable.

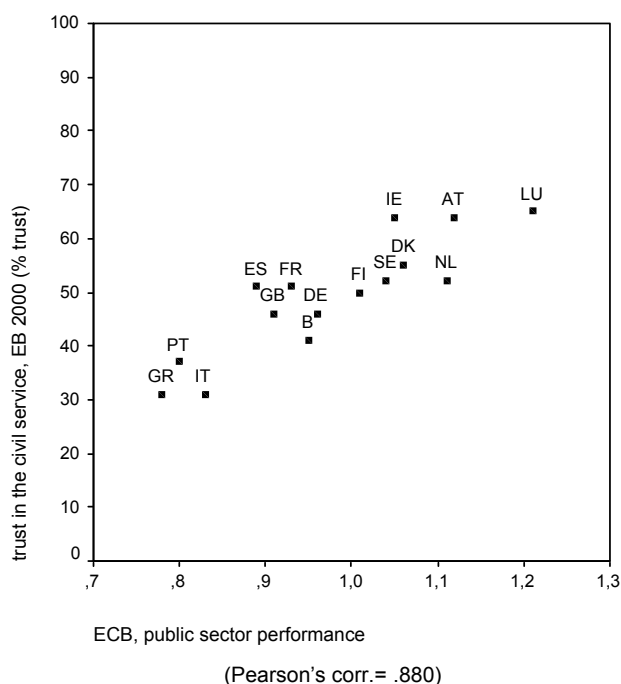
Table 18: Comparative public sector performance in the EU-15

rank	World Bank Institute Governance Indicators: government effectiveness 2002	Eurobarometer trust in the civil service, spring 2002	European Central Bank Public sector input efficiency
LU	1	2	1
NL	2	6	7
IE	3	2	2
GB	4	8	3
DE	5	10	7
FI	5	12	14
DK	7	4	13
ES	8	12	4
AT	9	1	9
SE	9	4	15
BE	11	7	10
FR	12	10	12
PT	13	9	5
IT	14	15	10
GR	15	14	6

Using subjective indicators (sometimes even trust) as measures for public sector performance becomes a problem when we want to use these performance indicators in a study on the relationship between public sector performance and citizens' trust in the public sector/government.

The figure below shows a very strong relationship between the level of trust in the civil service as measured by the Eurobarometer public opinion surveys in 2000 (% trusting, European Commission, 2000), and public sector performance, as measured by the European Central Bank (Afonso et al., 2003 - but using numbers for 2000). European countries that score high on the performance scale, such as Luxembourg, Ireland and Austria, also have populations that trust their civil service and government.

Figure 32: Trust and performance in the EU-15 countries



What looks at first sight as a very interesting finding is in fact rather misleading. The ECB indicator for public sector performance is an aggregated indicator containing elements such as health, public infrastructure, education and (public) administration, each of them consisting of specific indicators such as school enrolment, infant mortality, life expectancy. Most of the specific indicators of the administrative dimension, however, are based on subjective indicators, mainly CEOs' opinions on the extent of corruption, red tape and the quality of the judiciary. Relations between these subjective indicators and trust in the civil service are very high, while we do not find such a solid relationship between the more objectively measured (i.e. not using opinion surveys) performance indicators such as health and education and trust in the civil service. It seems the ECB public sector performance indicator is measuring *perceptions* of performance, and not actual performance.

This example shows that it is measuring genuine public sector performance and efficiency that is the most complicated problem, and not measuring perceptions. There is considerable uncertainty about the precise content and meaning of a 'trust in government' indicator, but it does measure a certain emotional and cognitive attitude towards government. Comparing public sector performance across nations and political systems is a difficult -if not impossible- task, due to different public sector structure and to differences in policy (see Van de Walle, Sterck, Van Dooren, Bouckaert, and Pommer, 2004, for more details).

The absence of government-wide performance indicators

Good government-wide performance indicators seem not to exist. This seriously hampers research on the government performance-trust relationship. Others have pointed at this problem before. In her book on trust, Norris identifies the main drawback of performance explanations for a decline in trust as the absence of a "consensus about the most appropriate way to compare government performance on

a consistent and meaningful basis" (1999b: 22). Even measuring performance, not of government or the public sector, but of specific administrations seems to be difficult if not impossible.

The distinction between government performance and perceptions of government performance is crucial when doing research. Regrettably, good measures of overall government administrative performance are not available, making it impossible to conduct meaningful comparisons of public sector performance. Internationally, the World Bank Governance Indicators dataset is one of the most promising datasets for the future⁴⁶ because it combines information from a multitude of sources. Unfortunately, many of these sources are opinion surveys. The recent study by the European Central Bank we have discussed also relies to some extent on subjective indicators (Afonso et al., 2003). The *Grade Reports* of the Federal government, States, counties, and cities in the US by the Government Performance Project at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs offer an interesting methodology for future international comparisons, but they also rely to a large extent on expert opinions (Government Performance Project, 2002).

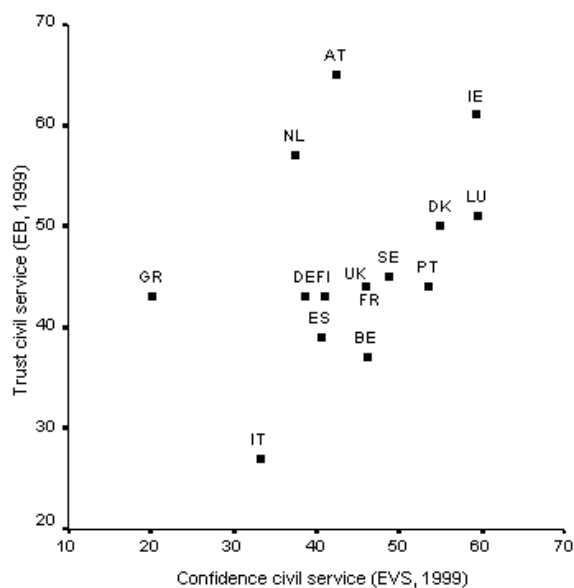
Measuring the overall performance of the public sector confronts us with a problem of data aggregation. Many studies apply models that reduce the complexity of government in an inadmissible way, and are thus not able to account for differences in administrative cultures. Differences in public sector performance are then partly attributable to methodological errors. Finding manageable ways and good indicators to compare public sector performance across nations will be one of the main challenges for the future. As governments do not have an established measure of overall public sector and administrative performance, they are not able to respond to their critics when publicly vilified for their failing performance. Due to the absence of internationally comparable measures of public sector performance, performance perception indicators may well be the only feasible way to compare national administrations.

Are subjective indicators at the macro-level reliable?

Using subjective indicators is only justifiable when they are stable and comparable. Subjective indicators do not necessarily return the same results as objective ones. This does not mean that subjective evaluations are simply born out of the inspiration of the moment of the respondent. Actually, we do observe a striking degree of similarity and stability. International comparison using different survey sources often returns similar results. The strength of subjective indicators is that often data collected by different instruments is available. Below is an example related to trust in government. Figure 33 shows levels of trust/confidence in the civil service. Data is taken from the European Values Study 1999 and from the Eurobarometer 51.0. We do observe considerable differences, but general tendencies remain similar. The civil service in Austria, the Netherlands and Greece scores considerably better in the Eurobarometer surveys than it does in the European Values Study.

⁴⁶ (<http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/data.html>),

Figure 33: Trust in the civil service in the EU-15 using two different sources



Are subjective indicators at the macro-level useful?

There are good reasons to opt for the use of subjective indicators in evaluating public sector performance. Relevant objective data on many public sector performance issues is difficult to obtain, let alone interpret (Kaufmann et al., 2002: 19). Even an at first sight simple indicator such as *number of staff employed in government* is actually quite complicated: do we measure staff at the central level or also at the local level? Do we exclude people working for non-profits executing government tasks while being fully subsidised by government? How do we deal with mass public sector employment as a way for combating unemployment: such a policy creates inefficiency in some sectors, but does relieve the burden on the social security system. Also at the output-side of government, similar difficulties exist: to what inputs do we relate a certain output or outcome? Lower social security expenditure may not necessarily result in higher infant mortality or lower life expectancy, but may be reflected in higher crime rates.

Subjective indicators help to circumvent some of these problems, but are certainly not without problems: citizens may fail to relate low education expenditure to high illiteracy but instead attribute illiteracy to children's laziness. Kaufman et al. (2002) defend the use of subjective indicators because *de jure* and *de facto* situations often differ, while it may simply be that it is the subjective indicator that does not sufficiently reflect reality. Subjective indicators may be measuring no more than an image or a cultural habit.

Studying perceptions is nevertheless important, as governments' are increasingly faced with public sector efficiency rankings in which they rank high or low, entirely based on subjective evaluations. These perceptions are often uncritically accepted as reflections of public sector performance. Some studies do indicate why they rely on subjective indicators and indicate possible pitfalls of their approach (e.g. World Bank governance indicators), others use subjective indicators for pragmatic reasons (the ECB study), and still others use the subjective evaluations as a reflection of a factual reality (e.g. as in the Global Competitiveness Report, World Economic Forum et al., 2002). The fact that subjective indicators do not necessarily reflect administrative performance does not mean that these perceptions

are not worth studying, as citizens act according to their perceptions. When citizens perceive civil servants as corrupt or slow, they will approach them in a cautious or unfriendly way, thereby not stimulating the civil servant to deliver outstanding performance. The main question is: what matters? Government performance, or perceptions of government performance? Does it matter if government performs badly when citizens do not complain? After all, doesn't public sector inefficiency only then turn into a problem when it becomes an issue on the public agenda or when budget restraints call for savings? Bok (1997: 55-56) criticises observers who say that the best index of government performance is the public opinion, because satisfaction also depends on other factors.

6.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, it was shown that attributing citizens' general attitude towards the public sector to the performance of all of the specific services composing this public sector disregards two important factors. Performance of a public service and the perception of this performance may differ substantially. By extrapolating from the research experience at the micro-level, it was suggested that a similar divergence might exist between government-wide administrative performance and perceptions of the public administration. The finding that sound government-wide performance indicators lack further complicates analysing the performance-perception relationship at the macro-level. The indicators commonly used for measuring general public sector performance often rely on perceptions, inevitably leading to tautological conclusions. The difficulties in measuring government-wide performance cannot be solved by merely aggregating the performance of its individual composing services, as aspects and criteria of performance may contradict each other.

Focusing on perceptions of performance therefore is both a practical necessity (absence of useful performance indicators at the macro-level) and a positive choice (perceptions as such do influence behaviour). In the following chapter, we analyse how perceptions of individual public services may or may not be aggregated into the perception of the public sector and government in general.

Chapter 7 OBJECTS OF TRUST? HIGH IMPACT AND THE PROBLEM OF AGGREGATION

Tsze-kung asked about government.

The Master said,

*"The requisites of government are that there be sufficiency of food,
sufficiency of military equipment, and the confidence of the people in their
ruler".*

(Confucius, The Analects, XII)

Two different procedures exist for mapping citizens' image of the public sector. One is to directly inquire for citizens' perception of the public sector in general; the other is to aggregate perceptions of specific services into an overall perception. Both approaches have, as we will see, considerable drawbacks. Measuring the overall perception of the public sector is problematic, since it is then not known what lies at the basis of this perception (more specifically, which services). Accumulating evaluations of specific services requires that we know the relative weight of each of these services as it is unlikely that a service that is used on a daily basis has equal weight in the overall perception of public services than has a service that is used just once.

A comparison of both approaches shows that specific perceptions and general perceptions are fundamentally different, and that the degree of dissimilarity is not equal for all groups of the population. Comparing evaluations of specific services with the evaluation of the public sector and government in general may be a faulty approach. In this way, we are not actually analysing the contribution of these specific services to the overall perception, but rather mapping citizens' mental map of government and the place of these services in it.

7.1 OBJECTS OF TRUST

Is there actually a relationship between the way in which citizens evaluate their police service or post office and the way they look at government? Which, if any, specific agencies contribute to the general image of government? The models and prerequisites mentioned in section 5.2 are summarised

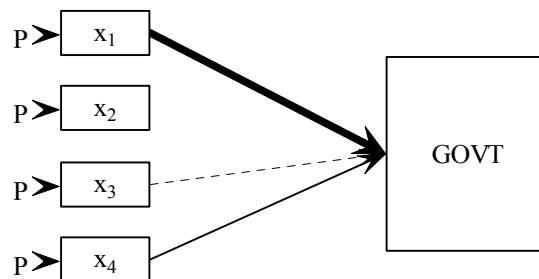
in Figure 34. Is the relationship between the image and evaluation of specific public services and that of government:

- Present or absent (x_2 vs. rest)
- Strong or weak, (x_1 vs. x_3 vs. x_4)

Core questions in this chapter will thus be:

- do we find a relationship between the evaluation of specific services, evaluations of and trust in the public administration and general trust in government
- how strong is this relationship?

Figure 34: Relationships between public services and 'government': 4 possibilities



To this end we will use variables in the survey on:

- Satisfaction and image of and trust in the police, post office, public transport, schools, refuse collection and employment agency.
- Image of a number of government-related professions and services
- Trust in institutions, including government in general
- Satisfaction with the functioning of public services in general

In our questionnaire, detailed questions on six specific public services were included. For the police, the post, primary education, refuse collection, the employment agency (VDAB) and the public transport agency (*De Lijn*), we asked respondents to indicate:

- Whether they thought the agency under question was a part of government
- What level of government was responsible
- Who would organise the agency best (private sector vs. police)
- Their frequency of use
- The general image of the agency
- The level of satisfaction
- The level of trust
- Whether there should be more control on the agency

We will use some of these items in this chapter. We found differences in the level of satisfaction with the services and the image citizens have about each service. For most of the services, differences were very small, except for the postal service and the refuse collection. Satisfaction with the postal service and the refuse collection is considerably more positive than the image citizens have about them. This suggests that other aspects are included in the formation of an image. Refuse collection is a

dirty job, but service delivery can be excellent. The postal service seems to have an image problem, since levels of trust and of satisfaction are considerably higher than is the positivity of the image.

Such a detailed approach, including questions on frequency of use, image, satisfaction etc. was of course only possible for a limited number of services due to size limitations of the questionnaire. A number of other services (some public, some private) were included in the questionnaire in a very concise way:

Is the image you have of these services and institutions positive or negative?

- Hospitals
- Care for the elderly
- Belgian railways
- Public radio and television
- Municipal administration
- Justice and courts
- Banks
- Supermarkets
- Electricity company

Additional information can be taken from the questions on citizens' attitudes towards a number of professions and functions, most of which are related to government. Image was measured on a scale ranging from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive).

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Police officer | • Post office official/employee |
| • Refuse collector | • Prison ward |
| • Journalist | • Doctor/GP |
| • Judge | • Military |
| • Teacher | • Mayor |
| • Civil servant | • Politician |
| • Bus driver | • Nurse |
| • Train conductor | • Fire fighter |
| • Postman | |

Validity of the performance hypothesis requires that those who are more satisfied with public services will also display more trust in government, and that the attitude towards public services is different from and can actually be distinguished from the attitude towards other governmental bodies and from government in general. The analysis will of course only give a static analysis, which is not able to capture temporal impact of certain services (the dominant impact model), and at this moment it only covers a limited number of services. Before starting the analysis, we elaborate on a number of possible approaches for determining the impact specific services may have on evaluations of the public administration and government in general.

7.2 DETERMINING IMPACT

When citizens have an opinion about the way government functions, this opinion has to be traced back to certain *objects of trust*. When a citizen who trusts government suddenly changes his or her opinion as a result of a corruption scandal, this scandal may have been the trigger for this change. For a citizen who never uses service A, or is not even aware of it, it is unlikely that this service will contribute to the general evaluation of public services, even though we have seen citizens can have an opinion about services they're not familiar with. Also, it is likely that an unlawful arrest will have a more profound impact on attitudes than mail that was delivered late. Determining how bureaucratic encounters contribute to the general image of the public sector and government requires that we can identify the objects of reference citizens use for constructing their image of government.

In section 5.2, we summarised the approach in much of the political discourse as a rather mechanistic method: adding attitudes towards all agencies and services results in the general image citizens have of the public sector and government. We, however, immediately broadened the approach and suggested that certain services may not have an impact at all, or that others have an above average impact. We will not continue the discussion started there, but will try to develop a typology for determining what services or objects of trust citizens use for constructing their evaluation of the public sector and government.

Determining whether an agency becomes part of a series of reference objects in the formulation of an opinion can be done both in a quantitative way and in a qualitative way. A purely quantitative approach would attribute services that are for example used more often a more central role in the mental concept of government. A qualitative approach would then state that not all types of encounters should have equal weight. The impact a certain agency has is not necessarily stable and permanent. Impact can be (quasi) permanent or non-permanent. Permanent impact would mean that certain agencies, e.g. the police, always have a strong impact on the general image of government. A temporal focus would mean that certain events would bring a certain agency temporarily to the core of people's perceptions of government. Good examples of this are the recent attention for food safety agencies in periods of food safety scandals in Europe, or the functioning of the CIA and FBI in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It may be clear that the distinction between the two foci is not absolute or exclusive.

Table 19: Typology of impact

	Quantitative approach	Qualitative approach
(Quasi) permanent	High Impact Agencies (HIAs)	Core functions
Non-permanent	Any scandal	'Real' scandal, often affecting core elements.

In the High Impact Agencies⁴⁷ approach, a summation of agencies and services results in the overall concept citizens have of government. A larger agency, or one that is used more often, has a higher impact on the general attitude towards the public sector. As the use of services is often

⁴⁷ We do not refer to actual *agencies* in their often-used legal definition (Thynne, 2004). Instead we use the word as any kind of service or specific body of public administration.

determined by life cycles of citizens, the list of HIAs is thought to be rather stable, but need not be so. In the core services approach, a more qualitative approach is being used. Services are not just added up, but certain services or service processes are attributed a higher importance. In the literature, the central position of courts and the police is often highlighted. Scandals push certain services to the core of citizens' perception of the public sector. It is, however, often difficult to determine whether a scandal will have a profound impact. Events that were at first sight insignificant have often become symbols or traumas and lead to more severe consequences than one could normally have predicted.

High Impact Agencies

Attempting to construct a list of High Impact Agencies

High Impact Agencies are agencies that have a strong impact on citizens' lives. This concept is a very simple one at first sight only. Often, governments are not even able to produce exhaustive lists of services they provide or are responsible for. Also, impact does not only result from actual use of a service in a traditional sense, namely going to an office. Kettl reported that in a survey "only 34 percent of those surveyed reported having personally been in touch with an agency of the federal government in the previous year" (1998: 59). Nevertheless, attempts have been made to construct a list of High Impact Agencies.

A good example is the National Partnership for Reinventing Government, which is actually at the basis of the *High Impact Agency* terminology. In 1998, the NPR shifted its focus from a government-wide reform initiative to an initiative aimed at 32 High Impact Agencies (HIAs) (National Partnership for Reinventing Government, 2000)⁴⁸. 80% of the NPR's energy would go to these 32 agencies to:

- Restore trust
- Improve performance
- Cut costs

Selection of these agencies was based on criteria of use and visibility: together, these 32 agencies serve 90% of government's customers. Most of these agencies were also included in the American Customer Satisfaction Index, which allowed for measuring the effects of the reforms (Fornell, 2000). With this initiative, the NPR assumed that reforms in these agencies would have the most significant impact on trust. The use of visibility and use as selection criteria does not guarantee this, because these criteria do not give any information on importance, dependency etc. Moreover, if one looks at the list of agencies (see footnote 48), one notices the absence of governmental agencies such as police,

⁴⁸ These are: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Food and Nutrition Service, Forest Service, Census Bureau, U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service/International Trade Admin., Patent and Trademark Office, National Weather Service, Defense acquisition reform, Student financial assistance, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Emergency Management Agency, General Services Administration, Food and Drug Administration, Administration for Children and Families, Health Care Financing Administration, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Office of Personnel Management, NASA, Small Business Administration, Social Security Administration, State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs, Federal Aviation Administration, Customs Service, IRS, Treasury Dept. Office of Domestic Finance/Financial Management Svc., U.S. Postal Service, Veterans Health Administration, and the Veterans Benefits Administration.

schools, etc. The reason for this is that the NPR was a federal initiative. Therefore, even though a list of HIAs has been developed, many of the real *High Impact Agencies* are missing.

A similar logic, though in this case motivated purely from a quality improvement perspective, can be found in most government electronic portals. The UK government gateway ukonline.gov.uk has built its site around *key events* in one's life. Similarly, the Flemish administration uses *service delivery clusters*. A listing of so-called High Impact Agencies similar to the American one does not exist in Belgium. In the e-government strategy a number of service delivery clusters have been identified that combine services related to important life-events of citizens: building a house, retirement, having children and so on. In the 1999 Election Studies Belgians ranked child protection as one of the most important topics determining their vote (Meersseman, Billiet, Depickere, and Swyngedouw, 2001). This clearly is an issue that would not feature as a high impact policy in other countries, and it was clearly not an issue in the early 90s. Food safety also became an important topic in 1999, while employment was one of the main issues in 2003. A crisis in the mid-1990s brought the functioning of the police and the courts to the centre of citizens' perception of government.

Problems with the HIA approach

The High Impact Agencies approach implies that public services that are important to citizens, or with which citizens have a high contact-ratio, determine their general image of public services, and, consequently of government. The reform rhetoric on High Impact Agencies contains a strong normative component, due to these agencies' prominent place in public sector reform. Emphasis on those services having a high (and direct) impact on citizens' lives is said to be the fastest way to increase citizens' trust in government. These approaches put a strong emphasis on public services rather than politics, and government rather than society in the process of restoring trust. Furthermore, they tend to reduce government to a mere summation of agencies and public services.

The use of the term High Impact Agencies is very much motivated by the desire to achieve *quick wins* by focusing on those services having many users or on front-offices instead of back-offices. Actions targeting HIAs are thus said to create goodwill among citizens and civil servants, but are not necessarily a guarantee for sustainable reform. Referring to HIAs is often part of a political strategy, and they may therefore dominantly serve as an anchor for communicating reform rather than for steering it (see also Kettl, 1998).

Though the high impact definition initially appears to be a very attractive, determining what the High Impact Agencies are is problematic. The HIA approach tries to deconstruct the multitude of citizen contacts with administrations and public services to a summation and sequence of one-on-one contacts. The construction of a HIA-list may differ substantively depending on the criteria used, while there are no clear and unambiguous criteria for determining the strength of an impact or encounter.

A deconstruction of the citizen-government encounter

In the high impact philosophy, citizens' bureaucratic encounters exist of a series of separable consecutive and conscious experiences with public agencies. In reality, every day, citizens have a large number of encounters with public services, be it conscious or not, and it is not always possible for them to determine where one encounter stops and another starts. Furthermore, many encounters are experienced collectively. This means that citizens' evaluations of the public services do not consist of a summation of genuine evaluations of the experienced performance of individual encounters with single

agencies. Though useful for analytical purposes, it is difficult to uphold the deconstruction of citizen-public services encounters into a series of one-on-one experiences. Citizens' evaluation of public services is thus not a summation of evaluations of individual-level bureaucratic encounters.

Difficulties in determining the strength of an impact

Determining what services or agencies should be considered as high impact agencies is difficult since one can use many criteria for this selection and because different life-styles make that high impact agencies are different for different people. Differentiating between types or categories of citizens falls out of the scope of this paper (and our data does not allow for it), so we will have to resort to criteria that allow for a selection at the macro-level. Using a single criterion such as contact-frequency, the number of customers, or the size of the budget is insufficient, since such an approach disregards other considerations citizens may have: they can frequently use certain services without being aware of it, one single contact with an agency may be considered very important, etc. In the table below we constructed a non-exhaustive list of criteria that may be used for determining whether a service qualifies as a so-called High Impact Agency.

Determining whether a public service can be considered as a High Impact Agency depends on the criteria used for doing so. Using other criteria may result in a new list of agencies.

Table 20: Criteria for constructing a list of High Impact Agencies

Type	Meaning
Budget	What is the weight of the agency on the entire government budget? But also: What is the weight of a financial allocation, subsidy, allowance or tax in the family budget?
Frequency of use	The higher the use, the stronger the impact that service has on someone's image of government
Importance	Daily use of public transport clearly has a different meaning than having to use the fire department. Receiving a benefit two months late has a different meaning for a poor family than for a rich one.
Visibility	Use is not a determinant, but visibility is. You should thus not actually use the service, but see, hear, etc. it.
Scandal	Related to visibility. Emergence of a scandal may make all other criteria temporally irrelevant.

Problem: how to assess encounters related to *once in a lifetime* events, e.g. marriage, death: these have a very low frequency of use, which therefore does not tell us anything about the impact.

Whether a service should be seen as a High Impact Agency can clearly not be determined by using one single criterion. Rice (1981) spoke about different intensities of encounters. All criteria are interrelated and often point to different directions and have another importance depending on context. Furthermore, these indicators suggest a certain stability in the impact. In reality, the impact can change. Scandals and events are one of the most obvious reasons why this would happen. A *dominant impact* does not only come from administrative subdivisions of *government*, but also from political bodies. Using these criteria becomes even more complicated, because of the absence of a visible and tangible output. Despite these problems, the importance of a service is often calculated in a very mathematical way, as the National Performance Review example shows.

Instability of the HIA approach

The listing of criteria above suggests that it is difficult to establish what the High Impact Agencies are. It also suggests that the impact of certain agencies might not be stable and permanent. The term high impact agencies is mainly used in reform discourse, which means that there is very little theoretical support for the concept. Research on trust in government often deals with the role of government outputs in citizens' evaluation of government (Easton, 1965; 1975), but these approaches in general do not reduce government output to that of a number of high impact agencies. Rothstein (2001) underlines the importance of output institutions to influence trust in general, since citizens have more contact with these compared to the input-side (voting, politicians). What outputs citizens look at is not at all clear, nor stable. Citizens may have other objects of reference depending on the political system in which they find themselves, their level of political sophistication, their frequency of contact with certain institutions, and so on. The composition of the list of high impact agencies for citizens will no doubt be different for US and for Belgian citizens, as we have tried to show above, and there is good reason to believe that reference objects differ across nations, time, and even between individual citizens.

Across nations and across people

As was just mentioned, different patterns of use of public services exist for different people. Determining a single High Impact Agency structure therefore seems to be impossible. We nevertheless believe that this should be possible at the macro-level. Canache et al. (2001) found that while a similar term is used in different nations for tapping attitudes towards government⁴⁹, the substantive content of the item is different. McAllister (1999) found that correlations between levels of confidence in different institutions differ considerably across nations. There is no reason to assume that citizens in different political systems would perceive their government as a combination of the same institutions.

Across time

Easton and Dennis (1969) analysed children's perception of the political system, and found that they consider other institutions as important as they grow older. In political systems, certain institutions may at times be considered as more important, due to evolutions in society (e.g. anti-trust agencies) or due to crises (e.g. food safety agencies in EU countries as a result of a series of food chain contaminations). Shifts to a *risk society* may give rise to increased importance of control institutions (Beck, 1992). Furthermore, it may be possible for governments to set the agenda and divert attention by pushing certain institutions to the core of citizens' perception of government.

Core functions of the state

The High Impact Agencies approach defines *impact* in a very quantitative way. Especially the concept of *use* is problematic, as is the fact that all agencies are attributed a similar starting position. The core functions of the state-approach is much more qualitative. It states that some aspects of government are much more important than others. A negative evaluation of these core-functions generates distrust, no matter what the performance of other agencies is. Most frequently cited examples are the police and the courts. These serve as a guarantee that all other processes in government function in a democratic way. We can thus talk about meta-trust: trust in the police and the

⁴⁹ Here it means satisfaction with the functioning of democracy.

courts automatically means there is trust in other institutions, because police and courts are a guarantee against misbehaviour of these institutions. Failure of police and courts to perform generates distrust. According to this approach, malfunctioning of agencies other than police and the courts will result in a loss of trust, but not in active distrust as would a malfunctioning of police and courts.

The choice for the police and the courts as core functions should not surprise us. Both can be seen as truly basic functions of a state (perhaps together with national defence), and are as such the cradles of legitimacy of modern states. This explains the attention both institutions receive in research (Tyler and Huo, 2002).

In her research on trust, Norén (2000) treats the police and the judicial system as the core functions of the state, because it is the belief in the just procedures these provide that explains why people obey the law. The police and the courts are one of the strongest determinants of trust in government⁵⁰. Listhaug and Wiberg (1995) also notice a decline in support for *order institutions*, but relate this to a weakening of traditional belief systems. This does not necessarily mean that countries with efficient judicial systems become more trusting. In any case, the legal system should be seen as the mechanism that translates trust in government into interpersonal trust (Uslaner, 2000). Rothstein (2001) notices a decline of trust in parliament and government in Sweden, but does not find this matched by a decline in generalised trust. With regard to trust in the institutions of law and order, that is, the courts and the police, he does find the strongest correlations with generalised trust. Trust in the police and in the courts is also considered in the literature as a precondition for interpersonal trust: these institutions serve as a guarantee that those who do not live up to the general expectations will be punished (Rothstein, s.d.).

Police and courts serve as guarantors for interpersonal trust. This is then used to conclude that police and courts are core functions of the state, even though the link to interpersonal trust is not a guarantee for the existence of a core institutions - trust in government relation. Even though the literature deals with the police and the courts in most cases, other *core functions* may exist. An example may be the importance of food safety agencies in recent years. It may be clear that a food safety agency is not entirely at its place here, since it clearly lacks the ability to provide meta-trust. Creation of core functions is therefore often more a result of (political) discourse than of the emergence of new core functions. The fact that the malfunctioning of certain agencies is used as a lightning rod does not necessarily mean its function is as necessary as one wants us to believe. That such a creation often happens in times of scandals contributes to this (deliberate) confusion. The Dutroux-crisis in Belgium, however, shows that the two may be interrelated: the scandal increased the attention for the courts and hereby reconfirmed its status as a core agency. It may be clear that a differentiation between high impact, core function and impact due to scandals is difficult to make.

Events and scandals as a source of high impact

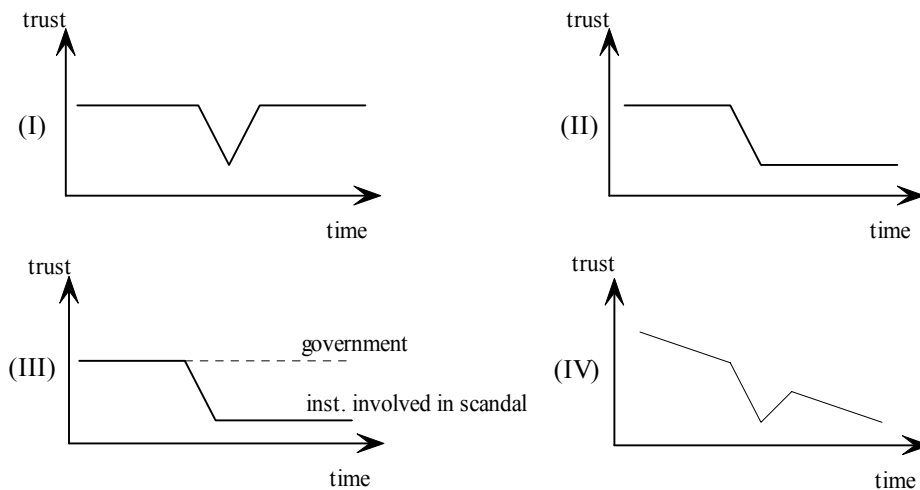
Events and scandals receive a lot of attention within research on trust in government. The emergence of a series of scandals often serves as an explanation for the decrease in trust, or the occurrence of a rallying event could help to increase trust. In the context of our discussion, the basic

⁵⁰ A fundamental failure here is that the relationship found between political trust and trust in the police/courts may also mean that all three are indicators of a more general trust in government. To the extent that trust in the police/courts measures the same concept (what has to be proved), it should not come as a surprise that the relationship is significant.

question is whether a scandal or events makes something a high impact agent, and, whether scandals have a lasting impact on levels of trust, or whether the impact is limited in time and in scope. Two questions thus remain unanswered:

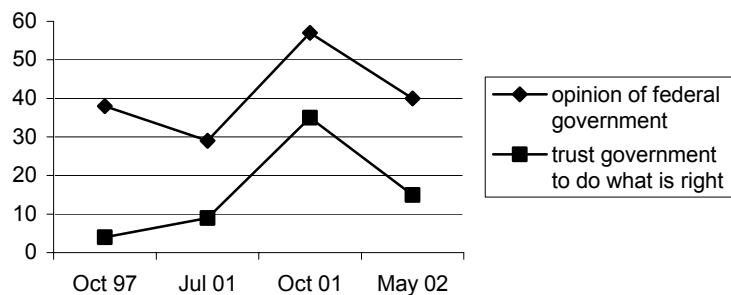
- Is the impact of a scandal permanent? (I vs. II)
- Is it trust in government that decreases, or just trust in the institutions involved in the scandal? (III)

Figure 35: The impact of events on trust⁵¹



Even though observers often state that a specific scandal will have a profound impact on trust in government (II), and that “we will never be able to trust again”, this is an unlikely analysis, because such a process would result in a permanently declining trust till it hits the ground. A democracy would in that case only be able to bear a limited number of crises, and always end up in a situation where there is no trust at all. We often see trust resume to its previous level after a scandal (I). The resurgence of trust in the US as a result of the 9/11 events does not seem to be permanent, and is gradually returning to previous levels (Mackenzie and Labinar, 2002)⁵².

Figure 36: Impact of 'events': 9/11 (% positive)



Source: Mackenzie and Labinar, 2002

⁵¹ It may be clear that the downward tendencies may equally be upward trends of events.

⁵² Numbers give two highest categories: very favorable & somewhat favorable (4-point scale) and just about always & most of the time (vs. only some of the time & never).

An alternative approach is that by Elchardus and Smits (1998): they observed that scandals mainly come to the fore in periods of declining trust (IV): it is thus not the scandal that causes the decline of trust, but scandals emerge more easily when trust is decreasing. Scandals then only contribute to distrust in a situation where trust was already declining. The absence of long-term data in several countries makes this difficult to test.

Observations that trust in institution X decreases in times of scandals in which institution X is involved should not come as a surprise (see e.g. Figure 9). But is this distrust also transferred to trust in government? Elchardus and Smits again observe that trust in practically all institutions declined during the Dutroux crisis (Elchardus and Smits). This would prove a transfer of distrust in one institution onto all or onto government in general, but then again their alternative explanation comes to the fore, namely that scandals emerge because trust was decreasing. Scandals will certainly alter the focus of evaluations: whereas a food-safety agency is normally just a boring government agency, it may determine government's image in times of a food safety scandal. Whether the impact on trust will be permanent is hard to establish. Scandals often have a very symbolic meaning, and there is not necessarily a strong objective reason for their emergence.

7.3 IS THERE ANY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPECIFIC AND GENERAL OPINIONS?

Is there a relationship between how citizens evaluate specific services and how they evaluate government in general? Does a positive evaluation of most services coincide with a positive evaluation of the functioning of public services in general and with trust in government? The table below shows the relationship between satisfaction and trust with specific public services, and general levels of satisfaction with the functioning of public services and trust in government.

Table 21: Specific satisfaction and trust and general levels of trust and satisfaction, correlations⁵³

	<i>Satisfaction with services</i>					
	<i>Police</i>	<i>Postal service</i>	<i>Prim. Educ.</i>	<i>Refuse collection</i>	<i>Employment agency</i>	<i>Public transport</i>
Trust in government	.190**	.043	.071**	.134**	.144**	.069**
Satisfaction public services	.270**	.118**	.127**	.173**	.175**	.132**

	<i>Trust in services</i>					
	<i>Police</i>	<i>Post</i>	<i>Prim. Educ.</i>	<i>Refuse collection</i>	<i>Employment agency</i>	<i>Public transport</i>
Trust in government	.253**	.055*	.159**	.104**	.124**	.068**
Satisfaction public services	.227**	.116**	.158**	.157**	.128**	.113**

Source: WADO F2F, 2002. Correlations significant at the 0.01 level (**) or 0.05 level (*).

⁵³ With regard to education, we have used satisfaction with *primary education*, and trust in *the educational system* (het onderwijs).

In almost all cases, the specific and the general evaluations correlate, both with trust in government and with satisfaction with the functioning of public services. The only exception is the postal service, where a correlation is absent or weak (satisfaction with the postal service and trust in government). Overall, correlations are the highest for the police, a finding that has been suggested in 7.2. At the same time, evaluations of these specific services also intercorrelate (Table 22).

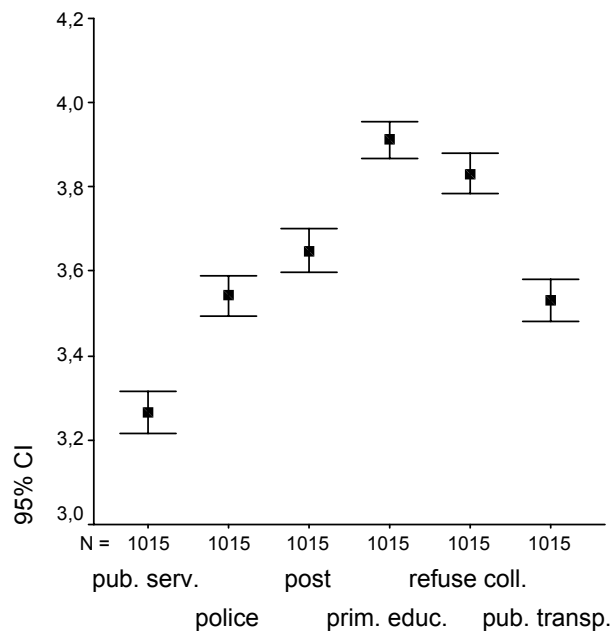
Table 22: Correlations between satisfaction scores of specific agencies

	<i>Postal service</i>	<i>Prim. Educ.</i>	<i>Refuse collection</i>	<i>VDAB</i>	<i>Public transport</i>
Police	.196	.332	.225	.205	.186
Post		.139	.440	.256	.398
Prim. Educ.			.234	.193	.173
Refuse collection				.277	.368
Employment agency					.384

Source: WADO F2F, 2002; all correlations significant (<.000)

It is thus found that satisfaction scores of *all* agencies correlate, some even substantially. Of course, the presence of certain correlations does not yet explain *why* we can find them. The findings suggests an extra dimension in the citizens' evaluation, and an important element in Chapter 8 will be to check whether citizens actually differentiate between these specific services. We have seen in the chapter on Belgium that there is some difference between satisfaction with the functioning of public services and trust in government. Another interesting but hardly innovative observation is that there is a huge gap between satisfaction with specific services and satisfaction with public services in general. While the majority is satisfied with most of the specific services, just 43,1% is satisfied with the functioning of public services in general (pub.serv.). Figure 37 shows the mean satisfaction scores and the 95% confidence intervals. It is clearly shown that satisfaction with the functioning of public services in general is different from satisfaction with the specific services, and also that there are relevant differences between some of the services.

Figure 37: Satisfaction with a number of specific services compared to general satisfaction



Source: WADO F2F, 2002

This suggests that the evaluation of public services in general is not merely a summation of the levels of satisfaction with specific public services. In a next step, we want to analyse which of these services contribute to the general evaluation of public services⁵⁴. For this purpose we enter the specific satisfaction scores included in the previous figure into an ordinal regression model with *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* as a dependent variable.

Table 23: Ordinal regression for satisfaction with the functioning of public services

	parameter	Std. error	p
satisfaction police	.682	.080	<.001
satisfaction postal service	.309	.077	<.001
satisfaction primary education	.182	.090	.042
satisfaction refuse collection	.310	.081	<.001
satisfaction public transport	.166	.078	.033

(Nagelkerke R²=.163)
Source: WADO F2F, 2002

Satisfaction with public transport and primary education are not found as significant parameters. The police clearly is the strongest parameter. The level of explained variance further confirms that the general satisfaction is different from the specific satisfaction with a number of high impact agencies. Adding frequency of use to this model increases explained variance only marginally. A possible reason for this low explanatory value could be that five services are not covering the entire range of the citizen

⁵⁴ The employment agency will not be included in further analyses, because of the small N (non-users were not asked to give a satisfaction score). We assumed that non-users would not be familiar at all with the employment agency, while even non-users of the police or primary education would be able to form an opinion on it.

public service interaction. We therefore broaden our analysis in 7.4, to include a number of additional agencies and services.

7.4 A TEST OF THE IMPACT OF SPECIFIC SERVICES ON GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNMENT

Model

We have already tested the impact of satisfaction with a number of specific services on *general satisfaction with the functioning of public services*. We noticed large differences in the size of this contribution. The approach will now be expanded, including more independent variables (specific services), and will test the model for several dependent variables. The contribution of evaluations of specific public services to citizens' evaluation of public services in general will be tested. As the reform rhetoric suggests that citizens who experience quality when encountering public services will also evaluate government at large in a positive way, we will test the contribution of bureaucratic encounters to citizens' trust in government. This statistic approach is required, as a deductive approach is not possible, because we are unable to determine the impact of a specific service a-priori, due to the existence of multiple criteria for doing so. We fit identical regression models for two different but related dependent variables. The first one is *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* and the second *trust in government*.

We use a stepwise approach to enter different groups of independent variables in the models. In step one, we enter some basic socio-demographic variables into the model: sex, education, age, income, and level of urbanization of one's town. We have learned from previous research on trust that these socio-demographics in most cases do not have a large contribution to the explanatory value of the multivariate models (Elchardus and Smits, 2002; Kampen and Molenberghs, 2002), but we include them anyway to control for possible effects.

In step two we add a number of public services. Some of the services are clearly public, others have strong linkages to the public sector: police, courts, the Belgian Post, primary education, refuse collection, public transport (bus & tramway), hospitals, elderly care, Belgian Railways, public television, municipal administration and the electricity company. The participants in the survey had to answer the question *Is the image you have of these services and institutions positive or negative* on a 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive) scale.

In step three we broaden the analysis by adding a number of government-related professions: police officer, refuse collector, judge, teacher, bus-driver, train conductor, mailman, post employee, prison ward, military and fire fighter. Though the approach is different because we use professions and not services, it allows us to broaden the scope. Unfortunately, the survey data does not allow us to fine-tune the model by adding data on contact frequency. In step four, we add citizens' image of civil servants as a broad category, as well as citizens' image of politicians.

Ordinal regression is used because the dependent variables are measured using an ordinal scale (McCullagh, 1980; Kampen, 2001). Variables that do not turn out to be significant become redundant and are not brought to the next step.

Explaining satisfaction with public services and trust in government

Before answering questions on specific public services, respondents had to answer two general questions, which will be used as dependent variables:

- To what extent do you trust government?
- To what extent are you satisfied with the functioning of public services?

About 43% of the Flemish respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the functioning of public services, while 40% is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This leaves less than 20% of respondents dissatisfied. For trust in government, results are somewhat different: here the number of distrusting respondent amounts to almost 30%. Full results have been shown before, in Table 11.

The first regression model takes *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* as a dependent variable. Our independent variables are entered in four consecutive steps, as indicated above.

Table 24: Ordinal regression model for 'satisfaction with the functioning of public services'

	Estimate	Std. error	Sig.	Estimate	Std. error	Sig.	Estimate	Std. error	Sig.	Estimate	Std. error	Sig.
Sex			ns									
Education			ns									
Age			ns									
Income	.204	.102	.046	.265	.105	.011			ns			
Urbanisation			ns									
Police				.350	.087	.000	.288	.105	.006	.362	.080	.000
Courts				.540	.086	.000	.510	.100	.000	.361	.081	.000
Postal service				.196	.082	.017	.316	.097	.001	.328	.084	.000
Primary education						ns						
Refuse collection						ns						
Public transport				.258	.094	.006	.371	.098	.000	.197	.082	.017
Hospitals				.203	.096	.033	.206	.096	.032	.219	.086	.011
Elderly care						ns						
Belgian Railways						ns						
Public television				.201	.089	.023			ns			
Municipal administration						ns						
Electricity company						ns						
Police-officer									ns			
Refuse collector									ns			
Judge									ns			
Teacher							.234	.109	.033	.185	.094	.049
Bus-driver									ns			
Train conductor									ns			
Mailman									ns			
Post employee							-.342	.106	.001	-.402	.090	.000
Prison ward									ns			
Military									ns			
Fire fighter									ns			
Civil servant										.267	.092	.004
Politician										.452	.077	.000
R ²		.005			.182			.196			.232	

Income level is the only socio-demographic that has a -weak- impact in the first step. Its impact vanishes later. Police, courts and the mail service are the three most relevant public services in the model. The impact of the former two has already been established in other research (Tyler and Huo, 2002). The latter is of course one of the public services most citizens use daily. Other significant services are public transport and hospitals. Adding a number of professions does generate some further results, but these are marginal at best. We left *teachers' image* in the model, but the *p value* suggests it is only border significant. One remarkable observation is that the image of *the post employee* is one of the few variables that remain significant, and that it is the only one with a negative sign. Adding civil servants' and politicians' image to the analysis is responsible for a considerable increase in R². The image of civil servants and politicians turn out to have a solid contribution to the model. The final model has a R² of .232.

We now follow the same trajectory for *trust in government*. The same variables are entered in the model.

Table 25: Ordinal regression model for 'trust in government'

	Estimate	Std. error	Sig.	Estimate	Std. error	Sig.	Estimate	Std. error	Sig.	Estimate	Std. error	Sig.
Sex			ns									
Education	.140	.047	.003	.198	.047	.000	.180	.050	.000	.223	.047	.000
Age			ns									
Income			ns									
Urbanisation			ns									
Police				.384	.083	.000	.385	.102	.000	.368	.081	.000
Courts				.467	.082	.000	.344	.098	.000	.207	.095	.029
Postal service						ns						
Primary education						ns						
Refuse collection				.273	.088	.002	.287	.096	.003	.225	.087	.010
Public transport				.267	.088	.002	.319	.096	.001	.206	.087	.018
Hospitals						ns						
Elderly care				.215	.080	.007	.227	.080	.005	.214	.074	.004
Belgian Railways				-.202	.090	.024	-.195	.096	.043	-.296	.090	.001
Public television				.240	.085	.005			ns			
Municipal administration						ns						
Electricity company						ns						
Police-officer									ns			
Refuse collector									ns			
Judge							.311	.093	.001			ns
Teacher									ns			
Bus-driver									ns			
Train conductor									ns			
Mailman							.445	.126	.000	.266	.104	.011
Post employee							-.234	.094	.012	-.298	.088	.001
Prison ward									ns			
Military									ns			
Fire fighter									ns			
Civil servant										.265	.094	.005
Politician										.618	.082	.000
R ²		.027			.155			.193			.237	

The explanatory power of our *trust in government* model is comparable to that of the *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* model, but we find some other variables to be significant. As for *satisfaction with the functioning of public services*, citizens' image of politicians is one of the most important contributors to *trust in government* as well. This variable is responsible for a considerable increase in explained variance. It is more important than most of the public administration items in the questionnaire. The higher educated a respondent is, the higher his or her level of trust. In the socio-demographic model for trust (Table 13), education was not found relevant. As in the previous model, police and courts are significant as well, as do some other public services.

Our analysis did find a number of conclusions on our initial hypothesis that stated that citizens' attitude towards a number of *high impact agencies* has a strong impact on their general evaluation of the public sector and government. The first one was that there is not much support for the *High Impact Agencies* hypothesis. Only some public services seem to determine general attitudes towards the public sector, notably the core functions courts and the police, whose influence on citizens' trust in government has been ascertained before (Tyler and Huo, 2002). The other important variables are citizens' image of politicians and of civil servants. This comes somewhat as a surprise, as it seems somewhat strange that citizens refer to politicians when evaluating the functioning of public services. Similarly, the image of *civil servant* is present while many specific public sector professions are absent. This suggests that bureaucratic encounters are not that important in the formation of attitudes towards the public sector.

A second observation is that there is surprisingly little difference between both tested models. With some exceptions, explanatory power and composition of the final models for *trust in government* and *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* hardly differ. This suggests that these two dependent variables in fact measure the same. Citizens' image of politicians takes a central position, and also a rather broad concept as *civil servant* figures prominently. *Satisfaction with the functioning of public services* may therefore not measure what we think it measures, i.e. an evaluation of bureaucratic encounters.

Evaluations of service quality

If it is true that *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* does in reality measure a general attitude towards government rather than one towards public services, it is not surprising that we find so little influence of specific public services. Goodsell and others have suggested years ago that a very general question such as *to what extent are you satisfied with the functioning of public services?* may generate other answers than questions that gauge for more specific opinions, because they leave respondents with a broader array of points of reference when constructing their answer (Katz et al., 1977; Goodsell, 1985). When asked for satisfaction with mail delivery citizens can in fact only rely on factors related to the delivery of mail and the post office when formulating an answer. Opinions on *public services* at large leave respondents with a broad array of specific public services to base their opinion on, and invite them to include a larger number of elements into their evaluation. Selection of evaluation factors is not necessarily based on rational grounds. In formulating an opinion, people tend to use the most easily accessible facts and ideas (Zaller, 1996). One negative experience with a single public service may therefore taint the opinion on public services at large. Personal experience is not required in order to formulate an opinion, as one can rely on second-hand experience or hear-say (Van de Walle, 2004). Answering a question on *satisfaction with public services* can be influenced by factors

that have nothing to do with an evaluation of the functioning of public services, but with a general attitude towards government. The array of potential points of reference is therefore as broad as it is in the case of a question on *trust in government*. This seems to be partly confirmed by the impact of parameters such as the image of politicians and the image of civil servants (thus the general catch-all term, not the specific government-related professions) in our model for *satisfaction with the functioning of public services*.

For these reasons, we have to look for a more specific dependent variable that does not *invite* respondents to deviate in their answer to aspects that are not directly related to the functioning of public services. The survey also contained a question where respondents had to indicate their opinion on a number of characteristics of government staff. It concerned very specific attributes that did not invite respondents to bring factors into their evaluation that were not directly related. Table 26 shows the frequency counts.

Table 26: Government staff generally is...

%	Completely disagree	Disagree	Not agree & not disagree	Agree	Completely agree
Helpful	1,2	10,7	26,7	58,4	3,0
Friendly	1,3	10,7	34,8	49,9	3,3
Reliable	0,9	10,1	36,7	49,7	2,6
Fast	8,2	41,1	33,8	15,7	1,1
Comprehensible	1,8	20,1	40,0	36,3	1,8
Competent	1,6	9,1	41,8	45,0	2,6
Accessible	2,6	18,6	35,0	41,5	2,2

Source: WADO F2F, 2002

The seven variables were entered into a principal components analysis, and the first principal component used as dependent variable in the regression. The analysis returned one single factor, explaining 53% of total variance (Cronbach's $\alpha = .8515$). We will use the term *evaluation of service quality* in the remainder of the chapter. We now use the factor scores for each observation as dependent variable in our regression. The same variables were entered following the same procedure of selection, but instead of an ordinal regression we apply linear regression, due to the nature of the dependent variable.

Table 27: Linear regression for aspects of service delivery satisfaction, stepwise selection

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	
(Constant)	-1,984	.447	.000
Municipal administration	.293	.059	.000
Civil servant	.302	.061	.000
Police-officer	.241	.071	.001
Courts	.197	.052	.000
Postal service	.181	.053	.001
Income	-.205	.065	.002
Military	.132	.051	.010
Refuse collection	.122	.059	.038
Public transport	.130	.059	.027
Fire fighter	-.152	.067	.023
Police	.138	.064	.030

R²=.343

As in the other models, satisfaction with the police and the image of the courts remain significant. The most important contribution to the model is made by citizens' image of the municipal administration. This is a surprising observation, as this item had no influence in the model on *satisfaction with the functioning of public services*. The disappearance of politicians' image, while the image of civil servants remains in the model, is another very interesting observation, since the image of the politician was a very important parameter in the *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* model (and in the *trust in government* model). Again, we find one negative sign.

The findings suggest that a specific evaluation of service delivery quality is to a large extent based on service encounters, whereas an evaluation of public services at large seems to rely on more generic criteria. Most of the significant variables in the model are services with a high impact, most of them visible at the local level: the municipal administration is one of the few traditional *bureaucracies* citizens have contact with on a regular basis. Still, the image of civil servants remains significant in the model, as does that of the courts even though concrete encounters are limited. This shows that at least some *general knowledge* on the public administration *taints* what could otherwise be regarded as a genuine evaluation of public services.

Summary of the findings

Do attitudes towards specific public services influence one's general attitude towards government and public services? We have tested three different models. All models were tested using exactly the same list of independent variables. Dependent variables were *satisfaction with the functioning of public services*, *trust in government*, and *evaluation of service quality* respectively. The table provides a summary of our findings and lists the significant parameters in each of the models.

Table 28: Summary of the findings

	Trust in government	Satisfaction with public services	Service delivery evaluation
Politician	X	X	
Police	X	X	X
Civil servant	X	X	X
Courts	X	X	X
Public transport	X	X	X
Post employee	X	X	
Mailman	X		
Refuse collection	X		X
Education	X		
Elderly care	X		
Belgian Railways	X		
Postal service		X	X
Hospitals		X	
Teacher		X	
Income			X
Municipal administration			X
Police-officer			X
Refuse collector			
Military			X
Fire fighter			X

The differences in independent variables indicate that a general measure such as *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* is measuring something that is different from an *evaluation of service quality*. The image of the police and the courts has a strong and significant impact in all of the three models. The image of politicians features in the *trust in government* and the *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* model, while it does not in the *evaluation of service quality* model. This suggests that the *evaluation of service quality* is built on aspects that are directly related to public administration and actual government service delivery, while political factors encroach upon the *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* opinion. Experience matters more in the *evaluation of service quality*, which is further confirmed by the composition of the list of parameters for this model: it is only in this model that the image of the municipal administration has a significant (and strong) impact. The absence of the municipal administration in the other models is somewhat surprising, because the municipal administration is one of the few public *administrations* (and not just *services*) most citizens have a direct contact with.

Do citizens' evaluations of public services and government agencies influence their general assessment of the public administration and government? Using a general survey on citizens' attitudes towards the public administration and government, we have empirically tested the hypothesis implicit in much administrative reform discourse, as would High Impact Agencies be the most important determinants of citizens' attitude towards public services and government at large. As High Impact Agencies is a concept that is mainly used in reform rhetoric, we were faced with the difficulty of operationalising this concept. We can use many interconnected criteria for determining whether an agency actually is a High Impact Agency, and it is therefore not possible to draw up a definitive list,

because its composition may differ depending on the public sector that is studied. This suggests that despite its usefulness for marketing purposes, an operationalisation of High Impact Agencies is very difficult.

A comparison of the three models reveals that using general questions on *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* is not a valid way for eliciting a genuine evaluation of the functioning of public services. Instead, such an item provides us with a general attitude towards the public services that does not necessarily rest on an evaluation of how specific public services function. The strong impact of the image of politicians in the model and similarities with the *trust in government* model suggests that citizens also refer to other than administrative factors in the formulation of their opinion. The analysis suggested that *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* is more than a mere evaluation of the functioning of agencies that compose government or the public sector, as non-bureaucratic factors seem to intervene, notably citizens' image of politicians. A comparison of variables explaining *trust in government* and those explaining *satisfaction with public services* revealed many similarities and suggests that *both measure in fact an almost identical attitude*. Heavy reliance on bureaucratic encounters to explain citizens' attitude towards the public sector, as is done in the High Impact Agencies approach, ignores these findings. The general nature of an item such as *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* invites citizens to draw many factors into their evaluation. It therefore tells us more about their general attitude towards government than about their evaluation of experienced bureaucratic encounters. *Evaluations of service quality* on the other hand seem to rely on respondents' experience with public services, and are because of their specificity mainly influenced by citizens' attitude towards specific public services.

Our findings confirm Goodsell's claim that the more specific the object of evaluation, the more positive citizens become towards public services, while a general evaluation produces negative results. This is precisely because citizens can draw from a broader array of negative reference objects. Measuring the impact of public sector reforms is therefore tricky, since improvements in service delivery will not necessarily be reflected in general measures of citizens' trust and satisfaction. Detailed studies of specific aspects of this service delivery relationship may show increases in satisfaction as a result of reforms.

Attempts to restore the public trust by reinventing the functioning of public services may not generate the desired results, as citizens' attitude towards specific aspects of service delivery do not necessarily spill over into their general attitude towards government. Low trust in government, a negative attitude towards the public administration at large and a positive image of many public services may indeed coexist.

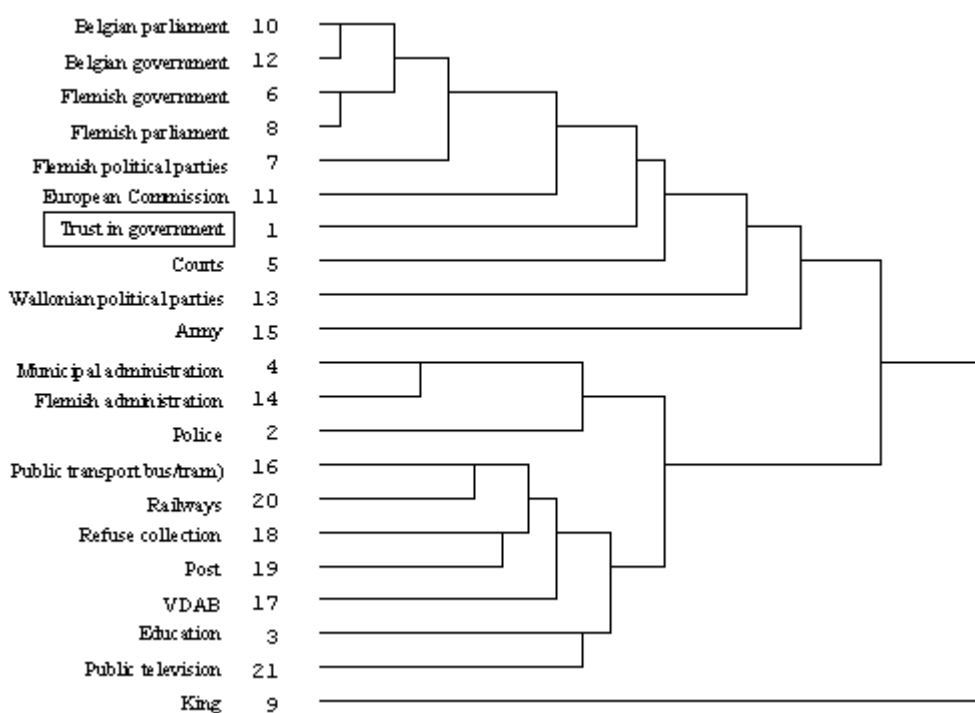
7.5 HOW DO ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND TOWARDS GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL RELATE?

We saw that citizens' image of politicians has a rather strong impact on citizens' general satisfaction with the functioning of public services. Methodological deficiencies alone are not sufficient for explaining this. This kind of relationship does not only depend on differences in satisfaction or evaluative attitudes. The overall location of the concept *public administration* or *civil service* within the broader concept *government* is important: what does citizens' concept map of government look like?

What is the place of the public administration within this concept? It may well be that citizens spontaneously refer to politicians when asked about government. This is illustrated by the answers on the open question in the WADO 2003 mail survey: *How could, according to you, the functioning of public services be ameliorated*. Even though the question clearly referred to public services, some 15% of the answers related to politicians.

Figure 38 shows the associative structure of our list of trust items (general trust in government, and trust in a list of 20 institutions and public services). This so-called dendrogram is based on a hierarchical cluster analysis. Items that are connected early are very similar. General trust in government clearly emerges as being related to the political bodies in the analysis, and not to the public services. In Kampen et al. (2003), it is shown that this association can be replicated in other surveys as well.

Figure 38: The associative structure of trust in government⁵⁵



Source: WADO F2F, 2002

The performance hypothesis assumes that the functioning of public services takes a central place in citizens' evaluation of government in general. Yet, it only looks at the performance and quality of these services, and disregards the place public services take in citizens' concept of government. A strong relationship between citizens' evaluation of public services and their general attitude in government implies that public services should take a central role in the mental concept of government. This centrality is far from obvious. Furthermore, this concept may not be stable, and hardly comparable across political cultures.

⁵⁵ Dendrogram based on a hierarchical cluster analysis.

The most important problem we are faced with is that the indicators we use for determining the associative structure (evaluations of specific institutions and services and of government in general), are the same indicators as the ones we use for testing the validity of the performance hypothesis. In the future, new methods for designing this kind of concept maps will have to be developed. The place of the public administration in the concept of government remains one of the most important issues for public administration students (Coombes, 1998:32). Few efforts are made to distinguish state and public administration, and the exact relationship between state and public administration remains fuzzy. In the US approach the public administration makes the state, as the state is seen as a problem-solver, while in Europe it is rather the state that shapes the public administration, in a more legalistic tradition (Kickert and Stillman II, 1996). The existing confusion is probably in part explained by linguistic problems (1.3). Determining the strength of the public administration-state connection in citizens' conceptualisation of the state will thus be one of the main challenges for the future, a challenge which, however, we will not take on in this research.

We have now analysed the interrelationship of attitudes towards the public administration and attitudes towards other bodies of government. One central question remains unanswered: does the public administration take an important place in the formation of general attitudes towards government? Though always present, administrations become visible mainly during times of failure. Recent scandals on the functioning of food safety agencies or stories about people who are found to be administratively death brought specific administrations or the administration in general in the news. The process can also work in a positive way. When administrative reforms are a key policy issue, and when these reforms receive a lot of attention, they can become, or can be made to become, central elements in citizens' image of government. A second question is whether an independent attitude towards the public administration exists, or whether it is seen as an accumulation of services. We will see in the next chapter that this will depend on the context of the citizen-administration encounter.

7.6 CONCLUSION

The High Impact Agencies hypothesis states that evaluations of public services that feature more prominently in citizens' conception of the public sector will have a stronger impact in the formation of an attitude about the public sector. We have seen, however, that it is practically impossible to measure this impact other than by relying on similarities in the evaluation. Cause and effect can therefore not be distinguished using survey material.

The similarities between the models that have been tested for *trust in government* and *satisfaction with the functioning of public services*, the strong impact of the image of politicians and civil servants in these models, and the significant differences with the *service delivery evaluation* model suggests that an opinion such as *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* does not reflect experienced performance. Such an opinion therefore seems to be influenced by other factors. The relationship with trust suggests that general attitudes towards government may have an influence on the more specific ones.

Theoretically, different relationships between performance of specific services and overall attitudes towards government have been identified. Perceptions of performance do not necessarily reflect actual

performance, but matter in their own right. Aggregating perceptions of specific services into a perception of the public sector was shown to be practically impossible. All of this suggests that a perception of the public sector may exist independently from the aggregated evaluation of specific services. This perception then goes beyond encounters. In Part III, we will analyse where this perception may come from. Predispositions, or pre-given attitudes, may reflect upon general evaluations of the public sector and on the evaluation of specific services. The perception of the public sector and trust in government may therefore not be related in the traditional way, but a reverse causal relationship may be at work.

III. Predispositions Towards Government

Chapter 8 PROBLEMS OF CAUSALITY IN RELATING ENCOUNTERS AND PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE

Ne dites pas à ma mère que je suis fonctionnaire, elle croit que je travaille !

(François Riche, 1992, book title)

In the performance approach, citizens' perception of specific public services contributes to their general image of government. This approach considers perceptions as a genuine representation of actual experienced quality. What is disregarded however is that citizens often have opinions on services that they do not actually use. Where do these opinions come from? Explanations in the performance approach do not go beyond individual-level explanations and are mainly focused on service encounters. Too often they deal with performance without taking into account factors other than actual performance that influence the *perception* of performance. The core of our argument will be that citizens' general attitude towards government also influences their evaluation of specific services. We thus reverse the direction of causality. This expanded approach moves from individual-level explanations to group- or society-level explanations, and is therefore able to move from a static explanation of the level of trust in government and the image of the administration to a dynamic explanation. Dominant attitudes in society will take a central role in this new approach.

General attitudes towards government influence opinions on specific services. This chapter shows how stereotyping theory may help explain opinions on the public administrations, and how these stereotypes persist and get diffused. At the end of the chapter, strategies for dealing with these stereotypes and dominant attitudes in society are outlined.

8.1 CAUSALITY IN THE PERFORMANCE-TRUST RELATIONSHIP AND STEREOTYPES

Many quotes and jokes indicate that there exists a certain generalised negative attitude vis-à-vis the public administration. This attitude seems to be self-sustaining despite many government efforts in

recent years to improve service quality. Jokes and stories about civil servants are in general very negative. Literature research and observations in existing data suggest that there exists a stereotypical image of the administration. This may influence measurement of the actual image citizens have of the administration. Goodsell (1994) for instance found that while citizens take a negative attitude towards government in general, their attitude becomes more positive when this *government* becomes more concrete. Other research confirms this observation, and explicitly relates this to stereotypes (Katz et al., 1977; Rainey, 1996). In their study on organizational incompetence, Ott and Shafritz (1994) are proponents of a separation of incompetence as an *objective reality*, and incompetence as a social construct. In a similar way, Goodsell states that "Americans have worked themselves into a state of believing -at a generalised level of conceptualization- that their government does not perform" (1985: 144), and he mentions the existence of a *cultural image of bureaucracy* (131).

We will use Allport's stereotyping theory to explain how stereotypes influence the everyday evaluation of government and the administration, and, more specifically, how the context of a survey or other means of data-gathering influences the impact of this stereotype (Allport, 1958). This forces us to go back to the first of the preconditions we presented in 5.2: the object of evaluation. Stereotyping is always related to a certain degree of generalisation. This would imply that citizens do not differentiate between governmental institutions, or that they generalise their opinion on specific institutions, policies or events to government in general. The extent of the generalisation still has to be established. It is possible that a negative attitude is not limited to government, but that it is present in society at large. Our empirical material only allows us to give indications and illustrations of perceived stereotypes and generalisation, and therefore our thesis will mainly be defended by relying on the literature and secondary data.

These observations may have an important impact on government's efforts to restore trust by modernising public services: the stereotypical image citizens have of government may impede them in perceiving the modernisation efforts. This means that we will also have to consider trust as an independent variable (i.e. it determines the perception) instead of only as a dependent one. When distrust becomes a dominant opinion in society, there is social pressure to conform to this opinion, and thus to express oneself in a negative way. Changing the way how government works will therefore not suffice to counteract such a *culture of distrust* (Sztompka, 1996), or *ritualistic negativism* (Citrin, 1974), but will require a great deal of social engineering as well.

The actual functioning of public services is just one factor in the explanation of the negative image these services have. Whereas government modernisation rhetoric approaches the modernisation of public services as a prerequisite for creating a more positive image of public services, our approach will be the opposite: the existing image of the public services influences evaluations of their actual functioning (Van de Walle, 2004). The image of the public administration is thus an independent variable instead of a dependent one. Such an approach does not help us to explain how such a negative image emerges, but it does show how it can be sustained: when distrust instead of trust becomes the basic attitude towards government, there is to a certain extent social pressure to express oneself in a negative way. International literature has thus far mainly relied on case studies to explain the emergence and persistence of the bureaucratic stereotype (e.g., civil servants' image in TV-series, police officers in movies etc.). We will focus on the persistence of these images by relying on stereotyping theory and social diffusion theories.

8.2 STEREOTYPING THEORY

Gordon Allport is one of the founders of stereotyping theory. Most of his research concentrated on ethnic minorities, but his theoretical framework is useful for stereotypes in general. A stereotype has two main features:

- There must be an *attitude* of favour or disfavour
- It must be related to an overgeneralised *belief* (Allport, 1958)

Generalisation means that people refer to out-groups as groups or structures, and not as specific persons or institutions. The advantage of such an approach is, that, when confronted with members of this out-group that are contra-stereotypical, it is not necessary to change the stereotype itself, as the reason for these contra-stereotypical features or behaviours can be attributed to that specific person, without having to alter the stereotype itself (Allport, 1958).

The difference between stereotypes and social norms is not always clear, and it is this similarity that we will use in the remainder of this chapter. A normative approach would define stereotypes as attitudes that a society rejects based on the prevailing norms. A stereotype would then just be a departure of prevailing norms. Such an approach does of course not explain why certain stereotypes pervade an entire society. When a stereotype actually pervades a society (this means that it is not rejected as a routine), one could claim the stereotype actually *is* the social norm. According to Allport (1958), we clearly have to distinguish two things in stereotyping research: a stereotype is a negative belief and it is an overgeneralised belief. Whether or not this stereotype is condemned in a society, has nothing to do with stereotyping theory.

Still, the difference between stereotypes and social norms remains vague. Even though stereotypes have a functional meaning for those using them⁵⁶, the use of stereotypes is very often a result of a wish to conform to prevailing social norms (not necessarily knowingly, Allport, 1958). Recent research on stereotypes no longer focuses on cognitive explanations, as was the case in traditional stereotype research. Stereotyping has also become an important issue in social psychology (Hinton, 2000): "Stereotypes do not simply exist in individuals' heads. They are socially and discursively constructed in the course of everyday communication, and, once objectified, assume an independent and sometimes prescriptive reality. It is naive to argue that stereotypes are simply a by-product of the cognitive need to simplify reality" (Augoustinos and Walker, 1996: 222).

We will approach stereotypes such as *government does not function properly*, *bureaucrats are lazy* etc. as social norms in a society. We will show how such a social norm expresses itself in society, how it is diffused, and why it persists.

⁵⁶ In everyday language, *stereotypes* are often used in a normative way. The functionality of stereotypes is hardly ever recognised.

8.3 GOVERNMENT AND STEREOTYPES: OBSERVATIONS

In an article in the newspaper *De Morgen*, a prominent Belgian politician referred to the following event:

“An old man from Antwerp addressed me about the square we were both looking at. The square had been renovated entirely, and had probably never looked better. The social housing bordering the square was finally renovated. I admit, the man’s neighbourhood had to wait for a long time, but finally the entire neighbourhood was upgraded. The result could clearly be seen. Still, the entire argument of the man was one long lamentation, which he then finally summarised as ‘for us, they [=government] never do anything’” (Janssens, 2000 – own translation)

This example shows that actual government performance does not always feature prominently in evaluations of government, and that government realisations are not the only factor in an evaluation. Negative experience will start to lead a life of its own, and may gradually become a frame of reference for the formulation of an opinion on government: perceptions become theory-driven instead of fact-driven (Augoustinos and Walker, 1996). Aberbach and Walker observed in 1970 that “Satisfactory outputs stimulate trust, but trust itself predisposes a person to view outputs positively” (1970: 1202). Mortimore, dealing with public perceptions of sleaze in Britain, states that “It seems likely that an existing general disdain and distrust of politicians has made the public consciousness a fertile ground for sowing more specific suspicions” (Mortimore, 1995).

This means that negative attitudes towards government cannot only be explained by analysing individual negative attitudes, because the expression of these individual attitudes is a prejudice, fashion or cultural element. According to Citrin (1974), a *Zeitgeist* stimulated anti-political rhetoric in the 70s. Distrust may become the basic attitude towards government, and there may exist a certain social pressure to conform oneself to this basic attitude. If the general citizens’ image of the public administration is negative, people in your environment may exert social pressure onto you to conform to this *norm*. Sztompka is using the term *culture of distrust*:

“When a culture of trust -or culture of distrust- appears, the people are constrained to exhibit trust or distrust in all their dealings, independent of individual convictions, and departures from such a cultural demand meet with a variety of sanctions” (Sztompka, 1996).

This culture of distrust means that citizens take a negative attitude towards public services, not because of the way how these services work, but just *because it are public services*. Fox explains this as follows:

“Damn-gummint [*damn government*] is a conflated aggregation, the illogical and shifting mingling of perceptions, symbols, examples, and nonsequitur inferences. Consider that every customer has had a bad experience with some private enterprise. But ‘damn-bidness’ [*business*] is not a conflated aggregation in high circulation” (Fox, 1996).

In the next paragraph we will show how these stereotypes related to the public administration are expressed, and how, using the theory on stereotypes and the process of generalisation more specifically, these can be explained. We will first deal with the image of the *bureaucrat* and the *civil servant*. Then we will focus on opinions on the functioning of public services whereby special attention will be given to opinions as would the private sector work better than the public sector.

Content of the stereotype

Bureaucrats and civil servants

When the word *bureaucrat* is used, it often bears no relation to the concept of *bureaucracy* as an efficient way of organising an administration, gifted with a strong sense of duty and public ethos, as it does in Max Weber's writings (Weber, 1922). Even *civil servant* carries a negative connotation. Civil servants are lazy, or at least avoid risks (Merton, 1940). If a civil servant takes initiative, this is considered as being engendered by the wish to protect one's own or one's administration's interests, as the public choice approach would state (Niskanen, 1971; Dunleavy, 1992). In a recent book, then Flemish Minister-president Patrick Dewael states the following:

“Nowadays, many citizens are very negative or indifferent towards government. It is *bon ton* to compare civil servants with profiteers and lazy-bones. Many users and clients of public services criticise everything government does and supports in an undifferentiated way. Policemen are mentally deficient, postmen are slow, counter-clerks are grumpy, teachers are unmotivated, and ticket controllers on the tram are bullies” (Dewael, 2001:110 - own translation).

These connotations pervade all uses of the words. There are many jokes about civil servants. Most officials in TV-series are corrupt. The alienation between the administration and citizens is also a common theme in literature. Beck-Jørgensen (1994) analysed novels in which government-citizen relations took a central place (e.g. Kafka's *The Castle*). His analysis showed that when dealing with the alienation between citizen and government, novels, or the characters in it, never refer to real activities, facts, or events, but to perceived aims, consequences and contexts of this administration.

Satisfaction with the functioning of public services

Listening to citizens' conversations in the post office or on a train creates the impression that citizens have an outspoken negative image of public services. Yet, customer satisfaction surveys often show an entirely different image. The Belgian Railways proudly announce that average satisfaction among their customers amounts to a score of 7,36/10 (NMBS, 2004). Eight out of ten citizens even claim to be satisfied with the service delivery of the tax administration (Dedicated research, 2002). Recent research on the image of teachers found that citizens, contrary to what was generally believed, had a fairly positive image (Rots and Theunissen, 2001). At the same time, the literature suggests that even though (Dutch) respondents had a positive image about teachers, they were convinced their opinion was not shared by the majority of citizens in society (Vrieze, van Kessel, and Mensink, 2000). Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995) labelled such an observation the *Fenno paradox*⁵⁷: citizens have a

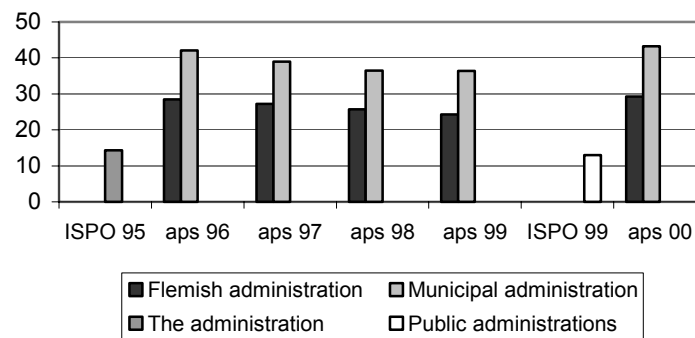
⁵⁷ University of Rochester political scientist Richard F. Fenno, Jr. was the first to observe this phenomenon.

fairly positive image of individual members of Congress (i.c. the member they have voted for), while they have a negative image of Congress, while we could in fact consider Congress as the summation of individual Members of Congress. One of the reasons they give for this is that people use other assessment standards. The evaluation of government is different from the evaluation of its specific constituting agencies (Princeton Survey Research Associates and Pew Charitable Trust, 2000). Parents evaluate their children's school in a positive way, but remain sceptical about the educational system (Loveless, 1997). Welfare agencies and its individual workers are considered as separate objects of evaluation (Soss, 1999: 86). In previous chapters we have observed many positive evaluations of specific public services as well.

Dinsdale and Marson (1999) refer to research that shows the more specific the evaluated agency is, the higher the satisfaction score becomes. At the same time, the opinion of those who have recently used a service is in general more positive, and the most recent contact with an agency is often rated better than the agency in general (Poister and Henry, 1994)⁵⁸.

The *trust in institutions* items in the Belgian APS and ISPO surveys offer a good illustration of these findings. The context of both surveys is slightly different (general survey and election survey respectively), as well as the order of questions. Still, it is possible to compare the results, as general tendencies and rankings of institutions show similar tendencies. In the APS survey, trust in the *municipal administration* and in the *Flemish administration* was measured (in 97, 98, 99, and 2000); The ISPO survey measured trust in *the administration* (95) and in *public administrations* (99). Figure 39 shows the results:

Figure 39: Images of public administration



Source: ISPO & APS surveys

The *administration* and *public administrations* are trusted less than the *Flemish* and the *municipal administration*. The level of trust depends on the level of abstraction of the concept. While we have to take different survey contexts into account, these results still confirm our hypothesis that a specific survey generates better results than a general and abstract survey.

Del Pino (2002:152) presents an overview of evolutions in the evaluation of public services in Spain. Ratings for the railways and the telephone company increase, while ratings for justice go down. The worst performing (or perceived to worst performing) agencies are the unemployment service,

⁵⁸ Poister and Henry's observations are not necessarily valid in all cases. There are also observations where non-users are considerably more negative.

justice, and the public administrations. Again, the evaluation of the public administration is lower than that of the specific services.

Table 29: Evaluation of public services in Spain⁵⁹ [level of efficiency (a lot + a fair deal) – (little + not)]

	Sep 92	July 94	July 95	Apr 96	July 96	July 97	July 98	June00
Postal service	-18	20	28	42	45	45	29	43
Public transport in cities	9	29	44	44	45	49	47	40
Air transport	17	32	43	41	46			
Railways	1	24	36	39	43	42	48	38
Education	18	22	35	28	21	18	18	7
Health care (hospitals)	-24	-2	2	8	1	11	15	8
Health care (ambulant)	-28	-8	6	8	1	10	-10	11
Social service	-12	0	19	18	15	13	16	8
Unemployment benefits agency ⁶⁰	-13	-5	17	11	9	12	14	3
The public administration⁶¹	-26	-26	-7	-19	-8	-4	0	-4
Police	0	-39	14	30	17			
Telephone	5	51	59	59	67			
Unemployment agency	-33	-23	-13	-14	-16	-13	-7	-9
Justice	-38	4	-34	-29	-35	-45	-40	-49

Source: del Pino, 2002

Our own WADO-survey found that civil servants are evaluated in a rather negative way, while specific government-related professions received ratings that were more positive. The main question should be *why* a general survey generates negative ratings, while a specific one generates ratings that are more positive (see e.g. Villoria, 2000). Our hypothesis would be that general surveys allow for a stronger impact of social norms and stereotypes on the respondents' answers. The impact of stereotypes should be rather limited in specific situations, since in these situations people have specific anchors for formulating their opinion (i.c. the actual functioning of the public service in question). The higher the level of abstraction, the more the criterion of evaluation will be related to the stereotypical images of public administrations. The lower the level of abstraction, the easier it becomes to use specific evaluation criteria. In a general survey, the social norm becomes the prime referential framework in the formulation of an opinion, due to the lack of other reference objects. In a specific survey, the prime referential framework is the actual experienced quality of the specific public service. This for instance explains why fire departments score high in satisfaction surveys: because people do not often personally encounter fire department services, it is difficult to base one's *evaluation* on actual experienced quality (Miller and Miller, 1991). Evaluations then use the mission of the fire department as a point of reference.

We do not only observe this process for specific agencies or administrations. Research in the Belgian insurance sector showed that clients' satisfaction with their insurance broker did not spill over

⁵⁹ Taken from Del Pino (2002). Table based on the studies of CIRES-Centro de Investigaciones sobre la Realidad Social, Madrid.

⁶⁰ Actually *Gestión del subsidio de desempleo*

⁶¹ *Oficinas de la Administración Pública*. It thus refers to the classical public administrations or bureaucracies, or every place where civil servants are employed.

to the image of the insurance companies (EC, 2003). This also seems to hold true for institutions in general. Steen (1996) for instance finds that in the Baltic States the church and the Army enjoy higher levels of trust. He explains these findings by referring to the symbolic function of the institutions. Both findings are not really tangible. The army for instance does not really *do* anything, except in times of war. Still, it is perceived as a symbol of national sovereignty. Citizens sympathise with the mission of the church and of the army, and this mission serves as a point of reference in the formulation of an attitude towards these institutions, because a specific tangible output to base one's opinion on is lacking.

Specific positive evaluations do not have to contradict the general negative image of government. In stereotyping theory, these specific agencies will be perceived by citizens as exceptions on the general rule. Civil servants are incompetent, but the civil servant who helped me last week was a good one. I must have been lucky. The consequence is that bad experiences influence the evaluation of public services in a negative way, while positive experiences do not bring about a positive effect in the evaluation (Hill, 1992).

Public vs. private sector

A specific expression of the *bureaucrats are lazy* stereotype is the private-public sector contrast. Deakin and Wright (1990) blame this on the political discourse that seems to use the slogan *public bad, private good* as an *Orwellian incantation*. In this discourse, the private sector is considered as superior to the public sector, and hence, privatisation will solve all problems. This dominating image seems to have lost standing in recent years. In public administration, it was confronted with a shift from NPM to *New Public Service*, and has been challenged by the anti-globalist movement, which, however, tends to move to the other extreme (private bad, public good).

In a large-scale study on differences in the evaluation of public and private services, Katz, Gutek et al. (1977) asked respondents to evaluate public and private sector services in general, as well as a recently used public and private sector service. When respondents had to compare public and private sector services, they indeed rated private sector services higher. When, however, the comparison concerned the private and public sector service that was used most recently, differences between public and private sector services evaluation disappeared. Again, stereotyping theory can be used to explain this phenomenon: in a direct comparison, the stereotype influences evaluations, while in specific situations, the impact of the stereotype disappears. Katz et al.'s findings were confirmed by other research: few differences between the evaluation of public and private sector services were found (Citizen-Centred Service network, 1999).

Van Slyke & Roch (2002) looked into satisfaction of social and health services users in Georgia, US. Several of these services are provided by government, while others are contracted out to non-profits. Satisfaction turned out to be higher among users who thought the service was provided by a non-profit, even when this was not the case. Satisfaction seems to coincide with the perceived status of the organisation, and not with actual status. Furthermore: respondents who claimed to be dissatisfied with service delivery believed to be dealing with a government-organised service rather than with a non-profit.

Generalisation of the concept *government*?

In previous paragraphs, the difference between specific and general surveys was at the core of our reasoning. Stereotypical images of government and public administration only seemed to be used when the object of discussion or surveying was not specific. *Government* is a rather heterogeneous and undefined (indefinable?) concept for most citizens. It is not at all clear whether one general attitude exists towards *government* or *the administration*, or whether this attitude is differentiated for levels and components of government. To use stereotyping theory to explain citizens' attitude towards government, there has to be, to a certain extent, generalisation. We already gave a number of examples, and other research has shown that citizens do not always (are not always able to) differentiate between governmental institutions or components (Muller and Jukam, 1977; Stipak, 1979; Steen, 1996; Mishler and Rose, 1997; Uslaner, 2002). Contamination of opinions towards the public administration by political institutions is therefore probably real.

Citizens do not only use very general concepts such as *the administration*, *the state*, or *the bureaucracy*. The seat of the administration also sometimes functions as such a general concept. The capital is not only a city, but first and foremost it is the seat of the *bureaucracy*. Uslaner (1999) in his research on trust wanted to know whether *Washington really is the problem*. For Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995), *Congress* functions as a catchall term to refer to politics and government. Belgians speak about *Brussels* and not about the federal or the regional administration. The Brussels Capital Region even blames part of its negative image on the presence of the European *bureaucracy [sic]* on its territory, which is often just designated as *Brussels* (Ministerie van het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest, 2001).

This generalisation implies that all institutions that are loosely associated with *government*, are evaluated using the same concepts and referential frameworks as the ones for evaluating *government* itself, and that an institution-specific evaluation criterion is not often used. We could therefore claim that in an evaluation of a specific institution, it is not only the actual performance that counts, but also the extent of differentiation between this specific institution and the concept of *government*. Whether somebody generalises or differentiates is part of the political socialisation (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Generalisation could therefore point to a lower level of political socialisation or to a different socialisation⁶² (Stipak, 1977).

8.4 PERSISTENCE AND DIFFUSION OF THE STEREOTYPE

The quality of individuals' bureaucratic encounters takes a central place in the efforts to create a positive image of government. The reasoning is that encountering a quality public service will eventually lead citizens to alter their image. In a second stage, this change is said to influence other people's opinion, since citizens discuss their experience with other people: my image of the public sector becomes more positive because I hear about the positive experiences of family and friends. This approach does not take other channels for diffusing stereotypes into account.

Expressions of stereotypes differ, and a number of stages can be distinguished (Allport, 1958):

⁶² Or, on the contrary, generalisation may be an expression of successful socialisation when the stereotypical image of government is the social norm.

Antilocution: antagonism is expressed in discussion and interaction with like-minded people, and sometimes with strangers. Possibly the most important form of antagonism towards public services can be found in discussions and chats among friends or colleagues. Antilocution is not only an expression of the stereotype; it also reinforces this stereotype. We will use social diffusion theory and the *spiral of silence* hypothesis to explain the diffusion and persistence of stereotypes.

Avoidance: In a second stage, members of the out-group are avoided, even when this creates discomfort for the avoider. Ott and Shafritz (1995) give the example of a person applying for a drivers' licence but who acts in a very defensive and combative way because of the expectations this person has, expectations that are based on the stereotype. The result of such an approach is that the civil servant does not bother to help this person in an efficient way. We are thus confronted with a self-fulfilling prophecy, or a self-regenerating cycle. One of the most obvious expressions of this avoidance behaviour are recent concerns by government for recruiting people. Because of avoidance reactions, changing a stereotype becomes very difficult: a government that wants to improve the image of the public administration, has severe difficulties in attracting competent staff, politicians will not be willing to provide budgets since it is their experience that citizens' attitudes do not change, and citizens do not believe communication on government modernisation initiatives, since government is not a trusted communicator. The consequence is that large parts of government communication are not seen or read by citizens. This avoidance is possibly also an explanation for the low levels of knowledge of politics among Flemish citizens (Cambré, Billiet, and Swyngedouw, 1997).

The next three stages in the expression of stereotypes are discrimination, physical assaults and extermination. We will not discuss these in detail.

Diffusion and interpersonal influence

The stereotype as social norm

We will not discuss the way how a stereotype comes into existence, but we will discuss the processes by which such a stereotype continues to exist, using diffusion theory, prominent in communication science (Rogers, 1995). Though these diffusion theories have been conceived in research on innovations, they also seem to be useful for research on the diffusion of opinions. Every additional or new (or repetition of old) information on the functioning of public services can be considered a specific innovation of which the diffusion can be studied. The most interesting aspect of the diffusion theory approach is that it does not reduce communication to mass media and -relevant for this research- government communication, but that opinion leaders and group dynamics take a prominent place, as does interpersonal communication (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1965). Contrary to many classic approaches to government communication these theories stress the importance of communication networks and multi-actor approaches.

Huyse has drawn attention to environmental factors determining political participation. He found differences in participation depending on the place of residence of respondents. Every region seemed to have specific cultural and structural factors determining participation: Participation could depend on the presence of political personalities in villages, local power relations, specific political historical factors, etc. Structurally, it means that when many people are participating in a certain area, the threshold becomes lower for others to participate as well. In villages with low participation, it becomes more difficult to take the first step (Huyse, 1969).

In his research on political attitudes, Weatherford (1982) found that political attitudes are influenced by the social context in which the owners of these attitudes reside. This means that the focus in attitude research shifts from mere socio-demographic characteristics to networks. Attitudes within a social network (a local network in Weatherford's research) will show a certain degree of convergence and harmonisation. Brudney and England, in research on evaluations of public service delivery come to a comparable conclusion: "Similarly, given the demographic homogeneity of most urban neighbourhoods, an individual's assessment of city services may result from his or her adoption of the norms and expectations of a trusted reference group, rather than from an independent judgment of the quality of services per se" (1982: 128). Litt in 1963 found that attitudes of political cynicism "...may be acquired as a community norm, a part of the political acculturation process..." (1963: 139). Johnston et al. discovered that "similar people vote differently in different places" (2004: 391), and that people's attitudes are influenced by a neighbourhood effect. Even though the recipient of a message selects and interprets incoming messages (Fauconnier, 1995), the reception itself is to a large degree influenced by social norms. Furthermore, "diffusion processes, for instance, are both specialized and highly subject to self-selection of interaction partners" (Weatherford, 1982: 122). Government communication therefore does not automatically generate the desired results, as the source of this communication is not necessarily trusted, simply because government is not part of the social network of the receiver. Information from peers will no doubt 'overrule' government information.

According to the *spiral of silence* hypothesis, people's perception of the composition of the public opinion influences the expression of their own opinion. This behaviour results from the desire to be integrated in the group and from a reluctance to be isolated when uttering divergent opinions (Noelle-Neuman, 1974; Glynn, Hayes, and Shanahan, 1997). One's own opinion, or at least the publicly expressed opinion, is thus influenced by what one perceives to be the general opinion. This process is, according to Schedler (1993: 422), often at work in opinion polls. Many questions are phrased in the negative, so that it may appear to respondents that having a negative attitude towards government is a matter of common sense. In the same way, Eliasoph stated that "...anti-institutional sentiment has become mainstream" (1998: 129). Personal attitudes and opinions on government can thus be approached as social norms. The direction of this influence is not so obvious however: citizens may be stimulated to adopt the dominant attitude, but they may just as well take the existence of a dominant opinion as a stimulus to strengthen one's own divergent attitude (see e.g. Scheufele and Eveland, 2001).

Similar research relates to perceptions of compatriots' opinions on racial segregation in the US. Few expressed themselves as proponents of racial segregation, still the number of segregationists in society was perceived to be two to three times higher than was suggested by a accumulation of all individual responses (O'Gorman, 1975). For O'Gorman this pattern depends on the cultural setting in which respondents are being asked to express themselves: "within a cultural setting that stresses racial equality, the existence of racial segregation benefiting whites at the expense of blacks can lead whites to the not unreasonable conclusion that such separation is preferred by many, if not most, whites. On the other hand, the presence of blacks in more racially integrated settings would warrant a quite different conclusion by whites about white racial values and norms". Very important in this process is that the perception of the dominant opinion often does not correspond to reality (Fields and Schuman, 1976).

The discursive aspect of (the use and persistence) stereotypes is at the centre of Van Langenhove's and Harré's research. For them, stereotypes are a rhetorical instrument for positioning oneself in society. Research does not only have to consider the *content* of stereotypes and the cognitive processes leading to the emergence and creation of these stereotypes, but it also has to analyse the way how these stereotypes are present in society (diffusion and distribution) (Van Langenhove and Harré, 1994: 368). They illustrate their approach with an example on philosophers, which can easily be applied on civil servants:

"Probably, in many cases the reason [for using the stereotype of a 'philosopher' - svdw] can be very simple: people know that a certain public image is often used and that it makes rather a good impression when one simply conforms to the 'general' idea. So without too much reflection they will call upon that image. In terms of positioning this means first and above all that the speaker is positioning him/herself towards the other speaker as somebody who acts in conformity with the 'general ideas' that live in what(s)he believes to be their common moral order. If the addressee sees him(her)self as part of a moral order in which the cartoon-stereotypes of philosophers are not much appreciated, (s)he will possibly object and say something like 'wait a minute, that's unfair, not all philosophers are etc.'. Whether or not the other speaker will object depends to some extent on his/her beliefs about philosophers but equally so on how (s)he wants the conversation to proceed. If these persons are in the middle of a business transaction, person B will probably not take up this point in order not to upset the other party." (Van Langenhove and Harré, 1994: 367)

This perception of the public opinion (or of how one thinks one's statements will generally be perceived) may be influenced by numerous factors. In this paragraph, we will deal with interpersonal communication and urban legends. In subsequent paragraphs we will deal with media-influence and opinion-leaders (politicians and civil servants).

Since we assume that the image of public services depends to a large extent on stereotypes, we can rightfully suggest that telling *horror stories* on public services contributes to the storyteller's status. These stories gradually detach from their origins, and will whither away from the original facts or narrator. In many cases we can speak about administrative myths and urban legends. These myths, precisely because they are taken for the truth, influence opinions and come to take their place in the national and political culture.

Experience with public services is an important source of dissatisfaction. In many cases, opinions are based on other people's alleged experience: people who had a negative experience will tell about this, while satisfied people normally do not. A classic example in marketing handbooks claims that dissatisfied customers discuss their experience with an average of seven people. This means that negative experiences are being diffused much faster. Improvements in service delivery thus have to be organised on a larger scale in order to influence public opinion.

Though attractive, this diffusion approach is also one of the main stumbling blocks in explaining negative stereotypes on government and public services. Research on social capital and trust suggests that people with higher social capital also have higher trust, and thus have a more positive attitude towards government (Elchardus and Smits, 2001). This would mean that the factors social capital research identifies as contributing to trust are in our approach factors that lead to the diffusion of negative images. If a negative stereotype of government exists, membership in organisations would

lead to a higher exposure to these stereotypes, and consequently to their reinforcement: social capital as the channel for diffusion of the dominant discourse. These findings do not mean our approach becomes invalid. Most social capital research focuses on group memberships, while our approach takes into account a broader array of diffusion channels (press, accidental by-passers, ...). Group memberships do not tell us anything about the internal functioning of the group: how strong is the social pressure within the group? A limited number of social contacts with high social pressure is different from a broad range of encounters with open discussion and little pressure. Social capital research tends to approach trust in government in a rather narrow way. Trust is a virtue, a must. The central element in the approach is creating or preserving a value consensus in society. Social capital also has a *dark side* (Putnam, 2000: 350-363). A critical approach to established institutions, values and norms is then not appreciated, while social contestation can fulfil an important creative role (Cohen, 1999; e.g., reacting to negative attitudes vis-à-vis the administration that one perceives as unjust). The function of and possibilities for *contestation* in a social group, and its relationship with social capital remains unclear. Weatherford offers an interesting approach for further research. He found that "...upper status individuals seem to belong to networks characterised by more disagreement in political discussions than lower status persons" (1982: 129). This implies that the relationship between social capital and trust is different for every socio-economic status group, and thus, diffusion dynamics may also be different.

Many organisations function as channels for the diffusion of distrust. Membership in an extreme-right or anti-system group is *social* capital, but it is not the social capital that is commonly defined as trust enhancing. Organisations in which the dominant (only?) attitude is one of a malfunctioning government and public administration are perfect channels for the diffusion of these negative images. Different types of organisation lead to the socialisation of its members in different norms. These social norms are not necessarily the same as those that are dominant in society in general. Billiet et al. (1997) find a relationship between trust and membership in a political organisation, but not between trust and membership in other organisations. This suggests that members are being socialised in different sets of norms. Research on the relationship between social capital and trust in government has to distinguish between two processes: social capital as a generator of trust because group membership may teach people co-operation and democracy, and social capital as an important factor in the socialisation of its members in its dominant norms and beliefs, that can contain positive as well as negative attitudes towards government.

Social opinions on the functioning of the administration

We perceive the present dominant attitude towards the administration as being of a stereotypical nature, but we cannot be entirely sure of this, and the *objective reality* behind the stereotype is difficult to measure. The WADO survey contained a number of items on the social context in which citizens express themselves on the functioning of government. Answers are shown in Table 30.

Table 30: General opinions on the functioning of government

%	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree
The general opinion in society is that government doesn't work well	1,0	23,4	25,6	44,4	5,6
Saying that government works well is just asking to be mocked	2,1	42,2	27,1	24,6	4,0
Everybody has an opinion on politics and civil servants, but in fact people do not know enough about it to formulate such an opinion	0,9	10,0	14,6	62,7	11,8
The way in which you hear people talking about government in pubs, on the train, at the bakery etc. corresponds to reality	3,2	35,9	31,1	27,0	2,7

Source: WADO F2F 2002

Almost three quarters of the respondents claim that people do not know enough about politics and civil servants to formulate an opinion. Young respondents do not agree with the statement that *Saying that government works well is just asking to be mocked*. The opinions of older respondents are evenly distributed between the *agree* and *disagree* categories. It are the lower educated and those with a lower income who agree that *The way in which you hear people talking about government in pubs, on the train, at the bakery etc. corresponds to reality*. It is very interesting to see that there are significant correlations between the answers on this item and attitudes towards immigrants (they abuse social security, they are a threat to our employment,...)⁶³. This could indicate that a comparable process is at the basis of both opinions: conformity to a perceived dominant opinion in society.

Table 31: Satisfaction with the functioning of public services * 'the dominant opinion is that government does not function well'.

	Not satisfied	Not satisfied, not dissatisfied	Satisfied
Disagree	2,0	7,0	16,8
Not agree and not disagree	2,7	11,2	11,9
Agree	12,4	22,8	13,2

Source: WADO F2F 2002

There are almost no respondents that *disagree* with the statement that the dominant opinion in society on government is negative, and that are at the same time personally dissatisfied with the public services. Being personally satisfied while claiming that the dominant opinion is negative on the other

⁶³ Correlations: $\tau = .237$ for *migrant workers come here to take profit of our social security*; $\tau = .190$ for *migrant workers are a threat to the employment of Belgians*.

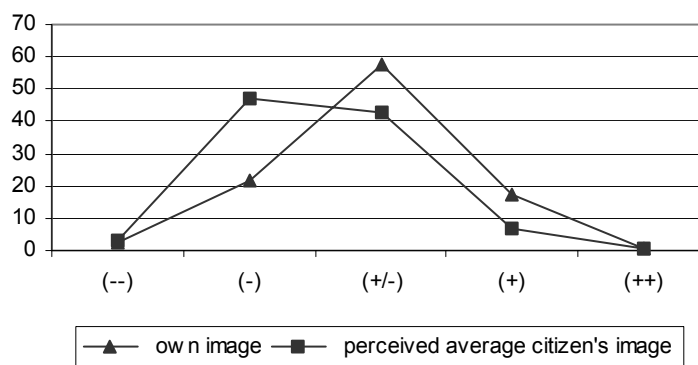
hand occurs frequently. *Those who are dissatisfied think others are also dissatisfied. Those who are satisfied have a broad array of opinions on how society in general thinks.*

We have stated that there is an interaction between one's own opinion and the perception of the general opinion in society. The WADO mail survey 2002 therefore contained a number of items that allow us to explore this further:

- What is the general image you yourself have of civil servants and public services?
- What is, according to you, the general image your family members have of civil servants and public services?
- What is, according to you, the general image the average Flemish citizen has of civil servants and public services?

One's own image is considered as being more positive than that attributed to family members, but difference is marginal ($\tau = .629$). The image attributed to the population in general still correlates with one's own opinion ($\tau = .483$), but it is considerably more negative (on average 2.54 vs. 2.92 on a 1-5 scale). 48.2% do not differentiate between their answers, 39.5% attributes the population in general a more negative image, while 7.4% thinks the average population has a more positive opinion than oneself.

Figure 40: Perceived image of the public administration among the average population



Source: WADO mail 2002

About 40% has a rather positive image of the public administration, but thinks the image of the average Flemish is more negative. Respondents with a higher education tend to rate their own image of the public administration as being more positive than that of the general population. Civil servants seem to realise that the average population perceives the public administration in a more negative way than they do themselves. Also, students and people in a management function think the population has an image of the PA that is more negative than their own.

On the other hand, we see a (small) group with a rather negative image of the public administration. They think the general population has a more positive image than they have themselves. In this group, we find more manual workers, tradesmen, and self-employed respondents. What is remarkable is that 25% of this category claims to vote for the extreme-right.

These observations suggest that there are different ways for explaining dissatisfaction with the public administration. While half of the respondents do not differentiate between their own image and

that attributed to the general population, one group seems to think that the population in general has a rather negative image of the population while they have a rather positive image of the administration. For a small group, we seem to perceive feelings of relative deprivation. Members of this group are dissatisfied themselves, but think the population at large is rather satisfied. Possibly, they perceive the own negative experience as exceptional. Also, the relationship between one's own image and the image attributed to the general population is stronger among older people than for the younger ones.

Bureau bashing

Bureau bashing refers to negative expressions (often by politicians) on the public administration, and is used normatively. It implies two phenomena:

- the expressions are selective and at least partially untrue
- the expressions are motivated by a certain degree of political self-interest and do not have bringing up administrative malfunctioning as their main aim.

Bureau bashing is not only a source of negative images of the administration, but also a product: Government's image, and not an evaluation of the facts is the base of the behaviour of political actors (Ringeling, 1993: 225). Bureau bashing is a popular theme in research on civil servants' image (Lee, 2000). Haque (1998), however, states the phenomenon is a recent one. According to him, open attacks on the administration by politicians did not occur frequently in the past, and started when the population became increasingly negative about the *political system*. Politicians would have started to *bash* for political profit, because they knew this feeling existed in society. This shift from dissatisfaction with the *political* system to *bureau bashing* is partly supported by numbers: The Canadian Centre for Management Development refers to Canadian research that asked citizens whom they referred to when expressing trust or distrust in government: 67 % thought about politicians, while only 16 % thought about civil servants (Dinsdale and Marson, 1999). The American *Council for Excellence in Government* (1999) asked citizens who they thought was responsible for what is wrong with government. Government employees were found at the bottom of the list while special interest groups, media, and elected officials were on top. At the same time, government employees were not thought to have the potential to improve the situation. This, of course, does not tell us anything on why citizens think this way: because they see civil servants as powerless, or because they see them as incompetent.

In most cases, *administrations* enjoy higher levels of trust than *political* institutions, but differences are not dramatic, except when we compare it with *political parties*. Dekker (2001) found that when levels of trust in a list of institutions is analysed, citizens' opinion on civil servants is related to both opinions on politics and on economic-bureaucratic powers.

Thad E. Hall (2002) analysed speeches in two legislatures of the American Congress about the way individuals in government and the administration were referred to. He distinguished four words that were used: *bureaucrat*, *public servant*, *civil servant*, and *government worker*. *Bureaucrat* was used most often and was in most cases part of a negative context. Negative use of the term even seemed to increase, something he related to a *Republican* majority during the second term. *Democrats* were found to use the term *bureaucrat* in answers to Republican attacks. The other concepts tended to be used in a positive context. *Public servant* referred more often to government functionaries that were retiring or to the parliamentarians themselves. Hall also found that the members of Congress almost

never referred to a specific organisation when speaking about individuals in the administration, what makes him conclude that *'bureaucrats' are everywhere yet nowhere*. In more than half of the cases, the members of Congress not only treated bureaucrats in a negative way, they also contrasted this group of bureaucrats to other groups: teachers and parents know better how to teach than a *Washington bureaucrat*. The word *bureaucrat* is used as a negative symbol to contrast an alternative that is deemed better. *Bureaucrat* is used as a word to frame debates in Congress (e.g. on the role of government) just as *communist* or *big business* was used in other periods. This political use of the word makes bureaucrats, according to Wildavsky (1988), victims of debates and discussions in which the bureaucrats cannot participate themselves.

The aim of bureau bashing is to facilitate the accomplishment of political aims, such as bringing one's party to power. From one perspective, this is a positive outcome of bureau bashing. But it also has detrimental effects, e.g. on the recruitment capacity of government (Haque, 1998). Hall (2002) refers to statements by Bill Clinton whether *bureau bashing* has contributed to a situation where the bombing of government buildings (cf. Oklahoma) is considered in certain environments as *just*. Terry (1997) thinks that the political rhetoric *does* influence the way citizens think about civil servants as well as the attitudes of these civil servants.

One important positive effect of *bureau bashing* deserves to be mentioned here: it helps politicians garner support for administrative reform. This observation relates to discussions we have dealt with previously on the constructive role of distrust in government. Distrust may be important as it helps to move away from the status quo (Parry, 1976). Bureau bashing may therefore help to form coalitions. This is exactly how *Reinventing Government* was promoted in the USA: "the ends (less costly administration of government) is worth the admittedly questionable means (misleading stories and statistics)" (Moe, 1994). But there is more: The same author also claims that the basic report of this reform exercise, *From red tape to results: creating a government that works better and costs less* (Gore, 1994), was written with the express aim to cater for journalists' need for *horror stories*.

Media pictures

The media is often accused of strengthening feelings of distrust in government because of their selective attention for events. For Lee and Paddock however, "Popular culture *reflects* [italics svdww] the hostility to government and bureaucracy that is deeply embedded in American history, society and culture" (2001: 1): the media does not create an image but merely reflect the common image fund in society. In Flanders, there does not exist much research on the way how government, administrations, and civil servants are depicted in the media, with the exception of some very specific studies, e.g. the one by Van den Bulck (2000) on the image of the police in film and TV-series. It is frequently suggested that much of the image of civil servants' image in Belgium is still dramatically influenced by the popular 1970s-80s TV-series *De Collega's*, on the adventures of a group of civil servants in a federal ministry.

The American *Council for Excellence in Government*, a non-profit aimed at strengthening citizens' trust in government and at promoting participation by making government and its role better known, commissioned research on how certain groups, and civil servants more specifically, are depicted in TV-series (Lichter, Lichter, Amundson, and Center for Media and Public Affairs, 1999; Council for Excellence in Government, 2001). For this research, 1400 episodes of well-known TV-series since 1955 were analysed, producing thousands of characters. One quarter of these characters had a profession related to government. The results were not surprising, but worth noting:

- The way that government officials are being depicted in the media has become ever more negative since 1955.
- Government officials in TV-series commit twice as many crimes as the other professional groups.
- When government officials are being featured in a positive way, they often are whistleblowers, or people who stand up against *the system*. Positive features are being related to specific persons, negative ones to the system, which is a process we have identified before.
- Teachers and law and order officials are more often than other officials depicted in a positive way, but they are in these cases not presented as *government* officials.

The second part of this research referred to 1999-2001 and found that government officials' image was growing to be increasingly positive. Civil servants were even one of those groups that made the most significant progress. This finding was in part attributed to the effect of the popular series *The West Wing*. Lee and Paddock (2001), in their study on the *movie bureaucrat hero*, found that these tended to be front-line officials delivering socially approved services. Most of these heroes were men, and wore uniforms. Lee and Paddock do, however, partly confirm what was reported above by explicitly limiting their study to *heroes* and to individuals, not structures and organisations. Overall, few movies they studied featured bureaucrats in a positive role, and in those that did, the focus was on heroes (see also Gabrielian, 2000).

These findings again confirm the existence of a negative bureaucratic stereotype. According to the expectancy violation theory, persons who violate our expectations are evaluated in a more extreme way than people with similar comparable characteristics (Hinton, 2000: 96). A hard-working *civil servant* will therefore more frequently be depicted as a hero, than would be the case for a *normal* hard-working *person*.

As we have mentioned previously, there is no research on this issue in Flanders. Nevertheless, there are good reasons why there would be similar processes at work in Flanders. We have mentioned the influence of the once popular TV series *De Collega's*. We should also mention the positive impact TV can have: police and army are said to have enjoyed increased popularity following the TV series *Flikken* and *Windkracht 10*. Still, positive approaches in the (news) media often focus on individuals (e.g. Van Noppen, Paul Van Buitenen, ...). A good example of this are the courts: while suffering from extremely low levels of trust, it has a number of *heroes* such as judge Connerotte and the police magistrate for Dendermonde D'Hondt.

Diffusion by civil servants

Civil servants themselves also contribute to the continuation of their -justified or unjustified- negative image. Research on the recruitment capacity of the Belgian federal administration revealed that many civil servants thought the negative image of civil servants among the general population was exaggerated, but not necessarily entirely incorrect. According to them, the older generation of civil servants was to blame for this (Hondeghe, Parys, Steen, and Vandenaabeele, 2002). Their own image of civil servants did not differ substantially from that of the population at large. The civil servants participating in the research reported a certain fatigue in responding to stereotypical stories they heard and many stated not to do any efforts anymore to refute these.

During a presentation of our research for civil servants, one of the attendants, a civil servant, stated not to be surprised by the negative stereotypes that exist about civil servants, considering the way that civil servants themselves talk about their administration. Yet, drawing a line where legitimate

criticism on one's own administration ends and where negativism starts is difficult. Politicians are also seen to display similar behaviour: American research revealed that it is often the politicians themselves that are the most critical of the functioning of parliament (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 1995).

8.5 SOCIAL ENGINEERING: CHANGING OR CIRCUMVENTING THE STEREOTYPE?

Governments are concerned with the negative image their administration has. What we want to do in this last paragraph is to offer some possibilities for changing citizens' opinion on the public administration. On normative grounds, there is no reason to plea for a change of the stereotype, and therefore the recommendations should be interpreted as solutions *given the aim* of governments, namely to get rid of the stereotypical negative image of civil servants. Stereotypes also have their merits. Negative framing of *bureaucrats* is said to have contributed to support for recent administrative reforms. In the pressure for these reforms realities and images or symbols are intrinsically linked, and the latter often had a creative effect. There is growing attention for the importance and indeed merits of symbols and rhetoric in public administration (Farmer and Patterson, 2003). Harmonizing reality and image is therefore perhaps not only impossible, but also not entirely desirable.

A frequent suggestion in consulting circles is that government should communicate more often and better. Classic government communication, however, is just one of many channels via which the opinion on public services is diffused. It may by now be clear that initiatives to improve the functioning of the administration, and communication about these improvements, will not necessarily lead to a change in the image or the stereotype of civil servants. Quality improvements could lead to more positive assessments in e.g. customer satisfaction surveys, because these are able to control the context in which an opinion is uttered. The specificity of this context makes the functioning of the administration under question the prime reference framework for the creation of an opinion. For general opinion on the functioning of bureaucracies, this specific context is not present in most cases, which makes the stereotypical image the prime referential framework.

Based on our analysis of the reasons for the persistence of the stereotypical image, we can identify two possible ways of changing the negative stereotype. The first focuses on the *specification of opinions* and is an accommodation of the stereotype by making it redundant; the second consists of a frontal attack on the stereotype itself by focusing on its diffusion dynamics.

Strategy 1: Circumventing the stereotype

The first approach builds upon the observation that the more specific the object of evaluation becomes, the more positive the image, i.e. the less impact of the stereotype. *Bureaucrats* have a negative image while teachers, nurses, and fire fighters are valued highly. Central administrations, ministries, and the like, do not enjoy public support, while the public is positive on the local administration and specific agencies. It is to be expected that if one changes one's identity from *civil servant in the Ministry of Public Works* to *engineer designing airports*, or from *health bureaucrat* to *hospital manager* or simply *doctor* (even when this doctor is only involved in administrative tasks and not practicing medicine), that the public appreciation increases. Then there is no longer a *Federal Government* organising something, instead, a consortium of very specific *Agencies for...* (see also

Dubnick and Justice, 2002). Marlowe recommends a similar strategy: "It seems that public administration's principal challenge in rebuilding its tarnished image is actually two challenges in one. That is, before the bureaucracy can improve its image, it must find a way to distinguish itself from its parent institutions" (2003: 21).

Such an approach does not actually *change* the stereotype; it simply removes a number of professions and institutions from the headers *bureaucrat* or *government*, and is therefore a defensive reaction, which gives no guarantee for the future. Though it can work in many cases, there remain professions and agencies that do not qualify for such a strategy. Moreover, the *emptying* of the categories *bureaucrat* or *government* may result in a rest-category filled with *bureaucrats* and *administrations* dealing with coordination, general policy preparation, ceremonial functions etc., thereby actually strengthening the stereotype because of the lack of tangibility of their tasks. However, the most important argument against this approach is the possible loss of a collective *governmental identity* and *esprit de corps* among civil servants. From the creation of multiple crosscutting identities, it follows that the previously existing single dominant image is undermined. Stereotyping theorists would describe this phenomenon more generally: "... stereotype change will not occur through encountering actual members of the category. Rather, change will occur with the formation of new social representations that then get used in discourse, or through changes in the positions taken within discourse" (Van Langenhove and Harré, 1994).

Strategy 2: Changing the stereotype: communicating to all stakeholders

The second approach for challenging the negative stereotype focuses on the dynamics of diffusion and preservation. It tries to remove the constraints for expressing oneself in a contra-stereotypical way by creating a new dominant image. This approach requires an active role of government, since it has to try to dominate the public discourse. A certain critical mass of positive communication is needed in order to counter the citizens' selective perception and break the existing social norm. In this way, the threshold for expressing oneself in a contrastereotypical way is lowered.

Civil servant characters featured in TV series have to radiate a positive image while civil servants themselves have to refrain from publicly discussing the negative characteristics of their jobs, politicians have to refrain from bureau bashing, etc. Massive communication on modernization and quality improvement initiatives may also contribute to this end. Unfortunately, government's impact on most of these aspects is rather limited, and the need for a domination in the discourse implies that scattered initiatives will not generate the desired result, because they will, according to the stereotype theory, be disregarded as *exceptions* to the general rule. Nevertheless, governments can train their staff to act as trust entrepreneurs; they can try to make politicians aware of the consequences of their words, etc.

Such an approach would be rather unprecedented but not necessarily impossible. With regard to campaigns against drunk driving, Dearing and Rogers (1996) gave the example of how its initiators managed to convince Hollywood to include designated drivers into their TV-series. In a similar way, some politicians refuse to be photographed while smoking, because they are concerned about the message it sends to young people. It may be clear that such a social engineering process can be time-consuming and that results may not come immediately. Furthermore, it is likely to encounter resistance because of democratic concerns. The boundary between *honest communication* and *propaganda* is often not very clear, and such social engineering initiatives may create an atmosphere in which critical comments are not appreciated.

8.6 CONCLUSION: THE IMPACT OF DOMINANT ATTITUDES

Goodsell's approach has often been taken for granted: specific objects are evaluated more favourably than general ones. This need not be the case: "The conventional wisdom in political science and social psychology has been that abstract attitude objects are processed differently than concrete ones. [...] The simple symbolic politics view [...] assumes that processing of political symbols depends on the evaluations associated with them, not on the symbol's level of abstraction." (Sears, 2001: 20). Evaluations thus depend on the symbolic content of concepts and objects, and not on the level of abstraction. The more positive evaluation of specific objects and the more negative evaluation of abstract objects is possible according to the symbolic politics view. This is not due to the level of abstraction, but to the mere observation that the abstract objects studied in PA (government, bureaucracy) often bear negative symbolic content, while specific objects in many cases have a positive symbolic content. The fact that these different connotations happen to correspond to an abstract-specific divergence is thus a coincidence. Indeed, it is very possible that citizens combine a positive attitude towards public transport in general and towards a specific bus company, with a negative view towards the public train company. In other words, "A simple symbolic politics theory would explain the less favourable evaluation of the more abstract objects as principally due to the different manifest symbolic content presented at each level of abstraction (and the different conditioned associations to those different symbols), not to the difference in level of abstraction per se." (Sears, 2001: 21)

Both theories, however, have a similar core: in the specific-abstract dichotomy, governments have to try to make the objects of evaluation more specific, while in the symbolic politics approach, they have to try to exclude symbolic affects from citizens' evaluation (at least when this symbolic affect is negatively framed). Explaining citizens' opinion on the public administration probably is not fundamentally different from other attitudes. In Zaller's theory, the opinion citizens express is influenced by the accessibility of the attitude (Zaller, 1996). This naturally means that our object-related approach in Chapter 1 is not entirely relevant, as we first need to know more about the centrality of certain objects of government in citizens' conception or mental associative network of the concept of government. The concept *government* is not necessarily a stable one, nor should it be the same for all citizens.

Attitudes that can be accessed better should, according to these theories, result in evaluations with a higher consistency. *Bureaucracy* or *public services* are concepts that encompass a multitude of aspects. Subsequent evaluations may therefore differ. More specific opinions are accessed in a more standardised way. The encounter with a bus-driver may for this reason take a central role in evaluations of the public transport, while this centrality is not so obvious when expressing opinions on *the public administration*. The large difference between *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* and *service satisfaction*, which was at the core of our analysis in 7.2, is far easier to understand when taking these considerations into account. The observations in 6.1 that services of a more homogeneous nature often receive better satisfaction ratings than heterogeneous ones can also be explained within this framework: homogeneous services simply have fewer possible objects of reference. The homogeneous-heterogeneous differences may therefore not be fundamentally different from the specific-general dichotomy.

Performance or stereotypes alone do not sufficiently explain the image of the administration or of civil servants. The main challenge is to determine when, why, and to what extent the evaluation is based on real experience rather than on the existing stereotype. When citizens give their opinion on government, they can use two different levels of answers: the general, ideological or stereotypical level and the specific, pragmatic level (Katz et al., 1977; Rainey, 1996). Which level is selected depends on the context of evaluation. During a spontaneous discussion in a pub, the stereotype will be used more frequently, while the actual experience with a service will dominate in a customer satisfaction survey. In formulating an opinion, people tend to use the most easily accessible facts and ideas (Zaller, 1996). Context determines the content of an attitude, which makes that attitudes often are unstable (Wilson and Hodges, 1992; Tourangeau, Rips, and Rasinski, 2000). In many cases, this most easily accessible idea is the stereotypical image of *government* or *bureaucrat*, but in other cases, specific ideas are available to formulate one's opinion.

Chapter 9 ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: BEYOND ENCOUNTERS?

Die Welt des Glücklichen ist eine andere als die des Unglücklichen.

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1922, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, 6.43)

Citizens do not necessarily refer to public services when constructing their attitudes on public services, and general opinions on government may influence specific evaluations. In this section, it is claimed citizens' evaluations of the public sector are not necessarily unique evaluations. They may be integrated into larger attitudinal tendencies, which are, as was suggested already in 4.7, not necessarily related to socio-demographics. Social factors come back into play. In the process of opinion formulation, not only the differentiation between government agencies may be vague and imprecise, but also the government-society divide may be blurred.

In Chapter 1 we explored the contribution of specific public services and so-called High Impact Agencies to general attitudes towards the public administration and government. In 4.7 and in the previous chapter, we analysed processes in society as an explanation for the attitude towards public services and government (resp. socio-demographic differences and stereotyping). Our analysis of socio-demographic characteristics, however, revealed that these characteristics do not help us to explain trust and satisfaction. We also saw that opinions about the public administration are severely influenced by methodological shortcomings (what does an item as *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* actually measure?) and by the impact of stereotypes and dominant opinions in one's neighbourhood. Disentangling cause and effect is crucial, but this is exactly the issue that is at the core of our problem. This chapter will focus on the question whether citizens' attitude towards the public administration and government is influenced by factors that are internal to this public administration and government, or rather by societal factors and personal attitudes.

The key challenge in this chapter will be to show readers the pitfalls of treating statistical correlations and semantic causal chains as actual explanations for satisfaction and trust, as is far too often the case in political discourse and journalistic approaches to the issue. A survey showing that citizens who think government wastes money, that it is inefficient and that it does not give enough information, are citizens who do not trust government, does therefore not necessarily mean that they

distrust government *because* it wastes money, is inefficient or does not give enough information. Observing these frequencies does not even necessarily mean that these citizens' specific opinion on waste, efficiency and information is considerably worse than that of other citizens.

9.1 DISSATISFACTION: INDICATIONS RATHER THAN CAUSES

A central element in most studies on citizens' attitudes towards the public administration is the desire to identify reasons for negative attitudes within the administration itself. Approaching the problem in this way is extremely dangerous. Such an approach assumes at the outset that all variables used are independent. However, there are methodological effects that cannot be disregarded. The inattentive researcher could conclude that citizens are not satisfied with public services because they do not consider these efficient, because citizens do not feel informed, because they think government wastes money, because they perceive civil servants as self-serving etc. When of course *all* of these variables come into play, some far deeper explanation is needed. One would expect that dissatisfaction is a result of discontent about specific aspects. When all aspects are withheld, however, it is suggested that these aspects *reflect* rather than *explain* dissatisfaction with public services.

Let us give some examples to support our point. The surveys we used (*Werken aan de Overheid*, WADO) were commissioned by the ministry of the Flemish Community and their principal aim was to analyse causes of discontent with the public administration. To this end, a broad range of questions was asked dealing with possible deficiencies in the administration: lack of information, uncaring civil servants, lack of speed and efficiency, political interference in public services etc. The traditional way of dealing with the answers on this kind of survey questions is to treat them as actual causes of discontent. We will give some examples why this is a dangerous way of dealing with the findings, a view we share with Ruscio:

"Reactions to the decline (*of trust, svdw*) have certainly not been lacking, but they typically follow a predictable formula: an analyst's alarmed response which is used to justify a set of prescriptions favored by the analyst. Trust can be restored by - take your pick - term limits, balanced budgets, regulatory reform, reinventing government, campaign reform, responsible journalism, stronger political parties, a third political party, vigorous state and local government, constraints on lobbying or an end to divided government" (Ruscio, 1997: 454).

In the survey, we asked respondents to indicate whether they considered government staff as helpful, friendly, reliable, fast, comprehensible, competent, and accessible. One would expect that such a question would generate an in-depth insight into the reasons for discontent. The questions indeed show a certain degree of variation. Respondents disagreed most on the statement that government officials are fast.

Table 32: Government staff/officials are in general...⁶⁴

	<i>helpful</i>	<i>friendly</i>	<i>reliable</i>	<i>fast</i>	<i>comprehensible</i>	<i>competent</i>	<i>accessible</i>
disagree	11.9	12.0	11.0	49.3	21.9	10.7	21.3
neutral	26.7	34.8	36.7	33.8	40.0	41.8	35.0
Agree0.	61.4	53.2	52.3	16.9	38.1	47.6	43.8

Source: WADO F2F 2002

Still, factor analysis reveals that these items load on one single factor explaining 53% of variance. Treating these items, or one of them, as explanations for dissatisfaction would therefore be a very tricky thing to do. Looking at the findings in this table could lead one to conclude that the speed by which government officials work is the main cause for dissatisfaction with public services. This is difficult to uphold when looking at a regression of these 7 items on *satisfaction with the functioning of public services*. The model has a pseudo R² of .151, but *fast* is not returned as significant in the model. A conservative approach only returns *reliable* and *competent* as explanatory variables, while the frequency table alone does not support this.

Table 33: Staff characteristics and satisfaction with public services

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Helpful	0.222	0.098	0.023
Friendly	0.059	0.098	0.548
Reliable	0.390	0.092	0.000
Fast	0.143	0.082	0.079
Comprehensible	0.112	0.090	0.212
Competent	0.385	0.092	0.000
Accessible	0.035	0.081	0.670

Source: WADO F2F 2002

For the same reason, our question about measures for improving the functioning of public services failed. We asked respondents to pick the three most important measures to improve from a (non-rotated) list of 7. The list consisted of:

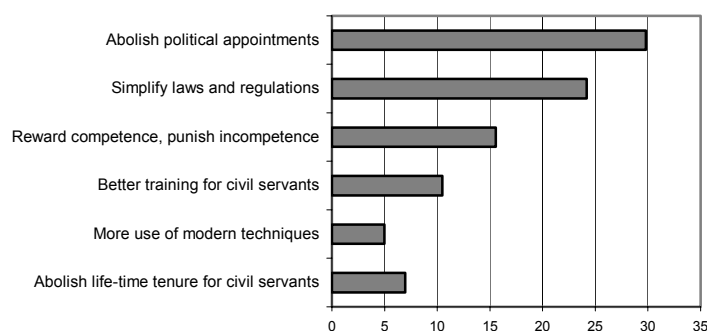
1. Abolish political nominations/appointments [*politieke benoemingen*]
2. Simplify laws and regulations
3. Reward competence, punish incompetence
4. Better training for civil servants
5. More use of modern techniques
6. Abolish life-time tenure for civil servants
7. Diminish the influence of politicians on the administration

We hoped this question would reveal additional indications for the reasons of discontent. Unfortunately, analysis was not possible, as this question was plagued with considerable methodological effects: respondents tended to choose the first item from the list as first most important

⁶⁴ Recoded from a 5-point scale (completely disagree -> completely agree).

measure, the second as second most important etc., as Figure 41 shows for the first measure (see also V.42 in Appendix 1).

Figure 41: Proposed measures for improving the functioning of public services, % of respondents that picked item as first measure



Source: WADO F2F 2002

The last possibility on the list was *never* selected. Out of 1248 people that were questioned, *nobody* (out of 1248 respondents) actually opted for option seven.

In the survey we also included a number of items on the privatisation of public services. For six public services, we inquired about the desirability of privatisation: *who would best organise mail delivery according to you? The private sector, government, or doesn't this make a difference?* The results of the survey show that there is no large number of proponents for privatisation. The highest numbers can be found with relation to the post office/mail delivery and refuse collection.

Table 34: Attitudes to privatisation of public services

%	post, mail delivery	refuse collection	employment agency	publ. transp bus & tram	police	primary education
private sector	31.1	26.2	21.1	20.6	13.8	10.9
government	34.2	37.2	44.2	46.4	56.7	59.7
makes no difference	30.7	33.9	27.3	29.3	25.3	26.1
missing	4.0	2.6	7.4	3.8	4.2	3.3

Source: WADO F2F, 2002

Preference for or against privatisation is clearly related to levels of satisfaction with these services: Low satisfaction coincides with a preference for privatisation. There are two possible explanations for this relationship. Dissatisfaction with how a service works makes citizens opt for privatisation, while high satisfaction then means that respondents want to keep the status quo. The other explanation is that one is negative because one does not agree with the current status of the service.

Table 35: Satisfaction with service delivery and attitudes towards privatisation

<i>% satisfied</i>	<i>best by private sector</i>	<i>best by government</i>	<i>makes no difference</i>	<i>sign.</i>
police	52,3	65,9	64,7	.004
post, mail delivery	57,6	84,0	76,1	.000
primary education	69,2	85,2	82,4	.004
refuse collection	78,0	85,1	83,3	.017
employment agency	46,1	70,8	65,9	.034
publ. transport, bus & tram	46,7	66,9	69,2	.000

Source: WADO F2F, 2002

Still, we observe rather high levels of satisfaction among those preferring a service delivery organised by the private sector. This makes us assume that the choice for private vs. government-organised service delivery is mainly an ideological one, and not one that is based on actual performance. The satisfaction-privatisation relationship becomes even more interesting at the macro-level. In the survey, a number of general items on privatisation have been included. A cross tabulation of the attitudes towards privatisation, and of general trust in government and satisfaction with the functioning of public services reveals that those who think most public services can be organised better by the private sector express a lower satisfaction with the functioning of public services and a lower level of trust in government (see Table 36), and indeed in most institutions, with the exception of trust in the employers' organisations.

Table 36: Trust, satisfaction and attitudes towards privatisation

<i>%</i>	<i>Pro-privatisation</i>	<i>Against privatisation⁶⁵</i>
General trust in government	15.0	30.7
General satisfaction with the functioning of the public services	32.6	51.9

Source: WADO F2F, 2002

Distinguishing cause and effect is very difficult in this situation. Preference for privatisation seems to be an expression of a negative attitude towards government, not just an opinion on whether the task should be exercised by government. This makes it very difficult to determine whether service-specific evaluations will have a larger impact on overall levels of trust when the respondent is in favour of government-organised service delivery, than in cases where one has the opinion that these are not government tasks. The question on *who would organise... best* therefore seems to be an indicator of satisfaction with these services, and does not necessarily reflect an ideological choice. The relationship with trust in government should therefore not be surprising. Further analysis shows that levels of satisfaction with specific services explain the dependent variable (trust in government) to a larger extent among those respondents in favour of privatisation. This should not be surprising, given the fact that service evaluations tend to be influenced by attitudes towards privatisation.

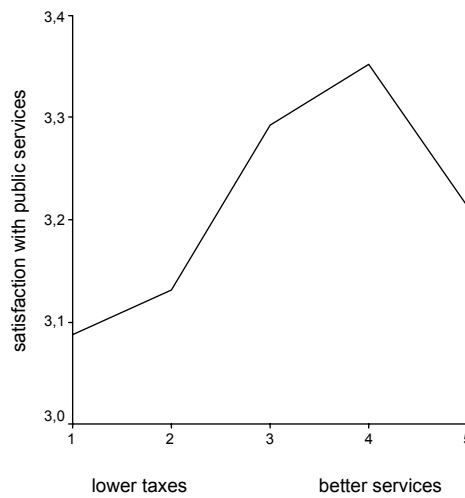
A final example we will give relates to citizens' choice between better services and lower taxes. Participants in the survey were asked to place themselves on a 1 to 5 scale with *lower taxes* on one side and *good services* on the other⁶⁶. We assumed that people who are not satisfied with services

⁶⁵ Both significant at $\chi^2=.000$ df =16

⁶⁶ In Dutch: *zo weinig mogelijk belastingen* and *een zo goed mogelijke dienstverlening*.

would prefer good services to lower taxes. We see, however, (Figure 42) that those who prefer an as-good-as-possible service delivery are generally more satisfied with the functioning of public services (mean satisfaction, based on a 1-5 scale where five means *very satisfied*). Those who prefer the least possible taxes are more dissatisfied than those desiring better services. Choosing service delivery over low taxes is thus not an expression of dissatisfaction. People who are not satisfied with the functioning of public services do not seem to call for better functioning public services, and instead want taxes to be lowered. It thus seems as if an as-good-as-possible service delivery will not help this group of citizens to become more satisfied.

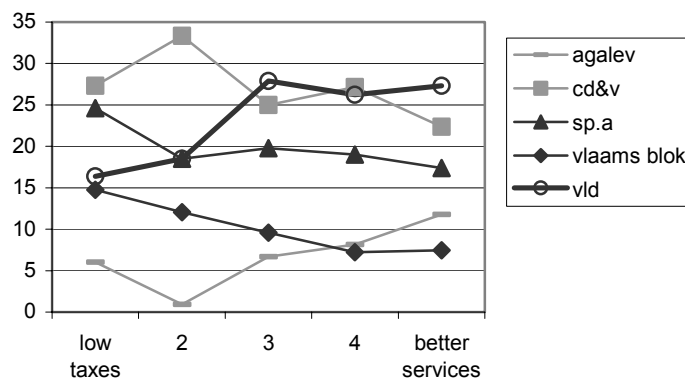
Figure 42: Tax vs. services dilemma and satisfaction with public services



Source: WADO F2F 2002

Taxes take a prominent place in the political debate. We see in the data that sensitivity to the tax theme differs depending on political party preference. It is generally believed that liberal party voters (VLD) have a strong preference for lower taxes. We also see, however, low taxes are hardly an issue for them. Low taxes are important for the extreme-right Vlaams Blok voters and to a lesser extent for the SP.a and CD&V voters. Even when taking income levels into account, these general tendencies do not change.

Figure 43: Taxes vs. services dilemma and party preference



Source: WADO F2F 2002. Lines indicate support for a party within the specific category.

These tendencies reveal that the interpretation of this item requires more than listing some frequencies. The item can only be interpreted *within* the general level of satisfaction with services and trust in government rather than as an explanatory variable for satisfaction

Four examples we have given show a strong interrelatedness between the items in our survey. These show that using these items for actually *explaining* dissatisfaction and identifying causes of distrust is a distortion of reality and will lead to incorrect conclusions. Attempts to cluster citizens in groups based on a number of qualitative dimensions is therefore perilous, as these dimensions tend to disregard the fact that these dimensions are interrelated and express underlying attitudes rather than reflect genuine attitudes towards the specific items the dimensions are built upon. Despite their attractiveness, segmentation of citizens in well-defined groups should be approached with a certain deal of healthy scepticism when elaborate methodological tests are absent. The Council for Excellence in Government (1999) for instance segmented the American population into six groups, based on their attitudes towards government:

1. Advocates
2. Personal beneficiaries
3. Reluctant supporters
4. Deeply alienated
5. Engaged critics
6. Disappointed

The segmentation is based on a number of variables. Respondents had to pick one of two opposing statements, the first of each pair listed below.

1. I feel close and connected to government
2. Government policies generally reflect my values
3. Government is generally effective in solving problems
4. Government programs have helped me and my family
5. Government generally pursues the people's agenda
6. Government should do more to help average people
7. Government is relevant to my life
8. Government serves the special interests
9. I pay too much in taxes for what I get from government
10. I can have an effect in government if I get involved

In the following section we analyse some of the underlying methodological characteristics of the interrelatedness between at first sight different qualitative dimensions.

9.2 GENERALISATION AND PATTERNS OF ANSWERS

Mapping patterns of answers

Our findings in this study showed that some differentiation is actually made between institutions. We have seen that certain institutions and agencies receive better or worse ratings than others. In 9.1 however, we also noticed there is a certain degree of generalisation in the evaluation. *Being dissatisfied with the functioning of public services in general almost always coincides with a more negative evaluation of practically all services.* In a similar way, low trust in government coincides with lower levels of trust in almost all institutions.

Table 37 shows mean trust scores (1= very little; 5= a lot) for twenty-six institutions, depending on whether the respondent has indicated he or she has a lot/very much, not little/not much, or (very) little trust in government (in general).

Table 37: General trust in government and trust in institutions

mean	Trust in government		
	a lot / very much trust	not little, not much trust	(very) little trust
the police	3.78	3.41	3.12
the educational system	4.03	3.83	3.70
the Flemish administration	3.63	3.27	3.02
the local administration	3.73	3.42	3.22
the legal system	3.39	3.00	2.62
the Flemish press	3.23	2.99	2.78
the Flemish government	3.59	3.23	2.83
Flemish political parties	3.29	2.98	2.61
the Church	2.90	2.59	2.60
Employers and the employers' organisations	3.46	3.22	3.08
the Flemish parliament	3.59	3.16	2.81
the trade unions	3.21	2.86	2.76
the King	3.43	2.98	3.02
the Belgian parliament	3.60	3.09	2.82
the European Commission	3.38	2.95	2.68
the Belgian government	3.56	3.09	2.72
the Walloon political parties	2.80	2.48	2.29
the army	3.16	2.88	2.87
De Lijn (public transport: bus & tram)	3.67	3.48	3.51
De VDAB (unemployment agency)	3.61	3.45	3.32
refuse collection	3.93	3.72	3.70
The Post	3.77	3.59	3.65
The NMBS (railways)	3.59	3.30	3.49
The VRT (public radio/TV)	3.83	3.64	3.44
Guy Verhofstadt (prime minister)	3.48	3.07	2.69
Patrick Dewael (min.-pres. Flemish region)	3.47	3.06	2.75

Source: WADO F2F 2002

These statistics suggest there is a certain degree of generalisation of a (dis)trusting attitude. This does not mean, however, that all items can be reduced to one single factor. One single factor explains at best 28.5% of variance, which shows there is too much variation to be able to speak about generalisation *pur sang*.

We counted the number of times respondents use a certain category of answers: how often do they reply with *very little trust*, *little trust* etc.? A respondent that is always using the same category could then be considered as a respondent who is generalising. Table 38 Shows the results. More than 70% or 884 respondents never use *very little trust*. One respondent uses this category seventeen times. The table also shows that categories 3 and 4 (*no trust, no distrust* and *a lot*) are used very often, something Figure 44 makes visible as well.

Table 38: Frequency of use of answering categories in a battery trust items

No of times category is used	Very little		Little		No trust, no distrust		A lot		Very much	
	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%
0	884	70.8%	308	24.7%	67	5.4%	44	3.5%	935	74.9%
1	176	14.1%	198	15.9%	47	3.8%	36	2.9%	156	12.5%
2	86	6.9%	169	13.5%	52	4.2%	51	4.1%	64	5.1%
3	46	3.7%	140	11.2%	60	4.8%	63	5.0%	30	2.4%
4	14	1.1%	124	9.9%	77	6.2%	82	6.6%	24	1.9%
5	10	.8%	77	6.2%	86	6.9%	99	7.9%	13	1.0%
6	9	.7%	64	5.1%	93	7.5%	96	7.7%	7	.6%
7	5	.4%	54	4.3%	81	6.5%	101	8.1%	5	.4%
8	5	.4%	44	3.5%	99	7.9%	109	8.7%	5	.4%
9	5	.4%	24	1.9%	88	7.1%	91	7.3%	3	.2%
10	1	.1%	12	1.0%	94	7.5%	81	6.5%		
11	1	.1%	12	1.0%	86	6.9%	65	5.2%	2	.2%
12	1	.1%	8	.6%	67	5.4%	64	5.1%	2	.2%
13	1	.1%	5	.4%	68	5.4%	46	3.7%	1	.1%
14	1	.1%	6	.5%	51	4.1%	41	3.3%	1	.1%
15	1	.1%	1	.1%	38	3.0%	41	3.3%		
16	1	.1%	1	.1%	31	2.5%	35	2.8%		
17	1	.1%	1	.1%	20	1.6%	18	1.4%		
18					17	1.4%	25	2.0%		
19					6	.5%	23	1.8%		
20					8	.6%	17	1.4%		
21					9	.7%	8	.6%		
22					3	.2%	12	1.0%		
average	.7		3		8.3		8.6		.6	

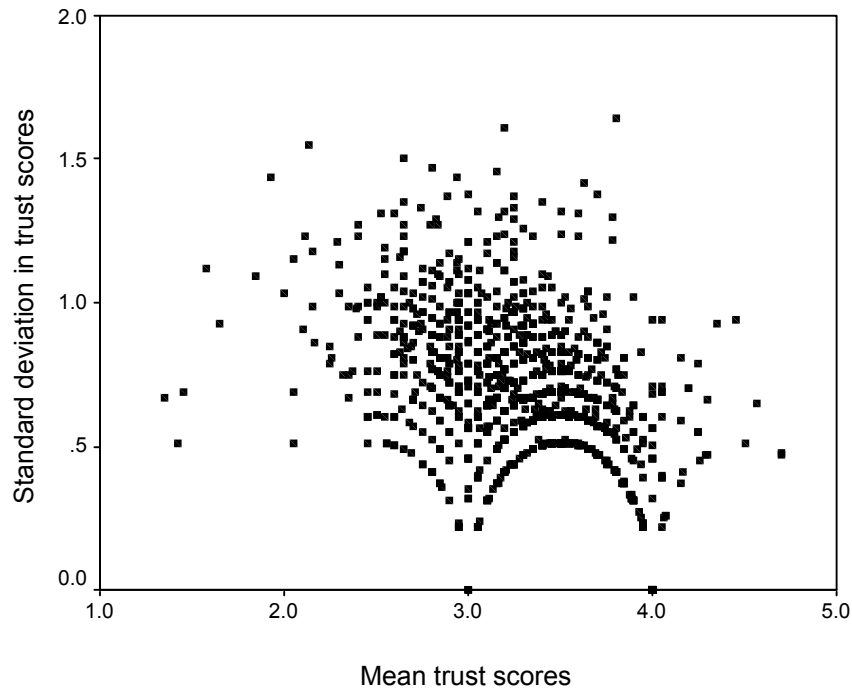
Source: WADO F2F 2002

Respondents that use the same category over and over are generalising in our approach. But how to determine how often is *over and over*? Is using a category ten times a lot? Is fifteen times? There is no easy way of doing this. If we would assume that every category has the same chance of being

selected, more than 4.4 times would be a lot (22 items, 5 possible answers). The extreme categories, however, have a lower chance of being picked. If we look at averages, we find that using *no trust, no distrust* 8 times out of 22 is perfectly normal. A choice has to be made, and this choice is naturally arbitrary. We could consider all respondents in the upper quartile of a category as generalising. This would mean that practically all those using the extreme category are generalising. Looking at socio-demographics, hardly anything appears significant. Religious people who visit a church on a regular basis tend to generalise a bit more, students a bit less. Apart from the observation there *is* generalisation, this approach does not help us much. In the following paragraphs, we try to approach the problem in a different way.

Our data shows an inclination among a number of respondents to limit the extent of variation in their answers, as is shown in Figure 44.

Figure 44: Patterns in response behaviour



Source: WADO F2F 2002

The x-axis indicates the mean level of trust calculated for twenty government-related institutions for every respondent⁶⁷. Trust scores range from 1 to 5. The Y-axis shows the standard deviation over these twenty institutions. The figure makes it visible that there are a considerable number of

⁶⁷ The police, the educational system, the Flemish administration, the local administration, the legal system, Flemish government, Flemish political parties, Flemish parliament, the King, Belgian parliament, European Commission, Belgian government, Walloon political parties, army, De Lijn (public transport by bus and tram), VDAB unemployment agency, refuse collection, Belgian Post, NMBS railways, VRT public radio, and TV. In the calculations for Table 38, trust ratings for the federal and regional prime minister/minister-president have also been included, hence 22 items there.

respondents that tend to use the same score over and over (notably 3 - *not little, not much trust*, and 4 - *trust a lot*). The figure does not give indications of a strong tendency to display generalised negative attitudes (where respondents would score 2 - *little trust* on most of the items).

The absence of variation in answering patterns makes analysis difficult. Indicating high trust for an institution may be an evaluation of that specific institution, but may also follow from a general pattern of high trust ratings. Displaying low trust in an institution in the survey may in a similar way indicate low trust in that specific institution, but may also be part of a generalised pattern of low trust. Evaluations of *one* institution should therefore be interpreted within the broader pattern of evaluations of *all* institutions. When a respondent's answers have a high standard deviation, we could rightfully claim this respondent makes a separate evaluation of all of the institutions. When, however, standard deviation is low, evaluation of a single institution may follow from a generalised attitude. This last step is a tricky one. It is of course possible that a respondent gives a true evaluation of every single institution and concludes that they all deserve the same level of trust (be it high or low).

Assume now that low standard deviation is an expression of generalisation and cannot follow from a *true* evaluation of each of the individual institutions. Based on the two scores displayed in the figure, we could divide our respondents into four groups:

1. *Generalised negative* (low standard deviation and low mean): evaluations of the institutions follow from a generalised trust attitude, which is a negative one.
2. *Dissatisfied* (high standard deviation and low mean): each of the institutions is evaluated individually, and the overall picture is a rather negative one.
3. *Positive but critical* (high standard deviation and high mean): each of the institutions is evaluated individually, and the overall picture is a rather positive one.
4. *Uncritical positive* (low standard deviation and high mean): evaluations of the institutions follow from a generalised trust attitude, which is a positive one.

Two problems of interpretation remain: 1) how to determine what is a high or low standard deviation and mean? and 2) is the generalisation of the answers a result of a generalised trusting attitude, or is it a methodological artefact, e.g. because the respondent is lazy or tired?

We start with the first problem, and later deal with the second one. Determining when a standard deviation or mean is high or low is an arbitrary decision. We define a low standard deviation as a standard deviation that is lower than or equal to the mean standard deviation in the sample (.70 in this case). A low mean -this is a low overall level of trust- is defined as a mean that is lower than or equal to the mean of the mean trust scores for all respondents. Using these definitions, we can determine the size of each of our four groups, as is shown in Table 39:

Table 39: Clusters of citizens' attitude types

	Low mean trust score	High mean trust score	
Low standard deviation	Generalised negative (19.7%) I	Uncritical positive (35.5%) IV	=> generalisation
High standard deviation	Dissatisfied (29.3%) II	Positive, but critical (15.6%) III	=> no generalisation

Source: WADO F2F 2002

Using this method, the group of uncritical positive respondents is by far the largest one (35.5% of the sample). Their overall mean is high, and they do not really differentiate between the institutions. Contrary to claims in the literature we have referred to in 8.3, it is not the group of the generalised negative that is the largest one, but that of the uncritical positive. It seems there is a considerably large group that has a positive predisposition towards government. This is in some way positive for government, but may also indicate absence of critical attitude and an inclination towards obedience. This group tends to be older and more religious than the average population. Some 20% are negative and generalise this negative attitude to most of the institutions listed. This means that for about 55% of the respondents we find a certain degree of generalisation. Of the groups where there is no generalisation, the dissatisfied is the largest one, with 29.3% of the respondents. 15.6% has an overall positive attitude, but still is critical towards certain institutions.

Following the same procedure in the 2002 mail survey, where a question was asked on one's own image of civil servants and public services and the perceived image among the population at large (Figure 40), it was found that the dissatisfied tend to judge their own image as more negative than that of the general population, and that the positive but critical group thinks their image of public services is more positive than that of the general population. Generalisers do not differentiate that clearly between their own and the perceived general public's image.

Though our method used for assembling these groups may be disputed, it may be one of the few methods for doing so, especially when we take the interrelatedness of the items, referred to in 9.1, into account. Identifying causes for this discontent is now the main challenge. Our first step compares all four groups on relevant socio-demographic differences. In our second step, we analyse differences between the two extreme groups more in depth.

A general conclusion is that there are no fundamental, clear, and overarching differences between the groups, something that corresponds to the analysis made in 4.7. Respondents with a higher mean trust score tend to be somewhat lower educated and have a lower income. More generalisers tend to be female. The uncritical positive are more religious. The dissatisfied vote more often for N-VA (New-Flemish Alliance) and for the extreme right Vlaams Blok. The uncritical positives prefer CD&V while the generalised negative vote for CD&V less often, but more for SP.a. Differences between the dissatisfied and the positive but critical are marginal: among the dissatisfied we find slightly more higher educated and Vlaams Blok voters, among the critical but positive some more retired people.

In the next step, we use a Chi square test to compare the two extreme groups in our typology: the uncritical positives and the generalised negatives. The huge difference in absolute levels of trust in institutions suggests that these two groups will be fundamentally different. Differences are, however, not as fundamental as one may have thought. We look into socio-demographics and issues such as individualism, traditionalism-authoritarianism, uncertainty avoidance, discomfort, and ethnocentrism.

Table 40: Characteristics of positive and negative generalisers

	Generalised negatives	Uncritical positives	Significance level of the X ² test
Education	Medium and higher	Lower	.000
Age	Young and mid-life	Older	.033
Income		Lower income	.003
Traditionalism/authoritarianism		More traditionalist	.024
Newspaper readership	More <i>De Standaard</i> readers		.005
Religion			
Regular church going		More	.001
Irregular church going		More	.013
Not religious	More		.002
SP.a vote	More SP.a voters		.020
CD&V vote	Fewer CD&V voters	More CD&V voters	.000

Source: WADO F2F 2002

Our conclusion is that both groups only differ on a very limited number of variables (only significant relationships are shown - bivariate analysis), and that half of those variables shown in the table are only borderly significant. In a multivariate model however, most of these differences evaporate, and only a modest effect of education and CD&V vote remains. We cannot, based on socio-demographics, predict which group a citizen will land in, but still the bivariate conclusions show some kind of differentiation between both groups. There is one group that is a bit more traditionalist, older, lower educated, church-going, and Christian-Democrat voting, while another is overall a bit higher educated, a bit younger (young or mid-life), less church going, or not religious, less Christian democrat, and tends to vote more Socialist. All of these characteristics are somehow related to age. We do not find differences in e.g. levels of individualism, ethnocentrism, uncertainty avoidance, and discomfort. We do not find many differences in media-use. The generalised negativists do read the quality newspaper *De Standaard* more often, but we do not find differences for other newspapers, radio stations, or TV channels. More remarkable is that these groups do not differ in their voting intentions for the extreme right. The absence of these differences is perhaps more important than the differences we do find. After all, we try to compare the two groups in our sample that were found in the extreme categories.

It thus seems we are dealing with some kind of age effect. Our single measurement does not allow establishing whether it concerns an age rather than a cohort effect. In the first case, the increasing share of older people in society could lead to a greater share of *uncritical positives*, be it that levels of church attendance will be lower and education higher for the new entrants in the group of older citizens. In the second case, a dominant uncritical positive attitude will gradually be replaced by a generalised negative one. This means that whereas high levels of generalisation originally tended to be reflected in a positive attitude, they now will mainly be expressed in generalised negative attitudes, thereby gradually eroding the relatively large group of 35.5 % of uncritical positives. Another possible evolution could be that that generalisation diminishes, but we have no indication why this would be the case.

The two groups do differ on most if not all items probing for an evaluation of the political and administrative system (political alienation, satisfaction with policy), but we do not find differences related to the general principles and values underlying a political system: participation vs. efficiency, popular participation vs. technocracy, defending the general vs. personal interest, lower taxes vs. better services, majority decisions vs. minority influence, electing politicians vs. participation in politics (see questions 38 and 41 in the WADO face-to-face survey, Appendix 1). All this seems to suggest that

there is no fundamental difference in values between these groups. Unfortunately, this does not teach us much about the reasons for discontent. All we are able to say at this point is that the generalised negativists are negative because they are negative, and that the uncritical positivists are positive because they are positive.

Now, remains the second problem of interpretation: is generalisation of the answers a result of generalised trusting attitude, or is it a methodological artefact? After each interview, interviewers were asked to fill out a two-page sheet about the session. One of the questions dealt with the motivation of the respondent. Motivation for the groups of generalised negative and uncritical positive respondents is indicated by the interviewers as being lower: respectively 33,1% and 34,7% of these respondents is identified as having been very motivated to participate in the survey, as compared to 42% and 47% in the other two groups we have described as groups where there is no generalisation.

Table 41: Respondents' motivation to participate in the survey

	generalisation	no generalisation	total
Highly motivated	34.1%	44.0%	38.6%
Moderately motivated	45.7%	39.7%	43.0%
Rather indifferent	16.3%	11.4%	14.1%
Reserved	2.8%	4.0%	3.3%
Very reserved	0.9%	0.7%	0.8%

Source: WADO F2F 2002, ($\chi^2=17.07$, $df=5$, $p=.004$)

A sound analysis of differences between the four groups requires we filter people with low motivation from our sample. The relatively low number of indifferent or reserved participants, however, suggests this will only have moderate influence on the final results. After all, the chance of having unmotivated respondents in our sample is very low, as this group would not have agreed to participate in the survey in the first place⁶⁸. Replication of the analysis with indifferent or reserved respondents excluded only resulted in marginal changes. Low motivation may be an intrinsic characteristic of respondents who generalise, but need not be so. Low differentiation may still occur in a genuine evaluation. Interviewers, however, may have tended to interpret generalisation as low motivation.

This and the previous approach for identifying respondents who generalise in their answers is in fact practically bound to fail, as there are no sustainable arguments for defining whether a repeated answering pattern reflects a measurement/methodological error, or whether it measures a genuine opinion.

Relating specific and general perceptions

Lock et al. (1999) found that confidence in government was higher when respondents were first asked about specific government operations. They explain this by referring to respondents' need for

⁶⁸ The face-to-face survey had a response rate of 68.16%.

consistency in their answers. It is difficult to rate government negatively if one has just approved of a number of specific government operations. Because of this effect, they subtitled their article 'Reminding the public what Federal Government does' (emphasis SVDW). Communication Canada made a similar observation in its surveys. In the Communication Canada survey, respondents were asked in the beginning of the survey: *Generally speaking, how would you rate the performance of the government of Canada*. Later on, after they had rated the Government's performance in various policy areas, they were asked: *Now that you have had an opportunity to think about the Government of Canada's priorities and performance in more detail I'd like to ask you again- generally speaking, how would you rate the performance of the Government of Canada?* The second time the question was asked, the Government's overall performance rating increased by 11 points, from 29% to 40% (good = 5,6, or 7 on a 7-point scale) (Fasiolo, 2002).

Lock et al. (1999:257) found this kind of effects to be stronger among Republicans, as the Republican ideology contains a strong anti-government rhetoric, resulting in lower overall confidence. Rating specific operations in a positive way therefore creates greater inconsistency for these respondents. Surprisingly, similar framing effects were not absent for the higher educated and those with more political knowledge. These groups were also found to be subjected to this kind of effects, as they have a larger storehouse of possible criteria for evaluating government. The specific questions helped them to select the evaluation criteria from this storehouse.

We can therefore expect among those respondents with an *informed opinion*, the evaluation of specific institutions will correspond to their evaluation of government in general. We interpret that people who are interested in politics or who have enjoyed a higher education will have a higher probability of having a genuine *informed opinion* rather than just *an opinion*. A good illustration of these informed opinions is found in Figure 45 and Figure 46. The triangles show mean trust in a number of specific institutions⁶⁹, while the squares shows mean general trust in government, related to expressed interest in politics and level of education of the respondents.

⁶⁹ Twenty in total, the police, the educational system, the Flemish administration, the local administration, the legal system, Flemish government, Flemish political parties, Flemish parliament, the King, Belgian parliament, European Commission, Belgian government, Walloon political parties, army, De Lijn (public transport by bus and tram), VDAB unemployment agency, refuse collection, Belgian Post, NMBS railways, VRT public radio and TV.

Figure 45: Informed opinion: interested in politics

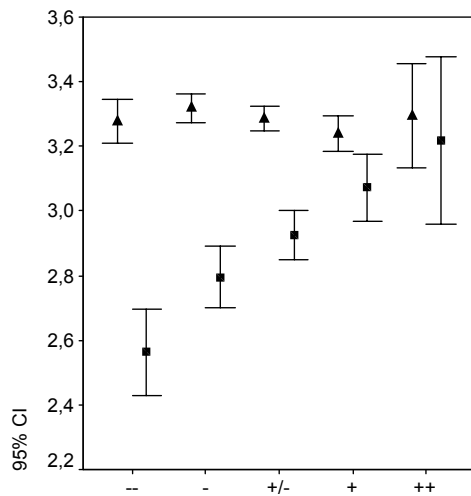
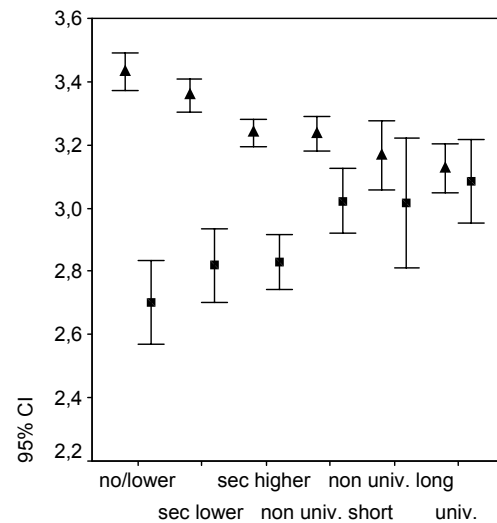


Figure 46: Informed opinion: education



■ general trust in government ▲ average trust in specific institutions

Source: WADO F2F, 2002

Those with a higher education or those interested in politics express levels of general trust in government that are very similar to their levels of trust in specific institutions. Among the lower educated, or those not interested in politics, these two types of opinions are clearly different: specific trust is much higher than general trust. We remind the reader that general trust was included very early in the questionnaire, immediately after the introductory questions on socio-demography. Taking into account these findings, Brudney and England's observation remains relevant for future research: *An important assumption often made in research is that survey respondents share a common point of reference in evaluating services* (1982: 128).

The analysis revealed that it is not possible to cluster respondents in clearly delineated groups with different characteristics, but it did show that there are different types of trust and distrust. In one type distrusting or trusting an institution seem to follow from an individual evaluation of the institution, and in the other, the opinion towards an institution is embedded in a more general trusting or distrusting attitude. Defining, let alone disentangling, these types is still uncharted territory: when are expressions of trust or distrust in a survey evaluations, feelings or non-opinions? This again shows that it is dangerous to consider expressed distrust towards an institution as an indication of intrinsic underperformance of this institution, or, alternatively, expressed trust as reassuring. We could go even further in this reasoning. Whereas policy-makers have thus far been concerned about citizens with low trust, they should in fact also worry about those expressing high levels of trust, as this may possibly point at a lack of critical attitude.

In the following sections we dive deeper into the phenomenon of generalisation, or rather, the social rather than individual component of trust and distrust. In these sections, we approach citizens' attitudes towards government as attitudes that emerge from a certain social context.

9.3 GENERALISED NEGATIVISM? OPTIMISM, PESSIMISM, AND SOCIAL MOOD

We have seen that in certain groups there is a certain degree of generalisation in the answers to the survey questions. Others have found that often no differentiation is made between institutions when asked to indicate levels of trust in a number of institutions. In the previous chapter we also indicated that citizens' perception of the public administration might in part be caused by stereotypes about this administration, rather than by experience. These conclusions suggest that in explaining trust it is not particularly useful only to look at the public administration, and this for two reasons:

1. There is not always sufficient differentiation between institutions, what means that a separate opinion on the public administration does not necessarily exist (Marlowe, 2003).
2. There is doubt whether the measures used for mapping citizens' attitudes towards the public administration and public services actually measure what we think they measure. Section 7.2 has sufficiently demonstrated this.

For these reasons, it seems that similar processes lie at the core of the explanations for citizens' attitudes towards government and towards the public administration. Explaining attitudes towards government will help a great deal to explain attitudes towards the public administration. We will therefore use *trust in government* data to develop our argument.

In the following sections we will explore two alternative explanations for levels of trust in government. Distrust at the macro-level is often seen as an artefact, because it often does not refer to specific or even real institutions or acts that are distrusted (Arzheimer, 2002: 78). This means that, when explaining distrust, we have to go beyond explanations that only look at government as a cause for citizens' distrust in government. Explanations are in fact far more complicated.

The first alternative approach treats the *gap* between citizens and government as a social construct: citizens do not normally distrust government, but only do so only when the functioning of government is defined as problematic by the elite. The second approach is related to what we will call *social mood*. In it, it are not specific explanations for distrust in government we are looking for, but general processes that seem to be at the core of many evaluative attitudes. This approach allows us to use discomfort, dissatisfaction with the functioning of government, consumer confidence, feelings of insecurity, declining social capital etc. not as explanations for distrust in government, but as expressions of one single -as yet undefined- phenomenon.

9.4 THE CREATION OF A GAP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENT

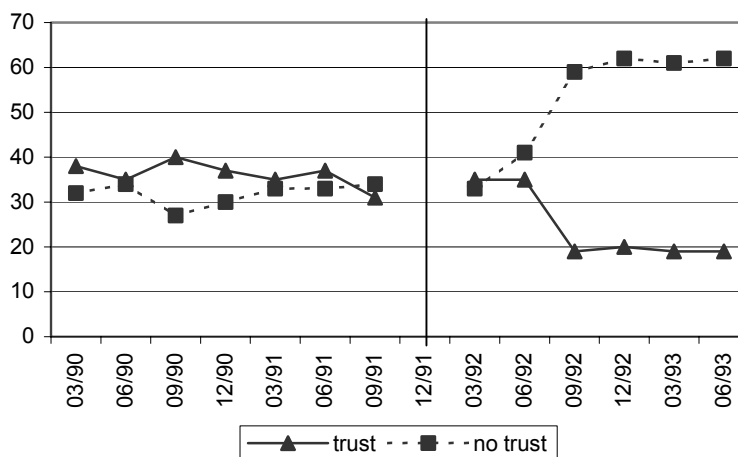
In his influential *Burgermanifest*, liberal politician Verhofstadt called in 1991 for an emancipation of the citizen from the political, administrative, and fiscal powers that suffocated him, and he was one of the first to speak about a *gap between citizen and government*, and urged for a *contract with the citizen* (Verhofstadt, 1991). The rise of the extreme right and of protest parties some months later in the 1991 *Black Sunday* elections was a shock for the political establishment. Politicians offered their own definition of the situation and respective solutions, but it was the Verhofstadt discourse on the *gap between citizen and government* that proved to be predominant (Maesschalck et al., 2002). The citizen became the focus of political discourse, both as a rhetorical device and as a genuine concern for

quality service delivery. From the early 90s on, the motivation for reform was no longer only to make the public sector perform better, but to remedy citizens' distrust in government (Bouckaert, Thijs and van Dooren, 2003).

But was there really a crisis? Our claim is that the actual situation did not change. The only change was in the interpretation of the situation. An existing situation suddenly came to be defined as problematic: while it was not a topic for discussion before, the *gap between citizen and government* moved to the core of political debate in just a matter of months. This is illustrated by a series of polls in the early 90s. The three-monthly poll by the *La Libre Belgique* newspaper contains a question on citizens' trust in government: *To solve the actual problems in Belgium, do you have confidence in the government of [name prime minister]?*

As Figure 47 shows, the level of trust in government was rather stable during the late 80s. The November 1991 *Black Sunday* elections resulted in a dramatic rise of the extreme right. In the March and June 1992 polls (four and seven months áfter the elections) we do not see real changes in levels of trust. The real shock would only come in September 1992. This means that the crisis of confidence only came into existence as a result of its entry in the political debate. Even though November 1991 is generally seen as the breakthrough of the extreme right, it was the 1989 elections for European Parliament that showed the first strong rise of the party. At that time however, these signs were not interpreted or defined as problematic. We interpret the gap between citizen and politics as a social construction (Bouckaert and Van de Walle, 2003), though one that would soon create considerable problems for its creators.

Figure 47: The birth of a crisis (% of trust in the federal government)



Source: La Libre Belgique

The decline in trust only became visible some time after the elections. At the same time, we see a decline in the number of respondents without opinion. A possible explanation can be found among politicians and the media: the discourse on the gap made its birth possible, as distrust hardly was an issue before (Huyse, 2004). *The gap between citizen and government* is a word that was launched in the first *Citizens' Manifesto* by the politician and now prime minister Verhofstadt (Verhofstadt, 1991). It was written in 1991 (January) and was soon followed by a second Manifesto in 1992 (May) (Blommaert, 2001). The jargon used in these booklets soon became the basis of political discourse in these years. According to Deschouwer (1998a:79), the debate on the *gap* erupted only after the electoral

breakthrough of the extreme right on November 24, 1991. His *exploration of the gap* did not find a generalised distrust in politics (1998a: 98), but only a crisis of the political party system. Therefore, the *gap* in the political discourse did not refer to something real, but actually preceded the gap in the polls. Both Deschouwer and Blommaert have described the emergence of the *gap* in 1991-1992 as a construction, but they did not illustrate this with detailed data. Our analysis of the polling data (Figure 47) shows that their analysis was correct.

For Deschouwer (1998b) political observers' perceptions of a growing distrust among citizens have preceded actual evolutions in popular distrust. This means the origins of the *gap* are to be found at the top. Despite these claims, he still states that levels of distrust (measured as satisfaction with democracy) are independent from the extent to which the *gap* is discussed (1998a: 81). The latter claim is difficult to uphold, as we are not aware of any solid cross-national discourse analyses on the phenomenon. The debate on the *gap* is said to be mainly one among political elites, whereas political discontent during the 30s and 60s is said to have had its origins outside the political system (van Gunsteren and Andeweg, 1994: 15). Van Gunsteren and Andeweg also quote the Dutch Social and Cultural Planning Office: "Despite contemplations about a growing gap between citizens and politics, survey results often show that the population does not dissociate itself from the political system: interest in politics increases rather than decreases, feelings of political powerlessness and cynical opinions on politicians do not spread further, and political participation fluctuates" (van Gunsteren and Andeweg, 1994: 25; Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, 1994 - own translation)⁷⁰. A similar conclusion is made in Huyse et al.'s (1992: 13) assertion that the 1991 election results were far from exceptional: similar dramatic changes also occurred in the '36, '65 and '81 elections.

From 1998 on, the tide of trust has been on the increase. Part of it is related to the economic situation. Also, the new government in 1999 had a discourse that was fundamentally different from what was heard under the previous government, and it was almost unconditionally positive (Nuytemans, 2002). The government spoke about restoring trust and about turning Belgium into an exemplary state. Possibly, this positive rhetoric and a flourishing economy have contributed to rising trust. Contrary to the strategies that had been used until then, *distrust was proclaimed* as non-issue, and those still referring to it were stigmatised as negativists. Just as the *gap* came into existence by putting it *on* the political agenda, it seems to have disappeared by taking it *off* the agenda. Even though citizen-government relations have not changed fundamentally, the way in which this relationship was being defined did change. The *gap between citizens and government* only became problematic after it had been put on the political agenda. Steyvers (2004) spoke about the political elites' quest for trust in government as a quest for a modern *Holy Grail*.

Remedies against distrust have often been *proclaimed*, and there was little analysis of genuine causes. The discussion showed that political discourse and fashions can be extremely powerful, and do influence the definition of the *gap* and possible remedies. We do see a number of evolutions in the debates on trust. In the early 90s, debates were on a *gap between citizen and politics*. Later discussions gradually moved to intolerance in society, which in turn was replaced by debates on

⁷⁰ Van Gunsteren and Andeweg note that empirical negation of the *gap* was not appreciated, as this would undermine politicians' motivation to do something about it. They show that almost all political science research institutes in the Netherlands regularly show in their research that the *gap* does not really exist. They are thus surprised that the public debates on the *gap* seem to negate all of these research findings, and conclude that talking about the *gap* and other protest discourse has become a rhetoric instrument in the political game.

feelings of insecurity. Scandals in the mid-90s shifted the attention to the functioning of courts and police. Recently, the debate has come to focus on societal causes of distrust, with the introduction of *social capital* in the political discourse and a replacement of distrust by *verzuring*⁷¹.

It is not because popular explanations for the phenomenon have changed, that the phenomenon itself has changed. It should not come as a surprise that distrust, intolerance, insecurity etc. are often quasi-interchangeably in explanatory models. However, it would also be incorrect to discard the popular explanations, as these have showed to influence the debates and behaviour.

9.5 CONSUMER CONFIDENCE AND TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

We have indicated that in the debate on the gap between citizens and government, causes and explanations shifted to the societal level. We will use the concept of *social mood* to refer to these processes at the societal level. In this section we compare evolutions in consumer confidence and political trust in eleven European countries from 1985 to 2003. Both indicators tend to show a remarkable convergence. Belgium is the only country where we did not (at first) find the expected relation, but the relationship reappeared once a period of extremely low political trust (1997-1998) was excluded. Specific crises in the economic or political subsystem thus seem to undermine the relationship between consumer confidence and political trust. Our results suggest that political trust indicators contain more than a mere evaluation of the *political* situation, and that consumer confidence is composed of more than just *economic* evaluations or expectations. We thus claim that both indicators should not be considered as reflections of their respective societal subsystems (economy/politics). Consumer confidence and political trust are both reflections of a *social mood*, what explains their convergence.

Introduction

Consumer confidence⁷² measures consumers' confidence in evolutions of the economic situation. Political trust measures citizens' trust in government. Thus far the conventional approach. Political scientists and sociologists increasingly refer to economic factors in their explanations for political trust, while economists have started to use sociological, psychological, and political explanations for levels of consumer confidence.

Government's management of the economy and citizens' evaluation of democracy's functioning seem to be related (Anderson and Guillory, 1997). It is, however, not clear how far the impact of economic factors reaches: do they influence evaluations of political incumbents, or do they influence evaluations of the political system in general (Kornberg and Clarke, 1992; Clarke, Dutt, and Kornberg, 1993; Huseby, 2000)?

⁷¹ *Verzuring* means *turning sour*. It refers to growing intolerance among people, individualisation and an increased tendency to complain.

⁷² The consumer survey is a telephone survey with approximately 1600 respondents. The sample is based on the telephone directory, and respondents are notified in advance by letter about the upcoming interview. Survey questions relate to the economic situation, financial situation of the household, unemployment expectations, savings, purchase intentions etc. The survey also includes socio-demographic variables.

Kornberg and Clarke (1994) find that citizens' evaluations of how government manages the economy barely show a relationship with political trust. Kuechler's research (1991) shows that the state of the economy (unemployment and inflation) and satisfaction with the functioning of democracy are connected, but it also shows that this connection is far from perfect as other -mainly political- factors are said to be important. At the aggregate level, the strongest declines in political trust seem to occur in periods prior to economic recession (Holmberg, 1999). Miller and Listhaug (1999) do not find institutional confidence and most economic performance indicators to be related.

Amelioration of the economic situation results in increased support for the parties in power, but not in increased support for political parties in general (Hetherington, 1999). Others find that a bad economic situation influences citizens' evaluations of politicians in general (Kornberg and Clarke, 1992). In the US, the economic situation does not influence the outcome of parliamentary elections, but it does have an impact on presidential elections, be it that the presence of the effect depends on the economic indicators one uses (Himmelberg and Wawro, 2001).

There is no clear and unambiguous relationship between a series of macro-economic indicators and political trust. Inglehart observes a certain similarity between economic cycles and satisfaction with the way democracy works in Germany (Inglehart, 1997: 228). What is valid in one country, is not necessarily valid in another (Huseby, 2000). A feature in this kind of research is the use of macro-economic indicators that can be measured in a so-called objective way, while perception indicators are not often used. There is no agreement on which type of economic indicators to use. What is to be considered as good or bad economic performance depends on choice (Miller and Listhaug, 1999). Furthermore, little is known on whether citizens actually use macro-economic observations or personal experience in their evaluations, and on whether these evaluations refer to the past or to expectations for the future (Anderson and Guillory, 1997; Himmelberg and Wawro, 2001). In explaining levels of consumer confidence, expected evolutions in one's personal economic situation and the country's economic situation are used simultaneously (Bechtel, Vanden Abeele, and DeMeyer, 1993). Individual circumstances may not necessarily play an important role: "Since economic performance is judged by collective (sociotropic) rather than individual (egocentric) criteria, popular perceptions of the economy are shaped principally by the mass media and through an assessment of national economic conditions, and less by individual economic circumstances" (McAllister, 1999: 189). McAllister (1999) found a relationship between support for political institutions and subjective economic satisfaction, but not between political support and objective economic indicators.

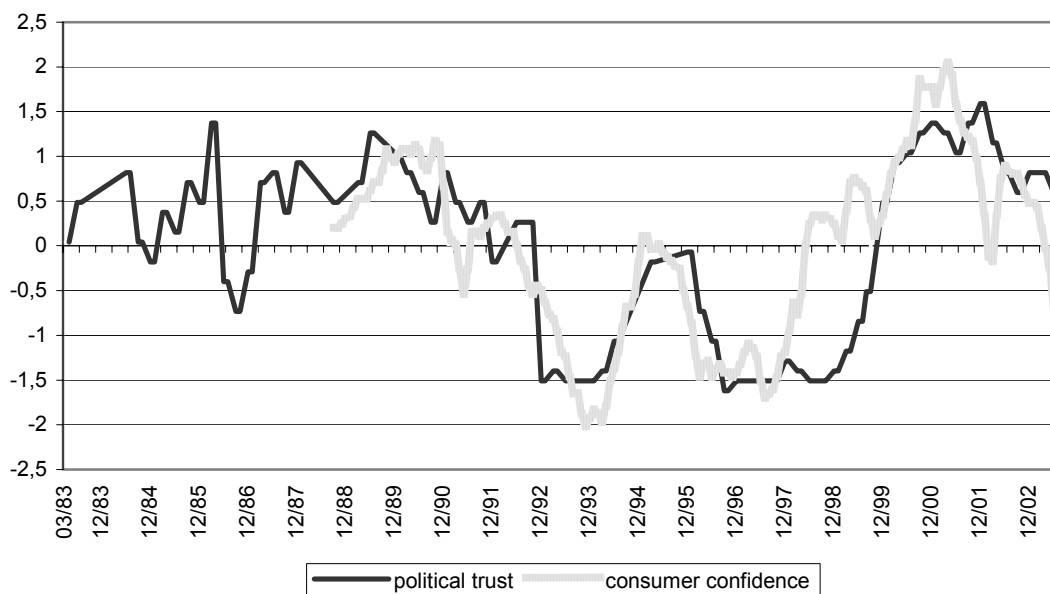
On the contrary, economists make use of political indicators while searching for explanations for economic evolutions. Here we mainly refer to attempts to explain levels of consumer confidence. Stock exchange developments cause changes in consumer confidence (Jansen and Nahuis, 2003), while these stock exchange developments are influenced by political events such as elections (Vuchelen, 2003). Vuchelen (1995) found that political events are reflected in consumer confidence. Erikson (2004) suggested that, when finding a relationship between vote choice and perceptions of economic conditions, it is the reported vote choice in the survey that influences the expressed perceptions of the economic situation, and not the economic situation that explains the vote choice.

This overview suggests that there are many similarities in the determinants of consumer confidence (economic developments, political events) and political trust. This means that consumer confidence and political trust themselves should also be strongly related.

The relationship between consumer confidence and political trust

There is a striking similarity between the indicator for consumer confidence, and that for political trust. Political trust is being measured every three months since 1982 in the *La Libre Belgique* (LLB) newspaper opinion poll⁷³.

Figure 48: Relationship between political trust and consumer confidence in Belgium (standardised)



The consumer confidence indicator and the LLB political trust indicator seem to be related, even though there is a strong divergence in 1996-1998 and in autumn 2001. The 2001 divergence is no doubt caused by the (short-lived) 9/11 impact on consumer confidence. In the 1996-1998 period, the country was confronted with a number of scandals (Dutroux, malfunctioning of the judicial system). It is possible that the increase in trust at the end of 1998 would have started earlier would no scandals have erupted. We do not have further proof for this speculation. Another explanation could be that in the exceptional economic situation in that period there was increased attention for the stock exchange, even among ordinary citizens, that could have lead to a de-coupling between political trust and consumer confidence.

This close relationship is very remarkable, as it has always been believed that both indicators referred to a different subsystem of society (politics vs. economy). The relationship can be due to several factors, some of which could be even typical for Belgium. For this reason, we extend our analysis to the EU-15 countries. Unfortunately, statistics on political trust as detailed as the Belgian data are hard to find. Measures of consumer confidence have been harmonised at a European scale rather early. Every now and then small differences are found between the European norm and instruments of individual countries, instruments have been altered at a certain moment, or the exact composition of the consumer confidence indicator has been changed. Most of these changes, however, were of a limited nature and had only marginal effects on comparability.

On its website, the European Commission offers time series for consumer and business confidence going back to 1985⁷⁴. The consumer confidence indicator is composed of four indicators taken from the monthly consumer surveys (European Commission, 2003):

- Expected change in financial position of one's household
- Expected developments of general economic situation in the country
- Expected change in unemployment
- Likelihood of saving money over next 12 months

The situation is not terribly bright for indicators of political trust. In our Belgian example we used data from a three-monthly opinion poll organised since 1982. At the European level, this kind of detailed time-series does not exist, and harmonisation of measurement instruments is practically absent. In some countries, detailed time-series are available (Weil, 1989), while in others a survey tradition for political trust hardly exists. The Standard Eurobarometers (EB) are generally organised twice a year in all EU countries, compiling data from a representative sample of the population. One question deals with the level of satisfaction with how democracy works in one's country. Respondents could be very, fairly, not very, and not at all satisfied. We combined the first two categories. *Satisfaction with democracy* is not a perfect indicator⁷⁵, but it remains the only harmonised, stable, comparable, and repeated measurement at the European level.

⁷³ To solve the actual problems in Belgium, do you have confidence in the government of [name prime minister]? (La Libre Belgique, 1982-2002).

⁷⁴ http://europa.eu.int/comm/economy_finance/indicators/businessandconsumersurveys_en.htm

⁷⁵ Quite some discussion exists on the use of *satisfaction with the functioning of democracy* as a measure of trust. At a first glance, this item is entirely different from most other items we have used so far. However, because the item has been integrated in the Eurobarometer studies it is one of the few items that allows for an analysis of trust across time and nations, and therefore has been used extensively.

Numerous articles discussed whether *satisfaction with the way democracy works* can really be used as an indicator for trust in government. The Eurobarometer *satisfaction with democracy* question contains two elements: a cognitive element that is an evaluation of the present *functioning* of democracy, and an affective one measuring support for the present political system, i.c. democracy (Kuechler, 1991). The Eurobarometer question *On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied with the way democracy works in...* combines a cognitive evaluation with support for the system, a possibility not distinguished by Easton (1965). This question is influenced by a short-term evaluation of policy, and is as such a bad indicator for *satisfaction with democracy* (Holmberg, 1999).

On the one hand we have those who claim that the classic political trust indicators and democracy satisfaction indicators measure different things. Citrin (1974) for instance states that political distrust is not necessarily an expression of the wish to change the political system. On the other hand we have those who claim that *satisfaction with democracy* and *trust in government* are both indicators of the same underlying attitude, and thus comparable (Kaase, 1999).

A final remark has to do with the word *democracy* itself. Shortly after the fall of communism inhabitants of Central- and Eastern European countries were polled for their satisfaction with the way democracy works, their point of reference will have been Western-Europe. West Europeans on the other hand will have compared the democracy they were living in to other ideal-types of democracy. Surveying Germans for their satisfaction with democracy is, according to Fuchs (1999) irrelevant, as Nazi-history made the word democracy very value-loaded, which makes that the threshold for Germans to express themselves as being dissatisfied is very high. Nevertheless, it is possible to support democratic values, while being at the same time extremely critical of the way democracy works in one's country at a certain moment (Easton, 1965; 1975).

In a first version of this analysis we were confronted with anomalies in our data for the spring of 1996. Especially for Italy, the Netherlands, the UK and Greece, measurement seemed to diverge sharply from what was expected, while no substantive reason for this decline in trust could be found. Closer inspection revealed that this data came from the Eurobarometer 44.3 OVR, which differs from the normal standard Eurobarometers. In this survey, the question on satisfaction with the way democracy works was preceded by a question on satisfaction with one's family life, whereas in other cases the question on satisfaction with democracy is embedded in another series of questions. This means that respondents in EB 44.3 OVR will compare their evaluation of democracy to the answer they had given to the preceding question. It is to be expected that respondents will take a somewhat more negative attitude vis-à-vis democracy than to their own family life. The absolute level of satisfaction with one's family life will therefore influence evaluations of democracy. This necessitates us to drop the spring 1996 data from our analysis⁷⁶. Unfortunately, this was the only measurement in 1996, whereas in most years surveys were organised twice every year. Also for 1995 we have just one measurement. The question on satisfaction with democracy was first used in 1973 (Eurobarometer ECS73). As we only have generally comparable consumer confidence data since 1985, we do not use the older democracy satisfaction data in the analysis.

A comparative analysis at the European level

The aim of this analysis is to determine whether the relationship found in Belgian data can be generalised to the other European countries. We restrict the analysis to the countries that joined the EU before 1995. Finland, Sweden and Austria are thus not included as we only have eleven measurements of satisfaction with democracy, whereas in other countries satisfaction was measured over thirty times since the mid-80s. Measurement of consumer confidence started only recently (2002) in Luxemburg, what makes us have to drop Luxemburg. This leaves us with eleven countries. For illustrative purposes, we also used the EU average, even though the calculation of the average is not based on the same group of countries as the ones we use in our analysis. Political trust indicators (satisfaction with democracy) are compared to the consumer confidence scores of the months in which Eurobarometer data collection was completed, as data collection for Eurobarometer surveys is often organised over two or more months.

The US has a solid tradition of measuring political trust (National Election Study) and consumer confidence. Consumer confidence indicators are comparable from January 1978 on (Curtin and The University of Michigan, 2003). The political trust time-series started in 1958, but unfortunately measurement is organised with two-year intervals, which makes a solid analysis of the American situation difficult. Webb Yackee and Lowery (2003), however, have found a relationship between support for the bureaucracy and the *Index of Consumer Sentiment*.

We use the indicator for satisfaction with democracy in a balanced way in analogy to the consumer confidence index (European Commission, 2003): $(PP_i + \frac{1}{2} P_i) - (\frac{1}{2} M_i + MM_i)$, where PP_i , P_i , M_i and MM_i stand for very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied and not at all satisfied respectively.

⁷⁶ Eurobarometer trends as presented at Gesis website (www.gesis.org) include EB 44.3OVR in their trend. They warn us that question context differs, but fail to notify users that this context has a strong influence on the answers.

Table 42: Correlations between 'satisfaction with democracy' and consumer confidence in 11 European countries

	Consumer confidence			Expected change in financial position of one's household in next 12 months		
		p	N		p	N
NL	.48	.005	(32)	.72	.000	(32)
BE	.32	.076	(32)	.44	.013	(32)
DK	.68	.000	(32)	.76	.000	(32)
DE ⁷⁷	.61	.000	(31)	.61	.000	(31)
EL	.59	.000	(32)	.57	.001	(32)
ES	.61	.000	(29)	.64	.000	(29)
FR	.43	.015	(32)	.34	.055	(32)
IE	.73	.000	(32)	.80	.000	(32)
IT	.78	.000	(32)	.79	.000	(32)
PT	.69	.000	(29)	.79	.000	(29)
UK	.67	.000	(32)	.73	.000	(32)
EU ⁷⁸	.62	.000	(31)	.74	.000	(31)

(Pearson correlations)

The relationship between satisfaction with democracy and the consumer confidence indicator is consistently high and almost always significant, with the exception of France and Belgium. Correlations become even higher when expected changes in the financial position of one's household in the next 12 months is used instead of consumer confidence. The relationship also appears in the aggregated EU-level averages.

Even though it is the *index* of consumer confidence that is most often used, this index is composed of a number of indicators (cf. supra). The indicators that consumer confidence is composed of are not one-dimensional (Bechtel et al., 1993). We thus also give correlations between political trust and expected changes in the financial position of one's household, as correlations with this item are almost always the highest. Despite this strong correlation, a regression analysis reveals that the expected financial situation is one of the weakest indicators of consumer confidence. Expected unemployment is the strongest contributor of consumer confidence, but in many countries it shows no relationship at all with political trust. This suggests that it are not macro-economic factors and expectations that determine political trust, but micro-economic expectations.

There is no significant relationship in France. A scatter graph (not shown here) reveals that the most recent measurement is an outlier, as we observe a clear peak in political trust in spring 2003. This peak is part of a general upward trend in France, but is still considerably higher than the November 2002 measurement. A general feature of this period is that political trust is exceptionally high, while consumer confidence is very low. We do not find outspoken reasons for this high political trust. Two tentative explanations relate to a *rallying around the flag* effect as a result of French anti-American resistance against the intervention in Iraq, and to the popular mobilisation prior to the May 2002 second

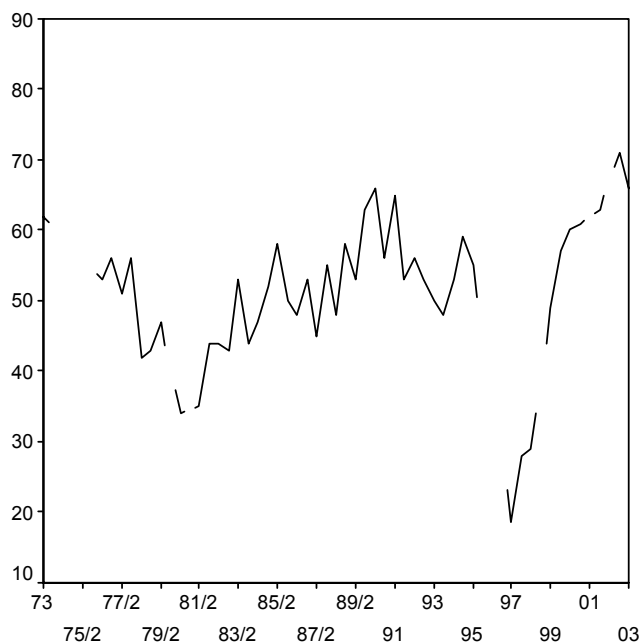
⁷⁷ The political trust indicator for Germany refers to West-Germany from 1985 until the spring of 1990. From autumn 1990 on, it refers to both West- and East Germany. This will no doubt influence the results.

⁷⁸ EU averages are based on those countries part of the EU in the respective year, and not only on the countries that are included in our analysis.

round of the presidential elections where Jacques Chirac ran against the candidate of the extreme right, Jean-Marie Le Pen.

The most remarkable finding is that Belgium is the only country where we do not find a significant relationship, even though the other data we used in Figure 48 revealed a relationship between political trust and consumer confidence. It was exactly this observation that stimulated us to broaden the analysis to other European countries. How to explain this absence of relationship? Figure 49 shows levels of satisfaction with how democracy works in Belgium:

Figure 49: Satisfaction with how democracy works in Belgium (% satisfied)



Source: Eurobarometer

The most remarkable feature in this data is the collapse of satisfaction in 1997-1998. This collapse should not come as a surprise, as Belgium was faced with an unprecedented political crisis. Arrests were made in a paedophilia case, Brussels was the scene of a mass demonstration (Oct. 1996), and public enemy no. 1 arrested in this paedophilia case managed to escape from prison in April 1998. These exceptional events had a profound impact on political trust and even more so on citizens' trust in the police and the justice system. We suppose the scope of the crisis, which was clearly related to the political system, temporarily disturbed the relationship with consumer confidence. If this hypothesis is correct, a relationship between political trust and consumer confidence should reappear once data for 1997-1998 are excluded from the analysis. Of course, this political crisis also influenced the *La Libre Belgique* newspaper opinion poll results, but as these results are more detailed (3-monthly), effects are probably less outspoken. Pearson correlation between consumer confidence and satisfaction with democracy now becomes .533 ($p=.003$, $N=29$). The relationship thus reappears -as expected- but remains weak. We could make attempts to filter more specific events from the data, but in the present state of the research such decisions would be too arbitrary: which crisis should be considered as *exceptional*? Scientific correctness would also require us to apply the same techniques to the data of the other countries. The latter requires additional research on political crises, something that falls out of the scope of this research.

Analysis for Belgium at the individual level

Our analysis thus far related to data aggregated at the national level. Such an analysis of course obscures certain individual-level differences. Because the indicators for consumer confidence and political trust have been collected using different instruments, it is not possible for us to analyse relations at both the individual and the European level at the same time. In our third WADO mail survey in 2003, we included a number of items to test the relationship at the individual level: satisfaction with the functioning of democracy (as in the Eurobarometer), trust in government (as in the Libre Belgique poll, see footnote 73), and the consumer confidence items⁷⁹:

- How do you expect the general economic situation in the country to develop over the next 12 months?
- How do you expect the number of people unemployed in this country to change over the next 12 months?
- How do you expect the financial position of your household to change over the next 12 months?
- Over the next 12 months, how likely is it that you save any money?

The next two tables show the frequencies for these four questions.

Table 43: Consumer confidence: expected evolutions

<i>expected evolution of...</i>	<i>economic situation in Belgium</i>	<i>unemployment in Belgium</i>	<i>financial position of household</i>
(++)	2,3	3,0	1,9
(+)	25,1	16,1	13,2
(=)	33,6	19,9	57,4
(-)	27,8	37,9	20,9
(--)	9,8	22,0	5,0

Source: WADO mail 2003

Respondents seemed to be especially worried about rising unemployment. This is probably in part due to problems in the Genk Ford plant and the announcement of mass dismissals in the period when the survey was being organised.

⁷⁹ Due to an error, the first two waves of questionnaires in the WADO 2003 mail survey (late June, early July 2003) contained a question on the household's financial situation that was used before the new method for calculating the index of consumer confidence was introduced. From the third wave on, the correct question was used. We will thus only use 2747 of the 3168 observations.

Table 44: Consumer confidence: expected savings

	<i>likelihood of saving over next 12 months</i>
very likely	16,6
fairly likely	33,6
not likely	31,8
not at all likely	16,7

Source: WADO mail 2003

The first important finding in the analysis, jeopardising the findings in the previous section, is that the four consumer confidence items do not load on a single factor. Unemployment and economic situation expectations in the country load on one factor; expected savings and financial position of the household on another.

All correlations are, as shown in Table 45, significant, but the size of correlations is considerably smaller than was the case in the aggregate analysis. We do of course have to deal with a considerably larger sample, making the findings not fully comparable. It nevertheless seems that there is a difference in the relations at the aggregate and those at the individual level. Differences in the direction of the correlation are due to question wording.

Table 45: Correlations between consumer confidence and trust in government

	<i>unemploy. in Belgium</i>	<i>financial position of household</i>	<i>expected savings</i>	<i>trust in government LLB</i>	<i>satisfaction democracy Belgium</i>	<i>satisfaction democracy Flanders</i>	<i>trust in government</i>
economic situation in Belgium	-0,42	0,29	0,18	0,35	-0,18	-0,18	-0,22
unemployment in Belgium		-0,16	-0,12	-0,22	0,13	0,14	0,17
financial position of household			0,35	0,22	-0,11	-0,12	-0,18
expected savings				0,12	-0,08	-0,09	-0,17
trust in government LLB					-0,28	-0,27	-0,34
satisfaction democracy Belgium						0,83	0,32
satisfaction democracy Flanders							0,32

All correlations significant at the 0.01 level. Source: WADO mail 2003.

Discussion and conclusion

We analysed the convergence between consumer confidence and political trust in eleven EU countries, which turned out to be very high in all countries but France and Belgium. When, however, an alternative indicator for political trust is used in Belgium (LLB), a relationship re-emerges. The exceptional situation for Belgium seems to be caused by extremely low levels of political trust during and after the Duitroux crisis. There are a number of plausible explanations for such a similarity.

- Citizens blame economic slack on government because it is perceived not to have taken measures to stimulate economic activity. We have discussed earlier why such a blame-attribution is not self-evident (in 5.2).

- A bad economic situation forces government to save, and citizens will be dissatisfied because of the high taxes and low government expenditure (unless government takes Keynesian measures against the economic crisis). Still, we notice that high government expenditure and low political trust coincide, and that tax-level evolutions are not good at explaining variations in trust.
- The gap between politics and citizens is not an isolated fact, but is part of a generalised negative attitude that influences evaluations of both the political and the economic life. This implies, among others, that high trust may stimulate the economy (Moesen and Cherchye, 2001). Previous research suggested that consumer confidence is influenced by political events, but also that citizens' political trust is influenced by the performance of the economy. Consumer confidence and political trust are therefore no economic and political sector-specific indicators

We are inclined to adhere to the third explanation. Research does not commonly find a relationship between income levels and satisfaction (Nye and Zelikow, 1997: 263). The consumer confidence indicator, however, is a subjective indicator (and it is intended to be so). Citizens are asked to give their opinion on the economic situation, but in fact they do not have many specific points of reference for constructing an opinion. The strength of the correlation between the indicators suggests that both are an expression of an underlying feeling, and we can thus consider them as *social mood* indicators. Both measure a societal mental state, a certain level of optimism or pessimism. Each of the indicators remains of course related to its specific sector (macro-economic resp. political evolutions). The findings suggest that we cannot just consider consumer confidence and political trust as the resp. evaluations of economic and political factors, but that they have to be considered as indicators of a social mood, a mood that in turn is related to the economic and political situation. Nevertheless, genuine evaluations of the present situation remain important. Certain events reduce these indicators to measuring the performance in the specific subsystem (economy, politics) they are commonly said to measure. A political crisis such as the Dutroux-case leads to a decline of political trust that is not matched by an equally substantial decline in consumer confidence. When outspoken political or economic crises are absent, consumer confidence and political trust are an expression of a submerged societal mood. Definitive conclusions are, however, not possible at this stage as this requires research on crises in a number of countries.

Our hypothesis helps to explain why relationships between optimism in society, socio-economic expectations and trust (Jacobs et al., 2003) or between social capital, feelings of insecurity, and trust (Elchardus, Smits, and Kuppens, 2003) are often found. The findings also confirm that the recent tendency in Belgium to speak about *verzuring* is perhaps more representative of reality than was the earlier discourse on political distrust and the *gap between citizens and politics*. Another interesting finding is the *discovery* by the National Bank of Belgium in recent publications (2002) of *experienced inflation* by citizens as opposed to *measured inflation*. Both *types* of inflation started to diverge (real & measured inflation decreases, experienced inflation increases) when the Euro was introduced. This again suggests that these kinds of perceptions are to a large extent a social phenomenon.

Political trust is more than an evaluation of politics by citizens. Social moods do not exist in isolation, but despite many relationships to other phenomena, little is known on their origins. More indications are found in Huseby's findings (2000) that there are no clear trends in satisfaction with

democracy in the European countries, but that fluctuations are nevertheless comparable. Uslaner (2002: 78) speaks about *overall optimism* that probably is a far better explanation for trust than is a series of objective indicators that could be reasons for this optimism. Norris speaks about the crisis of government as a “more diffuse mood of *Angst*” (1999a: 5). When dealing with stereotypes, we have already referred to some similar tendencies, and quoted authors who spoke about a *Zeitgeist* or a *culture of distrust* (Chapter 1). Opinions on public sector performance may therefore be more related to social moods, cultural differences, stereotypes etc. than to actual government performance (Ringeling, 1993: 282-9).

It thus seems as if distrust in government or a negative evaluation of the public administration is not a consequence of something this government or administration does or does not, but that it is just one expression of a broader phenomenon: a pessimistic attitude caused by mass-psychological processes that we have called *social mood*. Stimson (1999) found similar processes to be present in citizens' attitudes towards different policies, and he used *policy mood* as the latent variable behind these attitudes. A policy mood is a latent concept that cannot be measured by a single survey question, but is a bundling of separate issues (1999: 3 & 26)⁸⁰. Erikson, in his research on economic voting, suggested that “voters do not respond as a function of the issue positions they offer in surveys, but rather to positions on underlying latent issue dimensions that are difficult to measure” (2004: 43).

These findings suggest that citizens' perceptions of the public sector are part of a broader societal attitude. Individual-level explanations are not sufficient. Attitudes towards the public sector are more than individual attitudes. They are social attitudes instead. To some policy-makers this may not be a very useful finding, but these findings do integrate into evolutions and tendencies in sociological research. Relating the processes at the micro (individual) and those at the macro level may prove to be a central challenge (Mayntz, 2004).

With these findings in mind, the statistics we have presented at the very outset of this research (Table 2, p. 1-14) suddenly become less surprising. In the current stage of research, our explanations are nothing more than speculation. The use of the highly diffuse and undefined term *social mood* indeed indicates that it remains unclear how these moods may be created. The findings do, however, indicate that we should look beyond government to explain levels of trust in government, and beyond bureaucratic encounters to explain perceptions of administrative performance.

9.6 CONCLUSION: A SOCIETAL PHENOMENON?

General attitudes towards the public sector do not exist in isolation. These attitudes often are embedded in other attitudes. Dissatisfaction with one issue often coincides with negative attitudes towards many issues. Being dissatisfied with the functioning of public services in general almost always coincides with a more negative evaluation of practically all services. Many issues that are generally regarded as causes of dissatisfaction (lack of information, preference for privatisation, demands for

⁸⁰ Stimson admits, as I must do for the social mood concept, that it is difficult to define what a mood actually *is*. This problem in defining naturally evokes a lot of criticism; Stimson refers to Lippmann's *spirit of the age*, *shared feelings that move over time and circumstance*, and to the *idea of changing general dispositions* (Stimson, 1999: 20).

lower taxes), are therefore probably no more than expressions of this dissatisfaction. In this chapter, we have tried to measure the extent of generalisation of attitudes, by analysing patterns of answers in surveys. The analysis, contrary to what is generally assumed, revealed that the largest group of citizens is one that is uncritically positive. These people evaluate institutions and services in a positive way, and do not differentiate much. Opposite this group is a cluster of citizens that is generalised negative. The degree of generalisation suggests that the attitudes we measure cannot be considered as specific evaluations of services. Rather, these attitudes are part of a more general predisposition. On the other hand, some 45% of citizens were seen to differentiate in their opinions. Two thirds of this group, however, gave most institutions and services a negative score. What is remarkable is that all of these groups cannot be distinguished on socio-demographic criteria. What the analysis made clear is that the attitudes that are measured in a survey contain two elements. One is the aspect of evaluation of individual services; the other is the aspect of general predispositions towards government.

We found some evidence that these general predispositions are likely not to be limited to government. The concept of social mood has been used to describe this phenomenon, and was used as an explanation for the strong convergence between trust in government and consumer confidence. This evidence suggests that the study of citizens' perception of the public sector should not be limited to analysing attitudes towards specific services, but that it should also be approached as a part of a broader set of attitudes. Perceptions of the public sector are not just public sector-related attitudes, but are just as much societal attitudes.

IV. Conclusion

Chapter 10 ATTITUDES TOWARDS PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AS A SOCIAL OPINION

Ask people what 'public administration' means and either their faces will cloud over or everyone will give a different answer. [...] Yet ask people what is wrong with public administration, i.e., public maladministration, there is likely to be an immediate and lively response and the recalling of instances of mistreatment that they personally have experienced or know happened to somebody else.

(Gerald Caiden, What really is public maladministration? 1991, p. 486)

Policy-makers worry about declining levels of trust in government, and about the very negative image of the public sector. They often identify the failing performance of public services as a key factor explaining these developments. The central position of bureaucratic encounters in the formation of overall opinions about *the* public sector and government is harder to defend than a first impression would suggest. In the first part, it was found that the basic assumption of this reasoning is actually hard to defend. No definitive empirical evidence was found that citizens' attitudes towards the public sector and government actually constantly deteriorate. In part two, we looked for evidence to explore whether the performance of specific services actually determines the image of the public sector. Performance and citizens' perception of this performance were shown to be two different things. Aggregating the perception of specific services into a perception of the public sector proved to be very difficult from a theoretical viewpoint, and a pragmatic approach of the problem revealed a strong interrelatedness of the indicators that were used. This led us, in part three, to study the impact of certain predispositions towards the public sector on the evaluation of specific services. In the last chapter, it was shown that these predispositions even extended beyond the public sector and government.

The strong statistical relationships between attitudes towards specific public services, the public opinion towards the public administration, and trust in government are often taken as a proof of causal relations. We have demonstrated, however, a strong interrelatedness between these concepts, what suggests they cannot be disentangled in a meaningful way. Measuring satisfaction, perceptions of quality and trust in quasi-identical ways obscures genuine relationships. When citizens express opinions about services they have not used, or do not even really know, these cannot really be considered as genuine *evaluations*. The same goes for trust in government:

“Regardless of whether a person has had any personal experience with the police or the courts, they can still evaluate the performance of those authorities and the institutions they represent. Such general evaluations are similar to the measures of ‘trust and confidence’ in the government evaluations collected by political scientists.” (Tyler and Huo, 2002: 175)

The measures used for mapping trust in government and attitudes towards the public administration are taken for granted. It is not so obvious what these measures actually measure. Differences in how items are phrased are often taken as evidence of genuine difference. It is not because one item linguistically refers to *satisfaction with the functioning of public services*, and another to *trust in government* that they can be factually distinguished. Political scientists worry because conventional measures are being institutionalised, and that, as a consequence, “the components of legitimacy (efficacy, trust, political involvement, etc.) are typically treated as if they were theoretically and statistically separable” (Weatherford, 1992: 153). The present urge for collecting more and better data, especially time-series, obscures the lack of theoretical reflection and stimulates imitation rather than innovation (see e.g. Schedler, 1993: 417).

10.1 WHY WE SHOULD ABANDON THE MICRO-PERFORMANCE HYPOTHESIS: A REVISED MODEL

In the introduction, we presented two tables. One showed experienced problems in one’s neighbourhood in a Belgian city, and the other gave an evaluation of the quality of public services in the EU countries. There, we suggested that opinions about public services might be far more than a rational evaluation of experience with these services. A social component is included in the opinion. The basic model using the general discourse relating public sector performance and citizens’ overall attitudes towards government, was of a rather mechanical nature. In this micro-performance model, negative perceptions of the public sector and low levels of trust in government were taken for granted and logically related. Perceptions of individual services were steered by the services’ performance. The specific perceptions could be subsequently aggregated to a perception of the public sector, which at the time was a central element in trust in government. In this study, we have called into question some of the basic assumptions of this model, as well as many of the causal relations.

The spillover of personal experience with services to overall opinions about the public administration, and the aggregation of specific services and agencies to one single concept of *the public administration* or *government* are the key elements in the micro-performance approach to trust in government. Bureaucratic encounters are considered the single most important authoritative source in the formation of opinions. In our own research, we found ample indications that absence of encounters is by no means a reason not to have an opinion. The existence of social influence on memory is a well-established phenomenon in the literature (Granhag, Strömwall, and Billings, 2002).

Opinions towards the administration exist of multiple layers. The evaluation of service experience is just one, the traditional symbolic meaning of the administration and prevailing stereotypes is another. One step further removed is the impact of attitudes not related to the performance of government or even government as such (cf. the social mood concept in 9.5) on attitudes towards the public administration and government. This means that the opinion about the administration may become

entirely detached from the administration itself. Sears made a similar remark on political attitudes in general "... affective reactions are primary; they do not depend on prior cognitive appraisals and, indeed, may become completely separated from the content on which they were originally based (though perhaps later cognitively justified)" (2001: 24). In other words, the public opinion is something that also exists as a social fact, and is not necessarily permanently recreated through experience with public services. This cognitive justification is a key element. No matter how often citizens motivate their opinion towards the administration by referring to experienced service delivery, or no matter how often politicians relate performance and trust, this is no proof that the suggested logical relationship actually exists. A great deal of the existing confusion about whether there actually are declines in trust or satisfaction, or whether these are related, can be attributed to an insufficient distinction of the various layers. The similarity between the trust and satisfaction items in section 7.4 has illustrated this. Both our basic model and the alternative approach have their deal of validity, be it in other circumstances. The figures about informed opinion in section 9.2 are a good illustration of the different processes of the attitude formation.

Citizens' opinion on the public administration seems to consist of two related elements: an individual attitude and a societal attitude. Citizens' opinions on the public administration are not only created in a government-citizen interaction, but also in a citizen-citizen interaction. Governments' attention to improving services for restoring trust therefore missed out on many important elements of the trust attitude. Opinions about the public administration are embedded in a social context, and are not just an individual opinion. It are social opinions to which the individual participates. A societal rather than an individually-centred approach may be required when studying opinions towards the public administration and the impact of these opinions on trust in government. Developing a revised model is therefore required. The theoretical micro-performance model can be contrasted to a model that gives the societal dimension of attitudes toward public services and government a more central role. This model does not necessarily replace the original one, but should serve as a competing explanation. In the research, we found many indications why the two models may have differing degrees of validity, depending on the context in which opinions towards public services are being studied. The main differences between the two approaches are summarised below.

Table 46: Two approaches to the study of attitudes towards the public administration

	<i>Micro-performance approach</i>	<i>Societal approach</i>
Source of opinions	Service encounters	Encounter-detached
Scope	Exclusive (only administration)	Inclusive (factors other than the administration)
Focus	The individual	Society
Research paradigm	Rational, partially a-historical	Non-rational, historical
Research discipline	Public administration	Social psychology, sociology, ...

- *Source of opinions:* the micro-performance approach states that citizens' opinions on the administration are based on service encounters. Improving service delivery -the encounters- is then the best way to improve the image of the administration. Such a focus on encounters as a source of opinions fails to explain why citizens also have an opinion on services they do not

use. The argument as would this opinion then be based on hearsay is not entirely convincing, unless we would attribute this hearsay a far bigger importance.

- *Scope:* In the micro-performance approach, the administration itself takes a central role. Explanations for the opinion about the administration should be looked for within the administration. If there is dissatisfaction, one reason might be the way the administration functions. The micro-performance approach also places the administration at the core of citizens' concept of government. In the societal approach, we place the image of the administration itself within a broader framework, thus suggesting spillover effects from other government-related bodies (real or perceived), and even societal developments to opinions about the administration. Opinions about the administration may have their origins in factors not related to the administration itself. This helps to explain why opinions about the public administration are more than a summation of opinions about specific public services.
- *Focus:* The micro-performance approach focuses on individual opinions and encounters. Individuals have their own opinion that is a result of personal experience. Individual impact is more limited in the societal approach. Here individual opinions have to be seen within a societal context. This means that individual opinions are always to some extent influenced by social norms or by dominant attitudes in society. Individual opinions and even the perceptions themselves are embedded in the individual's social context.
- *Research paradigm:* a PA research approach is insufficient, because it tends to look for explanations for the image of the administration within the administration or in administration-citizen relationship. The societal approach states that evaluations and perceptions of government performance are not only created in a government-citizen interaction, but that a substantial part of these citizen evaluations have become detached from government, and are instead created in a citizen-citizen interaction. This does not only mean that perception has become detached from government performance, but also that even the object of evaluation (government) is disappearing from the picture. Evaluations of government performance thus evolve from an *evaluation* to a societal consensus. Not only current or recent experience with services matters, but also past experience and other people's experience. Even more important are cultural factors and historical attitudes towards the administration. The way in which the concepts of society, government, and administration are blended takes a central role. We have to keep in mind that attitude-formation towards the public administration may happen following different processes for different people.
- *Research discipline:* It is a natural reflex of public administration research to focus on individual services and agencies to explain opinions towards the public administration. The central position of institutions in the PA discipline tends to negate many other origins of these opinions. In this study, we have not found any solid reasons why explanations for attitudes towards the public administration would be different from explanations for any kind of opinions and attitudes. Opinions about the public administration should not in the first place be studied by analysing *objective realities* (i.e. performance of specific services, or characteristics of the public administration), but by applying current knowledge of attitude formation to the public administration. This requires a far greater interdisciplinarity (Turner, 2001).

10.2 WHAT ROLE IS LEFT FOR THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?

When most opinions about the public administration are in fact social opinions, what role is then left for the public administration? Does the conclusion that attitudes towards the public sector often are social opinions mean that bureaucratic encounters do not matter? Not exactly. It all depends on the context in which an attitude is formulated, and on the location and strength of a specific institution within the concept of public administration and of the public administration within the concept of government.

Frameworks of reference: attitudinal contexts

The more general or open the question in a survey, the broader the array of possible objects of reference. This explains why, in Chapter 1, we have found so little difference between the determinants of trust in government and those of satisfaction with the functioning of public services. Satisfaction with the functioning of public services invites the respondent to choose freely between a wide range of objects of reference when forming or expressing his or her opinion: recent encounters, stereotypes, discourse about the administration, media, etc. In section 9.2 we found a large degree of generalisation in trust attitudes towards a substantial list of institutions. This may be caused by the sheer length of the list, and the often-minimal difference between the institutions, stimulates the respondent to return to the same collection of objects of reference when asked, or forced, to express an opinion on each of these institutions.

Not only survey context affects opinions. Also in a day-to-day interaction, these processes are at work. The social context in which a person is asked to formulate an opinion often implies a pre-given possible range and nature of objects of reference. This means that, for instance, when confronted in the setting of a smoky pub with a question about your opinion about the administration, that the possible range of objects of reference is almost automatically limited to concepts such as slow, lazy, expensive, and to anecdotal information.

When this context changes to a situation where a person is asked to express an opinion about a certain administration (e.g. the vehicle registry office) by, for instance, a friend who is manager in this administration, or by the collaborator of a research agency administering a customer survey, then an entirely different array of mental linkages are being made. Odds are lower that attitudes about big government, taxes, politicians, or the ever-late railways will influence how opinions about this vehicle registry office will be expressed. The conclusion that citizens' evaluations of services in a customer survey are often different (i.e. this means more positive) from that what is generally expected is then explained by the fact that the referential framework for formulating this opinion is pre-given and pre-determined by the context of the survey setting. Expressing negative attitudes is then only possible *within* this framework, as reference to objects outside this setting is discouraged. Evaluations of specific encounters are made within a framework that is considerably narrower than is the case for general attitudes towards the public sector.

The fact that the public administration does not really have an identity apart from the state or government in general stimulates the conceptual bonding between satisfaction with services and trust in government. Actually, because little is known about citizens' mental map of government and the place of the administration in it, it would be a very plausible working hypothesis that the distinction

citizens make between the administration and government is very limited or even quasi non-existent. The situation may be different for more specific parts of the administration.

The impact of a social mood (section 9.5) is of a similar nature. Questions on general trust in government or satisfaction with democracy are extremely general and vague. Respondents may feel somehow lost when cognitively searching for an anchoring point for their opinion. Limiting the scope of objects of reference naturally limits the impact of social factors on expressed opinions. The pressure of social norms is less determining when the individual opinion is allowed to become more specific, and when there consequently are less anchoring points for the social norm. Our findings in Figure 45 and Figure 46 suggest that the scope of these mental frameworks could be different for different groups, or at least, that they have an impact in a different way. In the figures it was shown that higher education and higher interest in politics resulted in less divergence between general trust in government and trust in specific institutions. If the frameworks these groups use would have been the same ones, degrees of divergence should have been similar. The groups that were found to generalise in our analysis of patterns of answer in the battery of trust items (section 9.2, the generalised negatives and uncritical positives) seem to rely on different concepts when forming their opinion. It must be that for the generalisers there is a dominant reference object. For the others, there may be several specific reference objects, some of them only related to the specific institution that is being evaluated. Different levels of political sophistication may also be a possible explanation.

Re-locating the public administration within the concept of government

The public administration often lacks a separate identity or image, and therefore often blends into the concept of government. Apart from the concept of government, bureaucracy (in its pejorative meaning) may well be the only concept mentally related to the public administration. Public administrators would probably prefer to see public administration as part of the concept of service delivery, because in this way citizens would have a more relevant referent for evaluating the quality of government services -from the administrators' viewpoint, that is. Attitudes towards the public administration are not often dissimilated from attitudes towards government. If the concept of public administration is integrated into the concept of government, changing it will be difficult only by relying on public administration-related actions. The more central an element in a broader belief system, the harder the resistance to change (Converse, 1964). This means administrative reform, innovation and performance will only be evaluated on their own merits when the public administration can actually be disconnected from the concept of government, and specified within or even outside the concept of government.

Specifying the public administration in government: the role of reform projects

Political attitudes or specific events often influence or even tarnish the public administration's image. This can only change when the public administration comes to take a more central place in the concept of government. Odds for this to happen are very small, despite the pervasiveness of public services in people's lives. We did see in section 4.2 that media interest for administrative organisation and administrative reform is quasi non-existent. That chapter, however, also showed how an administrative reform project could be pushed to the core of the attention. The Copernicus administrative reform project in Belgium managed to put the administration at the centre of government for a short while, whereas the administration had a very marginal role before. This central position did

not so much result from the actual content of the project, but from the mere fact that the reform was presented as an encompassing project, concerning all citizens. It was a genuine *project*, and well publicised. In this way, terms of the debate could be changed. Evaluation of the public sector was no longer made based on encounters or social opinions about bureaucracy, but on the success or failure of the reform *project* itself. The intrinsic linkage of the reform project, however, with specific political parties and persons, risks that this party or person becomes the new object of reference in the attitude formation.

These comments are not exactly innovative. Changing the terms of the debate by making the public administration a dominant impact in attitudes about government by initiating a reform project is in fact nothing new. It is no more than a specific case of agenda-setting, just as the emergence of the distrust debate in the political discourse in Belgium in the early 90s also contained elements of agenda-setting (see section 9.4). Still, the impact of the administrative reform project went further in Belgium. It was integrated into an *innovative positive political project*, and in this way contributed to the creation of a positive social mood), which in turn will have had an impact on the broader societal framework in which opinions come into being. Failure to keep the issue of administrative reform on the agenda will have an impact on how the administration is being evaluated, not only because the public administration in this way loses a central place in the concept of government, but also because the reform project is seen as failed. Reduction of the public administration to the specific administrative reform project means the (perceived!) failure of the reform *project* will be interpreted as a failure of reform in general and as an indication that the administration does not perform properly.

The role of perceptions: beneficial effects of perception management?

A focus on perceptions of performance overemphasises the exceptional and minimises the normal. Improving citizens' attitudes towards the administration can be accomplished following two strategies. One is quality management and treats positive perceptions as an outcome of service quality. The other is perception management and needs not be related to actual service quality. Possibilities for both of these strategies have sufficiently been outlined in this study. Administrators, often convinced their administration has considerably improved through a series of reforms, are mainly worried by the observation that citizens' perception does not match the reality of service delivery as they see it. Closing the gap between perceptions of performance and actual performance is then regarded as the main challenge. Informing citizens is considered crucial. Is there any hope for creating a perception that corresponds to *reality* in this way? The strong role of symbols in the political discourse suggests this strategy will not necessarily work. Focusing on perception management may have a far greater impact on perceptions of performance than does actual performance.

Specifying the public administration, altering the belief system, or steering citizens' attention to other elements in their conception of government and the administration requires a great deal of social engineering. Opinions of trust in government and attitudes towards the public sector may be based on a changing set of reference objects. Controlling or at least influencing the processes of change is central to initiatives to improve the perceptions. Closing the gap between performance of public services and perceptions of service delivery may be attained by altering the objects of reference in which evaluations are made from the realm of government to the realm of service delivery. When citizens incorporate *public services* into their belief system of services (including e.g. banks, insurance companies) instead of in that of *government*, their evaluations will probably be focused more on actual

experienced service quality. We have suggested before that this switch in belief system orientation may account for the differences in the evaluation of public services in general surveys and in specific client satisfaction surveys.

10.3 CHALLENGES FOR POLICYMAKERS

Our conclusion that citizens' perception of the public sector is as much part of a social attitude as it is a response to experience poses considerable challenges to policymakers. A policy-research project about the impact of the functioning of public services on citizens' trust in government commissioned by the ministry of the Flemish Community stimulated the present study. This administration also sponsored the research and the data-collection. Other governments have commissioned similar research. It is therefore appropriate to dwell upon on the relevance and consequence of our findings for public administrations.

The opinion that citizens are dissatisfied with their public services prevails, despite evidence to the contrary. The gap between citizens and government is now perceived to be considerably larger than was the case in the past and the underperformance of the administration is considered a central determinant of levels of trust in government. These opinions are that well established that it will take more than mere factual information to counter this opinion. Offering factual information is exactly what many authors have done (see section 2.1), and what is central in many management approaches to government's image marketing. Citizens' image of the public administration does not necessarily correspond to their individual experience. Still, policymakers have a strong belief in the possibilities for improving this image by reforming public services. The way in which causal relationships are *perceived* by elites determines what policies they make (Sabatier and Hunter, 1989).

As we have demonstrated in section 9.1, many of the frequently presumed causes of distrust are in fact no more than expressions of this basic feeling. Policy-makers should beware of relying too heavily on self-reported explanations for dissatisfaction. Circularity permeates political decision-making. Trust or distrust and the given causes for it are part of an agenda-setting process, which in turn influences citizens' opinions. These given opinions are consequently taken as confirmation of the correctness of the policy-maker's new policy. Societal demands and political supply then cohabit in miraculous harmony. Erikson (2004) makes a similar recommendation for studying economic voting: aggregate data is preferred to individual-level analysis, as respondents tend to adapt their opinion about the economy to the political opinion they express in the survey. Economic perceptions are not necessarily accurate representations of the respondent's belief about the economy. He therefore asks whether we should "take survey respondent reports regarding economic conditions at face value as their economic beliefs? The analysis of this paper suggests that the answer is decidedly 'no' " (2004: 37)

The constant relating of trust, the performance of the administration, discontent etc. and blending of concepts means that the performance-trust relationship has become more of a symbolic reality, influencing actions. We cannot do else than to join Sims' explicit opinion that it would be unwise "to justify service improvement efforts in terms of possible effects on confidence" (Sims, 2001). Most evidence offered by political scientists, however, often is easily discarded as being the product of ivory-tower science. There are, however, as we will show below, good reasons why the academic findings do not easily get translated into policy change: The findings do not lead to action-plans.

A desire for specification and isolation

Solving problems requires agreement about the definition of the problem, and the possibility to relate the problem to a series of causes. Tackling a problem requires specification of the problem and its isolation on a specific location. Reality is hardly ever that simple. We have seen that the perception of the public administration cannot entirely be attributed to the public administration itself (and, we add that the existence of a problem is disputed). Complaints are often heard among civil servants that their agency's image suffers unjustly from failure in other agencies, or even from citizens' failure to distinguish between political decision and administrative implementation. Discouraging as this may be for these civil servants, generalisation is an important aspect in citizens' opinion.

A finding that bureaucratic encounters only have a limited direct impact on attitudes towards the public administration, and that a well-functioning administration does not necessarily lead to an increase in public trust, may well be demoralising for policy-makers involved in public sector reform and quality management. Influencing interpersonal communication patterns or changing social moods requires other techniques than reforming a public service, a task that is more clearly delineated. What is required is to disconnect between the debates on trust in government and those about public sector reform. Both are praiseworthy ends, but cannot necessarily be reached by following the same path (Bouckaert and Van de Walle, 2003).

Policy-makers get even more desperate when confronted with observations that evolutions in trust coincide with consumer confidence and social moods, and that an at first sight conventional measure of *satisfaction with the functioning of public services* in fact measures something entirely different. Taking these conclusions into account, many of the established causes of dissatisfaction and distrust (lack of information, big government, etc.) then turn out to be no more than symptoms of the phenomenon. The validity of explanatory models is often dictated by the present state of the political agenda. Persistence of this tendency to treat symptoms as causes is not only due to selective perception, but is also stimulated by the limited scope of many surveys. Most surveys organised by or for administrations tend to focus on aspects of service delivery or policy only. Bivariate *relations* then suggest *explanations*. An a-priori limitation of the quest for causes to the public administration or government itself of course predetermines what will be found.

A desire for modernity and a preference for individual-level explanations

The current survey tradition finds its origins in the behaviouralist approach. Often, the focus is on the individual respondent and his or her personal opinions. We have found, in this study, only marginal impact of socio-demographic variables on levels of trust or attitudes towards the public administration. Searing et al. found that relations between personality factors and political attitudes are virtually absent and equally remarked that "It may be a fundamental error to assume that average citizens possess such highly integrated belief systems in the first place" (Searing, Schwartz, and Lind, 1973: 429). Our analysis did not make it possible to cluster respondents in clearly delineated groups with different characteristics, but it did show that there are different types of trust and distrust. In one type distrusting or trusting an institution seems to follow from an individual evaluation of the institution, and in the other the opinion towards an institution is embedded in a more general positive or negative predisposition. Defining, let alone disentangling, these types is uncharted territory: when are expressions of trust or distrust in a survey evaluations, when are they feelings and when are they non-opinions? This again

shows that it is dangerous to consider expressed distrust towards an institution as an indication of intrinsic underperformance of this institution, or, alternatively, expressed trust as reassuring.

Because of the impact of stereotypes, interpersonal diffusion of attitudes, social moods etc., individual-level explanations may be insufficient for explaining attitudes towards the administration and towards government. Collective explanations at the macro-level may contribute to our knowledge. Stimson (1999) made a plea for studying macro-politics and for relating the macro and the micro level. Explanations at one level need not be valid at another. Studying the individual bureaucratic encounter is insufficient and will only generate partial information on the sources of the popular attitude towards the public administration. As we have seen, a great deal of the expressed attitudes towards the public administration can be treated as non-attitudes. Even though most people will express an opinion in a survey, we are not sure whether all these people really know what is their opinion about *government* or *public services*. We even have to admit we have great difficulties ourselves in expressing our *true* opinion on the functioning of *the* public services. Consider this example Eliasoph gives in her study on political engagement:

"When I asked the standard survey question "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?" many volunteers said something like what Carolyn said, "Most of the time. Well, at least I'd like to think it's most of the time. Of course, I'm not so sure it really *is*. But I hope it is. So, I'd say 'most of the time'. Yes, put 'most of the time'." (Eliasoph, 1998: 20)

Still, there are no sustainable arguments for defining whether a repeated answering pattern reflects a measurement/methodological error, or whether it measures a genuine opinion. It is doubtful whether the answer Eliasoph's interviewee finally gives is really one that will help us to track evolutions in trust in government, let alone the reasons for distrust. Policy-makers, however, seem to have difficulties in accepting the existence of such non-opinions and *don't know's*: The rational individual citizen should have an opinion, and political apathy is an aberration.

10.4 CHALLENGES FOR RESEARCH

Progress in the research on citizens' perception of the public administration requires reorientations in the empirical practice and in the research approach, as has been indicated before in section 10.1. First, a number of necessary evolutions in data-collection are addressed, and second, evolutions in theoretical approaches are mapped.

Trends in empirical practice

From disconnected surveying to an integrated approach. In the PA community, there is a tendency to gradually move to a harmonised and standardised set of questionnaires. Serious harmonisation of survey traditions in different countries and of methods is required for comparative research. The PA tradition still is far removed from the level of integration and harmonisation of methods and questionnaires we find in other disciplines. This harmonisation should be at the core of our efforts. Only with standardised instruments, comparative and longitudinal research will be possible in the future.

New types of data and innovative exploration of data. In section 7.2, we used the concept of *High Impact Agencies*. Despite the frequent use of the term, few efforts have been made to map and measure this impact. Defining the actual patterns of use of different groups of citizens would be a first useful step.

A considerable amount of data on citizens' attitude towards the public administration is available, but thorough *exploitation and analysis* of these data still has to start. Administrations tend to provide funding for the collection of new data, but they hardly ever commission research that analyses existing data. This under-analysis is especially striking when compared to surveys in political science or sociology, where the same data are being analysed by large groups of researchers. A first challenge is to make data widely available and easily accessible, also for researchers not familiar with the sociological survey tradition. Related to this is the tendency in public administration survey research to devote most of the attention to the substantive content of survey items. An alternative and, as we have seen, fruitful, strategy is to devote more attention to patterns of answers in surveys and to detect hidden explanations for certain reported attitudes.

Relating performance data to perceptions. Over the past decades, a lot of research has been done comparing objective quality indicators and subjective perceptions. Also, it was often thought that perception data (e.g. satisfaction with local services) could be used *in lieu* of performance indicators. The availability of perception data at the more general public administration level will in the future allow for comparing objective quality and process indicators to levels of satisfaction with the public administration and trust in government. This also requires efforts to develop better government-wide performance indicators. Existing indicators now often only cover certain aspects of administrative performance, or are of substandard quality.

Trends in theoretical approaches

The need for theoretical innovation. We have shown that there is considerable empirical fragmentation in research on trust. A convergence of the means and methods of data-collection should eventually lead to innovative theoretical approaches. Thus far, we have seen that there has been little innovation in explanatory models for citizens' attitudes towards the public administration. Few have moved beyond the explanations, or rather observations, that have been put forward by Katz, Gutek et al. in 1975 or Goodsell in 1983. Predominant values that lie at the core of attitudes have remained a blind spot in research. Research should go beyond merely the mapping of trends and evolutions in citizens' or users' opinions on the administration, and should try to look for further explanations.

Different conceptions of the state. Cross-national or cross-cultural comparisons of citizens' attitudes towards the public administration often disregard that the mental concept of *government*, *state* or *public administration* does not necessarily refer to the same objective basis. To know how citizens *evaluate* the public administration, we first need to know *what citizens see as public administration*, and how public administration is seen in relation to the *State (l'état)*. The place of the public administration in the concept of government or the State remains one of the most important issues for public administration students (Coombes, 1998:32). Few efforts are made to distinguish *state* and *public administration*, and the exact relationship between *state* and *public administration* remains unclear. In the US approach, the public administration makes the state, as the state is seen as a problem-solver,

while in Europe it is the state that shapes the public administration, in a more legalistic tradition (Kickert and Stillman II, 1996). The most important problem we are faced with is that the indicators we use for determining the associative structure (evaluations of specific institutions and services and of government in general), are the same indicators as the ones we use for testing the validity of the performance hypothesis.

Beyond public administration: political socialisation. Approaching citizens' attitudes towards the public administration from a multitude of perspectives includes questioning the rational paradigm. Satisfaction with public services does not only result from the quality of services. Merely a PA research approach is insufficient, since it tends not to look for explanations for these attitudes beyond the administration or the administration-citizen encounter itself. Opinions on the public administration are, in part, a social fact that emerges from interpersonal interaction.

The emphasis on citizens' conception of the public administration and the place of the public administration into the concept of government, and on steering citizens' attention to specific objects of reference brings political socialisation back into the debate. Though often disregarded by PA researchers, socialisation has been a key area in research on political and social attitudes. Attitudes towards the public administration may be determined more fundamentally by the initial or ongoing political socialisation than by experienced performance. Attitudes towards political bodies have been studied extensively in the political socialisation literature, but the way in which attitudes towards the public administration, civil servants and public services are being transferred has not received much attention. Political sociologists have largely ignored the public administration in their studies, and only few PA researchers included social and political attitudes in their research approach (del Pino, forthcoming). Persistence of attitudes may well be much more common than is adaptation of these attitudes to new experienced outputs or allocations by the political system (Searing et al., 1973).

The attention for interpersonal interactions does not only move the research approach beyond the public administration, but also beyond government. Community factors and not individual ones may be at the core of explanations. Neighbourhood effects and political-administrative culture may prove to be powerful explanations. Using social surveys in the way they currently exist does not seem to be the best way to advance.

Establishing a micro-macro link. As is common in this type of research, we originally focused on individual-level explanations for attitudes towards government, and on the influence of attitudes towards concrete services. A strong interrelatedness between opinions was found however, and the existence of a social mood was suggested. What is interesting here is not the individual evaluations of service experience, but the fact that opinions may exist independently from service experience. Apart from the individual-level explanations, we have also touched upon topics such as the agenda setting of trust, stereotypes, interpersonal influence, non-attitudes etc. More than studying the situation as it is, it is important to study how the situation has developed: what are the fundamental processes in which the attitudes come into existence and get transferred? How do citizens adopt dominant attitudes and social norms, and, how do they participate in the creation and change of these norms? Not the change or stability of individuals' opinion is at the core of our interest, but the change or stability of opinions in a system. Studying these processes requires a move from the micro-level analysis to the macro level one, by using aggregate indicators and by giving international comparative research a far greater role.

10.5 CONCLUSION

Students of customer satisfaction in the public sector and public administration scholars in general have unremittingly observed considerable divergence between citizens' often-positive evaluation of concrete services and their overall negative attitude towards the public sector. The public sector reform movement identified the performance of public services as a central prerequisite for restoring trust in government. Of course, the perceived overall negative attitude towards government was referred to as principal motive to engage in the reforms. In the 1990s, the consensus was that Western democracies were in crisis, expressed in permanently declining levels of trust in government.

We studied the factors determining citizens' perception of administrative performance, and the impact of this perception on trust in government. No convincing evidence was found for the existence of a permanently declining trust in government, nor for the overall conviction as would citizens' attitudes towards the public sector be unequivocally negative. Using survey material collected in Flanders, the dominant paradigm as would citizens' perception of the public administration result from an aggregation of the evaluations of concrete services was gradually challenged. Analysing measurement errors, stereotypes, and patterns of answers in the surveys, it was found that an alternative model that attributes a far greater importance to the societal context in which individuals form their attitudes was better able to analyse attitudes towards the public administration. The importance of context and interrelatedness of attitudes, however, pointed to an apparent irrelevance of comparing levels of trust in government and attitudes towards the administration, as both attitudes were found to rely on a similar set of objects of reference.

Perceptions of administrative performance may be embedded in broader social attitudes, and not necessarily connected to government or the administration itself. This implies that the service experience is not necessarily a new or dominant element in the attitude formation. Attitudes towards the public sector may therefore be, instead of being mere evaluations of individual experience, part of a broader tradition and life-style. Traditional causal relationships between the perception of public services and overall trust in government hence loose part of their relevance. An important impact of generalisation in attitudes towards institutions has been detected. Both generalised positive attitudes and generalised negative attitudes were found to exist. Attitudes towards institutions, public services, and government hence have to be interpreted within this general predisposition, and can by no means be considered as an evaluation of the *performance* of these institutions and services.

These findings require a change of focus for future research efforts. We did not find decisive indications that the process of attitude formation with regard to administrative performance is fundamentally different from the formation of other attitudes. Studying citizens' perception of the public administration may therefore just be a special case or application of the more general research on political attitudes, rather than an issue requiring its own specific public administration research approach. The research approach should not just be one of Public Administration scholars who focus on researching attitudes, but rather one of political sociologists who focus in their attitude research on the public administration as a case. Considering perceptions of the administration as social opinions may imply there is far more stability in these attitudes than one generally wants to believe or accept, and that, therefore, the impact of public sector reforms on government's image may not be a direct one.

Glossary & abbreviations

AGALEV	Flemish Green party
APS	Administration for Planning and Statistics, ministry of the Flemish Community
CD&V	Flemish Christian Democratic party
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
EB	Eurobarometer
EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
EGPA	European Group of Public Administration
EU	European Union
EU15	The 15 EU member states (1995-2004)
EVS	European Values Study
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act
HDI	Human Development Index
IPSA	International Political Science Abstracts
ISPO	Institute of Social and Political Opinion Research (K.U.Leuven)
LLB	La Libre Belgique
NES	National Election Studies
NPM	New Public Management
NPR	National Performance Review/ National Partnership for Reinventing Government
N-VA	New-Flemish Alliance (Flemish Regionalists/Nationalists)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PA	Public Administration (discipline)
SP.A-Spirit	Flemish Socialist party
TI	Transparency International
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
Vlaams Blok	Flemish Bloc (Flemish Extreme right party)
VLD	Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Liberals)
WADO	Werken aan de Overheid: Working on Government survey
WADO F2F	Werken aan de Overheid Face-to-Face survey
WVS	World Values Survey

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Summary in English

Students of customer satisfaction in the public sector and public administration scholars in general have unremittingly observed considerable divergence between citizens' often-positive evaluation of concrete services and their overall negative attitude towards the public sector. The public sector reform movement identified the performance of public services as a central prerequisite for restoring trust in government. Of course, the perceived overall negative attitude towards government was referred to as principal motive to engage in the reforms. In the 1990s, consensus seemed to exist that Western democracies were in crisis, expressed in permanently declining levels of trust in government.

We studied the factors determining citizens' perception of administrative performance, and the impact of this perception on trust in government. No convincing evidence was found for the existence of a permanently declining trust in government, nor for the overall conviction as would citizens' attitudes towards the public sector be unequivocally negative. Using survey material collected in Flanders, the dominant paradigm as would citizens' perception of the public administration result from an aggregation of the evaluations of concrete services was gradually challenged. Analysing measurement errors, stereotypes, and patterns of answers in the surveys, it was found that an alternative model that attributes a far greater importance to the societal context in which individuals form their attitudes was better able to analyse attitudes towards the public administration. The importance of context and interrelatedness of attitudes, however, pointed to an apparent irrelevance of comparing levels of trust in government and attitudes towards the administration, as both attitudes were found to rely on a similar set of objects of reference.

Perceptions of administrative performance may be embedded in broader social attitudes, and not necessarily connected to government or the administration itself. This implies that the service experience is not necessarily a new or dominant element in the attitude formation. Attitudes towards the public sector may therefore be, instead of being mere evaluations of individual experience, part of a broader tradition and life-style. Traditional causal relationships between the perception of public services and overall trust in government hence loose part of their relevance. An important impact of generalisation in attitudes towards institutions has been detected. Both generalised positive attitudes and generalised negative attitudes were found to exist. Attitudes towards institutions, public services, and government hence have to be interpreted within this general predisposition, and can by no means be considered as an evaluation of the *performance* of these institutions and services.

These findings require a change of focus for future research efforts. We did not find decisive indications that the process of attitude formation with regard to administrative performance is fundamentally different from the formation of other attitudes. Studying citizens' perception of the public administration may therefore just be a special case or application of the more general research on political attitudes, rather than an issue requiring its own specific public administration research approach. The research approach should not just be one of Public Administration scholars who focus on researching attitudes, but rather one of political sociologists who focus in their attitude research on the public administration as a case. Considering perceptions of the administration as social opinions may imply there is far more stability in these attitudes than one generally wants to believe or accept, and that, therefore, the impact of public sector reforms on government's image may not be a direct one.

Résumé en Français

Les chercheurs en administration publique ont observé sans cesse une divergence entre l'évaluation souvent positive que font les citoyens de leur expériences avec des services publics concrets, et l'opinion dominante et négative du secteur public en général. Dans la réforme du secteur public, le fonctionnement des services publics a été identifié comme condition centrale à reconstituer la confiance du citoyen dans le gouvernement. Donc, l'attitude négative envers le gouvernement a été utilisée comme motif principal pour s'engager dans les réformes. Dans les années 90, le consensus semblait exister que les démocraties occidentales étaient en crise, et qu'il existait une baisse permanente de niveaux de confiance envers le gouvernement.

Nous avons étudié les facteurs qui déterminent la perception du citoyen face à la performance de l'administration publique, et l'impact de cette perception sur la confiance dans le gouvernement. Aucune preuve persuasive a été trouvée, ni pour l'existence d'une confiance dans le gouvernement permanente en baisse, ni pour une conviction globale comme les attitudes du citoyen envers le secteur public seraient en générale négatives. En utilisant une série d'enquêtes auprès de 6500 citoyens en Région flamande, le paradigme dominant que la perception du citoyen envers l'administration publique est le résultat d'une agrégation des évaluations des services concrets (le 'micro-performance hypothesis') a été graduellement contredit. Analysant des erreurs de mesure, des stéréotypes, et des modèles de réponses dans les enquêtes, on a constaté qu'un modèle alternatif, donnant une importance bien plus grande au contexte social dans lequel les individus forment leurs attitudes, était supérieur au modèle classique pour expliquer les attitudes envers l'administration publique. L'importance du contexte social et la relation entre les deux attitudes, nous ont mené à constater l'inapplication apparente de comparer les niveaux de confiance envers le gouvernement et les attitudes envers l'administration dans une seule enquête, car les deux attitudes se fondent sur un ensemble semblable d'objets de référence.

Des perceptions de performance de l'administration peuvent être considérées comme incorporées dans de plus larges attitudes sociales, et pas nécessairement comme relié au gouvernement ou à l'administration lui-même. Ceci implique que l'expérience de service n'est pas nécessairement un élément nouveau ou dominant dans la formation d'attitudes. Les attitudes envers le secteur public peuvent donc, au lieu d'être des évaluations d'expériences individuelles, faire partie d'un ensemble d'attitudes politiques et sociales plus étendues. Les relations causales traditionnelles entre la perception des services publics et la confiance globale dans le gouvernement perdent par conséquence leur importance. Un effet important de généralisation dans les attitudes envers les institutions et services gouvernementaux a été détecté. Ils n'existent pas seulement des prédispositions négatives (où tous les services publics sont évalués dans le négative), mais aussi des prédispositions positives. Des attitudes envers des institutions gouvernementales, des services publics et le gouvernement, doivent par conséquence être interprétées dans cette prédisposition générale, et ne peuvent nullement être considérées exclusivement comme évaluation de la performance de ces institutions et services publics.

Nos résultats exigent un changement de direction dans les futurs efforts de recherche. Des indications décisives que le processus de la formation d'attitude, en ce qui concerne la performance de l'administration publique, est fondamentalement différent de la formation d'autres attitudes, n'ont pas été trouvées. Étudier la perception du citoyen envers l'administration publique peut donc être juste un cas ou une application spéciale de la recherche plus générale sur des attitudes politiques, plutôt qu'un thème exigeant sa propre approche scientifique dans la discipline d'administration publique. Considérer des perceptions envers l'administration en tant qu'attitudes sociales peut impliquer qu'il existe bien plus de stabilité dans ces attitudes qu'on veut généralement croire ou accepter, et donc aussi que l'impact des réformes du secteur public sur l'image qu'ont les citoyens du gouvernement, n'est, s'il existe, un impact direct.

Samenvatting in het Nederlands

In de negentiger jaren leek een consensus te bestaan dat de Westerse democratieën zich in een crisis bevonden. Zowel beleidsmakers als bestuurskundigen stellen steeds opnieuw vast dat er een grote kloof bestaat tussen de manier waarop burgers zich uitspreken over concrete overheidsdiensten (meestal vrij positief), en hun vrij negatieve houding tegenover overheidsdiensten in het algemeen. In vele landen werd een modernisering van de openbare diensten centraal geplaatst in de strategieën om het vertrouwen van de burger in de overheid te herstellen. De gepercipieerde negatieve houding van burgers t.o. overheidsdiensten werd gebruikt als motief voor het opstarten van hervormingen in de openbare sector.

We bestudeerden de factoren die het beeld dat burgers hebben over de werking van de overheidsdiensten bepalen, en de invloed van deze perceptie op het algemene vertrouwen van burgers in de overheid. Er konden geen overtuigende aanwijzingen worden gevonden voor het bestaan van een permanent afnemend vertrouwen van de burger in de overheid, en de algemene opvatting dat burgers een vrij negatief beeld hebben over de werking van de overheidsdiensten kon evenmin bevestigd worden. Gebruikmakend van surveymateriaal verzameld in 2002-2003 bij ongeveer 6500 inwoners van het Vlaamse Gewest werd de dominante opvatting, als zou het beeld dat burgers hebben over de overheidsadministratie als geheel een aggregatie zijn van een reeks concrete ervaringen met specifieke overheidsdiensten, in vraag gesteld. Door meetfouten, stereotypes en antwoordpatronen te analyseren kwam een alternatief model naar voor dat veel meer aandacht heeft voor de sociale context waarbinnen individuen hun attitudes vormen, en dat als dusdanig een betere verklarende waarde bleek te hebben. Het belang van de context waarbinnen burgers wordt gevraagd een opinie weer te geven, en de grote verwevenheid van verschillende opinies toonde aan dat het vrij weinig zin heeft het vertrouwen in de overheid te vergelijken met opinies over overheidsdiensten wanneer beide attitudes worden gemeten binnen één en dezelfde survey, omdat respondenten gebruik lijken te maken van sterk gelijkende referentieobjecten bij het vormen van hun opinies.

Het beeld dat burgers hebben over de overheidsadministratie kan worden gezien als ingebed in een bredere set van sociale attitudes, en als dusdanig niet noodzakelijk gerelateerd aan de overheid of de administratie zelf. Dit impliceert dat ervaringen met overheidsdiensten niet noodzakelijk doorwegen bij het vormen van een opinie over de overheidsadministraties als geheel. Houdingen t.o. de publieke sector worden dus niet enkel door evaluaties van individuele ervaringen met overheidsdiensten vormgegeven, maar zijn deel van een brede set van maatschappelijke opinies. De klassieke causale relaties tussen de perceptie van overheidsdiensten en het algemene vertrouwen in de overheid verliezen heel wat van hun geldigheid omdat een belangrijke mate van veralgemening kon worden vastgesteld in houdingen van burgers t.o.v. de instellingen en overheidsdiensten. Zowel veralgemeende positieve als veralgemeende negatieve houdingen bleken te bestaan. Houdingen t.o. instellingen, overheidsdiensten en de overheid als geheel dienen dus te worden geïnterpreteerd binnen deze algemene predisposities, en kunnen geenszins enkel worden beschouwd als een evaluatie van de eigenlijke prestaties van deze instellingen en diensten.

De bevindingen suggereren dat een wijziging in de richting van toekomstige onderzoeksinspanningen nodig en aangewezen is. We vonden geen overtuigende aanwijzingen dat de processen van attitudevorming fundamenteel verschillend zijn wanneer het gaat over houdingen

tegenover de overheidsadministratie dan wanneer het over andere attitudes gaat. Het bestuderen van de perceptie van burgers over de administratie vereist daarom wellicht geen eigen specifieke benadering binnen de bestuurskunde, maar kan gezien worden als niet meer dan een bijzondere toepassing van het gangbare onderzoek naar politieke attitudes. De ideale onderzoeksbenadering dient er daarom niet één te zijn van bestuurskundigen die zich toeleggen op attitudeonderzoek, maar wel één van politiek sociologen die de overheidsadministratie als onderzoeksobject nemen in de studie naar attitudes. Wanneer percepties van de administratie (deels) worden beschouwd als 'sociale opinies', dan zouden deze opinies wel eens stabielere kunnen zijn dan algemeen wordt aangenomen. Dit impliceert dat er niet noodzakelijk een (direct) verband is tussen de hervormingen van de overheidsadministratie en het herstel van het vertrouwen in de overheid.

Appendices

Appendix 1. The 'Working on Government' survey

Appendix 2. Composition of variables

Appendix 3. Description of other datasets used in the research

Appendix 4. Promising research designs for comparing public sector performance and perceptions, and inventory of available material

Appendix 1. THE 'WORKING ON GOVERNMENT' SURVEY

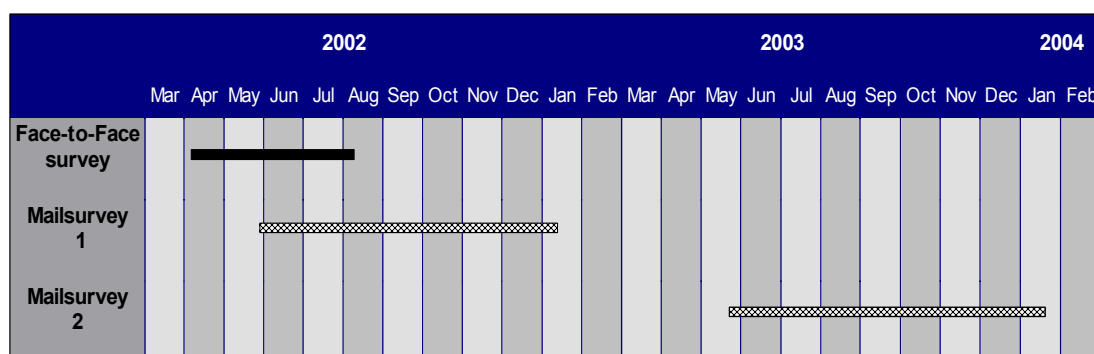
The *Werken aan de Overheid* survey (WADO-Working on Government) was organised as part of a research project commissioned by the ministry of the Flemish Community. The Public Management Institute worked on this project from November 2004 to October 2004. Researchers were dr. Jarl K. Kampen and Steven Van de Walle. Project supervisors were prof. dr. Geert Bouckaert (Public Management Institute) and prof. dr. Bart Maddens (Political Sociology). The central research question of this project was: How does the quality of public services contribute to citizens' trust in government? It had four main aims:

- Measuring trust in government and perceptions of public service delivery and public administration and trying to explain this
- Relating data from government customer satisfaction surveys with data from the general survey, in order to distinguish customer- and citizen views
- Measuring the impact of evolutions and fluctuations on levels of trust as well as the impact of specific events
- Research on methodological effects of face-to-face vs. mail surveys

A face-to-face survey was organised in spring 2002, based on a two-step sample: 107 clusters of 12 interviews were planned in 76 municipalities in the Flemish Region (Source: Civil Registry). Fieldwork was done by ISPO, the Interuniversity Centre of Political Opinion (ISPO) using 100 trained interviewers.

In the mail surveys, waves of questionnaires were being sent with two-week intervals. Fourteen successive waves covered a period of half a year (second half of 2002). In this way, the impact of certain events on citizens' opinions could be measured, and long-term impact and evolutions analysed, which is not possible with a single survey. By means of empirical validation of the results, a second mail survey was organised one year later but in the same months. This second mail survey also allows for correcting mistakes and for supplementing the face-to-face survey and first mail survey (15 waves). Mail surveys were self-administered, relying on the Central Logistic Service of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and students for data-entry. Respondents received an announcement letter, the questionnaire with postage-paid return envelope, and a reminder. A limited number of presents (approx. 0.5 to 1% of respondents) were given to respondents by means of a lottery.

Figure 50: Organisation and timing of the surveys



A detailed analysis of methodology has been made in the following documents that are available upon request:

- Kampen, J. K., Van de Walle, S., Bouckaert, G. & Maddens, B. (2003). De effecten van context en methode op de uitkomsten van survey onderzoek: Een empirisch vergelijk van drie metingen van het vertrouwen in de overheid. *Vijfde Rapport "Burgergericht Besturen: Kwaliteit En Vertrouwen in De Overheid*. Leuven: Instituut voor de Overheid, pp. 66+bijlagen.
- Van de Walle, S., Kampen, J. K., Maddens, B., Bouckaert, G., Veldwerkverslag Survey "Werken aan de Overheid", *Niet gepubliceerde onderzoeksnota, maart 2003*.
- Bouckaert, G., Maddens, B., Van de Walle, S., Kampen, J. K., Tweede postsurvey 'Werken aan de Overheid': Voorgestelde wijzigingen, *Niet gepubliceerde onderzoeksnota*, april 2003.
- Bouckaert, G., Maddens, B., Van de Walle, S., Kampen, J. K., Tweede postsurvey 'Werken aan de Overheid': Overzicht van de wijzigingen, *Niet gepubliceerde onderzoeksnota*, juni 2003.
- Van de Walle, S., Kampen, J. K., Maddens, B., Bouckaert, G., Methodologische nota bij de postenquête "Werken aan de Overheid III", *Unpublished Research note*, 2004.
- Kampen, J. K. & Van de Walle, S., Comparative measurement of trust in government institutions: the impact of survey methodology and context. *Working Paper*, 2004.
- Van de Walle, S., Kampen, J. K., Maddens, B. & Bouckaert, G. (2004). *Sourcebook, Veldwerkverslag en materiaal bij de 'Werken aan de Overheid' surveys*. Leuven: Instituut voor de Overheid.

Original Dutch-language version and English translation of the questionnaire.

NIS-nummer

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Reeks

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Nummer

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Nummer interviewer

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Naam interviewer

--

INTERVIEW

WERKEN AAN DE OVERHEID

(voorjaar 2002)

Contactadres: Instituut voor de Overheid, E. Van Evenstraat 2A, 3000 Leuven, tel. 016/323270



Mevrouw, Mijnheer.

Dit onderzoek peilt naar de waarden en opvattingen die leven onder de Vlaamse bevolking en naar de ervaringen van Vlamingen met overheidsdiensten, overheidsadministraties, en meningen over de overheid in het algemeen. Het onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd door het Instituut voor de Overheid van de Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in opdracht van het Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap.

Zoals 2.500 andere Vlamingen bent u op louter toevallige wijze uit het bevolkingsregister gekozen. Bij wijze van start zullen we eerst een aantal vragen stellen over uw leeftijd, gezin, beroep en opleiding. Nadien komen er vragen over uw ervaringen met overheidsdiensten en administraties. Tenslotte volgen een aantal vragen over uw politieke opinies en de manier waarop u aankijkt tegen de maatschappij.

Het is voor ons zeer belangrijk dat u alle vragen zo volledig mogelijk tracht te beantwoorden. Bij heel wat vragen is er geen juist of fout antwoord en gaat het om wat u persoonlijk denkt. Neem dus uw tijd om na te denken. Als een vraag voor u niet duidelijk is, dan zegt u het maar, dan lees ik die nog eens voor.

Het spreekt voor zich dat alle antwoorden die u mij geeft strikt vertrouwelijk zijn en volledig anoniem verwerkt worden.

Wij willen u nu al bedanken voor uw medewerking aan dit onderzoek.

postcode

reeks

set

NIS

respondentennr.

interviewer nr.

datum interview/..... /2002

beginuur interview uur minuten

Deel 1: Socio-demografie

V.1. In welk jaar en in welke maand bent u geboren ?
(ENQ. : noteer jaartal en maand op de stippelijntjes)

jaar 19..... maand

V.2.a Bent u als Belg / Belgische geboren ?

ja O (1)
neen O (2)

V.2.b. Had uw vader de Belgische nationaliteit bij geboorte?

ja O (1) > ga naar V.2.d
neen O (2) > ga naar V.2.c

V.2.c. > **Indien van toepassing**
Uw vader heeft/had niet de Belgische nationaliteit.
Welke is/was de nationaliteit van uw vader ?
(ENQ. : noteer de nationaliteit hieronder)

.....

V.2.d. Had uw moeder de Belgische nationaliteit bij geboorte?

ja O (1) > ga naar V.3
neen O (2) > ga naar V.2.e

V.2.e. > **Indien van toepassing**
Uw moeder heeft/had niet de Belgische nationaliteit.
Welke is/was de nationaliteit van uw moeder ?
(ENQ. : noteer de nationaliteit hieronder)

.....

V.3. ENQ. noteer of uw respondent een man of vrouw is.

man O (1)
vrouw O (2)

V.4. Heeft U momenteel betaald werk ?

Ja 1 → V.6

Neen 2 → V.5

*Ook zelfstandigen en hun helpers hebben betaald werk.
Officiële bijverdienste is ook betaald werk.*

Slechts één antwoord omcirkelen!

V.5.1 > **Alleen als respondent momenteel geen betaald werk heeft.**

Wat doet U op dit moment ? (ENQ.: lees de mogelijkheden één voor één op; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| Gepensioneerd (brugpensioen, pré-pensioen, enz.) | 1 |
| Huisvrouw/-man | 2 |
| Op ziekte- of bevallingsverlof | 3 |
| Met verlof zonder wedde/loopbaanonderbreking | 4 |
| Arbeidsongeschikt | 5 |
| Werkloos | 6 |
| Op zoek naar een eerste werk (niet werkloos) | 7 |
| Volgt volledig dagonderwijs | 8 → ga naar vraag 7 |
| Doet wat anders, of bij twijfel (specificeer) | 9 |

V.5.2 Hebt U vroeger ooit een beroep uitgeoefend ?

Ja 1

Neen 2 → V.8

V.5.3 > **Alleen als respondent ooit beroep heeft gehad.**

Sinds hoelang hebt U geen betaald beroep meer ?

Aantal jaren:

Aantal maanden:

Vragen betreffende huidig of vroeger beroep van de respondent.
 Indien **momenteel** meerdere beroepen: het betreft het hoofdberoep.
 Indien **vroeger** beroep: het betreft het laatst uitgeoefend beroep.

V.6 Welk beroep oefent/*oefende* U uit? U kan de passende beroepscategorie kiezen met behulp van de lijst op antwoordkaart 1.

Handarbeiders	1
Ploegbazen	2
Bedienden (privé sector)	3
Bedienden middenkader (privé sector)	4
Kaderleden (privé sector)	5
Ambtenaren (openbare sector)	6
Ambtenaren middenkader (openbare sector)	7
Ambtenaren in leidinggevend kader (openbare sector)	8
Kleinhandelaars, ambachtlieden	9
Kleine ondernemers en zelfstandigen	10
Groothandelaars of grote ondernemers	11
Vrije beroepen	12
Andere of bij twijfel (specificeer).....	13

V.7

> **Alleen respondenten die volledig dagonderwijs volgen.**

U studeert momenteel in volledig dagonderwijs. Welke onderwijsrichting volgt u ? Op kaart 2 staan de antwoordmogelijkheden. U kan hieruit 1 antwoord kiezen.

(ENQ. : lees de antwoordopties voor ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

geen	O (1)
lager onderwijs	O (2)
algemeen vormend LSO	O (3)
technisch LSO	O (4)
beroepsonderwijs LSO	O (5)
algemeen vormend HSO	O (6)
technisch HSO	O (7)
beroepsonderwijs HSO	O (8)
niet-universitair hoger onderwijs korte type	O (9)
niet-universitair hoger onderwijs lange type	O (10)
universitair onderwijs	O (11)
andere of bij twijfel	O (12)

-
- V.8. *(ENQ : deze vraag heeft enkel betrekking op personen die momenteel NIET studeren in volledig dagonderwijs)*
Op de kaart die ik u nu ga tonen staan een aantal diploma's en getuigschriften. Wat is het hoogste diploma of getuigschrift dat u hebt behaald? Op **kaart 2** staan de antwoordmogelijkheden. U kan hieruit 1 antwoord kiezen.
(ENQ. : lees de antwoordopties voor; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)
- | | |
|--|--------|
| geen | O (1) |
| lager onderwijs | O (2) |
| algemeen vormend LSO | O (3) |
| technisch LSO | O (4) |
| beroepsonderwijs LSO | O (5) |
| algemeen vormend HSO | O (6) |
| technisch HSO | O (7) |
| beroepsonderwijs HSO | O (8) |
| niet-universitair hoger onderwijs korte type | O (9) |
| niet-universitair hoger onderwijs lange type | O (10) |
| universitair onderwijs | O (11) |
| andere of bij twijfel | O (12) |

-
- V.9. Bent u gehuwd, ongehuwd, gescheiden of weduwnaar/weduwe ?
- | | |
|--------------------|-------|
| ongehuwd | O (1) |
| gehuwd | O (2) |
| gescheiden | O (3) |
| weduwnaar / weduwe | O (4) |

-
- V.10. Welke omschrijving past het best bij uw levenssituatie ?
(ENQ. : lees de antwoordopties voor ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)
- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| ik woon bij mijn ouder(s) | O (1) > ga naar V.14 |
| ik woon alleen | O (2) > ga naar V.17 |
| ik woon samen met mijn partner | O (3) > ga naar V.11 |
| ik woon samen met mijn partner en kinderen | O (4) > ga naar V.11 |
| ik woon niet samen met mijn partner maar wel samen met mijn kinderen | O (5) > ga naar V.14 |
| andere | O (6) > ga naar V.14 |

-
- V.11. > **Alleen als de respondent een partner heeft.**
Wat is het hoogste diploma dat uw partner behaald heeft ? Op **kaart 2** vindt u de
antwoordmogelijkheden terug.
(ENQ. : lees de antwoordopties voor ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)
- | | |
|--|--------|
| geen | O (1) |
| lager onderwijs | O (2) |
| algemeen vormend LSO | O (3) |
| technisch LSO | O (4) |
| beroepsonderwijs LSO | O (5) |
| algemeen vormend HSO | O (6) |
| technisch HSO | O (7) |
| beroepsonderwijs HSO | O (8) |
| niet-universitair hoger onderwijs korte type | O (9) |
| niet-universitair hoger onderwijs lange type | O (10) |
| universitair onderwijs | O (11) |
| andere of bij twijfel | O (12) |
-

- V.12. > **Alleen als de respondent een partner heeft.**
Had uw partner tussen nu en vijf jaar geleden betaald werk ?
- | | |
|------|--------------------------|
| ja | O (1) |
| neen | O (2) > ga naar vraag 14 |
-

- V.13. > **Alleen als de respondent een partner heeft.**
Werkt(e) uw partner bij de overheid?
- | | |
|------|-------|
| ja | O (1) |
| neen | O (2) |
-

- V.14. > **Alleen als de respondent niet alleen woont.**
Hoeveel personen maken er nu deel uit van uw gezin, uzelf inbegrepen ?
- aantal personen
-

- V.15. > **Alleen als de respondent niet alleen woont.**
Hoeveel gezinsleden, uzelf inbegrepen, hebben er betaald werk ?
- aantal personen
-

- V.16. > **Alleen als iemand anders dan de evt. partner in het huishouden betaald werk heeft.**
Werkt er nog iemand anders in uw gezin voor de overheid?
- | | |
|------|-------|
| ja | O (1) |
| neen | O (2) |

V.17. Hoeveel kinderen hebt u ? (aangenomen, stiefkinderen en overleden kinderen inbegrepen)

aantal kinderen

V.18. > **Alleen als respondent kinderen heeft**
Hoeveel kinderen hebt u momenteel nog financieel ten laste ? Hiermee bedoelen we kinderen waarvoor u het onderhoud betaalt. Dit kan ook onder de vorm van alimentatiegeld.

aantal kinderen ten laste

V.19. Ik ga u nu een vraag stellen over het gezinsinkomen. Het gezinsinkomen is het totale inkomen van alle leden van het huishouden samen en houdt ook loon, kindergeld, pensioenen, vervangingsinkomens en andere inkomsten in. Hoeveel bedraagt het gezamenlijk netto-maandinkomen van uw gezin ?

..... Bf

> **indien een bedrag genoemd wordt, ga naar V.21 ; anders naar V.20.a**

V.20.a. > **indien geen bedrag genoemd werd**
Ik begrijp dat het moeilijk is om deze vraag te beantwoorden. De volgende vraag is gemakkelijker te beantwoorden. Is het gezamenlijk netto-maandinkomen van uw gezin groter dan 80.000 bcf (€ 2000)?

ja O (1) > **ga naar V.20.c**
neen O (2) > **ga naar V.20.b**

V.20.b. Indien u nu de categorieën op **kaart 3a** bekijkt, in welke categorie situeert zich dan het gezamenlijk maandelijks netto-inkomen ?
(ENQ. : toon kaart 3a; duidt de juiste categorie aan ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

1. < 20.000 Bf € 500	O (1)	9. 55.000 - 59.999 Bf € 1375 - 1499	O (9)
2. 20.000 - 24.999 Bf € 500 - 624	O (2)	10. 60.000 - 64.999 Bf € 1500 - 1624	O (10)
3. 25.000 - 29.999 Bf € 625 - 749	O (3)	11. 65.000 - 69.999 Bf € 1625 - 1749	O (11)
4. 30.000 - 34.999 Bf € 750 - 874	O (4)	12. 70.000 - 74.999 Bf € 1750 - 1874	O (12)
5. 35.000 - 39.999 Bf € 875 - 999	O (5)	13. 75.000 - 79.999 Bf € 1875 - 1999	O (13)
6. 40.000 - 44.999 Bf € 1000 - 1124	O (6)	14. Weet niet	O (77)
7. 45.000 - 49.999 Bf € 1125 - 1249	O (7)	15. Geen antwoord	O (88)
8. 50.000 - 54.999 Bf € 1250 - 1374	O (8)		

> **ga naar V.21**

V.20.c. Indien u nu de categorieën op **kaart 3b** bekijkt, in welke categorie situeert zich dan het gezamenlijk maandelijks netto-inkomen?
 (ENQ. : toon kaart 3b; duidt de juiste categorie aan ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

1. 80.000 - 84.999 Bf	€ 2000 - 2124	O (1)	13. 140.000 - 144.999 Bf	€ 3500 - 3624	O (13)
2. 85.000 - 89.999 Bf	€ 2125 - 2249	O (2)	14. 145.000 - 149.999 Bf	€ 3625 - 3749	O (14)
3. 90.000 - 94.999 Bf	€ 2250 - 2374	O (3)	15. 150.000 - 159.999 Bf	€ 3750 - 3999	O (15)
4. 95.000 - 99.999 Bf	€ 2375 - 2499	O (4)	16. 160.000 - 169.999 Bf	€ 4000 - 4249	O (16)
5. 100.000 - 104.999 Bf	€ 2500 - 2624	O (5)	17. 170.000 - 179.999 Bf	€ 4250 - 4499	O (17)
6. 105.000 - 109.999 Bf	€ 2625 - 2749	O (6)	18. 180.000 - 189.999 Bf	€ 4500 - 4749	O (18)
7. 110.000 - 114.999 Bf	€ 2750 - 2874	O (7)	19. 190.000 - 199.999 Bf	€ 4750 - 4999	O (19)
8. 115.000 - 119.999 Bf	€ 2875 - 2999	O (8)	20. 200.000 - 299.999 Bf	€ 5000 - 7499	O (20)
9. 120.000 - 124.999 Bf	€ 3000 - 3124	O (9)	21. 300.000 - 399.999 Bf	€ 7500 - 9999	O (21)
10. 125.000 - 129.999 Bf	€ 3125 - 3250	O (10)	22. > 400.000 Bf	> € 10000	O (22)
11. 130.000 - 134.999 Bf	€ 3250 - 3374	O (11)	23. Weet niet		O (77)
12. 135.000 - 139.999 Bf	€ 3375 - 3499	O (12)	24. Geen antwoord		O (88)

V.21. De volgende vragen gaan over uw levensstandaard.
 (ENQ. : lees de antwoordopties voor ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

	Veel lager	Lager	Gelijk	Hoger	Veel hoger	GA/W N
1. Indien u denkt aan de situatie 5 jaar geleden, is uw levensstandaard nu dan lager, gelijk of hoger?	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Hoe denkt u dat uw levensstandaard zal evolueren in de toekomst? Zal die lager zijn, gelijk, of hoger?	1	2	3	4	5	7

ENQ.: Schrijf een eventuele motivatie van verandering hieronder op (bv. afstuderen, pensionering, promotie, etc.)

.....

V.22.a Tot welke van volgende levensbeschouwelijke strekkingen rekent u zichzelf ?

(ENQ. : noem de mogelijkheden op ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

- | | |
|--|-------|
| ongelovig | O (1) |
| vrijzinnig | O (2) |
| protestant | O (3) |
| kristelijk gelovig maar niet katholiek | O (4) |
| katholiek | O (5) |
| islamitisch | O (6) |
| joodse godsdienst | O (7) |
| geen enkele of onverschillig | O (8) |
| andere | O (9) |

V.22.b Mensen nemen soms deel aan kerkelijke of religieuze plechtigheden naar aanleiding van een huwelijk, begrafenis e.d. Als we dit niet meetellen, hoe vaak neemt u dan deel aan kerkelijke of godsdienstige erediensten ?

(ENQ. : lees de antwoordopties voor ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

- | | |
|---|-------|
| nooit | O (1) |
| zeer zelden | O (2) |
| enkel op kerkelijke of godsdienstige feestdagen (Kerstmis, Pasen ...) | O (3) |
| maandelijks | O (4) |
| meerdere keren per maand | O (5) |
| wekelijks | O (6) |
| meerdere keren per week | O (7) |

V.23 Bij welke mutualiteit bent U aangesloten? (eventueel langs uw ouders of voogd om)

(ENQ. : lees de antwoordopties voor ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Christelijke mutualiteit | O (1) |
| Socialistische mutualiteit | O (2) |
| Liberale mutualiteit | O (3) |
| Neutrale mutualiteit | O (4) |
| Andere (specificeer) | O (5) |
| Weet niet | O (7) |

V.24 Bent u eigenaar of huurder van uw woning?

(ENQ. : lees de antwoordopties voor ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

- | | |
|--|-------|
| Eigenaar | O (1) |
| Huurder | O (2) |
| Huis wordt kosteloos ter beschikking gesteld | O (3) |
| Inwonend bij familie | O (4) |
| Andere:..... | O (5) |

Deel 2: Burger en Overheidsdienstverlening

In de komende minuten zullen we U een hoeveelheid vragen stellen die betrekking hebben op uw meningen over en ervaringen met de overheid en met dienstverlening in het algemeen. We beginnen met een paar hele algemene vragen.

V.25 In welke mate heeft u vertrouwen in de overheid? U kan **kaart 4** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Heel weinig | O (1) |
| Weinig | O (2) |
| Niet weinig, niet veel | O (3) |
| Veel | O (4) |
| Heel veel | O (5) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |
-

V.26. In hoeverre bent u tevreden met de werking van overheidsdiensten? U kan **kaart 5** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Heel ontevreden | O (1) |
| Ontevreden | O (2) |
| Niet ontevreden, niet tevreden | O (3) |
| Tevreden | O (4) |
| Heel tevreden | O (5) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |
-

V.27 In hoeverre bent u het eens met de stelling dat de overheid meer gecontroleerd zou moeten worden? U kan **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Helemaal oneens | O (1) |
| Oneens | O (2) |
| Niet eens, niet oneens | O (3) |
| Eens | O (4) |
| Helemaal eens | O (5) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

De volgende vragen gaan over de politie. Het gaat hier om de eenheidspolitie. Dit wil zeggen dat deze vragen zowel op de vroegere politie als de vroegere rijkswacht betrekking hebben. Mensen komen omwille van een heleboel redenen in contact met de politie: voor het verkrijgen van informatie, in verband met misdrijven, voor het neerleggen van een klacht, in het verkeer enz.

- V.28_1 Is de politie volgens U een onderdeel van de overheid?
- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ja | O (2) |
| Deels niet, deels wel | O (3) |
| Nee | O (4) > ga naar vraag V.28_3 |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

-
- V.28_2 Welke overheid is naar uw mening verantwoordelijk voor de organisatie van de politie. Is dit de gemeentelijke, de Vlaamse of de federale (Belgische) overheid.
- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Gemeentelijke overheid | O (1) |
| Vlaamse overheid | O (2) |
| Federale (Belgische) overheid | O (3) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

-
- V.28_3 Wie zou volgens u de politie het beste organiseren? De privé-sector, de overheid, of maakt het geen verschil?
- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| De privé-sector | O (1) |
| De overheid | O (2) |
| Maakt geen verschil | O (3) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

-
- V.28_4 Heeft u of uw gezin, om welke reden dan ook, het afgelopen jaar te maken gehad met de politie? Zo ja, hoe vaak ongeveer? U kan **kaart 7** gebruiken om te antwoorden.
- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Nooit | O (1) |
| Eén keer | O (2) |
| Een paar keer | O (3) |
| Bijna elke maand | O (4) |
| Bijna elke week | O (5) |
| Bijna elke dag | O (6) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.28_5 Alles tezamen genomen, heeft U een positief of een negatief beeld van de politie? U kan **kaart 8** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Heel negatief | O (1) |
| Negatief | O (2) |
| Niet negatief, niet positief | O (3) |
| Positief | O (4) |
| Heel positief | O (5) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.28_6 Hoe tevreden bent u met de dienstverlening van de politie? U kan **kaart 5** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Heel ontevreden | O (1) |
| Ontevreden | O (2) |
| Niet tevreden, niet ontevreden | O (3) |
| Tevreden | O (4) |
| Heel tevreden | O (5) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.28_7 In hoeverre bent u het er mee eens dat de politie meer gecontroleerd dient te worden? U kan **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Helemaal oneens | O (1) |
| Oneens | O (2) |
| Niet oneens, niet eens | O (3) |
| Eens | O (4) |
| Helemaal eens | O (5) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.29_1 De volgende vragen gaan over de Post. Het gaat hier om de postbedeling en de dienstverlening aan de loketten in het postkantoor.

Is De Post volgens U een onderdeel van de overheid?

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ja | O (2) |
| Deels wel, deels niet | O (3) |
| Nee | O (4) > ga naar vraag V.29_3 |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.29_2	Welke overheid is naar uw mening verantwoordelijk voor de organisatie van De Post? Is dit de gemeentelijke, de Vlaamse of de federale (Belgische) overheid.	
	Gemeentelijke overheid	O (1)
	Vlaamse overheid	O (2)
	Federale (Belgische) overheid	O (3)
	Weet niet/geen antwoord	O (7)

V.29_3	Wie zou volgens U de postbedeling het beste organiseren? De privé-sector, de overheid, of maakt het geen verschil?	
	De privé-sector	O (1)
	De overheid	O (2)
	Maakt geen verschil	O (3)
	Weet niet/geen antwoord	O (7)

V.29_4	Hoeveel maal bent u het afgelopen jaar op een postkantoor geweest? U kan kaart 7 gebruiken om te antwoorden.	
	Nooit	O (1)
	Eén keer	O (2)
	Een paar keer	O (3)
	Bijna elke maand	O (4)
	Bijna elke week	O (5)
	Bijna elke dag	O (6)
	Weet niet/geen antwoord	O (7)

V.29_6	Alles tezamen genomen, heeft U een positief of een negatief beeld van De Post? U kan kaart 8 gebruiken om te antwoorden.	
	Heel negatief	O (1)
	Negatief	O (2)
	Niet negatief, niet positief	O (3)
	Positief	O (4)
	Heel positief	O (5)
	Weet niet/geen antwoord	O (7)

V.29_7 Hoe tevreden bent u met de dienstverlening van De Post? U kan **kaart 5** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Heel ontevreden | O (1) |
| Ontevreden | O (2) |
| Niet tevreden, niet ontevreden | O (3) |
| Tevreden | O (4) |
| Heel tevreden | O (5) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.29_8 In hoeverre bent u het er mee eens dat de Post meer gecontroleerd dient te worden? U kan **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Helemaal oneens | O (1) |
| Oneens | O (2) |
| Niet oneens, niet eens | O (3) |
| Eens | O (4) |
| Helemaal eens | O (5) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.30_1 De volgende vragen gaan over het lager onderwijs.

Is het lager onderwijs volgens U een onderdeel van de overheid?

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Ja | O (2) |
| Deels wel, deels niet | O (3) |
| Nee | O (4) > ga naar vraag V.30_3 |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.30_2 Welke overheid is naar uw mening verantwoordelijk voor de organisatie van het lager onderwijs. Is dit de gemeentelijke, de Vlaamse of de federale (Belgische) overheid?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Gemeentelijke overheid | O (1) |
| Vlaamse overheid | O (2) |
| Federale (Belgische) overheid | O (3) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.30_3 Wie zou volgens U het lager onderwijs het beste organiseren? De privé-sector, de overheid, of maakt het geen verschil?

- | | |
|---------------------|-------|
| De privé-sector | O (1) |
| De overheid | O (2) |
| Maakt geen verschil | O (3) |

Weet niet/geen antwoord O (7)

V.30_4 > **Alleen als respondent kinderen heeft**

Zaten één of meer van uw kinderen tussen nu en een jaar geleden op de lagere school?

Ja O (1)

Nee O (2)

V.30_5 Alles tezamen genomen, heeft U een positief of een negatief beeld van het lager onderwijs? U kan **kaart 8** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

Heel negatief O (1)

Negatief O (2)

Niet negatief, niet positief O (3)

Positief O (4)

Heel positief O (5)

Weet niet/geen antwoord O (7)

V.30_6 Hoe tevreden bent u over het lager onderwijs? U kan **kaart 5** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

Heel ontevreden O (1)

Ontevreden O (2)

Niet tevreden, niet ontevreden O (3)

Tevreden O (4)

Heel tevreden O (5)

Weet niet/geen antwoord O (7)

V.30_7 In hoeverre bent u het er mee eens dat het lager onderwijs meer gecontroleerd dient te worden? U kan **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

Helemaal oneens O (1)

Oneens O (2)

Niet oneens, niet eens O (3)

Eens O (4)

Helemaal eens O (5)

Weet niet/geen antwoord O (7)

V.31_1 De volgende vragen handelen over de huisvuilophaling, de 'vuilkar' zoals mensen soms zeggen.

Is de huisvuilophaling volgens U een onderdeel van de overheid?

Ja O (2)

Deels wel, deels niet O (3)

Nee O (5) > ga naar vraag V.31_3

Weet niet/geen antwoord O (7)

V.31_2	Welke overheid is naar uw mening verantwoordelijk voor de huisvuilophaling. Is dit de gemeentelijke, de Vlaamse of de federale (Belgische) overheid.
	Gemeentelijke overheid O (1)
	Vlaamse overheid O (2)
	Federale (Belgische) overheid O (3)
	Weet niet/geen antwoord O (7)
V.31_3	Wie zou volgens U het ophalen van huisvuil het beste organiseren? De privé-sector, de overheid, of maakt het geen verschil?
	De privé-sector O (1)
	De overheid O (2)
	Maakt geen verschil O (3)
	Weet niet/geen antwoord O (7)
V.31_4	Alles tezamen genomen, heeft U een positief of negatief beeld van de huisvuilophaling? U kan kaart 8 gebruiken om te antwoorden.
	Heel negatief O (1)
	Negatief O (2)
	Niet negatief, niet positief O (3)
	Positief O (4)
	Heel positief O (5)
	Weet niet/geen antwoord O (7)
V.31_5	Hoe tevreden bent u met de huisvuilophaling? U kan kaart 5 gebruiken om te antwoorden.
	Heel ontevreden O (1)
	Ontevreden O (2)
	Niet tevreden, niet ontevreden O (3)
	Tevreden O (4)
	Heel tevreden O (5)
	Weet niet/geen antwoord O (7)
V.31_6	In hoeverre bent u het er mee eens dat de huisvuilophaaldienst meer gecontroleerd dient te worden? U kan kaart 6 gebruiken om te antwoorden.
	Helemaal oneens O (1)
	Oneens O (2)
	Niet oneens, niet eens O (3)
	Eens O (4)
	Helemaal eens O (5)

Weet niet/geen antwoord

O (7)

De volgende vragen gaan over de VDAB, de Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding. Deze dienst staat in voor het begeleiden van personen die op zoek zijn naar een job en voor opleidingen aan werkzoekenden en werkenden.

V.32_1 Wie zou volgens u de beroepsopleidingen en arbeidsbemiddeling het beste organiseren? De privé-sector, de overheid, of maakt het geen verschil?

De privé-sector

O (1)

De overheid

O (2)

Maakt geen verschil

O (3)

Weet niet/geen antwoord

O (7)

V.32_2 Heeft u of iemand in uw gezin het afgelopen jaar gebruik gemaakt van de diensten van de VDAB?

Ja

O (1)

Nee

O (2) > **ga naar V.33**

Weet niet/geen antwoord

O (7) > **ga naar V.33**

V.32_3 Alles tezamen genomen, heeft U een positief of een negatief beeld van de VDAB? U kan **kaart 8** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

Heel negatief

O (1)

Negatief

O (2)

Niet negatief, niet positief

O (3)

Positief

O (4)

Heel positief

O (5)

Weet niet/geen antwoord

O (7)

V.32_4 Hoe tevreden bent u met de dienstverlening van de VDAB? U kan **kaart 5** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

Heel ontevreden

O (1)

Ontevreden

O (2)

Niet tevreden, niet ontevreden

O (3)

Tevreden

O (4)

Heel tevreden

O (5)

Weet niet/geen antwoord

O (7)

V.32_5 In hoeverre bent u het er mee eens dat de VDAB meer gecontroleerd dient te worden? U kan **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Helemaal oneens | O (1) |
| Oneens | O (2) |
| Niet oneens, niet eens | O (3) |
| Eens | O (4) |
| Helemaal eens | O (5) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.33_1 De volgende vragen handelen over de vervoersmaatschappij De Lijn. De Lijn staat in voor het vervoer per bus en per tram.

Is De Lijn volgens U een onderdeel van de overheid?

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Ja | O (2) |
| Deels wel, deels niet | O (3) |
| Nee | O (4) > ga naar vraag V.33_3 |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.33_2 Welke overheid is naar uw mening verantwoordelijk voor de organisatie van De Lijn? Is dit de gemeentelijke, de Vlaamse of de federale (Belgische) overheid.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| Gemeentelijke overheid | O (1) |
| Vlaamse overheid | O (2) |
| Federale (Belgische) overheid | O (3) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.33_3 Wie zou volgens u het openbaar vervoer per bus en per tram het beste organiseren? De privé-sector, de overheid, of maakt het geen verschil?

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| De privé-sector | O (1) |
| De overheid | O (2) |
| Maakt geen verschil | O (3) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.33_4 Hoe vaak heeft U tussen nu en een jaar geleden de bus of de tram genomen? U kunt **kaart 7** gebruiken bij het antwoorden.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Nooit | O (1) |
| Een enkele keer | O (2) |
| Een paar keer | O (3) |
| Bijna elke maand | O (4) |
| Bijna elke week | O (5) |
| Bijna elke dag | O (6) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.33_5 > **Alleen als respondent niet alleen woont.**

Hoe vaak namen uw gezinsleden tussen nu en een jaar geleden de bus of de tram? U kunt nog steeds **kaart 7** gebruiken bij het antwoorden.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Nooit | O (1) |
| Een enkele keer | O (2) |
| Een paar keer | O (3) |
| Bijna elke maand | O (4) |
| Bijna elke week | O (5) |
| Bijna elke dag | O (6) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.33_6 Alles tezamen genomen, heeft U een positief of een negatief beeld van De Lijn? U kan **kaart 8** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Heel negatief | O (1) |
| Negatief | O (2) |
| Niet negatief, niet positief | O (3) |
| Positief | O (4) |
| Heel positief | O (5) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.33_7 Hoe tevreden bent u met de dienstverlening van De Lijn? U kan **kaart 5** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Heel ontevreden | O (1) |
| Ontevreden | O (2) |
| Niet tevreden, niet ontevreden | O (3) |
| Tevreden | O (4) |
| Heel tevreden | O (5) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.33_8

In hoeverre bent u het er mee eens dat de Lijn meer gecontroleerd dient te worden? U kan **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Helemaal oneens | O (1) |
| Oneens | O (2) |
| Niet oneens, niet eens | O (3) |
| Eens | O (4) |
| Helemaal eens | O (5) |
| Weet niet/geen antwoord | O (7) |

V.34

We noemen een aantal beroepen en functies. Kunt u zeggen of deze een positief of een negatief beeld bij U oproepen? U kan **kaart 8** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

	Heel negatief	Negatief	Niet negatief, niet positief	Positief	Heel positief	WN/GA
1. Politie-agent	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Vuilnisophaler	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Journalist	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Rechter	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Leraar	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Ambtenaar	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Buschauffeur	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. Treinconducteur	1	2	3	4	5	7
9. Postbode	1	2	3	4	5	7
10. Postbeambte (loketbediende)	1	2	3	4	5	7
11. Cipier/gevangenisbewaarder	1	2	3	4	5	7
12. Dokter	1	2	3	4	5	7
13. Militair	1	2	3	4	5	7
14. Burgemeester	1	2	3	4	5	7
15. Politicus	1	2	3	4	5	7
16. Verpleegster/verpleger	1	2	3	4	5	7
17. Brandweerman	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.35

We noemen een aantal diensten en instellingen. Heeft U een positief of een negatief beeld van de volgende diensten en instellingen? U kan weer **kaart 8** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

	Heel negatief	Negatief	Niet negatief, niet positief	Positief	Heel positief	GA/WN
1. Ziekenhuizen	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Ouderenzorg	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. De NMBS (de Belgische spoorwegen)	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. De VRT (Canvas, Ketnet, TV1 en Radio 1&2, Klara, Donna, Stu Bru)	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Gemeentelijke administratie	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Justitie en rechtbanken	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Banken	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. Supermarkten	1	2	3	4	5	7
9. Elektriciteitsmaatschappij	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.36

In welke mate bent U het eens of oneens met volgende uitspraken over de overheid? U kan **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

	Helemaal oneens	Oneens	Niet eens, niet oneens	Eens	Helemaal eens	GA/WN
1. De overheersende mening in de maatschappij is toch wel dat de overheid slecht werkt.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Zeggen dat de overheid goed werk levert is erom vragen uitgelachen te worden	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Iedereen heeft wel een mening over politiek en over ambtenaren, maar in feite weten de mensen er niet genoeg over om zich zo'n mening te vormen	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. De manier waarop je mensen op café, in de trein, bij de bakker enz. over de overheid hoort praten sluit dicht aan bij de werkelijkheid	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Ik zou mijn familie en vrienden aanraden om bij de overheid te werken.	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Een job bij de overheid is respectabel.	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.37

We leggen u nu een aantal uitspraken voor die betrekking hebben op de rol van de overheid en de privésector in de maatschappij. In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende uitspraken? U kan opnieuw **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

	Helemaal oneens	Oneens	Niet eens, niet oneens	Eens	Helemaal eens	GA/WN
1. De overheid zou beter werk leveren indien ze minder taken zou doen.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. De meeste overheidsdiensten kunnen beter door de private sector worden georganiseerd.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. De idee dat de privésector altijd beter werkt dan de overheid is een sprookje.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. De overheidsdiensten moeten functioneren als een bedrijf.	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Ik denk dat onze overheidsadministratie nu een positief imago heeft.	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Het imago van onze overheidsadministratie is er de laatste jaren sterk op achteruit gegaan.	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Onze overheidsadministraties werken nu beter dan 5 jaar geleden.	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.38

(*ENQ.: Overhandig kaart 9 aan de respondent*). De overheid kan verschillende doelstellingen nastreven. In de volgende vraag worden telkens twee doelstellingen gegeven. Sommige mensen gaan eerder akkoord met de doelstelling bij het cijfer 1, anderen gaan eerder akkoord met de doelstelling die bij cijfer 5 staat. Weer anderen hebben een mening die daar ergens tussenin ligt (cijfers 2, 3 en 4). Die cijfers staan op **kaart 9**. Kunt u aangeven waar uw mening ligt door het bijhorende cijfer te noemen? (*ENQ.: Lees steeds de twee doelstellingen voor; omcirkel het gegeven antwoord*).

1. Inspraak	1	2	3	4	5	Efficiëntie	WN /GA
2. Het algemeen belang	1	2	3	4	5	Mijn persoonlijk belang	WN /GA
3. Inspraak voor iedereen	1	2	3	4	5	Inspraak door deskundigen	WN /GA
4. Zo weinig mogelijk belastingen	1	2	3	4	5	Een zo goed mogelijke dienstverlening	WN /GA

V.39 Werken de overheidsadministraties van de volgende landen of regio's volgens U beter of slechter dan de Vlaamse overheidsadministratie? U kan **kaart 10** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

	Veel slechter	Slechter	Niet slechter en niet beter	Beter	Veel beter	WN/GA
1. De Belgische overheidsadministratie	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. De Waalse overheidsadministratie	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. De Nederlandse overheidsadministratie	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. De Franse overheidsadministratie	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. De Duitse overheidsadministratie	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. De Italiaanse overheidsadministratie	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.40 We noemen een aantal kenmerken en eigenschappen die het personeel van de overheid in meer of mindere mate kan bezitten. We willen steeds weten wat uw ervaring is wanneer u denkt aan uw relatie met het personeel van de overheid. U kan **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

Het personeel van de overheid is in het algemeen...

	Helemaal oneens	Oneens	Niet eens, niet oneens	Eens	Helemaal eens	GA/WN
1. Behulpzaam	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Vriendelijk	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Betrouwbaar	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Snel	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Begrijpelijk	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Bekwaam	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Toegankelijk	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.41 Ik lees nu een aantal uitspraken over de ambtenaren en overheidsdiensten voor. In welke mate bent u het eens of oneens met elk van deze uitspraken? U kan weer **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

	Helemaal oneens	Oneens	Niet eens, niet oneens	Eens	Helemaal eens	GA/WN
1. Overheidsdiensten werken efficiënt	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Ambtenaren zijn corrupter dan gewone mensen	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Ambtenaren dienen eerder hun eigenbelang dan dat van de burgers.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. De overheid gooit geld over de balk	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.42 Sommige overheidsdiensten werken beter dan andere. We lezen u een aantal maatregelen voor die belangrijk zouden kunnen zijn voor het *verbeteren* van de werking van sommige overheidsdiensten. Die maatregelen staan ook op **kaart 11**. Kunt u nu drie maatregelen kiezen die naar uw mening belangrijk zijn voor het *verbeteren* van de werking van sommige overheidsdiensten, en ordenen volgens belangrijkheid?

(ENQ.: Lees alle maatregelen één voor één voor; begin met het vragen naar de belangrijkste maatregel, dan de op één na, en dan de op twee na belangrijkste; schrijf het cijfer in de bijbehorende vakjes)

1. Politieke benoemingen afschaffen
2. Wetgeving en reglementen vereenvoudigen
3. Bekwaamheid belonen, onbekwaamheid straffen
4. Ambtenaren beter opleiden
5. Meer moderne technieken gebruiken
6. Vaste benoemingen afschaffen
7. De invloed van politici op de administratie verminderen

Eerste maatregel nr.

Tweede maatregel nr.

Derde maatregel nr.

V.43

We stellen nu een paar vragen over de informatie die de overheid verstrekt. In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende uitspraken? **Kaart 6** geeft de antwoordmogelijkheden.

	Helemaal oneens	Oneens	Niet eens, niet oneens	Eens	Helemaal eens	GA/WN
1. De overheid geeft veel te weinig informatie	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. De overheid geeft geen objectieve informatie	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. De overheid zorgt er voor dat ik steeds voldoende geïnformeerd word over haar beslissingen	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. De meeste informatie van de overheid is te ingewikkeld om te begrijpen	1	2	3	4	5	7

Deel 3: Burger en Politiek

De volgende vragen gaan over politiek en politici.

- V.44 (ENQ.: *Overhandig kaart 12 aan de respondent*). In de volgende vraag worden telkens twee tegenovergestelde uitspraken gegeven. Sommige mensen gaan eerder akkoord met de stelling bij het cijfer 1, anderen gaan eerder akkoord met de stelling die bij cijfer 5 staat. Anderen hebben een mening die daar ergens tussenin ligt (cijfers 2, 3 en 4). Die cijfers staan ook op **kaart 12**. Kunt u nu bij elk van deze stellingen aangeven waar uw mening ligt door het bijhorende cijfer te noemen?
 ENQ.: *geef kaart 12; omcirkel het gegeven antwoord.*

1. Een politicus moet het algemeen belang verdedigen	1	2	3	4	5	Een politicus moet het belang van zijn kiezers verdedigen	WN /GA
2. Burgers moeten niet alleen bij verkiezingen, maar altijd met politiek bezig zijn	1	2	3	4	5	Eens burgers hun politici verkozen hebben houdt hun rol in de politiek op	WN /GA
3. In een democratie neemt de meerderheid alle beslissingen	1	2	3	4	5	In een democratie moet de opinie van de minderheid ook op de besluitvorming wegen	WN /GA

- V.45. Stel dat er volgende zondag nationale verkiezingen zouden zijn. Voor welke politieke partij hebt U dan de grootste voorkeur? U kan **kaart 13** gebruiken om te antwoorden.
 (ENQ.: *overhandig kaart 13; slechts één antwoord mogelijk*)

1. AGALEV
2. CD&V (voormalig CVP)
3. N-VA (voormalig VU)
4. SP.A (voormalig SP)
5. SPIRIT (voormalig VU)
6. VLAAMS BLOK
7. VLD
8. PVDA
9. VIVANT
10. ECOLO
11. PRL
12. PSC
13. PS
14. Andere :
15. Weet het nog niet

V.46

En wat is uw mening over de volgende uitspraken? U kan gebruik maken van **kaart 6** om te antwoorden (*ENQ.* : lees de statements één voor één voor; één uitspraak per statement)

	Helemaal oneens	Oneens	Niet eens, niet oneens	Eens	Helemaal eens	Geen mening
1. Gaan stemmen heeft geen zin, de partijen doen toch wat ze willen.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. De meeste politici beloven veel, maar ze doen niets.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Politici zijn corrupter dan gewone mensen.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. De meeste van onze politici zijn bekwame mensen die weten wat ze doen.	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Politici dienen eerder hun eigenbelang dan dat van de burger.	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Politici doen het merendeel van de tijd wat juist is.	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Als burgers geen vertrouwen meer hebben in de overheid, dan loopt het mis	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. Het parlement kan best afgeschaft worden want het lost geen enkel probleem op.	1	2	3	4	5	7
9. Het huidige politieke systeem is verrot.	1	2	3	4	5	7
10. We mogen gelukkig zijn dat we in een land leven dat zulke democratische wetten en gewoonten heeft.	1	2	3	4	5	7
11. Gehoorzaamheid en respect voor het gezag zijn de twee belangrijkste deugden die kinderen moeten leren.	1	2	3	4	5	7
12. Onze sociale problemen zouden grotendeels opgelost zijn, als we ons op de één of andere manier konden ontdoen van immorele en oneerlijke mensen.	1	2	3	4	5	7
13. We hebben nood aan sterke leiders die ons voorschrijven wat we moeten doen.	1	2	3	4	5	7
14. Alleen door middel van maatschappelijke conflicten wordt in de moderne maatschappij vooruitgang geboekt.	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.47

Sommige mensen hebben heel veel belangstelling voor politiek. Anderen hebben daar helemaal geen belangstelling voor. Hebt U veel of weinig belangstelling voor politiek? U kan antwoorden met **kaart 4**.

Heel weinig	1
Weinig	2
Niet weinig, niet veel	3
Veel	4
Heel veel	5

V.48

Nu willen we graag weten in hoeverre u tevreden bent met een aantal instellingen en overheden. U kan opnieuw **kaart 5** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

In welke mate bent u tevreden of niet tevreden met

	Heel ontevreden	Ontevreden	Niet tevreden, niet ontevreden	Tevreden	Heel tevreden	Nog nooit over nagedacht
1. de werking van de federale (Belgische) overheid	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. het beleid van de regering Verhofstadt	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. de werking van Vlaamse overheid	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. het beleid van de regering Dewael	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. de werking van de gemeentelijke overheid?	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. de werking van de democratie in België?	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. de werking van de democratie in Vlaanderen?	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. In hoeverre denkt u in de toekomst tevreden te zijn met het beleid van de regering Verhofstadt	1	2	3	4	5	7
9. In hoeverre denkt u in de toekomst tevreden te zijn met het beleid van de regering Dewael?	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.49 Ik noem een aantal instellingen en diensten. In welke mate heeft u *vertrouwen* in de volgende instellingen en diensten? U kan **kaart 4** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

	Heel weinig	Weinig	Niet weinig, niet veel	Veel	Heel veel	GA/WN
1. de politie	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. het onderwijs	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. de Vlaamse administratie	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. de gemeentelijke administratie	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. het gerecht	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. de Vlaamse pers	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. de Vlaamse regering	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. de Vlaamse politieke partijen	1	2	3	4	5	7
9. de Kerk	1	2	3	4	5	7
10. de patroons of de werkgevers	1	2	3	4	5	7
11. het Vlaams parlement	1	2	3	4	5	7
12. de vakbonden	1	2	3	4	5	7
13. de koning	1	2	3	4	5	7
14. het Belgisch parlement	1	2	3	4	5	7
15. de Europese Commissie	1	2	3	4	5	7
16. de Belgische regering	1	2	3	4	5	7
17. de Waalse politieke partijen	1	2	3	4	5	7
18. het leger	1	2	3	4	5	7
22. De Lijn	1	2	3	4	5	7
23. De VDAB	1	2	3	4	5	7
24. Huisvuilophaling	1	2	3	4	5	7
25. De Post	1	2	3	4	5	7
26. De NMBS	1	2	3	4	5	7
27. De VRT	1	2	3	4	5	7
28. Guy Verhofstadt	1	2	3	4	5	7
29. Patrick Dewael	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.50 U vindt hieronder een lijst met een aantal problemen en beleidsdomeinen. Kunt U telkens aangeven hoe *tevreden* u bent met het huidige beleid m.b.t. deze gebieden? **Kaart 5** kunt u gebruiken om te antwoorden.

	Heel ontevreden	Ontevreden	Niet tevreden, niet ontevreden	Tevreden	Heel tevreden	GA/WN
1. Justitie	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Milieu	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Tewerkstellingsbeleid	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Onderwijs	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Pensioenen	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Ziekteverzekering	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Veiligheid en ordehandhaving	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. Verkeersveiligheid	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.51 Sommigen zeggen dat België een **koning** nodig heeft, anderen vinden dat er in België geen koning nodig is, nog anderen hebben hierover geen mening. Welke mening leunt het dichtst bij de uwe aan?

- België heeft een koning nodig. 1
- België heeft geen koning nodig. 2
- Hier heb ik geen mening over. 7

Deel 4: Burger en Maatschappij

V.52 Hoeveel goede vrienden of vriendinnen hebt u, uw eventuele partner niet meegerekend?
aantal goede vrienden of vriendinnen

V.53 De meeste mensen bespreken af en toe belangrijke persoonlijke kwesties met andere mensen. We noemen een aantal mogelijke personen op met wie u de afgelopen 6 maanden wel of niet belangrijke persoonlijke kwesties heeft besproken. Als een categorie niet voor u van toepassing is (omdat u bijvoorbeeld geen partner heeft) kunt u dat ook zeggen.
(ENQ. : lees alle personen één voor één voor; duid code 1 aan voor JA, code 2 voor NEEN en code 9 voor NIET VAN TOEPASSING)

	ja	neen	niet van toepassing
1. Uw partner	O (1)	O (2)	O (9)
2. Uw ouders	O (1)	O (2)	O (9)
3. Uw kinderen	O (1)	O (2)	O (9)
4. Uw broers en/of zussen	O (1)	O (2)	O (9)
5. Ruimere familie	O (1)	O (2)	O (9)
6. Vrienden	O (1)	O (2)	O (9)
7. Buren	O (1)	O (2)	O (9)
8. Collega's (eventueel: studiegenoten)	O (1)	O (2)	O (9)
10. Andere, namelijk	O (1)	O (2)	O (9)

V.54 In ons land zijn nogal wat mensen aangesloten bij verenigingen. Ik ga u een lijst met een aantal soorten verenigingen voorlezen. Kunt u mij zeggen of u daar nu lid van bent of soms vroeger lid bent van geweest en indien u nu lid bent of dat dan is als actief lid, passief lid of bestuurslid? Op kaart 14 vindt u de antwoordmogelijkheden terug.
(ENQ. : lees de verenigingen één voor één voor ; slechts 1 antwoord per item mogelijk)
Een passief lid is iemand die niet meer doet dan alleen het lidgeld betalen en/of het tijdschrift lezen; een actief lid is iemand die aan de activiteiten van de vereniging deelneemt en een bestuurslid is iemand die binnen de vereniging een officiële functie vervult (voorzitter, secretaris, penningmeester ...)

	Bestuur	Actief lid	Passief lid	Vroeger lid	Geen lid
1. Een jeugdvereniging, jeugdbeweging of jeugdclub	1	2	3	4	5
2. Een milieu- of natuurvereniging	1	2	3	4	5
3. Een culturele vereniging (toneel, muziek, literatuur ...)	1	2	3	4	5
4. Een socio-culturele vereniging (Davidsfonds, KAV, KVLV, De Bond)	1	2	3	4	5
5. Een sportvereniging	1	2	3	4	5
6. Een politieke vereniging of partij	1	2	3	4	5
7. Een religieuze of kerkelijke vereniging	1	2	3	4	5
8. Een adviesraad (jeugdraad, MINA raad, ...)					
9. Een wijk- of buurtcomité	1	2	3	4	5
10. Een vereniging die ijvert voor de verbetering van het lot van anderen	1	2	3	4	5
11. Een vakbond, een middenstandsorganisatie, een beroepsvereniging of een organisatie van werkgevers of zelfstandigen	1	2	3	4	5
12. Nog een andere vereniging Welke?	1	2	3	4	5

V.55

Ik lees U enkele uitspraken voor die men soms hoort. In welke mate bent U het daar mee eens of niet mee eens. U kunt terug **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden. Als U ergens nooit over heeft nagedacht dan kunt U dat steeds zeggen.

	Helemaal oneens	Oneens	Noch eens noch oneens	Eens	Helemaal eens	Geen Mening
1. De mensheid, onze naasten, solidariteit... wat een onzin allemaal, iedereen moet eerst voor zichzelf zorgen en zijn belangen verdedigen.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Men moet steeds zijn eigen plezier nastreven, en zich niet te veel van anderen aantrekken.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Het is belangrijk om in de eerste plaats te streven naar een vooraanstaande positie voor zichzelf	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Wie veel kan, mag dit hoofdzakelijk gebruiken om er zelf beter van te worden	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. De dag van vandaag verandert alles zo snel dat ik niet goed meer weet hoe ik mij moet gedragen	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Er komt tegenwoordig zo veel informatie op ons af dat we op den duur niets meer begrijpen	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Het lijkt wel of er geen eenvoudige oplossingen zijn voor veel sociale problemen	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. Ik vind dat gewoontes en gebruiken dienen om nageleefd te worden	1	2	3	4	5	7
9. Gebruiken en omgangsvormen moeten zoveel mogelijk onveranderd blijven	1	2	3	4	5	7
10. Ik doe altijd mijn eigen zin, ook al gaat dat volledig in tegen wat algemeen aanvaard is	1	2	3	4	5	7
11. Wat goed en wat kwaad is hangt af van de omstandigheden en het tijdstip	1	2	3	4	5	7
12. Mensen die altijd ja of nee willen krijgen als antwoord beseffen niet hoe gecompliceerd de wereld wel in elkaar zit	1	2	3	4	5	7
13. Ik wil altijd voor elke beslissing een duidelijke reden hebben	1	2	3	4	5	7
14. Keuzen maken wordt alsmaar moeilijker in deze tijd	1	2	3	4	5	7
15. Als ik een probleem heb dat ik niet kan oplossen, dan voel ik me slecht	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.56 Ik lees U nog enkele uitspraken voor. Ze hebben betrekking op uw leefomstandigheden. U kan weer **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

	Helemaal oneens	Oneens	Niet eens, niet oneens	Eens	Helemaal eens	Weet niet / Geen mening
1. Overdag en 's avonds vermijd ik sommige buurten in mijn woonplaats omdat ze onveilig zijn.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. De straten in mijn buurt zijn over het algemeen proper en goed onderhouden.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. De leefsituatie in mijn buurt is de laatste jaren verbeterd.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Er wonen teveel vreemdelingen in mijn buurt.	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. De politie zou in mijn woonplaats veel harder moeten optreden tegen de criminaliteit.	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Alles tezamen ben ik tevreden met de buurt waar ik nu woon.	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.57 De volgende vragen hebben betrekking op migranten, hieronder verstaan we vooral Turken en Marokkanen. Wilt U zeggen of U het al dan niet eens bent met de volgende uitspraken. U kan nog steeds **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden. Als U hierover geen mening hebt dan zegt U het maar.

	Helemaal oneens	Oneens	Niet eens, niet oneens	Eens	Helemaal eens	Weet niet / Geen mening
1. Migranten zijn over het algemeen niet te vertrouwen.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Gastarbeiders zijn een gevaar voor de tewerkstelling van de Belgen.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. De gastarbeiders komen hier profiteren van de sociale zekerheid.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Moslims zijn een bedreiging voor onze cultuur en gebruiken.	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Migranten mogen aan geen enkele politieke activiteit deelnemen.	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.58 Welk van de volgende uitspraken is voor U het meest van toepassing?

- Ik voel me enkel Vlaming 1
- Ik voel me meer Vlaming dan Belg 2
- Ik voel me evenveel Vlaming als Belg 3
- Ik voel me meer Belg dan Vlaming 4
- Ik voel me enkel Belg 5
- Weet niet 7

V.59 Ik lees U nog enkele uitspraken voor. U kan **kaart 6** gebruiken om te antwoorden.

	Helemaal oneens	Oneens	Niet eens, niet oneens	Eens	Helemaal eens	Weet niet / Geen mening
1. Ik ben fier dat ik Belg ben.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Ik ben fier dat ik Vlaming ben.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Het is de plicht van elke Belg om respect te hebben voor de Belgische geschiedenis en cultuur	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Het is de plicht van elke Vlaming om respect te hebben voor de Vlaamse geschiedenis en cultuur	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Volkeren zijn van nature niet gelijkwaardig.	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Vlaanderen moet onafhankelijk worden.	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Belastinggeld dat ik betaal zou alleen aan Vlaanderen ten goede mogen komen	1	2	3	4	5	7

V60_1 Hoe vaak kijkt u naar het nieuws op de tv ? De antwoordmogelijkheden bevinden zich op **kaart 15**.

(ENQ. : toon kaart 15 ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| nooit | <input type="radio"/> (1) > ga naar V.61 |
| minder dan één keer per maand | <input type="radio"/> (2) |
| ongeveer één keer per maand | <input type="radio"/> (3) |
| meerdere keren per maand | <input type="radio"/> (4) |
| ongeveer één keer per week | <input type="radio"/> (5) |
| meerdere keren per week | <input type="radio"/> (6) |
| dagelijks | <input type="radio"/> (7) |
| meerdere malen per dag | <input type="radio"/> (8) |

V.60_2 Als u naar het nieuws op de tv kijkt, naar welke zender kijkt u meestal naar het nieuws ?
(ENQ.; schrijf zender op)

.....

V.61_1 Hoe vaak luistert u naar het nieuws op de radio ? De antwoordmogelijkheden bevinden zich op **kaart 15**. (ENQ. : toon kaart 15 ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| nooit | <input type="radio"/> (1) > ga naar V.62 |
| minder dan één keer per maand | <input type="radio"/> (2) |
| ongeveer één keer per maand | <input type="radio"/> (3) |
| meerdere keren per maand | <input type="radio"/> (4) |
| ongeveer één keer per week | <input type="radio"/> (5) |
| meerdere keren per week | <input type="radio"/> (6) |
| dagelijks | <input type="radio"/> (7) |
| meerdere malen per dag | <input type="radio"/> (8) |

V.61_2 Op welke zender luistert u meestal naar het nieuws op de radio?
(ENQ.; schrijf zender op)

.....

V.62_1 Hoe vaak leest u een krant? De antwoordmogelijkheden bevinden zich op **kaart 15**.
(ENQ. : toon kaart 15 ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| nooit | O (1) > ga naar V.63 |
| minder dan één keer per maand | O (2) |
| ongeveer één keer per maand | O (3) |
| meerdere keren per maand | O (4) |
| ongeveer één keer per week | O (5) |
| meerdere keren per week | O (6) |
| dagelijks | O (7) |
| meerdere malen per dag | O (8) |

V.62_2 Welke kranten leest u het meeste? De antwoordmogelijkheden bevinden zich op **kaart 16**.
(ENQ. : toon kaart 16 ; meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------|
| De Morgen | O (1) |
| De Standaard | O (2) |
| De Gazet van Antwerpen | O (3) |
| De Financieel Ec. Tijd | O (4) |
| Het Nieuwsblad | O (5) |
| Het Laatste Nieuws | O (6) |
| Het Belang van Limburg | O (7) |
| Het Volk | O (8) |
| De Gentenaar | O (9) |
| Metro | O (10) |
| Franstalige Belgische Kranten | O (11) |
| Buitenlandse kranten | O (12) |
| Andere | O (77) |

V.63 Welke informatiebron vindt u het meest betrouwbaar? De krant, de radio, de televisie, of geen enkele? (ENQ.: slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

- | | |
|--------------|-------|
| Krant | O (1) |
| Radio | O (2) |
| Televisie | O (3) |
| Geen enkele | O (4) |
| Weet niet/GA | O (7) |

AFRONDING

Ter afronding hebben we nu nog enkele vragen over het interview zelf.

V.64. Hoe aangenaam of onaangenaam vond u in het algemeen het afgelopen interview ?

Op **kaart 17** staan de antwoordmogelijkheden.

(ENQ. : toon kaart 17 ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

- zeer aangename ervaring O (1)
aangename ervaring O (2)
noch aangename, noch onaangename ervaring O (3)
onaangename ervaring O (4)
zeer onaangename ervaring O (5)
- weet het niet, geen mening O (7)

V.65. Wat vond u van de duur van het interview ?

(ENQ. : lees de antwoordmogelijkheden voor ; slechts 1 antwoord mogelijk)

- te lang O (1)
juist gepast O (2)
te kort O (3)
- weet het niet, geen mening O (7)

V.66. Ik ga u een aantal uitspraken voorlezen Kan u mij zeggen in welke mate u er het mee eens bent of niet ?

(ENQ. : toon kaart 6; slechts 1 antwoord per item)

	Helemaal oneens	Oneens	Niet eens niet oneens	Eens	Helemaal eens	weet niet
1. Dergelijke onderzoeken zijn een verspilling van de mensen hun tijd	O (1)	O (2)	O (3)	O (4)	O (5)	O (7)
2. Iedereen heeft de verantwoordelijkheid om mee te werken aan dergelijke onderzoeken	O (1)	O (2)	O (3)	O (4)	O (5)	O (7)
3. Mensen zouden betaald moeten worden om mee te werken aan een dergelijk interview	O (1)	O (2)	O (3)	O (4)	O (5)	O (7)

einduur interview

..... uur

..... minuten

HARTELIJK DANK VOOR UW MEDEWERKING !!!

Vooraleer aan een volgend interview te beginnen, overloop nog even de volgende vragen:

- Zijn alle vragen in de vragenlijst die beantwoord hadden moeten worden, ook effectief beantwoord?
 Is op de kapt van de vragenlijst het respondentnummer en uw naam vermeld?
 Is het contactblad voor dit interview volledig ingevuld?
 Is het begin en einduur ingevuld?
 Vergeet niet hierna het interviewerrapport in te vullen
-

IN TE VULLEN DOOR DE INTERVIEWER

R.1	Waren er, buiten Uzelf en de respondent, tijdens het interview nog andere personen aanwezig die de vragen en antwoorden konden horen?	
	Niemand aanwezig	1 → R.4
	Anderen aanwezig	2

R.2 Wie waren aanwezig?

*De relatie tot de respondent aanduiden.
Meerdere antwoorden zijn mogelijk.*

Partner	1
Kinderen	2
Partner en kinderen	3
Ouder(s) en/of schoonouder(s)	4
Broer(s) en/of zus(sen)	5
Anderen	6

R.3 Heeft iemand van die aanwezigen zich nooit, af en toe, of voortdurend met het interview bemoeid?

Nooit	1
Af en toe	2
Voortdurend	3

R.4 Heeft de respondent vragen ter verduidelijking gesteld?

Zeer veel	1
Veel	2
Af en toe	3
Bijna nooit	4
Nooit	5

R.5	Heeft U bij de respondent weerstand ondervonden bij het beantwoorden van sommige vragen?	
	Zeer veel	1
	Veel	2
	Af en toe	3
	Bijna nooit	4
	Nooit	5

R.6	Hoe beoordeelt U de motivatie van de respondent om mee te werken?	
	Zeer gemotiveerd	1
	Tamelijk gemotiveerd	2
	Eerder onverschillig	3
	Terughoudend	4
	Zeer terughoudend	5

R.7	Hoe beoordeelt U over het algemeen genomen de capaciteit van de respondent om de in het interview gestelde vragen te begrijpen en een voor hem/haarzelf zinvol antwoord te geven?	
	Zeer hoog	1
	Hoog	2
	Voldoende	3
	Gering	4
	Zeer gering	5
	Totaal onvoldoende	6

R.8 Heeft U nog bijzondere opmerkingen bij dit interview?

.....
.....
.....

NIS-no.

--	--	--	--	--

Series

--

Number

--	--

Interviewer no.

--	--	--	--

Interviewer name

--

INTERVIEW

WERKEN AAN DE OVERHEID

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

(spring 2002)

Contact address: Public Management Institute, E. Van Evenstraat 2A, 3000 Leuven,
tel. +32 (0)16/323270, fax. +32 (0)16/323267, io@kuleuven.ac.be
<http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/io/trust>

Steven Van de Walle
Prof. dr. Geert Bouckaert
Dr. Jarl K. Kampen
Prof. dr. Bart Maddens

Madame, Sir.

This is a survey on the values and opinions of the Flemish population and on the experiences of Flemish citizens with public services and government in general. This research is organised by the Public Management Institute of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and was commissioned by the Ministry of the Flemish Community.

As 2500 other Flemish citizens, you have been selected randomly from a sample from the civil registry. The first questions will deal with you age, life situation, profession and education. The next questions are about your experiences with public services and public administrations. Finally, there are a number of questions on your political opinions and on the way you look at society.

It is very important for us that you try to answer all questions completely. There is no right or wrong answer to many questions, what is important is your personal opinion. When necessary, please take your time to think about your answer. If a question is not clear to you, please warn me, and I will read out the question again.

It's obvious that all answers you give are strictly confidential, and will be processed in a way that protects your privacy and respects your anonymity.

We would like to thank you for your participation.

postal code

NIS

series

respondent no.

interviewer no.

date interview/..... /2002

starting hour interview h. min.

NB: This English translation has not been used in the interviewing process, as questionnaires were in Dutch only.

Part 1: Socio-demographics

V.1. In which year and which month were you born?
(INT. : note year and month on the lines)

year 19..... month

V.2.a Were you born as a Belgian?

yes O (1)
no O (2)

V.2.b. Did your father have the Belgian nationality at birth?

yes O (1) > go to V.2.d
no O (2) > go to V.2.c

V.2.c. > **If applicable**
Your father does/did not have the Belgian nationality.
Which is/was the nationality of your father?

.....

V.2.d. Did your mother have the Belgian nationality at birth?

yes O (1) > go to V.3
no O (2) > go to V.2.e

V.2.e. > **If applicable**
Your mother does/did not have the Belgian nationality.
Which is/was the nationality of your mother?

V.3. INT. Note whether respondent is a man or a woman.

man O (1)
woman O (2)

V.4. Do you presently have a paid occupation?

Yes 1 → V.6

No 2 → V.5

*Self-employed and people helping them also have paid work.
Official extra earnings are also paid work.*

Encircle only one answer!

V.5.1 > **Only if respondent does not have paid work at this moment.**

What are you doing at this moment ? (*INT.: read all possibilities one by one; only 1 answer possible*)

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| Retired | 1 |
| Housewife/-man | 2 |
| On sick leave/maternity leave | 3 |
| On leave without pay/career interruption | 4 |
| Disabled | 5 |
| Unemployed | 6 |
| Looking for a first job (not jobless) | 7 |
| Attending full-time education | 8 → go to question 7 |
| Doing something else, or if in doubt (specify) | 9 |

V.5.2 Have you ever exercised a profession/trade before?

Yes 1

No 2 → V.8

V.5.3 > **Only if respondent ever had an occupation.**

How long have you been without an occupation?

Number of years:

Number of months:

*Questions on present or previous job of respondent.
If at this **moment** more than one job: it concerns the main occupation.
If respondent had job in **the past**: last job.*

V.6 Which profession do you have or did you have in the past? You can pick the applicable professional category on **card 1**.

Blue-colour worker	1
Foreman	2
White-colour worker (profit sector)	3
Middle management (profit sector)	4
Executive staff - management (profit sector)	5
Low-ranking civil servant (public sector)	6
Middle-ranking civil servant (public sector)	7
High-ranking civil servant (public sector)	8
Retail trade / craftsman	9
Self-employed	10
Wholesaler / large-scale entrepreneur	11
Professional (doctor, lawyer, ...)	12
Other or in doubt (please specify).....	13

V.7 > **Only for respondents following full-time daytime education.**
You are currently attending full-time education. Which education? On **card 2** you can find the answers.

(INT. : read possibilities ; only one possible answer)

none	O (1)
primary education	O (2)
lower general secondary education	O (3)
lower technical secondary education	O (4)
lower secondary vocational education	O (5)
higher general secondary education	O (6)
higher technical secondary education	O (7)
higher vocational education	O (8)
non-university higher education – short type	O (9)
non-university higher education – long type	O (10)
university education	O (11)
other or if in doubt	O (12)

V.8. (INT :this question only concerns respondents currently not attending full-time education)
On the card I will show you'll see a number of degrees and certificates. What is the highest qualification you have gained? You can find the possibilities on **card 2**. You can pick 1 answer.

(INT. :read possibilities; only one possible answer)

- | | |
|--|--------|
| none | O (1) |
| primary education | O (2) |
| lower general secondary education | O (3) |
| lower technical secondary education | O (4) |
| lower secondary vocational education | O (5) |
| higher general secondary education | O (6) |
| higher technical secondary education | O (7) |
| higher vocational education | O (8) |
| non-university higher education – short type | O (9) |
| non-university higher education – long type | O (10) |
| university education | O (11) |
| other or if in doubt | O (12) |
-

V.9. Are you married, single, divorced, widow/widower?

- | | |
|---------------|-------|
| single | O (1) |
| married | O (2) |
| divorced | O (3) |
| widow/widower | O (4) |
-

V.10. How can your living condition best be described?

(INT.: read options; only one possible answer)

- | | | |
|---|-------|--------------|
| I live with my parent(s) | O (1) | > go to V.14 |
| I live on my own | O (2) | > go to V.17 |
| I live with my partner | O (3) | > go to V.11 |
| I live with my partner and children | O (4) | > go to V.11 |
| I do not live with my partner, but I do live with my kids | O (5) | > go to V.14 |
| other | O (6) | > go to V.14 |

- V.11. > **Only when respondent has partner.**
 What is the highest qualification your partner has gained? You find the possibilities on **card 2**.
(INT. : read options; only one possible answer)
- | | |
|--|--------|
| none | O (1) |
| primary education | O (2) |
| lower general secondary education | O (3) |
| lower technical secondary education | O (4) |
| lower secondary vocational education | O (5) |
| higher general secondary education | O (6) |
| higher technical secondary education | O (7) |
| higher vocational education | O (8) |
| non-university higher education – short type | O (9) |
| non-university higher education – long type | O (10) |
| university education | O (11) |
| other or if in doubt | O (12) |
-

- V.12. > **Only when respondent has partner.**
 Does your partner have a paid occupation at present or did he/she have one in between now and 5 years ago?
- | | |
|-----|---------------------------|
| yes | O (1) |
| non | O (2) > go to question 14 |
-

- V.13. > **Only when respondent has partner.**
 Does/did your partner work for government?
- | | |
|-----|-------|
| yes | O (1) |
| no | O (2) |
-

- V.14. > **Only when respondent does not live alone.**
 Of how many persons does your household consist, yourself included?
- Number of persons
-

- V.15. > **Only when respondent does not live alone.**
 How many members of your household, yourself included, have a paid occupation?
- Number of persons
-

- V.16. > **Only if, except for the partner, somebody else in the household has a paid occupation.**
 Does someone else in your household work for government?
- | | |
|-----|-------|
| yes | O (1) |
| no | O (2) |

V.17. How many children do you have? (adopted, step children and deceased children included)

Number of children

V.18. > **Only when respondent has children.**

How many children of your children depend financially on you at this moment? By this we mean people you're supporting financially. This can also be an alimony.

Number of dependent children

V.19. I'm now going to ask you a question on the family income. The family income is the income of all members of your household and does comprise wages, children allowances, pensions, and other incomes. What is the total net monthly income of your household?

..... BEF

> **if respondent gives amount, go to V.21 ; otherwise go to V.20.a**

V.20.a. > **if respondent does not give an amount**

It is difficult for you to answer this question. The next question is, perhaps, easier to answer. Is the combined net monthly income of your household greater than 80.000 BEF (€ 2000)?

yes
no

O (1) > **go to V.20.c**
O (2) > **go to V.20.b**

V.20.b. If you now examine the categories displayed on **card 3a**, in which category would you then situate the combined net monthly income?

(INT.: show card 3a; only one possible answer)

1. < 20.000 BEF € 500	O (1)	9. 55.000 – 59.999 BEF € 1375 – 1499	O (9)
2. 20.000 - 24.999 BEF € 500 – 624	O (2)	10. 60.000 - 64.999 BEF € 1500 – 1624	O (10)
3. 25.000 - 29.999 BEF € 625 – 749	O (3)	11. 65.000 - 69.999 BEF € 1625 – 1749	O (11)
4. 30.000 - 34.999 BEF € 750 – 874	O (4)	12. 70.000 - 74.999 BEF € 1750 – 1874	O (12)
5. 35.000 - 39.999 BEF € 875 – 999	O (5)	13. 75.000 - 79.999 BEF € 1875 - 1999	O (13)
6. 40.000 - 44.999 BEF € 1000 – 1124	O (6)	14. don't know	O (77)
7. 45.000 - 49.999 BEF € 1125 – 1249	O (7)	15. no answer	O (88)
8. 50.000 - 54.999 BEF € 1250 – 1374	O (8)		

> **go to V.21**

V.20.c. If you now examine the categories displayed on **card 3b**, in which category would you then situate the combined net monthly income?
(INT.: show card 3b; only one possible answer)

1. 80.000 - 84.999 BEF	€ 2000 - 2124	O (1)	13. 140.000 - 144.999 BEF	€ 3500 - 3624	O (13)
2. 85.000 - 89.999 BEF	€ 2125 - 2249	O (2)	14. 145.000 - 149.999 BEF	€ 3625 - 3749	O (14)
3. 90.000 - 94.999 BEF	€ 2250 - 2374	O (3)	15. 150.000 - 159.999 BEF	€ 3750 - 3999	O (15)
4. 95.000 - 99.999 BEF	€ 2375 - 2499	O (4)	16. 160.000 - 169.999 BEF	€ 4000 - 4249	O (16)
5. 100.000 - 104.999 BEF	€ 2500 - 2624	O (5)	17. 170.000 - 179.999 BEF	€ 4250 - 4499	O (17)
6. 105.000 - 109.999 BEF	€ 2625 - 2749	O (6)	18. 180.000 - 189.999 BEF	€ 4500 - 4749	O (18)
7. 110.000 - 114.999 BEF	€ 2750 - 2874	O (7)	19. 190.000 - 199.999 BEF	€ 4750 - 4999	O (19)
8. 115.000 - 119.999 BEF	€ 2875 - 2999	O (8)	20. 200.000 - 299.999 BEF	€ 5000 - 7499	O (20)
9. 120.000 - 124.999 BEF	€ 3000 - 3124	O (9)	21. 300.000 - 399.999 BEF	€ 7500 - 9999	O (21)
10. 125.000 - 129.999 BEF	€ 3125 - 3250	O (10)	22. > 400.000 BEF	> € 10000	O (22)
11. 130.000 - 134.999 BEF	€ 3250 - 3374	O (11)	23. Don't know		O (77)
12. 135.000 - 139.999 BEF	€ 3375 - 3499	O (12)	24. No answer		O (88)

V.21. The following questions deal with your standard of living.
(INT. : read options; only one possible answer)

	A lot lower	Lower	Equal	Higher	A lot higher	NA/DK
1. When you think about the situation 5 years ago, is your current standard of living then lower, equal or higher?	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. How do you think your standard of living will evolve in the future? Will it be lower, equal of higher?	1	2	3	4	5	7

INT.: Note motivation of change in standard of living if respondent gives one (e.g., no longer a student, first job, retirement, promotion, etc.)

.....

V.22.a To which of the following religious/philosophical orientations do you belong?

(INT. : read options; only one possible answer)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Non-believer | O (1) |
| Free-thinker | O (2) |
| Protestant | O (3) |
| Christian, but not catholic | O (4) |
| Catholic | O (5) |
| Islam | O (6) |
| Jewish | O (7) |
| None or indifferent | O (8) |
| Other | O (9) |
-

V.22.b People sometimes participate in religious services such as weddings, funerals etc. If we do not take into account these services, how often do you participate in religious services?
(INT. : read options ; only one possible answer)

- | | |
|---|-------|
| never | O (1) |
| very seldom | O (2) |
| only on Holy Days (Christmas, Easter ...) | O (3) |
| monthly | O (4) |
| a few times month | O (5) |
| weekly | O (6) |
| several times a week | O (7) |
-

V.23 Which health insurance organisation or “mutual society” are you a member of?

(INT. : read options ; only one possible answer)

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Christian Mutual Society | O (1) |
| Socialist Mutual Society | O (2) |
| Liberal Mutual Society | O (3) |
| Neutral Mutual Society | O (4) |
| Other (specify) | O (5) |
| Don't know | O (7) |
-

V.24 Do you own or rent your house?

(INT. : read options ; only one possible answer)

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Owner | O (1) |
| Renter | O (2) |
| House is being provided for free | O (3) |
| Live with family | O (4) |
| Other:..... | O (5) |

Part 2: Citizen and public services

In the minutes to come, we will ask you a number of questions about your opinions on and experiences with government and service delivery in general. We will start with a number of general questions.

V.25 To what extent do you trust government? You can use **card 4** to answer.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Very little | O (1) |
| Little | O (2) |
| Not little, not much | O (3) |
| A lot | O (4) |
| Very Much | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.26. To what extent are you satisfied with the functioning of the public services? You can use **card 5** to answer.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Very dissatisfied | O (1) |
| Dissatisfied | O (2) |
| Not dissatisfied, not satisfied | O (3) |
| Satisfied | O (4) |
| Very satisfied | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.27 To what extent do you agree with the statement that there should be more control on government? You can use **card 6** to answer.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Completely disagree | O (1) |
| Disagree | O (2) |
| Neither agree nor disagree | O (3) |
| Agree | O (4) |
| Completely agree | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |

The following questions deal with the police. People get in touch with the police for a number of reasons: requesting information, filing complaints, in traffic, with regard to crimes etc.

- V.28_1 Is the police part of government according to you?
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Yes | O (2) |
| No on the one hand, yes on the other | O (3) |
| No | O (4) > go to question V.28_3 |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

- V.28_2 Which government is responsible for the organisation of the police according to you? Is this the local, the Flemish or the Federal (Belgian) government?
- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Local government | O (1) |
| Flemish government | O (2) |
| Federal (Belgian) government | O (3) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

- V.28_3 Who would organise the police best? The private sector, government, or doesn't this make a difference?
- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| The private sector | O (1) |
| De government | O (2) |
| Makes no difference | O (3) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

- V.28_4 Did you or your family, no matter for what reason, have contact with the police over the past year. If yes, how often? You can use **card 7** to answer.
- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Never | O (1) |
| Once | O (2) |
| A couple of times | O (3) |
| Almost every month | O (4) |
| Almost every week | O (5) |
| Almost every day | O (6) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |

V.28_5 All together, do you have a positive or negative image of the police? You can use card 8 to answer.

- Very negative O (1)
 - Negative O (2)
 - Not negative, not positive O (3)
 - Positive O (4)
 - Very positive O (5)

 - Don't know/no answer O (7)
-

V.28_6 How satisfied are you with police service delivery? You can use **card 5** to answer.

- Very dissatisfied O (1)
 - Dissatisfied O (2)
 - Not satisfied, not dissatisfied O (3)
 - Satisfied O (4)
 - Very satisfied O (5)

 - Don't know/no answer O (7)
-

V.28_7 To what extent do you agree there should be more control on the police? You can use **card 6** to answer.

- Completely disagree O (1)
 - Disagree O (2)
 - Neither disagree, neither agree O (3)
 - Agree O (4)
 - Completely agree O (5)

 - Don't know/no answer O (7)
-

The following questions deal with the Post Office. They deal both with mail delivery and service delivery in the Post Office.

V.29_1 Is the Post Office a part of government according to you?

- Yes O (2)
- Yes on the one hand, no on the other O (3)
- No O (4) > go to question V.29_3

- Don't know/no answer O (7)

V.29_2 Which government is responsible for the organisation of the Post office according to you? Is this local, Flemish or federal (Belgian) government?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Local government | O (1) |
| Flemish government | O (2) |
| Federal (Belgian) government | O (3) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.29_3 Who would best organise mail delivery according to you? Private sector, government, or does this make no difference?

- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| The private sector | O (1) |
| Government | O (2) |
| Makes no difference | O (3) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.29_4 How many times were you at the post office in the past year? You can use **card 7** to answer.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Never | O (1) |
| Once | O (2) |
| A couple of times | O (3) |
| Almost every month | O (4) |
| Almost every week | O (5) |
| Almost every day | O (6) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.29_6 All together, do you have a positive or a negative image of the Post? You can use **card 8** to answer.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Very negative | O (1) |
| Negative | O (2) |
| Not negative, not positive | O (3) |
| Positive | O (4) |
| Very positive | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |

V.29_7 How satisfied are you with the service delivery of the Post? You can use **card 5** to answer.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Very dissatisfied | O (1) |
| Dissatisfied | O (2) |
| Not satisfied, not dissatisfied | O (3) |
| Satisfied | O (4) |
| Very satisfied | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.29_8 To what extent do you agree there should be more control on the Post? You can use **card 6** to answer.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Completely disagree | O (1) |
| Disagree | O (2) |
| Neither disagree, nor agree | O (3) |
| Agree | O (4) |
| Completely agree | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

The following questions deal with primary education.

V.30_1

Are primary schools [*lager onderwijs*] according to you part of government?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Yes | O (2) |
| Yes on the one hand, no on the other | O (3) |
| No | O (4) > go to question V.30_3 |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.30_2 Which government is responsible for the organisation of primary education according to you? Is this local, Flemish or federal (Belgian) government?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Local government | O (1) |
| Flemish government | O (2) |
| Federal (Belgian) government | O (3) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.30_3 Who would best organise primary education according to you? Private sector, government, or does this make no difference?

- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| The private sector | O (1) |
| Government | O (2) |
| Makes no difference | O (3) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |

V.30_4 > **Only when respondent has children**
Were one or more of your children at primary school between now and a year ago?

Yes	O (1)
No	O (2)

V.30_5 All together, do you have a positive or a negative image of primary education? You can use **card 8** to answer.

Very negative	O (1)
Negative	O (2)
Not negative, not positive	O (3)
Positive	O (4)
Very positive	O (5)
Don't know/no answer	O (7)

V.30_6 How satisfied are you with primary education? You can use **card 5** to answer.

Very dissatisfied	O (1)
Dissatisfied	O (2)
Not satisfied, not dissatisfied	O (3)
Satisfied	O (4)
Very satisfied	O (5)
Don't know/no answer	O (7)

V.30_7 To what extent do you agree there should be more control on primary education? You can use **card 6** to answer.

Completely disagree	O (1)
Disagree	O (2)
Neither disagree neither agree	O (3)
Agree	O (4)
Completely agree	O (5)
Don't know/no answer	O (7)

The following questions deal with refuse collection.

V.31_1 Is the refuse collection a part of government according to you?

Yes	O (2)
Yes on the one hand, no on the other	O (3)
No	O (5) > go to question V.31_3
Don't know/no answer	O (7)

V.31_2 Which government is responsible for refuse collection according to you? Is this the local, the Flemish or the Federal (Belgian) government?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Local government | O (1) |
| Flemish government | O (2) |
| Federal (Belgian) government | O (3) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.31_3 Who would best organise refuse collection according to you? Private sector, government, or does this make no difference?

- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| The private sector | O (1) |
| Government | O (2) |
| Makes no difference | O (3) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.31_4 All together, do you have a positive or a negative image of the refuse collection? You can use **card 8** to answer.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Very negative | O (1) |
| Negative | O (2) |
| Not negative, not positive | O (3) |
| Positive | O (4) |
| Very positive | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.31_5 How satisfied are you with refuse collection? You can use **card 5** to answer.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Very dissatisfied | O (1) |
| Dissatisfied | O (2) |
| Not satisfied, not dissatisfied | O (3) |
| Satisfied | O (4) |
| Very satisfied | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.31_6 To what extent do you agree there should be more control on refuse collection? You can use **card 6** to answer.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Completely disagree | O (1) |
| Disagree | O (2) |
| Neither disagree, neither agree | O (3) |
| Agree | O (4) |
| Completely agree | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |

The following questions deal with the VDAB, the Flemish Service for Employment and Vocational Training. This agency is responsible for assisting jobseekers in looking for a job and for training unemployed and working people.

V.32_1 Who would best organise vocational training and labour mediation according to you? Private sector, government, or does this make no difference?

- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| The private sector | O (1) |
| De government | O (2) |
| Makes no difference | O (3) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |

V.32_2 Did you or anyone in your family use the services of the VDAB over the past year?

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Yes | O (1) |
| No | O (2) > go to V.33 |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) > go to V.33 |

V.32_3 All together, do you have a positive or a negative image of the VDAB? You can use **card 8** to answer.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Very negative | O (1) |
| Negative | O (2) |
| Not negative, not positive | O (3) |
| Positive | O (4) |
| Very positive | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |

V.32_4 How satisfied are you with the service delivery of the VDAB? You can use **card 5** to answer.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Very dissatisfied | O (1) |
| Dissatisfied | O (2) |
| Not satisfied, not dissatisfied | O (3) |
| Satisfied | O (4) |
| Very satisfied | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |

V.32_5 To what extent do you agree there should be more control on the VDAB? You can use **card 6** to answer.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Completely disagree | O (1) |
| Disagree | O (2) |
| Neither disagree, nor agree | O (3) |
| Agree | O (4) |
| Completely agree | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

The following questions deal with the public transport company De Lijn. De Lijn takes care of public transport by bus and tram.

V.33_1 Is De Lijn a part of government according to you?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Yes | O (2) |
| Yes on the one hand, no on the other | O (3) |
| No | O (4) > go to question V.33_3 |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.33_2 Which government is responsible for the organisation of De Lijn according to you? Is this the local, the Flemish or the Federal (Belgian) government?

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Local government | O (1) |
| Flemish government | O (2) |
| Federal (Belgian) government | O (3) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.33_3 Who would best organise public transport by bus and tram according to you? Private sector, government, or does this make no difference?

- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| The private sector | O (1) |
| Government | O (2) |
| Makes no difference | O (3) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |

V.33_4 How often did you take the bus or tram over the past year? You can use **card 7** to answer.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Never | O (1) |
| Once | O (2) |
| A couple of times | O (3) |
| Almost every month | O (4) |
| Almost every week | O (5) |
| Almost every day | O (6) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.33_5 > **Only if respondent does not live alone.**

How often did members of your family take the bus or tram over the past year? You can still use **card 7** to answer.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------|
| Never | O (1) |
| Once | O (2) |
| A couple of times | O (3) |
| Almost every month | O (4) |
| Almost every week | O (5) |
| Almost every day | O (6) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.33_6 All together, do you have a positive or a negative image of De Lijn? You can use **card 8** to answer.

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Very negative | O (1) |
| Negative | O (2) |
| Not negative, not positive | O (3) |
| Positive | O (4) |
| Very positive | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |
-

V.33_7 How satisfied are you with the service delivery of De Lijn? You can use **card 5** to answer.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| Very dissatisfied | O (1) |
| Dissatisfied | O (2) |
| Not satisfied, not dissatisfied | O (3) |
| Satisfied | O (4) |
| Very satisfied | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |

V.33_8

To what extent do you agree that there should be more control on De Lijn? You can use **card 6** to answer.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Completely disagree | O (1) |
| Disagree | O (2) |
| Neither disagree, nor agree | O (3) |
| Agree | O (4) |
| Completely agree | O (5) |
| Don't know/no answer | O (7) |

V.34 We read a number of professions and functions. Is the image you have of those professions and functions positive or negative? You can use **card 8** to answer.

	Very negative	Negative	Not negative, not positive	Positive	Very positive	DK/NA
1. Policeman	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Garbage man/refuse collector	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Journalist	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Judge	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Teacher	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Civil servant	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Bus driver	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. Train conductor	1	2	3	4	5	7
9. Postman	1	2	3	4	5	7
10. Post office official	1	2	3	4	5	7
11. Prison guard	1	2	3	4	5	7
12. Doctor	1	2	3	4	5	7
13. Military	1	2	3	4	5	7
14. Mayor	1	2	3	4	5	7
15. Politician	1	2	3	4	5	7
16. Nurse	1	2	3	4	5	7
17. Fireman	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.35

We read a number of services and institutions. Is the image you have of these services and institutions positive or negative? You can again use **card 8** to answer.

	Very negative	Negative	Not negative, not positive	Positive	Very positive	NA/DK
1. Hospitals	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Elderly Care	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. The NMBS (Belgian Railways)	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. The VRT (Canvas, Ketnet, TV1 en Radio 1&2, Klara, Donna, Stu Bru) <i>[public radio and TV]</i>	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Municipal administration	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Justice and courts	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Banks	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. Supermarkets	1	2	3	4	5	7
9. Electricity company	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.36

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements on government? You can use **card 6** to answer.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree	NA/DK
1. The general opinion in society is that government doesn't work well.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Saying that government works well is just asking to be mocked.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Everybody has an opinion on politics and civil servants, but in fact people do not know enough about it to formulate such an opinion	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. The way in which you hear people talking about government in pubs, on the train, at the bakery etc. corresponds to reality.	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. I would advise my family and friends to work for government.	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. A government job is a respectable one.	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.37 We now present you a number of statements related to the role of government and the private sector in society. To what extent do you agree with these statements? You can again use **card 6** to answer.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree	NA/DK
1. Government would perform better if it would do less.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Most public services can be organised better by the private sector.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. The idea as would the private sector always work better than government is a fairy-tale/myth.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Public services should function as a company.	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. I think that our public administration at present has a positive image.	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. The image of our public administration has deteriorated considerably over the past few years.	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Our public administration works better now as compared to 5 years ago.	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.38 (INT.: Give card 9 to respondent). Government can pursue different aims. In the following question two aims are given at every turn. Some people tend to agree with the aim indicated by number 1, others tend to agree with the aim indicated by number 5. Other people have an opinion which lies in between (numbers 2, 3 and 4). These numbers are indicated on **card 9**. Could you please indicate where you would locate your opinion by mentioning the appropriate number?
(INT.: Read both aims; encircle answer respondent gives).

1. Participation	1	2	3	4	5	Efficiency	DK/ NA
2. The general interest	1	2	3	4	5	My personal interest	DK/ NA
3. Participation for everyone	1	2	3	4	5	Participation by experts	DK/ NA
4. As few taxes as possible	1	2	3	4	5	An as good as possible service delivery	DK/ NA

V.39 Do the public administrations in the following countries or regions work better or worse than the Flemish public administration according to you? You can use **card 10** to answer.

	Much worse	Worse	Not worse and not better	Better	Much better	DK/NA
1. The Belgian public administration	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. The Walloon public administration	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. The Dutch public administration	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. The French public administration	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. The German public administration	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. The Italian public administration	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.40 We name a number of characteristics and qualities government officials/staff could have to a greater or lesser degree. We would like to know what your experience is when dealing with government officials. You can use **card 6** to answer.

Government staff/officials are in general...

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree	NA/DK
1. Helpful	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Reliable	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Fast	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Comprehensible	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Competent	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Accessible	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.41 I'm now reading a number of statements on civil servants and public services. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements? You can again use **card 6** to answer.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree	NA/DK
1. Public services work efficiently	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Civil servants are more corrupt than average people	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Civil servants serve their personal interest instead of that of the citizens.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Government wastes money	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.42 Some public services work better than others. We read a number of measures which could be important for the *improvement* of the functioning of certain public services. The measures are also listed on **card 11**. Could you now please choose 3 measures which are according to you important for the improvement of the functioning of certain public services, and rank these according to importance?

(INT.: Read all measures the one after the other; ask by probing for the most important measure, followed by the second most important and the third most important; write the number in the appropriate boxes)

1. Abolish political nominations/appointments [*politieke benoemingen*]
2. Simplify laws and regulations
3. Reward competence, punish incompetence
4. Better training for civil servants
5. More use of modern techniques
6. Abolish life-time tenure
7. Diminish the influence of politicians on the administration

First measure no.

Second measure no.

Third measure no.

V.43

We now ask a number of questions on the information government gives. To what extent do you agree with the following statements? You can use **card 6**.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree	NA/DK
1. Government does not give enough information.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Government does not give objective information.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Government always makes sure I am informed on its decisions in a sufficient way.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Most government information is too complicated to understand.	1	2	3	4	5	7

Part 3: Citizen and Politics

The following questions deal with politics and politicians.

- V.44 (INT.: give respondent card 12). In the following question two statements are set against each other. Some people tend to agree with the statement next to number 1, others tend to agree with the statement next to number 5. Other have an opinion which lies in between (numbers 2, 3 and 4). These numbers are also indicated on **card 12**. Could you please indicate your opinion by indicating corresponding number?
 INT.: give card 12; encircle answer respondent gives.

1. A politician should defend the general interest	1	2	3	4	5	A politician should defend the interest of his constituency/voters	DK/ NA
2. Citizens should always be engaged in politics, and not only during elections	1	2	3	4	5	Once citizens have elected their politicians, their role in politics ends	DK/ NA
3. In a democracy the majority takes all decisions	1	2	3	4	5	In a democracy, the opinion of the minority should also weigh on decision-making	DK/ NA

- V.45. Suppose there are national elections next Sunday. Which would be your preferred political party? You can use card 13 to answer.
 (INT.: give card 13; only one possible answer)

1. AGALEV [green party]
2. CD&V (former CVP) [Christian democrats]
3. N-VA (former VU) [Flemish nationalist]
4. SP.A (former SP) [socialist]
5. SPIRIT (former VU) [Flemish nationalist]
6. VLAAMS BLOK [extreme right]
7. VLD [liberal]
8. PVDA [extreme left]
9. VIVANT
10. ECOLO [french speaking green party]
11. PRL [french speaking liberals]
12. PSC [french speaking christian democrats]
13. PS [french speaking socialists]
14. Other :
15. Don't know yet

V.46 And what is your opinion on the following statements? You can use card 6 to answer
(INT. : read statements one by one)

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree, nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree	No opinion
1. There's no point in voting; the parties do what they want to do anyway.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Most politicians promise a lot, but don't do anything.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Politicians are more corrupt than ordinary people.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Most of our politicians are competent people, who know what they are doing.	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Politicians serve their own interests rather than those of the public.	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Politicians do what is right most of the time.	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. If citizens do not trust government anymore, things go wrong.	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. Parliament can best be abolished, since it does not solve any problem.	1	2	3	4	5	7
9. The present political system is rotten.	1	2	3	4	5	7
10. We should be happy to live in a country which has laws and customs which are so democratic.	1	2	3	4	5	7
11. Obedience and respect for authority are the two most important virtues children have to learn.	1	2	3	4	5	7
12. Most of our social problems would be solved, if we could somehow get rid of the immoral, crooked people.	1	2	3	4	5	7
13. What we need is strong leaders who tell us what to do.	1	2	3	4	5	7
14. Progress in society is only possible by means of societal conflicts	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.47 Some people are very interested in politics. Others are not interested in politics at all. How interested in politics are you? You can use **card 4**.

Very little 1
 Little 2
 Not little, not much 3
 A lot 4
 Very Much 5

V.48

We now would like to know to what extent you are satisfied with a number of institutions and governments. You can again use **card 5** to answer.

To what extent are you satisfied...

	Very dissatisfied	dissatisfied	Not satisfied, not dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Never thought about it
1. with the way federal (Belgian) government works.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. with the policy of the Verhofstadt government.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. with the way Flemish government works.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. With the policy of the Dewael government.	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. with the way local government works?	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. with the way democracy works in Belgium?	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. with the way democracy works in Flanders?	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. To what extent do you expect in the future to be satisfied with the policy of the Verhofstadt government? [<i>federal government</i>]	1	2	3	4	5	7
9. To what extent do you expect in the future to be satisfied with the policy of the Dewael government? [<i>Flemish government</i>]	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.49 Now I'm going to read you a number of institutions and services. To what extent do you have trust in them? You can use card 4 to answer.

	Very little	Little	No trust, no distrust	A lot	Very much	NA/DK
1. the police	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. the educational system	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. the Flemish administration	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. the local administration	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. the legal system	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. the Flemish press	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Flemish government	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. Flemish political parties	1	2	3	4	5	7
9. the Church	1	2	3	4	5	7
10. employers and the employers' organisations	1	2	3	4	5	7
11. the Flemish parliament	1	2	3	4	5	7
12. the trade unions	1	2	3	4	5	7
13. the king	1	2	3	4	5	7
14. the Belgian parliament	1	2	3	4	5	7
15. the European Commission	1	2	3	4	5	7
16. the Belgian government	1	2	3	4	5	7
17. the Walloon political parties	1	2	3	4	5	7
18. the army	1	2	3	4	5	7
22. De Lijn (public transport: bus & tram)	1	2	3	4	5	7
23. De VDAB (unemployment agency)	1	2	3	4	5	7
24. refuse collection	1	2	3	4	5	7
25. The Post	1	2	3	4	5	7
26. The NMBS (railways)	1	2	3	4	5	7
27. The VRT (public radio/TV)	1	2	3	4	5	7
28. Guy Verhofstadt	1	2	3	4	5	7
29. Patrick Dewael	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.50 Here you find a list with a number of problems and policy fields. Could you please indicate how satisfied you are with the current policy on these fields? You can use **card 5** to answer.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Not satisfied, not dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	NA/DK
1. Justice	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Environment	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Employment policy	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Education	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Pensions	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Health insurance	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Safety and public order	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. Traffic	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.51 Some say Belgium needs a **king**, others say Belgium does not need a king, and still others do not have an opinion on this. Which opinion corresponds best to yours?

- Belgium does need a king. 1
 Belgium does not need a king. 2
 I do not have an opinion about this. 7

V.55

I'm going to read you a number of statements one often hears. To what extent do you agree or disagree with them? You can use **card 6** to answer. If there are issues you've never thought about, you can always mention this.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree not disagree	Agree	Completely agree	No opinion
1. 'Humanity', brotherhood' and 'solidarity' are all nonsense. Everybody has to take care of themselves first and defend their own interests.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. People should always pursue their personal pleasure, and shouldn't think too much about others.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. It is in the first place important to aspire after a prominent position for oneself.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Those who have many skills, can use this in the first place to become better themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. Nowadays everything is changing so fast that I don't know how to behave anymore.	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. We're confronted with so much information, that in the end we don't understand anything anymore.	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. It seems as if there are no simple solutions to many social problems.	1	2	3	4	5	7
8. I think that customs and habits are there to be observed.	1	2	3	4	5	7
9. Customs and habits should remain unchanged as much as possible.	1	2	3	4	5	7
10. I always do what I want, even when this runs counter to all conventions.	1	2	3	4	5	7
11. What is good and evil depends entirely upon the circumstances at the time.	1	2	3	4	5	7
12. People who insist upon a yes or no answer just don't know how complicated things really are.	1	2	3	4	5	7
13. I always want a clear reason for every decision.	1	2	3	4	5	7
14. Making choices is becoming increasingly difficult nowadays.	1	2	3	4	5	7
15. If I have a problem I can not solve, I'm feeling bad.	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.56 I'm reading you some more statements. They concern your living conditions. You can use **card 6** to answer.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Don't agree, nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree	DK/NO
1. I avoid certain areas in my village/town during daytime and at night because they are unsafe.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. The streets in my neighbourhood are in general clean and well-kept.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Living conditions in my neighbourhood have improved over the past years	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Too many strangers [<i>vreemdelingen</i>] live in my neighbourhood.	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. In my village/town, police should act much tougher on crime.	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. All together, I'm satisfied with the neighbourhood where I live.	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.57 The following questions deal with immigrants, by which we here mean Turkish and Moroccan people. Could you please indicate whether you agree or disagree with these statements? You can use **card 6** to answer. If you have no opinion, then you can just say this.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Don't agree, nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree	DK/NO
1. In general, immigrants cannot be trusted.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. Guest workers are a threat to the employment of Belgians.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. Guest workers come here to take advantage of our social security system.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. Muslims are a threat to our culture and customs.	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. The participation of immigrants in any political activity should be forbidden..	1	2	3	4	5	7

V.58 Which of the following statements corresponds best to your attitude?

- I'm only feeling Flemish 1
- I'm feeling more Flemish than Belgian 2
- I'm feeling as much Flemish as I'm feeling Belgian 3
- I'm feeling more Belgian than Flemish 4
- I'm feeling only Belgian 5
- Don't know 7

V.59 I'm again reading you a number of statements. You can use card 6 to answer.

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Don't agree, nor disagree	Agree	Completely agree	DK/NO
1. I'm proud to be a Belgian.	1	2	3	4	5	7
2. I'm proud to be a Fleming.	1	2	3	4	5	7
3. It's every Belgian's duty to respect the Belgian history and culture.	1	2	3	4	5	7
4. It's every Fleming's duty to respect the Flemish history and culture.	1	2	3	4	5	7
5. By nature, people [volkeren] are not equal	1	2	3	4	5	7
6. Flanders has to become independent	1	2	3	4	5	7
7. Taxes I pay should only be used for the benefit of Flanders	1	2	3	4	5	7

V60_1 How often do you watch the television news? You can find the possible answers on **card 15**.

(INT. : show card 15 ; only 1 answer possible)

- never O (1) > go to V.61
- less than once a month O (2)
- about once every month O (3)
- several times a month O (4)
- about once every week O (5)
- several times a week O (6)
- daily O (7)
- several times a day O (8)

V.60_2 On which channel do you normally watch the television news?

.....

V.61_1 How often do you listen to the radio news? You can find the possible answers on **card 15**.
(INT. : show card 15 ; only 1 answer possible)

- never O (1) > go to V.62
- less than once a month O (2)
- about once every month O (3)
- several times a month O (4)
- about once every week O (5)
- several times a week O (6)
- daily O (7)
- several times a day O (8)

V.61_2 On which channel do you normally listen to the radio news?

.....

V.62_1 How often do you read a newspaper? You can find the possible answers on **card 15**. (*INT. : show card 15 ; only 1 answer possible*)

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| never | O (1) > go to V.63 |
| less than once a month | O (2) |
| about once every month | O (3) |
| several times a month | O (4) |
| about once every week | O (5) |
| several times a week | O (6) |
| daily | O (7) |
| several times a day | O (8) |
-

V.62_2 Which newspaper(s) do you read most frequently? You can find the possible answers on **card 16**. (*INT. : show card 15 ; more than one answer allowed*)

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| De Morgen | O (1) |
| De Standaard | O (2) |
| De Gazet van Antwerpen | O (3) |
| De Financieel Economische. Tijd | O (4) |
| Het Nieuwsblad | O (5) |
| Het Laatste Nieuws | O (6) |
| Het Belang van Limburg | O (7) |
| Het Volk | O (8) |
| De Gentenaar | O (9) |
| Metro | O (10) |
| Francophone Belgian newspapers | O (11) |
| Foreign newspapers | O (12) |
| Other | O (77) |
-

V.63 Which source of information do you consider to be the most reliable? Newspaper, radio, television, or none? (*INT.: only one possible answer*)

- | | |
|---------------|-------|
| Newspaper | O (1) |
| Radio | O (2) |
| Television | O (3) |
| None | O (4) |
| Don't know/NA | O (7) |

FINISHING

To finish, we have some final questions on the interview itself.

V.64. When you consider this interview, how pleasant or unpleasant do you think it was? You can find possible answers on card 17.
(INT. : show card 17 ; only one possible answer)

- very pleasant experience O (1)
pleasant experience O (2)
not pleasant, not unpleasant experience O (3)
unpleasant experience O (4)
very unpleasant experience O (5)
- don't know, no opinion O (7)

V.65. What do you think of the time the interview took?
(INT. : read possible answers ; only 1 possible answer)

- too long O (1)
just right O (2)
too short O (3)
- don't know, no opinion O (7)

V.66. I'm going to read you a number of statements. Could you please indicate whether you agree or disagree with them?
(INT. : show card 6 ; only one possible answer)

	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neither agree Nor disagree	Agree	Completely Agree	Don't Know
1. Such surveys are a waste of people's time	O (1)	O (2)	O (3)	O (4)	O (5)	O (7)
2. Everybody has the responsibility to co-operate on these surveys	O (1)	O (2)	O (3)	O (4)	O (5)	O (7)
3. People should be paid to participate in such an interview	O (1)	O (2)	O (3)	O (4)	O (5)	O (7)

End time interview h.

..... min.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION!!!

Before starting the next interview, please check the following:

- Have all questions been answered?
 Did you note your name and the respondent no. on the cover?
 Did you fill out the contact sheet for this interview?
 Did you note the hour when starting and finishing the interview?
 Don't forget to fill out the interviewer report.
-

TO BE FILLED OUT BY INTERVIEWER

R.1	Was anyone present during the interview who could hear the questions and the answers apart from yourself and the respondent?	
	Nobody present	1 → R.4
	Others present	2

R.2 Who was present?

*Indicate relation to respondent of those present.
More than one possible answer.*

	Spouse/partner	1
	Own children	2
	Spouse/partner and children	3
	Parent(s) and/or parent(s) in law	4
	Brother(s) and/or sister(s)	5
	Others	6

R.3 Did anyone of those present interfere with the interview? Never, now and then, constantly?

	Never	1
	Now and then	2
	Constantly	3

R.4 Did the respondent ask for clarifications?

	Often	1
	A lot	2
	Now and then	3
	Almost never	4
	Never	5

R.5	Did you feel any resistance on the part of the respondent in answering some questions?	
	Often	1
	A lot	2
	Now and then	3
	Almost never	4
	Never	5

R.6	How do you judge the motivation of the respondent to cooperate?	
	Highly motivated	1
	Moderately motivated	2
	Rather indifferent	3
	Reserved	4
	Very reserved	5

R.7	How did you, in general, judge the capability of the respondent to understand the questions asked in the interview and to give answers that are meaningful to himself or herself ?	
	Very high	1
	High	2
	Adequate	3
	Poor	4
	Very poor	5
	Totally inadequate	6

R.8 Do you have any supplementary remarks concerning this interview?

.....

.....

.....

Appendix 2. COMPOSITION OF VARIABLES

In the analyses a number of preconstructed variables have been used. Composition of these variables is shown here.

Religion

v.11 To which of the following religious/philosophical orientations do you belong?

Non-believer	O (1)
Freethinker	O (2)
Protestant	O (3)
Christian, but not catholic	O (4)
Catholic	O (5)
Islam	O (6)
Jewish	O (7)
None or indifferent	O (8)
Other	O (9)

v.12 People sometimes participate in religious services such as weddings, funerals etc. If we do not take into account these services, how often do you participate in religious services?

never	O (1)
very seldom	O (2)
only on Holy Days (Christmas, Easter ...)	O (3)
monthly	O (4)
a few times month	O (5)
weekly	O (6)
several times a week	O (7)

if (v11=1) => not religious.
 if (v11=2) => freethinking.
 if (v11=3) => other.
 if (v11=4) => other.
 if (v11=6) => other.
 if (v11=7) => other.
 if (v11=8) => not religious.
 if (v11=9) => other.
 if (v11=5 and v12 le 3) => marginal Catholic.
 if (v11=5 and v12 le 5 and v12 gt 3) => irregular churchgoing.
 if (v11=5 and v12 gt 5) => regular churchgoing.

Education

v.7 or v.8 What is the highest qualification you have gained?

none	O (1) => no/lower
primary education	O (2) => no/lower
lower general secondary education	O (3) => sec. lower
lower technical secondary education	O (4) => sec. lower
lower secondary vocational education	O (5) => sec. lower
higher general secondary education	O (6) => sec. higher
higher technical secondary education	O (7) => sec. higher
higher vocational education	O (8) => sec. higher
non-university higher education – short type	O (9) => non univ. short
non-university higher education – long type	O (10) => non univ. long
university education	O (11) => univ.

Appendix 3. DESCRIPTION OF OTHER DATASETS AND INDICATORS USED IN THE RESEARCH

APS

Yearly survey on socio-cultural change in Flanders, organised by the Administration for Planning and Statistics (ministry of the Flemish Community), 1996-2004, N= ± 1500

(<http://aps.vlaanderen.be>)

Consumer surveys

Monthly telephone survey (n=1500) commissioned by the National Bank of Belgium. A number of the items are used for compiling the consumer confidence indicator.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/economy_finance/indicators/businessandconsumersurveys_en.htm & www.nbb.be

Corruption Perceptions Index

Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) compiled by Transparency International (TI). It essentially is a meta-analysis and aggregation of existing and commissioned survey material (www.transparency.org)

Eurobarometer

The Standard Eurobarometer was established in 1973. Each survey consists in approximately 1000 face-to-face interviews per EU Member State. Conducted between 2 and 5 times per year, with reports published twice yearly. They are commissioned by the European Commission and provide time-series since the early 70s. Special Eurobarometers are organised on specific topics, e.g. on services of general interest (http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion). The European Commission used to organise the Continuous Tracking Survey, a survey tracking opinion on a daily basis for one month. We used the one organised between 23/10 and 19/11 1996, wave 96.10, N= 800 for every EU country, 1600 for Germany

http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archives/europinion_cts/special/Services_publics/spfina2b.pdf

European Values Study (EVS) and World Values Survey (WVS)

Three waves of surveys in almost all European countries: 1981, 1990, 1999-2000. Last wave in 32 countries. N for Belgium resp. 1145, 2792 and 1912 (<http://www.europeanvalues.nl>). The World Values Survey grew out of EVS and organised an additional wave in 1995. In the recent wave, almost 80 societies have been covered (<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>).

ISPO

General Election Study in Belgium in 1991, 1995 and 1999. N in 1999 = 2899 (www.kuleuven.ac.be/ispo)

De kennis van de Vlamingen & hun houding tegenover de Vlaamse Overheid

Survey commissioned by the ministry of the Flemish Community on Flemish citizens' knowledge about and attitude towards Flemish government. Organised by the Center for Survey Methodology,

Department of Sociology (K.U.Leuven). Face-to-face interviews consisting of a baseline measurement (1995, N=710) and a measurement of the effect of government campaigns (1996), consisting of a panel group (N=532) and a control group (N=455).

La Libre Belgique

The La Libre Belgique poll is first and foremost a political opinion poll by the *La Libre Belgique* newspaper since 1982. In total 2000 Belgians older than 18 participate (750 in both Flanders and Wallonia, 500 in Brussels, of which 100 Dutch speakers). Selection is based on a random walk, with a pre-determined starting point in a sample of municipalities with different degrees of urbanisation. For selecting the respondents, the *last birthday* method is used, and further differentiation is made based on a number of criteria (sex, age, type of employment, social class). (To our knowledge, the trust data have been used for the first time as a time-series in our 'citizen governance: quality and trust in government' project. (www.lalibre.be))

National Election Studies

The American Election Study, biennial (www.umich.edu/~nes/)

UNDP Human Development Index

The HDI – human development index – is a summary composite index that measures a country's average achievements in three basic aspects of human development: longevity, knowledge, and a decent standard of living. Longevity is measured by life expectancy at birth; knowledge is measured by a combination of the adult literacy rate and the combined primary, secondary, and tertiary gross enrolment ratio; and standard of living by GDP per capita (PPP US\$) (<http://hdr.undp.org>)

Appendix 4. PROMISING RESEARCH DESIGNS FOR COMPARING PUBLIC SECTOR PERFORMANCE AND PERCEPTIONS, AND INVENTORY OF AVAILABLE MATERIAL

Perceptions of service quality and of public sector performance are possibly not only influenced by the objective quality of the service, but by a broad array of aspects. This makes comparison between satisfaction scores, or even more, research on the impact of service quality on trust in government, very difficult. Other researchers have also identified data availability as one of the main challenges [Swindell & Kelly 2000 #95376 /ft ": 37"]. Comparing public sectors internationally is then even more complicated. The absence of government-wide performance indicators forces us to break down government performance and analyse the performance-satisfaction-trust relationship at that level. There are a number of research designs that would allow for completing the entire objective quality indicators – perceptions of quality/satisfaction – trust in government chain. The problem of aggregation is thereby not solved however. Data used in this research was collected by a general survey. Relating objective quality indicators to these perceptions would require a new research design. More attention for objective quality indicators would result in less attention for determinants of trust not related to the public administration.

Spatial design

The advantage of a spatial design is that a comparison between quasi-similar public services can be made, and that a number of external influences can be excluded.

Table 47: A spatial research design for relating quality, satisfaction and trust

	Municipality A	Municipality B	Municipality C	Municipality n
Quality of ...	Fire dept. A Police A Municipal administration A	Fire dept. B Police B Municipal administration B	Fire dept. C Police C Municipal administration C	Fire dept. N Police N Municipal administration N
Perceptions of & satisfaction with...	Fire dept. A Police A Municipal administration A Public services in general	Fire dept. B Police B Municipal administration B Public services in general	Fire dept. C Police C Municipal administration C Public services in general	Fire dept. N Police N Municipal administration N Public services in general
Trust in ...	Fire dept. A Police A Municipal administration A Public services in general Government Politics	Fire dept. B Police B Municipal administration B Public services in general Government Politics	Fire dept. C Police C Municipal administration C Public services in general Government Politics	Fire dept. N Police N Municipal administration N Public services in general Government Politics
Socio-demo-graphics & life-styles	Age, education, deprivation, individualism,	Age, education, deprivation, individualism,	Age, education, deprivation, individualism,	Age, education, deprivation, individualism,
Area-specific characteristics	History, unemployment, distance to capital, political coalitions, ...	History, unemployment, distance to capital, political coalitions, ...	History, unemployment, distance to capital, political coalitions, ...	History, unemployment, distance to capital, political coalitions, ...

This design could also be used in international comparative research, even though the intercultural dimension and country-specific differences add complexity to the comparison.

As for the trust and satisfaction data, there has always been more interest in collecting new data than for consolidating existing data. This means that much survey data has not (yet) been discovered by public administration researchers, and that items on the public administration, public services and civil servants remain thus far largely unexplored. Many of these surveys have been designed for other purposes, often in the field of (political) sociology, what explains the limited use by PA scholars. The absence of easy-to-use combined datasets adds to this under-exploration. Table 48 provides an inventory of surveys that are available to PA scholars who want to do research on citizen attitudes towards the public administration. Condition for inclusion in the list is that these surveys cover at least 3 European countries, and that they contain a fair number of items dealing with the public administration. The list is not meant to be comprehensive, and data-collection methodology is not necessarily up to the same standards for all surveys.

Table 48: Overview of data sources on public opinion on the public administration

Source	Period	Coverage	Useful items	URL
<i>Eurobarometer</i> ⁸¹ (European Commission)	Since 1973, 2x/year. Some of the indicators starting in 1973, 1994, 1997, 1999	Approx. 1000 in all EU countries	Trust in institutions; satisfaction with democracy Special reference to Services of general interest in EB 53 and 58. In-depth survey of public services in EB 47.	http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/
<i>Candidate Countries Eurobarometer</i> (previously <i>Central and Eastern Eurobarometer – EC</i>)	Since autumn 1990, yearly	Approx. 1000 in each EU Candidate country	Trust in institutions; satisfaction democracy	http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/
<i>Special Eurobarometers</i> (European Commission)	2000 & 2002	Approx. 1000 in each EU country	Services d'intérêt général (2000 & 2002)	http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/
<i>Europinion, Continuous Tracking Survey</i> (European Commission)	October 1996	Approx. 800 per EU country	Special Europinion: European Public opinion on public services	http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/
<i>European Values Study</i>	1981, 1990, 1999/2000	32 countries in last wave, approx 900-3600 per country	Confidence in institutions, satisfaction democracy, technocracy & democracy, leadership, civic duties & values, evaluation 'system of governing'	http://www.europeanvalues.nl
<i>World Values Survey</i>	1981, 90-91, 95-98, 99-01	Up to 80 societies, min. n= 1000	Confidence in institutions, satisfaction democracy, technocracy & democracy, leadership, evaluation system of governing & leaders	http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org
<i>European Social Survey</i>	Two-yearly, first in 2002,	Min. 1500 per country, 24 European countries	Trust in institutions, satisfaction way government works, satisfaction democracy, functioning education & health care, civic duties	http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org
<i>ISSP: International Social Survey Programme</i>	Role of Government Module (included in national surveys) 1985, 1990, ±1995, 2006	23 countries in latest Role of government module, of which 16 European, n=approx 1000/country	Government regulation, government spending priorities, obeying laws, trust civil servants, satisfaction democracy, taxes, privatisation	www.issp.org
<i>Voice of the People</i> (World Economic Forum)	2002	N=36000, 47 countries	Trust in the institutions	http://www.voice-of-the-people.net
<i>Readers' Digest Trusted Brands Survey</i>	2001, 2002, 2003	18 European countries, n=27692, mail survey	Confidence in policies, professions and institutions	http://www.rdtrustedbrands.com

⁸¹ for non-European countries, see also Global Barometer (<http://www.globalbarometer.org>), Latinobarómetro (<http://www.latinobarometro.org>), Afrobarometer (<http://www.afrobarometer.org>), East Asia Barometer (<http://eacsurvey.law.ntu.edu.tw>)

<i>Readers' Digest Eurodata</i>	1969, 1990	Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Germany, England, Italy N=4919 in 1969 17 European Countries. N=22339 in '90;	Confidence in Institutions, civic duties	
<i>International Crime Victim Surveys (ICVS)</i>	1989, 1992, 96/97, 00/01	14 countries in 1989. 1000-2000 households, CATI or face-to-face. Now 56 countries	Police helpfulness, is police doing a good job in controlling crime, satisfaction police response, experience of corruption by government or public official	http://www.unicri.it/icvs/index.htm
<i>New Democracies Barometer (NDB)</i>	Five rounds: 1991, 1992-93, 1993-94, 1995, 1998	Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, Ukraine, Serbia + Montenegro, partly also in Austria, Germany, Moldova, total n 8-12000 for each round and Austria.	Evaluation of how government works + comparison with previous regime, trust in institutions	http://www.cspp.strath.ac.uk
<i>New Baltic Barometer (NBB)</i>	1993, 1995, 1996, 2000	Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania,		http://www.cspp.strath.ac.uk
<i>New Europe Barometer Omnibus Survey (NEB)</i>	2001, previously NBB & NDB	Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, total n=11012	Satisfaction democracy, Evaluation of how government works + comparison with previous regime, trust in institutions, corruption	http://www.cspp.strath.ac.uk
<i>European Election Study (EES)</i>	1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999 (on the occasion of elections for the European Parliament). Before 1999 integrated in Eurobarometer.	EU countries, n=500 or 1000 (300 in Lux.). CATI	Policy in integration, immigration, economy, and environment: what level of government should do it, should government should it? Satisfaction with this policy. Satisfaction with democracy, evaluation of government's record	http://shakti.trincoll.edu/~mfrankli/EE_S.html
<i>Opinion polls</i>	Continuous	Wide range of public opinion surveys, some have been conducted in several countries e.g. Gallup Brain: database of public opinion surveys by Gallup since 1935; CBOS (Poland) on trust in institutions in Poland, Czech republic and Hungary		
<i>Election studies</i>	Continuous. Long tradition in some countries, rather recent in others	Organised in many countries, but no harmonised instrument.	For an overview of studies in some EU countries, see (Mochmann, Oedegaard, and Mauer, 1998)	

Apart from this series of surveys among the general population, numerous surveys exist among selected groups. The World Bank Public Officials Survey⁸² surveyed civil servants, mainly in developing countries. The Toqueville Research Center is currently engaged in a project interviewing chief administrative officials and local representatives in Central and Eastern Europe⁸³. Business people are also frequently questioned, for instance in the OECD PUMA Multi-country Business Survey in 11 countries in 1998-99 on administrative burdens, cost of administrative compliance and relations with government officials⁸⁴. The World Business Environment survey was administered in 80, mainly developing, countries and dealt with the efficiency of public services, impact of regulations, relation of the firm with government and bureaucracy, red tape, corruption and legality⁸⁵. The World Economic Forum has its well-known survey among business executives that is used for the Global Competitiveness Report⁸⁶. Other surveys relied on experts, such as the Columbia State Capacity Survey and the Freedom House ratings. The World Bank has compiled a good overview of these studies and surveys (Kaufmann et al., 2002), which is also available on their website.

Time-series design

Another possible approach is to compare time-series of performance, satisfaction and trust data. The main drawback in this design is causality; how to attribute changes in satisfaction/trust to changes in the performance of (a number of) the studied services. Finding comparable evolutions does not mean these aspects are causally related. It could happen that changes in the level of trust are to be attributed to factors that were not measured in the research (e.g. when only data on public sector performance are available, while changes in life-styles, political attitudes etc. were not measured).

Table 49: A time series design for researching the relationship between public service performance and citizens' trust

	Moment 1	Moment 2	Moment 3	Moment 4
Performance indicator _{1→n}				
Satisfaction score _{1→n}				
Trust score _{1→n}				
Other indicators _{1→n}				

Implementing such a design requires that good data is available. This includes:

- Repeated measurement
- Same population interrogated on attitudes towards public services and general attitudes towards government and the public administration, using a harmonised and standardised instrument
- Perception indicators that can be related to specific performance indicators

⁸² <http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/civilservice/surveys.htm>

⁸³ <http://www.Tr-c.org>

⁸⁴ 7859 companies, <http://www.oecd.org/pdf/M00018000/M00018009.pdf>

⁸⁵ <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wbes/index.html>

⁸⁶ <http://www.weforum.org>

In Table 50 relevant opinion data available in Belgium is listed. In most cases measurements are not repeated or not standardised, or the number of items is very limited and difficult to relate to objective performance indicators, which in turn are not easy to find due to changes in the data collection methods and absence of comparable time-series.

Table 50: Data available in Belgium for researching trust & satisfaction

Source	Data/content	Repeated?	Time frame
APS	Trust in n° of institutions + policy indicators	Some aspects repeated	1996-2000 & 2002
ISPO	Trust in n° of institutions + political indicators	Repeated	1995 & 1999
Eurobarometer	Trust in n° of institutions + satisfaction democracy + policy indicators	Repeated	Some of the indicators starting in 1973, 1994, 1997, 1999
European Values Study	Confidence in n° of institutions	Repeated	1981, 1990, 1999
WADO	Trust in n° of institutions + policy indicators + PA performance	partially repeated in two-weekly waves	2002 & 2003, mail & face-to-face, in waves
La Libre Belgique	Opinion poll on trust in government	Repeated	Since 1982
Federal Quality Barometer	Satisfaction with 1 specific service + 1 trust question	Single	Mainly 1998-1999
Client surveys MVG	Satisfaction with 1 specific service + n° of trust indicators	Single, in some cases already repeated, not yet with trust indicator included	Mainly since 2001
Other surveys	Probing for specific aspects, often containing or performance appraisals, or trust indicators (academic surveys, client satisfaction surveys, ...)	Single	

DOCTORATEN IN DE SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN

I. REEKS VAN DOCTORATEN IN DE SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN⁽¹⁾

1. CLAEYS, U., *De sociale mobiliteit van de universitair afgestudeerden te Leuven. Het universitair onderwijs als mobiliteitskanaal*, 1971, 2 delen 398 blz.
2. VANHESTE, G., *Literatuur en revolutie*, 1971, 2 delen, 500 blz.
3. DELANGHE, L., *Differentiële sterfte in België. Een sociaal-demografische analyse*, 1971, 3 delen, 773 blz.
4. BEGHIN, P., *Geleide verandering in een Afrikaanse samenleving. De Bushi in de koloniale periode*, 1971, 316 blz.
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9. SLEDSSENS, G., *Mariage et vie conjugale du moniteur rwandais. Enquête sociologique par interview dirigée parmi les moniteurs mariés rwandais*, 1972, 2 delen, 549 blz.
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11. DEPRE, R., *De topambtenaren van de ministeries in België. Een bestuurssociologisch onderzoek*, 1973, 2 delen, 423 blz. + bijlagen.
12. VAN DER BIESEN, W., *De verkiezingspropaganda in de democratische maatschappij. Een literatuurkritische studie en een inhoudsanalyse van de verkiezingscampagne van 1958 in de katholieke pers en in de propagandapublicaties van de C.V.P.*, 1973, 434 blz.
13. BANGO, J., *Changements dans les communautés villageoises de l'Europe de l'Est. Exemple : la Hongrie*, 1973, 434 blz.
14. VAN PELT, H., *De omroep in revisie. Structurering en ontwikkelingsmogelijkheden van het radio- en televisiebestel in Nederland en België. Een vergelijkende studie*, Leuven, Acco, 1973, 398 blz.
15. MARTENS, A., *25 jaar wegwerparbeiders. Het Belgisch immigratiebeleid na 1945*, 1973, 319 blz.
16. BILLET, M., *Het verenigingsleven in Vlaanderen. Een sociologische typologieformulering en hypothesetoetsing*, 1973, 695 blz. + bijlagen.
17. BRUYNOOGHE, R., *De sociale structurering van de gezinsverplegingssituatie vanuit kostgezinnen en patiënten*, 1973, 205 blz. + bijlagen.
18. BUNDERVOET, J., *Het doorstromingsprobleem in de hedendaagse vakbeweging. Kritische literatuurstudie en verkennend onderzoek in de Belgische vakbonden*, 1973, 420 blz. + bijlagen.
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