# UNDERSTANDING THE QUALITY OF GOVERNMENT IN CHINA:

## The Cadre Administration Hypothesis

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# ABSTRACT

China's remarkable development poses a problem for theories that have stressed the importance of institutions producing "good governance" and minimizing corruption. As a possible solution to this problem, the following ten arguments are presented: 1) Current research presents us with two very different concepts of governance; 2) Only one of these can serve as the basis for an operationalization of "good governance"; 3) In this approach, labeled "Quality of Government" (QoG), it is argued that QoG should be distinguished from "quality of democracy", implying that; 4) the definition of QoG should be confined to the execution and implementation of public policies; 5) Using a "public goods" approach to corruption, QoG can be defined and measured in a universal way using impartiality in the exercise of public power as the basic operational norm; 6) As with representative democracy, QoG can be institutionalized in very different ways; 7) Most western scholars have confused countries' specific institutional configuration of "good governance" with the basic norm for QoG which; 7) has led to dysfunctional policy suggestions for developing countries; 8) Beginning in the 1990, the public administration in China has used performance-based management as its main operational tool; 9) This specific type of public administration can be conceptualized as a cadre organization – a non-Weberian model for increasing QoG, that has been neglected both in public administration research and in the institutional theory of development; 10) The cadre organization model, which is also found in the West, solves the perennial delegation problem in public administration, which can explain why China has thrived, despite not having a Weberian rule-of-law type of administration and scoring relatively high on standard measures of corruption

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# Institutional theories of governance and the problem with China[1]

The starting point for this paper is simple; On the one hand, there is now an abundance of research in economics and political science arguing for the importance of state's administrative capacity and systems of governance for countries' economic prosperity and social development (Bentzen 2012; Aidt 2009; Acemoglu and Robinson 2008; Holmberg and Rothstein 2012; Norris 2012; Uslaner 2008). On the other hand, The People's Republic of China (henceforth China) in all of the available measures of quality of government institutions scores quite low, yet, as is well-known, show exceptionally high economic growth and impressive improvements, in many commonly used measures of human well-being, not least those related to population health (Sen 2011). Using Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, Wedeman (2012:178) shows that China is a profound outlier as it has much higher annual growth rate than other countries with similar level of corruption. The magnitude of this problem is shown by the fact that leading scholars in the institutional approach to development have been forced to use a number of quite inelegant ad-hoc explanations to account for the Chinese case (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012, 473-443).

This "puzzle with China" leaves us with three possibilities. First, the theory stressing the quality of institutions is a misspecification of the problem of what causes economic and social development. For example, it may be the case that the theory is not as general as the proponents argue, in the sense that it may work for some type of societies but not for others. A possible explanation is that, for a country like China, low quality in its formal institutions, may be compensated for by high quality in its informal institutions. Li and Wu (2010) have argued that the presumably high level of social trust in China, serves as an informal institutional device that mitigates the negative effects of corruption in the formal institutions. In a similar way, it has been argued that the "guanxi" networks in China not only should be seen as facilitating corruption but also as informal systems for securing honesty in economic transactions (Huang and Wang 2011; Li 2011). A second possibility is that there is something profoundly wrong with how the quality of government institutions is conceptualized by mostly western scholars and that this is specifically detrimental to the Chinese case. A central issue here is of course the relation between universalism and cultural relativism in the social sciences. The latter approach would argue that concepts such as *good governance, corruption* or the *quality of government* are a based on profoundly western ideals and therefore should

not be applied to other cultures such as China. A third possibility is that there is a measurement problem – the institutional theory may be right and concepts like *quality of government* can be universally applied, but the problem lies in how they have been operationalized for measuring China.

In this paper, I will concentrate on the two latter possibilities. My inclination is that the institutional theory of development is basically right. It would take too much space to present the full argument here but to summarize I think that both the internal logic of the institutional theory as well as the results from many different types of empirical research is to this day convincing. I will also argue that concepts such as corruption and quality government can and ought to be universal and that there is little that speaks for a the need of specific culturally determined Chinese understanding of these concepts. The assumption that this paper wants to explore is that "the problem with China" may be related to a misunderstanding of the main operational mode of the Chinese public administration. The hypothesis put forward is that research on this topic may have missed the importance of a specific organizational form for public administration, namely the *cadre organization*, which seems to be prevalent in contemporary China. This quite specific type of public administration, which can also be found in Western democracies, is very different from, and in some cases superior to, the Weberian model of rule-of-law based bureaucracy in producing socially efficient outcomes, which has been put forward by most scholars in the institutional approach to development.

## The Two Worlds of Governance

Any discussion of how to assess the quality of governance has to start with the theoretical issue of how we should define this concept – what should count as "governance" and what should count as "quality". As (Gerring 2007, 212) states: No methodological approach, however technically advanced, can work unless we know "what we are talking about". The first problem when assessing the quality of governance in China is that there are at least two very different ideas of what constitutes "governance" in the social sciences. The first has its background mainly in public administration and public policy analysis of western democracies. Its basis was the recognition, beginning in the early 1990s, that an increasing number of empirical studies had shown that western democracies no longer relied mainly on government authorities when trying to reach public or collective goals. It was argued that traditional public administration structures that used to have a monopoly, or at

least was the main actor, in implementing public policies, had been weakened, replaced, or challenged by various forms of public-private partnerships and more lose networks of organizations including also various civil society organizations, trade organizations and private companies. The empirical studies showed that various forms of market solutions were also used for providing what were essentially public goods, such as for example publicly financed charter school systems and pseudo-market systems in the provision of health care. This development was seen as a result of a long standing critique in western democracies of the traditional type of Weberian type of public administration as being "rigid and bureaucratic, expensive and inefficient" (Pierre and Peters 2005, 5).

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

This post-Weberian policy approach to governance has become a fairly large enterprise, judged by number of publications and citations (Levi-Faur 2012a)). For example, it almost completely dominates the recently published 800 pages *Oxford Handbook of Governance*. The index of this handbook has only five entries about *corruption,* but fifty about *participatory governance* and forty-eight on *network governance. The* same can be seen in the only international academic journal that is

titled *Governance* – searching for the term *management* in abstracts yields five times as many articles than a search on *corruption*. It should also be noted that this approach to governance rarely concerns issues about the public administration in developing countries (Pierre and Rothstein 2011)

The problem is that the conceptualization of governance in this approach is not overwhelmingly precise. On the contrary, leading scholars in this approach tend to make a virtue of conceptual ambiguity. An example is David Levi-Faur (2012a: 3) who in his introductory editorial chapter to the *Handbook of Governance* mentioned above states that this publication intends to demonstrate that "governance is increasingly becoming a broad concept that is central to the study of political, economic, spatial and social order in general". In reality, the concept tends to capture all forms of collective social co-ordination, outside pure market relations or the family. The problem is that such a broad understanding of governance makes it difficult to distinguish it from all other forms of social co-ordination. To paraphrase what Aaron Wildavsky (1973) said about another once popular concept (yes, many years ago): "If planning is everything, maybe it's nothing".

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

What is interesting is that at the same time as the above mentioned approach to governance started to mushroom, a very different idea of what this concept entails saw the light of day. The background of this approach was not located in studies of public administration and public policy in mature western democracies, but instead located in discussions in research about development and (the lack of) economic growth, in third-world (and later transition) countries. In common language, the approach argued that the institutionalized "rules of the game" should have a more central role in social science research and especially for explaining variation in social and economic development (North 1990; Shirley 2005; Greif 2005; Smith 2007). In this approach, that I would prefer to call the *political economy approach to governance,* the importance of informal institutions has often been stressed by leading scholars (Ostrom 1990; North 1998). However, in empirical research, these "rules of the game" has de facto become very oriented towards state centered variables, such as: states' administrative capacity; the degree to which the rule-of-law principles are respected; the level of corruption in the public sector; the effectiveness and professionalism in the public administration; the secure enforcement of property rights, and meritocratic recruitment of civil servants (Smith 2007). This idea of "good governance" for achieving social and economic development has become central for many international development organizations. For instance, in the mid-1990s, when the World Bank started to emphasize the negative impact of corruption, in the public sector, on economic development, this lead to the establishment of the Work Bank Governance Indicators project (Kaufmann et al. 2005). An important empirical result was produced by Evans and Rauch (1999), who already in the late 1990s showed that a Weberian type of public administration had a positive impact on economic growth for developing countries.

*Good governance* is now used, in particular, by many national development agencies and international organisations, such as the World Bank and the United Nations. One example is the International Monetary Fund that in 1996 declared that *"promoting good governance in all its aspects, including by ensuring the rule of law, improving the efficiency and accountability of the public sector, and tackling corruption, as essential elements of a framework within which economies can prosper"* (Rothstein 2012, 143). In development policy circles, this "good governance" agenda has to a large extent replaced what was known as *the Washington Consensus.* This approach stated that economic growth could be created by systematic deregulations of markets, tightening of public spending, guarantees for property rights, and large scale privatizations (Serra and Stiglitz 2008). The reason why this strategy did not work was, according to many observers, that poor countries lacked the necessary type of institutions that were "taken for granted" in neo-classical economics. Among those, leading development economist

Dani Rodrik listed institutions such as "a regulatory apparatus curbing the worst forms of fraud, anti-competitive behavior, and moral hazard" and "the rule of law and clean government". According to Rodrik, these were institutions that economists usually took for granted "but which are conspicuous by their absence in poor countries" (Rodrik 2007, 97). In the former communist countries, this strategy became known as "shock-therapy capitalism". It ran into a number of problems, not least because its proponents did not pay adequate attention to the need for institutions, which would hinder fraudulent, anti-competitive, corrupt, and other similar types of destructive behavior (Kornai et al. 2004).

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

It is to this task that the rest of this paper will be devoted. The conceptual discussion is largely a summary, and to some extent an expansion of earlier efforts I (together with Jan Teorell) have made in this conceptual enterprise (Rothstein and Teorell 2012; Rothstein 2011; Rothstein and Teorell 2008). The overall ambition for this enterprise is nothing less than to provide what Fukuyama (2004, 22) has asked for, namely "a theory of institutions, that can be generalized, and that will provide the basis for policy guidance for poor countries". The implication is of course that for this to work, it is necessary to present an idea of how "quality of government" should be conceptualized and measured. To do so, we must present a norm or a set of norms against which the "modus operandi" of the public administration in a country can be evaluated.

# The Quality of Government (QoG) Approach

## Democracy vs. QoG

As indicated above, the "good governance" agenda in development research has largely concerned the character of the state. This is one reason why I have chosen to use the term "quality of government" instead of "good governance" since the latter term includes many non-state actors. Another reason is an ambition not to increase the conceptual confusion caused by the fact that, as described above, we now have two very different approaches, in the social sciences, using the term "governance", in almost diametrically different ways. Furthermore, I want to stress that the conceptual issue is not only empirical but also normative – to define and assess what should count as "quality" (or as "good"), when it comes to the way a state apparatus interact with its citizens, cannot be done without entering into a discussion with political philosophy of what ought to be the proper role and functions of the state.

A first point is that what we are looking for is how political power is *exercised* in a society, that is, how societal steering is handled by the state. This makes our conceptual task easier since we in this conceptual enterprise can leave out how power is *accessed* in a society, not because it is of minor importance but, as I will argue below, it should be treated separatedly. When it comes to what should count as quality in the access to power, modern political philosophy, as expressed by for example Robert Dahl and John Rawls gives an almost unequivocal answer – namely liberal representative democracy (Dahl 1989, 2006; Rawls 1993). Although such a system can be organized and institutionalized in many different ways - the Danish democracy is very differently institutionalized than the US democracy - it is a separate operation from how the exercise of power functions in a society. Logically, we should therefor distinguish between the quality of a country's (representative) democracy and the quality of its government. The implication is that the norm(s) of what constitutes "good democracy" cannot be identical with the norms that constitute "good government".

This implies that it should be possible for a country to have an impeccable democratic system for organizing the access to political power but a "bad", "low quality", and/or "corrupt" system for the exercise of public power. This is also what empirical research tends to show – there is no straightforward relation between measures of a country's democracy and various measures of for example its level of corruption (Montinola and Jackman 2002; Sung 2004; Holmberg and Rothstein 2011) . Some non-democratic countries get high scores in various measure of "good governance" (Kuwait, Singapore), while some democratic countries score very low on

these measures (Greece, Jamaica). Empirical research also gives the quite disturbing result that corrupt politicians are often re-elected (Kurer 2001; Chang et al. 2010; for a different result see Bågenholm 2010). It is noteworthy that the same non-linear relation seems to exist between democracy and respect for human rights (Zakaria 2003). The implication is that that when the World Bank researchers includes "voice and accountability" in their definition of "good governance", they conflate two different and often disconnected parts of the political system and makes it impossible to see under what circumstances an increased quality for the "access part" also can increase the quality of the "exercise part" (Kaufmann et al. 2009). A third conclusion is therefore that conceptually, quality of government (QoG) should be distinguished from quality of democracy. It follows that a country such as China may get a high assessment of its quality of government although it is a non-democracy.

## QoG vs. Relativism and Universalism: The Public Goods Approach

A common argument is that the QoG agenda, launched by many international development organizations, represents a specific western liberal ideal that is not applicable to countries outside that part of the world. There are at least two arguments against this type of relativistic conceptual strategy. The first is normative and based on the similar discussion in the areas of human rights and democracy. In my judgment, the anti-relativistic camp has won the discussion that for such central political concepts we should avoid definitions that are culturally relativistic (Talbott 2005; Neier 2002). Otherwise, we would lack a moral right to criticize countries that violate human rights and portray their authoritarian regimes as "just our type of democracy". In our case, the right not to be discriminated by public authorities, the right not to have to pay bribes for what should be free public services, and the right to be treated with "equal concern and respect" (Dworkin 1977) by the courts, are in fact not very distant for what counts as universal human rights.

The second reason against a relativistic definition of QoG is empirical. Although the empirical research in this area is not entirely unambiguous, my assessment is that most of it points to the quite surprising result that people in very different cultures seem to have a very similar notion of what should count as corruption. Survey results from very corrupt places in India, and from equally corrupt countries is sub-Saharan Africa, show that people in these societies take a very clear stand against corruption (Widmalm 2008, 2005; Miller et al. 2001; Nichols et al. 2004).

For example, when people in severely corrupt countries in Africa are surveyed by the Afrobarometer (2006) on whether they consider it "not wrong at all," "wrong but understandable," or "wrong and punishable" if a public official: 1) decides to locate a development project in an

area where his friends and supporters live; 2) gives a job to someone from his family who does not have adequate qualifications, and; 3) demands a favor or an additional payment for some service that is part of his job, a clear majority of Africans deemed all three acts both wrong and punishable (see figure 1 below).

FIGURE 1. MORAL APPROVAL OF CORRUPTION



Degree of acceptance

■ A public official decides to locate a development project in an area where his friends and supporters lived
□ A government official gives a job to someone from his family who does not have adequate qualifications
□ A government official demands a favor or an additional payment for some service that is part of his job
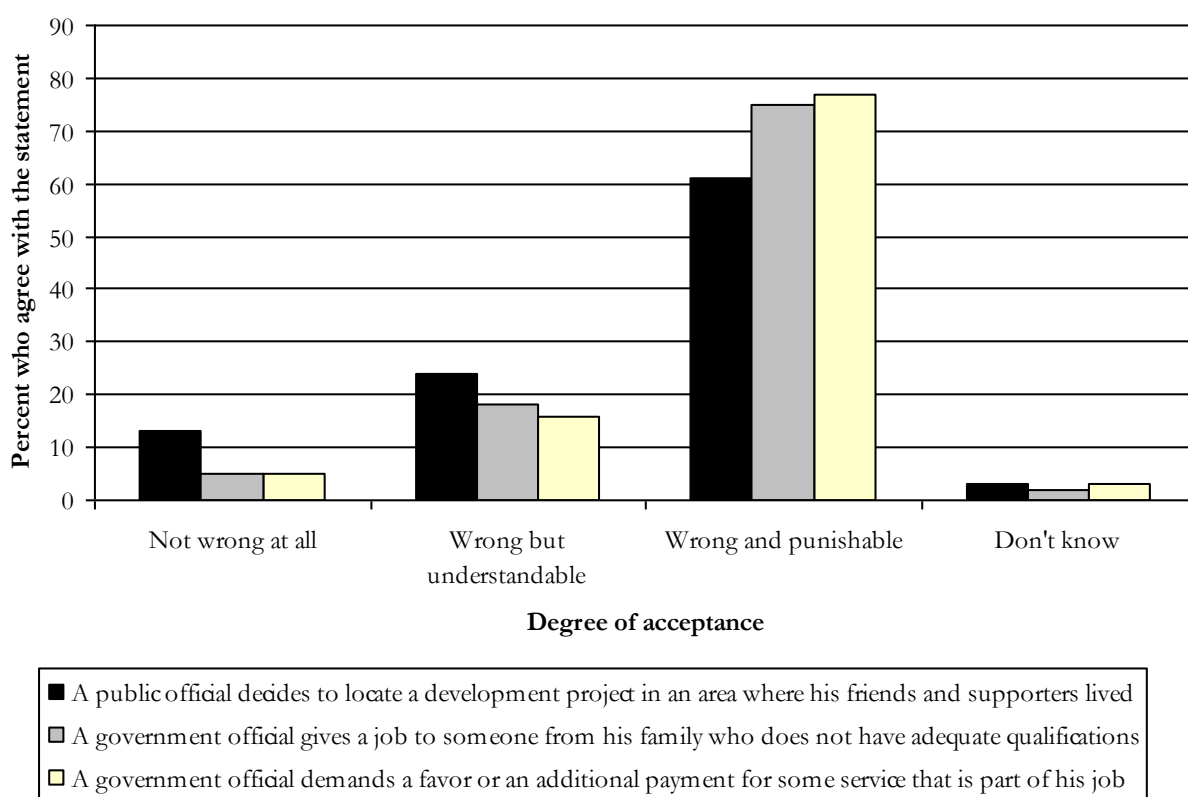
More specifically, 61, 75 respectively 77 percent (55, 72, respectively 84 percent in Kenya and 34, 63, respectively 62 percent in Uganda) of the respondents find the acts both wrong and punishable, while 24, 18, respectively 16 percent (26, 21, respectively 11 percent in Kenya and 35, 29, respectively 29 percent in Uganda) find them wrong but understandable, and a mere 13, 5, respectively 5 percent (16, 6 respectively 3 percent in Kenya and 31, 7, respectively 8 percent in Uganda) find them not wrong at all. In a survey study of severely corrupt villages in India, Widmalm (2005) finds similar results. Although, in reality a very absent figure in these villages, the Weberian civil servant

model (impartial treatment of citizens disregarding income, status, class, caste, gender, and religion, as well as "not ever under any circumstances accept bribes"), finds overwhelming support among the village population. The mystery is of course how the villagers who probably never have encountered an impartial bureaucrat nevertheless can envision such a person.

This result is largely supported by ethnographic work in countries like Ghana and Nigeria, that show that although corruption is rampant, people are extremely critical of it and understand its negative consequences for their societies (Jordan Smith 2007; Hasty 2005; Rose-Ackerman 2010).[2] My reading of some recent work on corruption in China gives the impression that the understanding of what should count as corruption is pretty similar to the standard definitions used in the west (Wedeman 2012; Chen 2005; Burns 2004; Wu and Zhu 2011). For example, Saich (2011, 276) reports a number of surveys carried out in China that shows that a large majority respondents rank corruption and cleaner government as their top concern. Moreover, it should be underlined that while China as whole have fairly high levels of corruption, Hongkong is ranked at the opposite end of these measures. Ethnicity and culture seems not to predict QoG very much. In other words, the idea put forward by among others Heidenheimer (2002) and Gupta (1995) that the public acceptance of what is commonly understood as corruption, varies significantly across cultures, does not find much support in empirical research. We should keep in mind that the meritocratic public administration is not a Western but a Chinese invention (Fukuyama 2011)

My point is that although the level of corruption shows great variation in different societies, this should not be seen as an indication that the understanding and moral evaluation of corruption differs by culture. The reason people, although they condemn corruption, participate in corrupt practices seem to be that they understand the situation as a "collective action" problem where it makes little sense to be "the only one" that refrains from using or accepting bribes and other kick-backs (Karklins 2005; Persson et al. 2012) (Karklins 2005, Persson, Rothstein and Teorell 2012). As Gunnar Myrdal stated, already in the 1960s, in his analysis of the "soft state" problem in developing countries, people reason as follows: "Well, if everybody seems corrupt, why shouldn't I be corrupt." (Myrdal 1968, 409). Even if the negative effects of corruption is well-understood, and the practice morally condemned, it makes little sense to be the only honest policeman in a severely corrupt police force, or the only one in the village who does not pay the doctor under the table to get ones children immunized if everyone else pays. Moreover, analyses of what counted as corruption in very distant pasts, such as the Roman Empire or thirteen century

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[2] It is noteworthy that Rose-Ackerman seem to have changed her position, compare (Rose-Ackerman 1999, 104)

France, give the impression of not being different from contemporary notions of the concept (MacMullen 1988; Jordan 2009). In sum, there are both empirical and normative arguments speaking in favor of a universal definition of QoG.

One way to understand why there seems to exist a universal understanding of QoG, despite the huge variation in practice, is what I would call a *public goods approach* to this problem. In all societies/cultures, in order to survive, all groups of people have had to produce at least a minimal set of public goods, such as security measures and a basic infrastructure.[3] For example, in most protestant countries, starting in medieval times, local parishes took care of financing religion as a public good (churches, religious education, salaries to priests, etc.), which they organized in a semi-democratic manner, in which principles of representation, accountability, and transparency prevailed (Rothstein and Broms 2011). The very nature of a good being "public" is that it is to be managed and distributed according to a principle that is very different from that of private goods. When this principle of management and distribution of public goods is broken, by the ones entrusted with the responsibility for handling the public goods in question, the ones that are the victims see this as corruption. This is why corruption is a concept that is related to the political and not the private sphere.[4] The following example intends to illustrate this.

In an indigenous small village in a developing country is unlikely to have a system for taxation. Still there are certain individuals that have been selected to perform functions as arbitrators or judges. This is a public good because it makes it possible to solve disputes between village members/families in a non-violent way. These persons have to have an income and it is thus customary for the parties involved to give them gifts, when their services are asked for. Such gifts may for a westerner look like bribes, but they are usually not seen as bribes by the local people, who seem to be able to make a functional distinction between bribes and gifts (Sneath 2006; Werner 2000).[5] One can interpret the distinction between gifts and bribes that anthropologists have discovered in the following way: The reasons why gifts are not seen as bribes, by the local villagers, is that: a) the gifts are public and b) there is a well-established level for how big such gift can be. This implies that the gift is to be seen as a *fee for a service*, not a bribe. It would only be a bribe, and would also be seen as a bribe by the local people, if it was given in secret, and if its value was considerable

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[3] For an analyses of village production of public goods in China, see Tsai (2007; Liou et al. 2012)

[4] In my native language (Swedish), the term bribery is not used for similar practices in the private and public sphere. Instead, the legal term for the private sector is "faithlessness against principal".

[55] In general, anthropologists have stayed away from issues about corruption, mainly for ideological reasons, not wanting to "blame the victims" and an eagerness to have good relations with the groups they study (Haller and Shore 2005, 5). The recently published second edition of the *Handbook of Economic Anthropology* does not have a chapter on corruption and the issue is according to the index only mentioned in passing on two occasions in this 679 page volume (Carrier 2012). For an exception, see Torsello (2011, ch. 1)

higher than what is customary. The reason is that what the arbitrator and judge is delivering to the village is in fact a public good, since it makes it possible to solve conflicts peacefully avoiding that some conflicts escalate to a level where they may hurt the very survival of the village. Arbitrators/judges are selected on the bases of being able to perform his/her functions in an impartial and fair manner, according to the customary laws. If not doing so, the parties would not rely on him/her to handle their conflict in the first place. Only if the arbitrator/judge would accept secret "gifts" of higher value than is customary, in exchange for favoring one of the parties, would his/her actions become a violation of the public good. His/her actions would then instead turn, what is supposed to be a public good, into a private good for him-/herself, and for the party that is favored, and this would be seen as corruption, also by this local community. Understanding corruption in this public goods approach can thus serve as a solution to the relativism – universalism puzzle that has plagued discussions about this problem for a long time, especially in anthropological research.

Much of the confusion about cultural relativism in the discussion about what should count as corruption stems from the issue that what should be "public goods" differ between different societies and cultures. Or in other words, what is seen as "the state" varies between different societies, which certainly blur traditional western ideas about the private/public distinction. For example, in an absolutist feudal society, the understanding may be that the central state apparatus is the private property of the lord/king; and hence, this state is not seen as a public good. However, also in such societies, local communities have usually produced some public goods, for example quite complex institutions for taking care of what Elinor Ostrom (1990) defined as "common pool resources", which are natural resources that are used by members of the group but that risks depletion if overused. Such resources are constantly facing a "tragedy of the commons" problem, and is thus in need of public goods, in the form of effective regulations, to prevent overuse that leads to depletion. As Ostrom and her collaborators have documented extensively, the idea of common natural resources as public goods that needs to be regulated by a common set of administrative rules exists in a great many different cultures and locations(Ostrom 2005). My argument is that it is difficult to envision a society without some public goods, and when these public goods are handled as private goods, this is universally understood as corruption, independently of the culture. To use the results from Ostrom's research - if the villagers, selected for implementing the rules, which have been created for making sure that the local "common pool resource" is managed in a sustainable manner, for the community as a whole, bend the rules to favor themselves, this would be understood as corruption in that local community. Thus, a second conclusion is that we should not ex-

pect the Chinese people to have a moral or ethical understanding of corrupt practices that differs from for example the dominant view in organizations like Transparency International and the World Bank, or as stated in the UN convention against corruption. Instead, what may differ is what is considered as falling under the public goods category.

In part, the relativistic position has been strengthened by how corruption has usually been defined, which is often a variant of "misuse of public power for private gain". The problem with this definition is that it is empty, since what should count as "misuse" (or "abuse"), is not defined. More precisely, for an act to be seen as corrupt, the norm that a public official or civil servant transgresses is not specified in this definition. Thus, this standard definition corruption invites cultural relativism, since what should count as "misuse of public power", may be different in different contexts. This could be compared to the precision with which the basic norms of human rights have been specified in political theory as well as how the basic norm for democracy has been specified in democratic theory. Thus, for the *access to power*, there is a broad agreement on what the basic norm should be in order for a political system to be seen as legitimate, namely, as stated by Robert Dahl, *Political equality*. The problem is that for the exercising of power, we have up to date lacked such a similar basic norm for when actions by public officials are to be seen as legitimate or not. *Accountability* will not work because a person's actions are held accountable *according to some pre-defined norm*. *Transparency* will also not work because what you can see when a system is transparent, is what makes you decide whether an action is legitimate or not. Both accountability and transparency are important as processes but neither gives us information on the type of actions that should be deemed illegitimate, when political power is exercised by public officials and civil servants.

## Why QoG should be kept apart from Efficiency, Policies and Specific Institutional Configurations

There is also an argument for including some notion of efficiency or administrative competence in the definition of QoG. This is problematic for several reasons. One reason is that we usually want to explain variation in economic or social efficiency, as well as administrative competence, by variation in QoG – the question of whether "bad institutions" have a negative impact on economic growth, is now a standard issue in development economics (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012). However, if efficiency (or administrative competence or capacity) is included in the very definition of QoG, such questions cannot be answered because the answer is included in the very conceptualiza-

tion of the (independent) variable. This also follows the conceptual strategy of reserving the definition of QoG to procedures (which is the same strategy that is commonly used for defining representative democracy).

Another issue is whether the definition of QoG should include the enactment of specific policies or if it should be strictly about procedures. For example, in the above mentioned definition by the World Bank researchers, "sound policies" are seen as part of the definition (Kaufmann et al. 2005). This is dubious for two reasons: First, can international (mostly economic) experts really be expected to be in possession of reliable answers to the question of what is "sound policies"? For example, should pensions or health care or education be privately or publicly funded (or any mix of these)? To what extent and how should financial institutions be regulated? I dare say that, so far, the economists' record is only partly convincing. Secondly, again making a parallel to the "access to power" side, most definitions of democracy are procedural in the sense that the system, intended to realize "the will of the people", is not in favor any particular political ideology. Robert Dahl's basic norm for democracy – *political equality* - is strictly procedural and a reason for this is of course to reach a broad enough "overlapping consensus" about the rules for deciding and implementing public policies a society consisting of conflicting ideologies and (moral, political, ideological, religious etc.) doctrines (Rawls 2005). If what we are striving for is a universal definition of QoG, my inclination is that it has to be procedural and not include any substantial policies in the same manner. It is also important to differentiate between the basic norm and the institutional configuration of the system. While the Danish, German and British democracies are institutionally quite different, their institutions can all be seen as resting on the idea of political equality. The reason why the basic norm and the specific institutional configuration in democracies should not be conflated can readily be seen by the following thought experiment:

Every representative democracy has to solve a number of issues for which different institutions have been created (or evolved), such as:, the electoral system; the degree of decentralization; the formation of the organizations that are to implement laws and policies; the way expert knowledge is infused into the decision-making process; and so on. Democratic theory does not provide precise answers to how these institutions should be constructed. There is, to take an obvious example, not a clear answer in democratic theory that tells us if a proportional electoral system (giving rise to a multi-party system) is to be preferred over a first-past-post system that usually produces a two-party system. As the table below shows, at least ten such institutional dimensions can be identified in every representative democracy (Rothstein 1996a).

TABLE 1. EXAMPLES OF BASIC INSTITUTIONAL VARIATION AMONG REPRESENTATIVE
DEMOCRACIES.

| Type of institution | Institutional variations |
|---|---|
| Electoral system: | Proportional vs. majoritarian |
| Legislative assembly: | Unicameral vs. bicameral |
| Government structure: | Unitarian  vs. federalist |
| Central executive: | Parliamentarism vs. presidentialism |
| Judicial review: | Strong vs. weak (or no) judicial review |
| Local governments: | Weak vs. strong local autonomy |
| Civil service: | Spoils recruitment vs. merit-recruitment |
| Protection of minorities: | Strong versus weak protection |
| Referendums: | Regularly used vs. not used |
| Consultation of experts | Routine vs. ad hoc |

According to the main works in democratic theory, none of the various choices that can be made for the ten types of institutions above are mutually exclusive. In theory, everything can be combined. Thus, the result from this thought experiment shows that there are at least 1024 ways of *institutionalizing* a representative democracy. [6] Since many of these dimensions are in reality not dichotomous but to varying extent continual  (more or less strong judicial review, more of less spoils recruitment to the civil service, more or less decentralization to local governments, etc.), the possible variation is in fact much larger than "1024". My point is this: Efforts to try to establish democracy or improve QoG around the world should not look to the specific institutional configuration since this may vary enormously. For example, to take the specific institutional configuration of the United States as a blueprint for the world, as Acemogly and Robinson (2012) have done, is in all likelihood a mistake.  The specific institutional configurations for democracy as well as QoG should be expected to vary according to the specific traditions and history of countries.  Instead, it is the general acceptance of the *basic norm* that is important, and at least for countries that we consider democratic, this norm can be realized by quite different sets of institutions. This is probably why exporting specific institutions from democratic and high QoG countries, such as the Swedish "ombudsman", the US type of legal system, or the British Westminster system, to the developing world, usually has failed (Andrews 2010; Messick 1999). These institutions have not been anchored in the tradition and history of the "importing" countries, and they have often been established as "empty shells" since they have not been closely connected to a basic operative norm as described above.

This reasoning also works for explaining how states, which are generally seen as having high QoG, have institutionalized their public administration and their legal system. For ex-

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[6] $2^{10}$ = 1024

ample, the four Nordic countries are generally seen as having very high QoG. However, a closer look will reveal that Finland and Sweden have a very different system for the organization of the central state apparatuses than has Denmark and Norway.[7] Another example is that the political power, wielded by the US Supreme Court, does not have an equivalent in any of the Nordic countries. If this reasoning is correct, we should expect that countries with a different history and different political traditions, than what is found in Western Europe and North America, when establishing QoG and representative democracy, will have an institutional configuration, that is quite specific, and in some instances unique. The question is how this can be the case when we have argued that notions of democracy and QoG (as well as human rights) de facto are, and moreover ought to be, universal. My argument is simple – it is the basic operational norms that are universal while the institutional configuration can, and ought to, vary. We should thus not be surprised when it shows that "good governance" can have many faces (Andrews 2010).

The question is then, what could be the equivalent to "political equality" for the side of the political system that implements policies and laws. Obviously, political equality cannot work as a basic norm for the exercise of political power since the result of the democratic process is that we are not to be treated equally. Instead, most policies that are enacted in a perfectly legitimate (democratic) way are intended to be partial, such as tax breaks for the rich, the poor, or the middle class; subsidies to farmers in some but not other regions; free tuition to university education for only for talented young people; investments in infrastructure in some but not other areas; more policemen on the streets in only some parts of the city, and so on. This leads to a fundamental conclusion for this enterprise – namely if we are going to argue that something like "*good* governance" or "*quality* of government" exists and can be conceptualized, we have to find something else than the norm of "political equality" which democratic theorists have presented for the "input" side. Simply put, *quality of democracy* and q*uality of government* are different things.

## Why QoG is not only the Rule of Law

One well-known salutation to this problem is that the exercise of power should be based on the Rule of Law. A central problem with this approach is that although unequivocally embraced as a virtue of any political system, the concept is rarely defined with accurate precision. One reason for

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[7] In Sweden and Finland, the ministries are quite small organization mostly serving the minister in preparing legislation and budget proposals to the Parliament but they are not responsible for implementing policies. This task is handled by semi-independent National Board and Agencies that have their own boards and Director Generals. In Denmark and Norway, the minister is also in charge of the organization that implements policies.

this may of course be that the concept is inherently ambiguous and legal scholars argue over its exact meaning (Rose 2004). To begin with, they dispute whether or not the rule of law should be given a purely procedural interpretation, bearing no implications for the actual substance of promulgated laws. Those that defend a procedural notion claim that the rule of law must be distinguished from the rule of "good" law. Critics argue that this would allow morally detested regimes, such as Nazi Germany, to be classified as abiding by the rule of law. Against the procedural view, these critics seek to inscribe into the rule of law various substantive moral values of liberal democracy (Bratton and Chang 2006). Yet, even among proceduralists, who adhere to a narrower conception, ambiguities remain. More attention is usually paid to the internal qualities of the laws themselves — such as the need for the law to be clear, understandable, general, internally consistent, prospective, stable etc. — rather than to defining the core principles that a political system must abide to in order to be in accordance with the rule of law.

Searching for these core principles, one may instead turn to conceptions developed within political science. Weingast (1997, 245) defines the rule of law as "a set of stable political rules and rights applied impartially to all citizens". Similarly, O'Donnell (2004,33) states a minimal definition of the rule of law as "that whatever law exists is written down and publicly promulgated by an appropriate authority before the events meant to be regulated by it, and is fairly applied by relevant state institutions including the judiciary." He then specifies his normative term:

By "fairly applied" I mean that the administrative application or judicial adjudication of legal rules is consistent across equivalent cases; is made without taking into consideration the class, status, or relative amounts of power held by the parties in such cases; and applies procedures that are pre-established, knowable, and allow a fair chance for the views and interests at stake in each case to be properly voiced.

The rule of law thus embodies the principle "equality before the law". It entails "a crucial principle of fairness — that like cases be treated alike" (ibid., 33-4). However, one problem is that good governance also applies to spheres of state action other than those directly governed by law. When public policy is to be enacted in so-called "human processing" areas, such as education, health care, welfare benefits and active labor-market programs, widely discretionary powers usually need to be transferred to lower level government officials and professional corps responsible for implementing policy. The reason is that they have to adapt actions to the specific circumstances in each case, and that it has turned out to be administratively impossible to enact precise "rule of law type" laws and regulations that can guide this (Rothstein 1998). In many of these areas, governance is carried out

by professional corps, who are, for the most part, guided by professional standards that are issued by their organizations and not connected to "rule of law" principles. For example, nurses in elderly care homes would probably not think of what they are doing as guided by "the rule of law". The same goes for experts on industrial development project or environmental protection. This is not exactly a novel insight: Aristotle himself observed that written laws cannot be applied precisely in every situation, since the legislators, "being unable to define for all cases ... are obliged to make universal statements, which are not applicable to all but only to most cases" (quoted in Brand 1988, 46) . The conclusion is that while the "rule of law" principles in most approaches serve as a central ingredient in QoG, they are too limited to cover the full spectrum of the concept.

## Quality of Government as Impartiality

In the long discussion of how representative democracy should be defined, the distinction between procedural and substantive definitions is a central theme (Dowding et al. 2004). Since our purpose is to reach a universal definition of QoG, a procedural definition is to be preferred since procedures stand a better chance of being acceptable to groups in a democracy with a pluralism of different moral and ideological doctrines (Rawls 2005).[8] Universalism is of course not the only requirement, another important demand, especially if we want to operationalize and measure, is precision. The need for precision is obvious if we consider for example the definition of good institutions provided by Acemoglu and Robinson (2012). Their now well-known argument is that it is institutions of a certain kind that promote economic growth. Such institutions, they argue, should be "inclusive". With this, they mean institutions that "allow and encourage participation by the great mass of people in economic activities that make best use of their talents and skill and enable them to make the choices they wish". Such institutions should also "secure private property, an unbiased system of law, and a provision of services that provides a level playing field in which people can exchange and contract". Moreover, such institutions "also must permit the entry of new business and allow people to choose their careers". The list does not stop, the institutions that are needed for economic prosperity should also "distribute power broadly in society" and ensure that "political power rests with a broad coalition or plurality of groups" (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012, 73 and 80). One can say many things about this definition, but not that it is overwhelmingly precise, - they neither sepa-

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[8] To use a parallel from sport – all national teams participating in the World Championship of Soccer seem to accept the idea of a common set of procedural rules that are to be applied by an impartial team of referees. Without this, the operation would collapse. However, one should notice that very few spectators will be cheering for the team of referees.

rate substance from procedures nor what should be confined to the access of power and to the exercise of power. Another problem with this definition of the main explanatory variable in their theory is that it is very close to what the theory intends to explain. How surprised should we be that such "inclusive" institutions will create the good and prosperous society and that a society with the opposite type of "extractive" institutions will be bad and poor? One could argue that a society with institutions that, just to mention one feature, have publicly provided services, that ensure level playing field to all its citizens, in fact is the good and prosperous society, and that their institutional theory thereby is close to a being a tautology because a lack of theoretical distance between what needs to be explained (the explanandum) and what explains this phenomenon (the explanans)

Searching for a definition, it is notable that the conceptual discussion in this approach has largely been detached from normative political theories about social justice and the state. It should be obvious that when terms like "good" or "quality" are placed in political concepts it is impossible to refrain from entering the normative issues that are raised in political philosophy. One can say that modern political philosophy has been engaged with the issue of "what the state ought to do" but has refrained from taking an interest in the empirical research what the state "can do". There are good reasons for why it is meaningless (or even dangerous) to discuss the one without the other (Rothstein 1998). The quality of government and good governance agenda is a clear case where normative/philosophical theory and positive/empirical approaches should merge. This issue is certainly not confined to internal academic civilities. Without a foundation in ethical standards, there is a risk that approaches, like the good governance agenda translate into practical policies that end up in mindless utilitarianism, where basic human rights are sacrificed in the name of some overall utility. A central requirement for a definition of concepts such as quality of government is thus that it is based in a normative theory that gives some orientation for what should be regarded as morally acceptable for the state to do.

One result from the "thought experiment" about possible institutional configurations of a democracy above is that a definition of quality of government cannot relate to a specific set of institutional arrangements. Instead, it is necessary to look for an equivalent to the input side's *political equality*. On the basis of the type of rights-based liberal political theory launched by philosophers such as Brian Barry, Ronald Dworkin and John Rawls, I have suggested together with Jan Teorell such a basic norm, namely *impartiality* in the exercise of public power (Rothstein and Teorell 2008). This is defined in the following way: "*When implementing laws and policies, government officials shall not take anything about the citizen or case into consideration that is not beforehand stipulated in the policy or the*

*law".* This definition is fairly precise and can be applied universally. It makes clear what basic norm is being "abused" when corruption, clientelism, favouritism, discrimination, patronage, nepotism or undue support to special interest groups occur (Mungiu-Pippidi 2006, 2011). It excludes policies since it is strictly procedural.

The connection to "good" or "quality" is motivated by the fact that impartiality is the driving notion behind John Rawls' liberal right-based theory of justice. As Goodin argues: "Certainly, the antithesis of justice is favouritism" (Goodin 2004, 100). In this context, impartiality is not a demand on actors on the input side of the political system but first and foremost an attribute of the actions taken by civil servants, professional corps in public service, law enforcement personnel, and the like. Simply put, in democracies and non-democracies alike, we should expect public policies to be partisan since this is the "nature of politics". However, when such partisan policies are going to be implemented, QoG demands that this should be done in an impartial way. This is in line with the argument that the content of public policies should not be included in the definition of QoG. Instead, it is impartiality in the exercise of power (the "ought to treat equally" principle) that is the central component of QoG (Kurer 2005). To treat equally does of course not imply that everyone should get the same, - only people that are in need of a kidney transplantation should get one. Instead, this follows the idea of "equal concern and respect" launched by Ronald Dworkin (1977). Again, impartiality is a procedural norm to be followed when policies are to be exercised, not when policies are decided in the democratic process. This conditionality in the application of impartiality as a justice principle goes in fact all the way back to John Stuart Mill:

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

As with representative democracy, QoG as impartial implementation is a procedural definition and should thus have the same advantages for reaching broad legitimacy. Research in psychology have shown that procedural justice is as, or sometimes even more important for people to accept outcomes than is substantial justice (Tyler and Huo 2002). In our case, it has often been taken for granted that the main source of political legitimacy is representative democracy (Fukuyama 2004:26). Empirical research based on survey data does not support this conclusion. Using data

from the World Value Survey from 72 countries, Gilley (2009) finds that while democratic rights are important for citizens to make up their minds of whether their state is legitimate or not, measures that capture QoG, such as the rule of law and control of corruption, are far more important for them. As he concludes, "this clashes with standard liberal treatments of legitimacy that give overall priority to democratic rights" (Gilley 2006, 56). The micro-logic that can explain this surprising result may be quite simple. If a person is deprived of his voting rights, or if his vote in practice does not count[9], nothing seriously bad is likely to happen to her. However, if his/her children don't get medical treatment because he/she lacks the resources to pay bribes, if the police does not protect him/her property because he/she belongs to a certain ethnic group, or if he/she loses her job because he/she does not belong to the right political party, the implications may be very serious (Rothstein 2011, ch. 4).

As stated above, QoG as impartiality does not include economic efficiency or administrative competence or capacity. Instead, this definition intends to explain the variation in these variables. This may work in the following way. A public administration that is built on the basic norm of impartiality will result in a meritocratic system of recruitment of civil servants. Instead of political connections or kinship, recruitment and promotion will be based on the training, skills, and experiences of the candidates, which in its turn is likely to result in higher administrative efficiency. Recent empirical research shows a surprisingly strong correlation between meritocratic recruitment, low levels of corruption, and high levels of QoG (Dahlström et al. 2011). Another illustration of the relation between QoG as impartiality and state capacity comes from the capacity of states to implement its tax laws. One could argue that the capacity of a state to tax as a measure of state capacity implying that the higher the revenue a state collects, the higher is its administrative capacity. The problem with this is of course that the majority in a country with a high administrative capacity may prefer to have low taxes. That is why I would argue the capacity to collect the taxes the state has decided to collect is a better measure of state capacity. Such a "tax evasion" measure, based on expert surveys, has been created for 31 countries by the Bertelsmann Foundation's project *Sustainable Governance Indicators* and is shows great variation between OECD countries.[10] As shown by figure 2, the correlation between the QoG Insitute's measure of impartiality in

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[9] Say you are a Republican living in New York City and want to vote in the upcoming presidential election.

[10] The measure is based on the following question: "How prevalent is business tax evasion in (country x), on a scale of 1 to 7?" The values range from 1 (50% or more of business is unofficial or unregistered) to 7 (all businesses are registered). See http://www.sgi-network.org/index.php?page=scores&indicator=S8_2

the public administration (see below) and this measure of tax evasion is very high, indicating that impartiality is a strong predictor of state capacity.

FIGURE 2. STATE CAPACITY BY TAX EVASION AND IMPARTIAL ADMINISTRATION



Tax Evasion
vs. Corruption Perception Index

R-squared=0.72
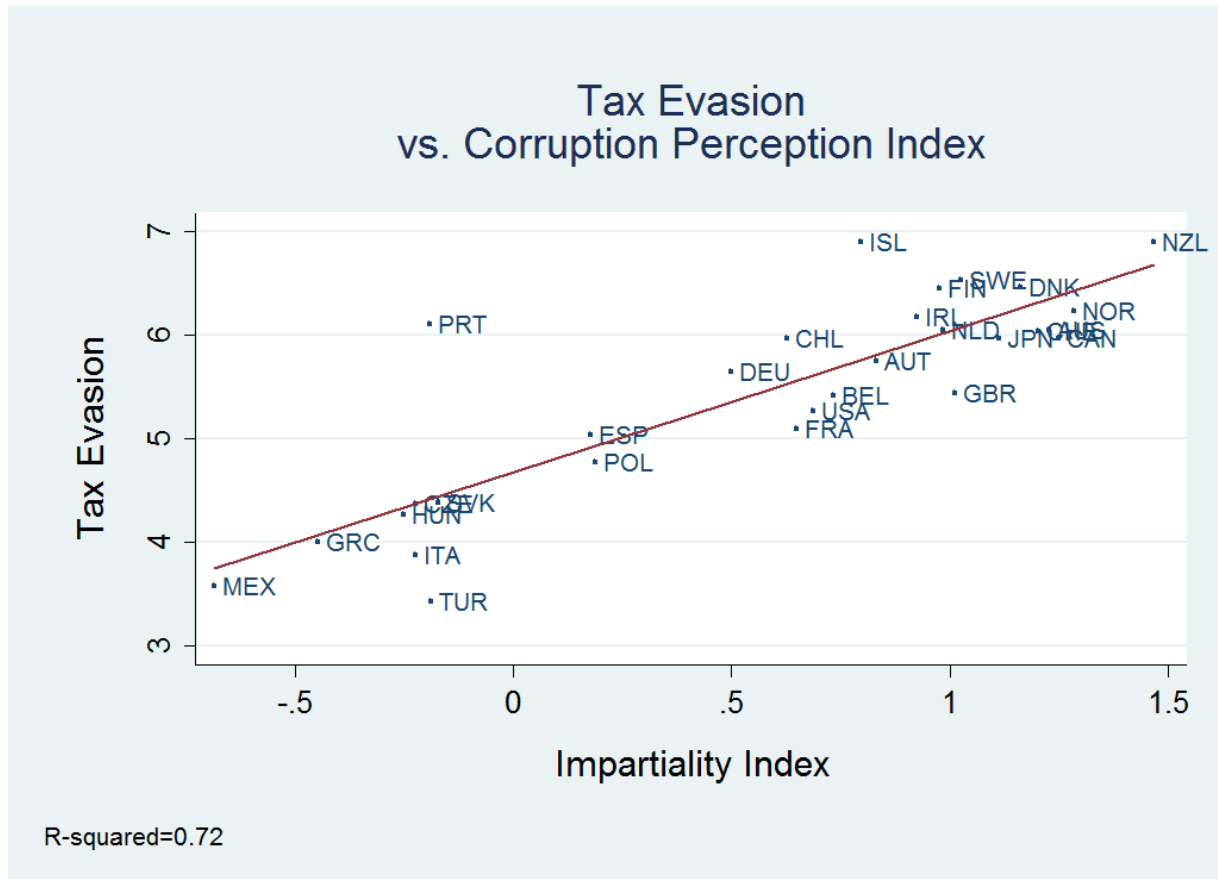
## Measuring Quality of Government

The first attempt to provide a comparative measure for QoG came in 1995 when Transparency International launched its yearly Corruption Perception Index. Based on various expert surveys, this measure (and others as well) has been criticized for giving an inaccurate and/or biased picture of the level of corruption in various countries. Needless to say, we will never have anything even close to a perfect measure of QoG. However, some recent results show that there might not be much to

worry about in this and other measures of QoG.. The first thing to note is that various expert based surveys and estimations for measuring corruption and other theoretically related concepts of "QoG", such as the rule-of-law and the extent to which impartiality is the basic norm for the civil service in different countries, correlate at a surprisingly high level (Holmberg et al. 2009). Even more interesting is that expert based measures of the level of corruption in various countries and measures based on representative samples of the population correlate strongly. One example is a recent study by Svallfors (2012), which uses the European Social Survey carried out in 2008 and covers 29 countries in both western and Eastern Europe. This survey included questions such as whether people perceived that the police or the public health care gave "special advantages to certain people or deal with everyone equally?" Svallfors compared the answers to these questions, from the sample populations in the 29 countries, with three different expert-based measures: 1) the International Country Risk Guide indicator of Quality of Government; the Transparency International Corruption index; and the World Bank Estimate of Government Efficiency. His conclusion is the following: "we find amazingly strong correlations between the experts' judgments and the public's perceptions. The correlation coefficient is no less than 0.81, which indicates that the measures are very strongly interrelated".

Another similar comparison has been done, based on the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). In its 2006 survey, the ISSP for the first time included questions that would measure the extent of perceptions of corruption. Comparing the results from 35 countries, including not only the West but also the countries in Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and South America, with Transparency Internationals expert based measure of corruption, the authors conclude: "The two measurement tools of corruption, one based on expert interviews, the other on probability samples, reveal astonishingly similar results" (Bechert and Quandt 2009, 100). Yet another recent survey of corruption, carried out by the QoG Institute on behalf of the EU commission, reveals the same pattern. This study consisted of interviews with 34.000 persons, in 27 EU countries, and included questions that not only captured perceptions but also direct experiences of corruption. Again, the correlation between results about the level of corruption in various EU countries from the survey of "ordinary people" and expert based measures are surprisingly similar, with a statistical correlation at .81 (Charron et al. 2010). The conclusion from these results are that "ordinary people" in both high and low corrupt countries have the same perceptions and also experience the same level of corruption as does the international country experts. This is not to deny that there may be problems with the measures for some countries, for example China (see more below), but there seem to be quite some external validity to the generally used measures of QoG.

A second question is if the definition of QoG that I have argued for – impartiality in the execution of public policies – can be operationalized and measured in a meaningful way. The short answer is yes. The Quality of Government Institute at University of Gothenburg has carried out a web-based expert poll on this specific topic. After two rounds of data collection spanning over the period 2008-2010, data was collected from 973 experts (mainly professors in public administration) from 126 countries across the globe, including China, on perceptions of the structure and behavior of public administrations. Three measurement strategies were used to gauge the theoretical concept of impartiality in the exercise of public power as defined above. The first was very direct, asking the respondents to rate their country in terms of this explicitly stated definition:

*Q: By a common definition, impartiality implies that when implementing policies, public sector employees should not take anything about the citizen/case into consideration that is not stipulated in the policy. Generally speaking, how often would you say that public sector employees today, in your chosen country, act impartially when deciding how to implement a policy in an individual case?*

Responses could be given on a response scale ranging from 1, "Hardly ever" to 7, "Almost always". The cross-country mean is 4.3, ranging from 2.0 in Honduras to 6.4 in Australia (the cross-country standard deviation is 1.0). In this sample of countries, government institutions are thus perceived to be impartial slightly more often than not, but the variation across countries is substantial.

The second measurement strategy attempted to tap into perceptions of impartiality by way of a scenario, the case of a cash transfer program to the "needy poor":

*Q: Hypothetically, let's say that a typical public employee was given the task to distribute an amount equivalent to 1000 USD per capita to the needy poor in your country. According to your judgment, please state the percentage that would reach:*

The question was then followed by six pre-determined response categories for which the respondents could fill in a number from 0 to 100 (provided that they sum to 100 percent in total). The percentage reaching the "needy poor" is supposed to be a gauge of how impartially this particular policy would be implemented. The mean of this percentage is close to 50 percent (52), again accompanied by quite substantial cross-country variation, ranging from a low of 9.6 percent in Nepal to a high of 97 percent in Hong Kong (the cross-country standard deviation being 20 percent). The remaining (average) 48 percent of the cash transfer end up fairly evenly distributed across the re-

maining response categories: with people with kinship ties to the public employee (12 %), middlemen/consultants (14 %), superiors of the public employee (9.5 %), or in the public employee's own pocket (8.1 %), the remainder (4.3 %) reaching a residual category of "others".

The third measurement strategy in this QoG-survey was to provide examples of government behaviour that clearly breach the impartiality principle. Three such examples were provided and, again, the response categories ranged from 1, "Hardly ever" to 7, "Almost always".

*Q:. Thinking about the country you have chosen, how often would you say the following occurs today?*

*a. Firms that provide the most favourable kickbacks to senior officials are awarded public procurement contracts in favour of firms making the lowest bid?*

*b. When deciding how to implement policies in individual cases, public sector employees treat some groups in society unfairly?*

*c. When granting licenses to start up private firms, public sector employees favour applicants with which they have strong personal contacts?*

These three variables all have fairly balanced cross-country means (at 4.0, 3.9, and 4.0), but again display substantial variation across countries (with standard deviations at 1.4, 1.1 and 1.3, respectively).

The extent to which this impartiality index taps into a meaningful dimension of cross-country variation could also be assessed through a direct comparison to other measures of similar concepts. Quite reassuringly, the QoG expert survey index correlates at .86 with a a composite measure of public perceptions of the extent to which doctors and nurses, as well as the tax authorities, "give special advantages to certain people or deal with everyone equally", in a sample of 28 countries from the European Social Survey (data from Svallfors 2012). Given their different origins, the fit between these two sources of data is pretty impressive (see Figure 2). The implication is that QoG based on the norm of impartiality as defined above can be operationalized and measured both in expert surveys and in surveys with representative samples of the population and that these two measurement strategies have high external validity.

FIGURE 3: IMPARTIALITY AND PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF INSTITUTIONAL FAIRNESS
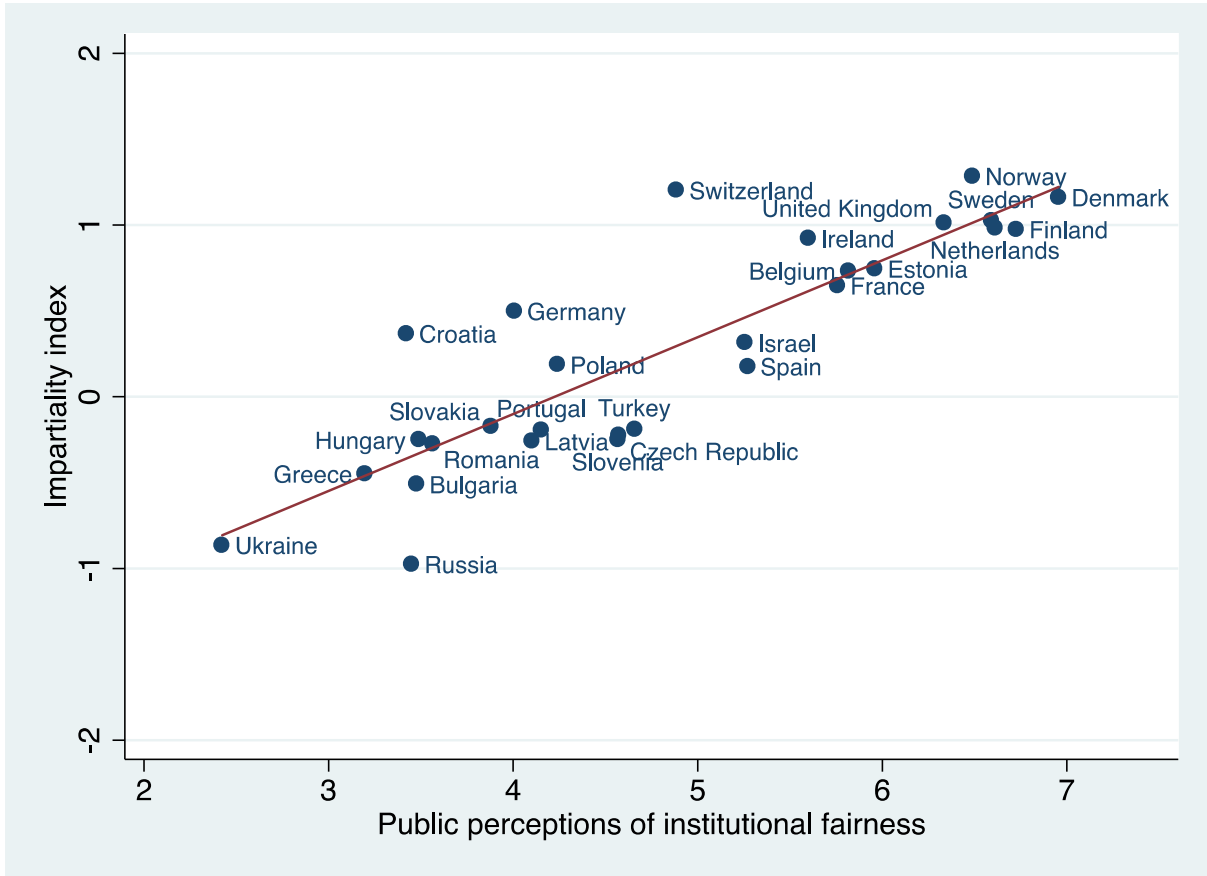


Moreover, the variation in the degree of QoG, as impartiality across countries looks much as can be predicted from other measures, such as the World Governance Indicators produced by the World Bank Research Institute or the Corruption Perception Index from Transparency International (correlations at .87 and .86, respectively). Although this fit across data sources is reassuring, Figure 4 below makes clear that there are still subtle differences between the information contained in these commonly employed corruption indices and our new measure of impartiality. The countries highlighted in the upper part of the figure, most notably Jamaica, Ecuador and Algeria, have higher levels of impartiality than one would expect given their perceived level of corruption. By contrast, the countries highlighted in the lower part, most notably the United Arab Emirates, Honduras, and

the territory of Puerto Rico, have significantly lower levels of impartiality than their corruption scores would predict. Although corruption and a lack of impartiality tend to go hand in hand, these examples also make clear that these two concepts are not equivalent.

FIGURE 4: IMPARTIALITY AND THE WORLD BANK INSTITUTE CORRUPTION INDEX



R²=0.77
Sources: QoG Expert Survey (2008-2011), World Bank (2011)
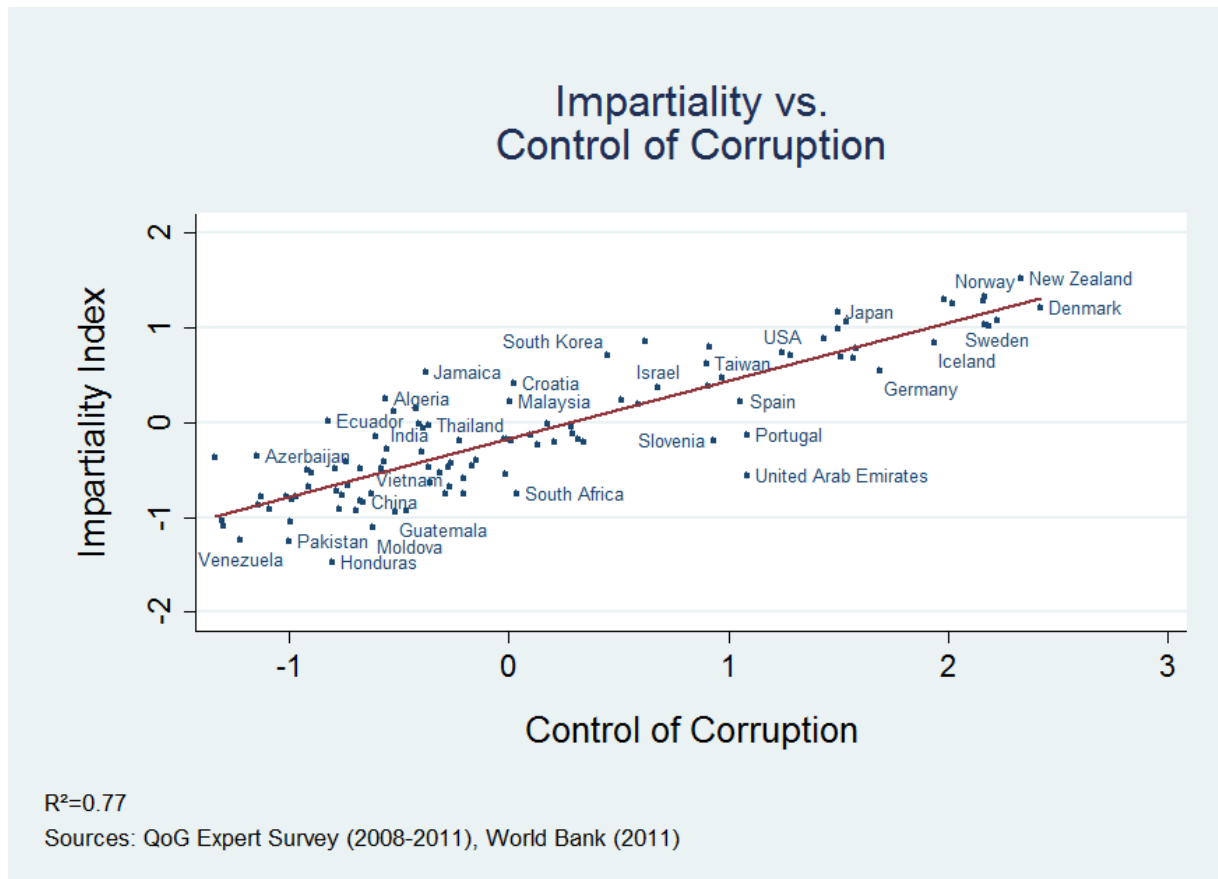
## Is there a misunderstanding of the quality of government in China?

As stated above, the external validity of the various measures of QoG is surprisingly high. However, one central problem is that all these measures give one figure per country. This can be highly misleading because especially in large and rapidly developing countries, we have reason to suspect substantial regional and sector variation. A survey for measuring QoG, based on 34.000 European citizens, where they were not only sampled by country but also by (174) regions, showed that in some European countries, there are very large differences between regions (Charron et al. 2010).

For example, while the regions of southern and mid-Italy score very low, some of the Northern regions turn out to be as clean as Denmark. Thus, for Italy, one hundred fifty years of state building seem to have gone unnoticed at the regional level. The study show that for some EU countries, there is very little regional variation, but for countries like Belgium, Italy, Romania, Spain, Portugal and Bulgaria, a national score is highly misleading. In the QoG Expert survey mentioned above, one of the experts on China made the following comment to the survey: *"Situation in China varies a lot across localities. For example, improving public service may be a bigger concern for government officials in coastal areas such as Guangdong and Shanghai than public officials in inland regions such as Qinghai and Gansu. I feel a bit difficult to generalize the situation of the whole China when answering some questions."* The existence of huge variation in the provision and quality of public goods by local governments in China is also well-documented by Tsai (2007). Tsai's study also shows that great local variation in the provision of public goods exists even in cases with similar economic prosperity.

Moreover, it is reasonable to conclude that if there can be huge regional variation in a country, we should expect that there can also be great variation between different sectors in QoG. For example, the rule of law system may be weak while certain parts of the public administration may perform much better, or that corruption is rampant in the health sector but much lower in the educational sector. Needless to say, in a huge and rapidly developing country like China, we should expect there to be huge variation in QoG both between different regions and sectors (cf. Fallows 2012), which implies that the measures producing "one figure per country" is likely to be highly misleading in this case.

This also becomes true if one takes a closer look at the World Bank's World Governance Index (WGI), which measures six different aspects: 1) voice and accountability; 2) political stability (absence of violence); 3) government effectiveness; 4) regulatory quality; 5) rule of law, and finally; 6) control of corruption (Apaza 2009). The index is a composite data index, which utilizes 300 variables from 30 different organizations. The highest score that China receives on the WGI is that of the government effectiveness, which aims to measure the quality of public services and quality of civil service among others, where it hovers around the $60 - 65$ percentile (Apaza 2009). In fact, despite fairly high levels of corruption, the Chinese population seems to be quite satisfied with government services in general. Comparing six Asian-pacific large countries, Wang (2010) shows that Chinese citizens are more content with how the government handles issues such as fighting crime, unemployment, human rights, economy, political corruption, and improving quality of pub-

lic services than citizens in countries such as USA, Japan, Russia, and India. Out of these six giants only Australia outperforms China.

Data from the World Value Study survey carried out in 2007 shows that not only does China have markedly higher levels of social trust and higher growth rates than other large developing countries, despite that they all resemble each other when it comes to the their levels of corruption, as shown in table 2 below, the Chinese population also seems to have substantially higher confidence in the police and the civil service.

TABLE 2. GENERALIZED TRUST, CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

|  | China | Peru | India | Morocco | Brazil | Mexico |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Generalized trust (%)** | 52,3 | 6,3 | 23,3 | 13 | 9,4 | 15,6 |
| **Confidence in Institutions (%)** | | | | | | |
| *Police* | 80,1 | 15,8 | 64,1 | 61,4 | 44,8 | 33,6 |
| *Civil Services* | 85,8 | 6 | 54,3 | 51,3 | 52,4 | 25 |
| **GDP Growth (%)** | 9,1 | 5,02 | 3,77 | 3,32 | 2,66 | 0,83 |
| **GDP per Capita Growth (%)** | 8,37 | 3,55 | 2,17 | 2,09 | 1,25 | -0,19 |

*Source: World Values Survey (2007) and QoG dataset (data from World Bank and OECD 2007)*

As a starting point, it is important to understand that the term civil servant per se, cannot be directly imported from the English language to translate the same understanding in Chinese. In China, the term for civil servant covers both party cadre and government officials, which implies that it is difficult to separate the term, as it encompasses, in practical terms, more than one job category (Chou 2008).

Recent scholarship on the Chinese civil service has focused on the civil service reform initiated by the Deng leadership in the 1980s, and later reinvigorated in 1993 (Burns and Wang 2010; Burns 2007), as well as on the legal framework, that serves as the basis and starting point to institutionalize these reforms. A central finding in the literature about the civil service in China is that there is still an overwhelming presence of the Communist Party within the civil service (Burns 2007; Liou et al. 2012; Chou 2008; Burns and Zhiren 2010; Burns and Wang 2010; Collins

and Chan 2009; Heimer 2006). The extent of the Party's involvement is demonstrated by the fact that a member of the Politburo's seven-member Standing committee, is in charge of overseeing organization and personnel work, including the management of the civil service. The fact that Party members make up 80% of civil service posts, in the roughly five and a half million-strong civil service (Xi 2002), is evidence of that the civil service is being dominated by the ruling communist party. It also reinforces the absence of a Weberian style "civil service neutrality" in the Chinese public administration (Burns 2007).

In 1993, admission criteria were revised as part of the reform, to include university degrees as part of selection. By 2003, the civil service reforms had shown significant improvement in the quality of its civil servants, with 70% of civil servants having university degrees (Burns and Wang, 2010). The competition for jobs in the central administration seems to be high. According to one study, in 2009, more than 775 000 applicants competed for some 13 500 jobs (Burns and Zhiren 2010). However there appears to be a significant difference in the quality of civil servant found at the center (in this case Beijing) in comparison to those in more remote areas. The difference is well illustrated by the prestige associated with the job in the relevant areas. At the center, it is considered a prestigious job, whereas in the remoter areas, it is seen as more of a last option. Another issue that marks the difference between the center and the rest is the serious widespread corruption in the form of buying and selling positions at the local level. An apt summary is forwarded by Burns "…open, competitive hiring characterizes the civil service at the centre and probably in the richer coastal areas. Even in these areas, however, local government must provide employment for non-competitively selected demobilized soldiers. In less developed parts of the country, where government serves as an employer of last resort, the problems are much more severe" (Burns 2007).

During the pre-reform era, the evaluation of the civil servants rested strongly on the criteria of party loyalty (Chou 2008). However, beginning in the early 1990s, this seems to have shifted towards a strong emphasis on the performance of civil service (Chen 2005; Burns and Zhiren 2010; Gao 2009; Edin 2003, 2005). Starting at the county and township level in the early 1990, "performance and result based management" has, according to Burns and Zhiren (2010) as well as Gao (2009) and Edin (2003), become a central model for the implementation of public policy in China. In this model, which according to Gao (2009, 22) has been overlooked in most studies of state capacity in China, government authorities at higher levels are setting increasingly precise and quantifiable targets for the administration at regional, county and township levels to which also individual civil servants are held accountable. Edin (2003, 36) argues that this should be seen as a

systematic strengthening of state capacity by increasing "institutional adaptability" at the local level (see also Gao 2009). One effect is that the careers of public officials have been increasingly tied to how well they are able to fulfill the quite specific policy goals. While goals measuring economic performance (as ability to deliver taxes) have certainly been important, these studies report that targets concerning social development have become more prominent, such as the extent to which young people have received education as well as to what extent farmers, that have lost their land due to industrial development, have been compensated (Edin 2005; Heimer 2006). Some of these performance targets, such as family planning, social security, handling of mass protests, have been directly tied to individual civil servants and have carried powerful sanctions if not met (Burns and Zhiren 2010, 15; Edin 2003). According to one study based on interviews with county officials, such targets "were the most important task for leadership cadres, and the accomplishment of targets…. brought great pressure for local officials, especially for cadres in the leadership corps who were directly accountable" (Gao, cited in Burns and Zhiren 2010, 16). This result is supported by another interview-based study of 150 local cadres in southern China (Edin 2003). What is particularly interesting is that the performance targets at the county and township levels are a mix of ideological, political, economic, educational and social goals. Examples given by Gao, cited in Burns and Zhiren (2010, 18f), are:

- Building party branches in resident communities
- At least 80% of "women diseases" should be under control
- Making a practical plan for dealing with mass complaints
- Ensuring that 95& of social conflicts are handled by means of negotiation
- Ensuring an annual growth rate of x %
- Reduction of water consumption by x %
- Population reduction by x %
- Conduction moral education among the youth

A list of policy goals like this does neither resemble what is to be expected from a Western style Weberian bureaucracy, nor is it in line with the standard definition of "good institutions" in the economics of development or "good governance" literature. Economic and social efficiency goals are being mixed with ideological goals while things like securing property rights or establishing the

rule of law are not mentioned at all. The question is if we can theoretically find a model for public administration that fits a list of such goals.

This also brings to light the "double-edged sword" that civil servants in China have to face since they are wearing "two hats" (in their capacity of civil servant and Party member). The dual role creates an extra layer of accountability, giving stronger incentives to maintain performance. In case of underperformance, one does not only "loses face", but also both jobs (party and civil service/state enterprise position). To perform badly in one job means losing both posts, because the Party is a predominant factor in all sectors of the public administration. (Chou 2008).

While China must be characterized as a non-democratic authoritarian regime, not all such regimes are the same. In a comparative study of 76 countries using data from 1983-2003, Charron and Lapuente (2011) differentiate between three types of authoritarian regimes, namely single party regimes, monarchies, and military/ personalistic rule. Using a variety of measures for QoG, they find substantial differences in the level of QoG among these types of authoritarian rule. Single-party regimes have the highest level of QoG, when economic prosperity is taken into account. Their argument is that at a modest level of economic prosperity, single-party regimes are much better than monarchies or military regimes in channeling demands from citizens into higher levels of state capacity. This is also shown in recent empirical research on governance in China. Included in the performance based management system are systematic demands on local officials to measure (by surveys) citizens' satisfaction with various policies and with "government work style, integrity and clean government" (Burns and Zhiren 2010, 21; cf. Edin 2003). It is noteworthy that the existence of performance-based management is neither confined to nor has its origin in China. Instead, as Gao (2009) shows, it has originated in and is often practiced in the West. For example, in 1995, the OECD published a report titled *Performance Management in Governance: Performance, Measurement and Result-Oriented Management* in which this form of public administration was highly recommended. What is special about the Chinese performance based management is that soft ideological and hard professional targets are mixed (Heimer 2006).

To summarize: China has dramatically increased the educational demands and professional competence for its civil service but the communist party is still heavily in control. Demands on performance and accountability have increased as has efforts to measure citizens' satisfaction with performance. However, this governance model does not seem to be based on a Weberian rule-of-law model. Instead, it seems to be a system in which performance goals are set centrally giving local cadres fairly large discretionary power over how to reach the targets – what Edin

(2003, 36) labels "institutional adaptability" (see also Gao 2009 for a similar argument). A central conclusion is that *state capacity* in China is organized in a way that is very different from the Weberian model rule-of-law type of "good government" launched in the institutional development theory described above.

In addition, as with other single-party authoritarian states, China seems to have had higher QoG[11] than other authoritarian types of regimes and has as a consequence improved its economic performance as well as performance on most standard measures of overall human well-being. The question is if we can find a general theory or model of public administration and state capacity that makes sense of this without resorting to a culturalist "China specific" explanation for how to understand what is to be seen as state capacity and quality of government?

## Is the Cadre Organization Model the Solution to the Chinese Puzzle?

The hypothesis I will present is that the puzzle, why China has thrived despite high levels of corruption, may be found in the interface between the ruling communist party and the public administration. My hypothesis is that the combination of single-party rule and the type of reforms of the public administration described above may have resulted in an organizational form for China's public administration that works as a solution to the most general problem in organizational theory, implementation research and public administration, namely the issue of how to handle *delegated discretion*.

The literature on public administration is sometimes steeped in the language of economics, in which the goals of the principals are clear and the agents are rational utility-oriented self-interested types. Here, the major problem is how the principal can create an incentive structure that makes it rational for his/her agents to strive to achieve the goals of the organization instead of engaging themselves in all kinds of fraudulent and self-serving actions. As shown by for example Gary Miller, if the tasks that are going to be performed by the agents are complex, the rational choice type of incentive steering cannot work. The reason is that the principal, in order to create the right type of incentive system, needs correct information from the agents about the work process. However, if the agents think that the principal will use this information against their interest,

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[11] As measured by the World Bank Governance Indicator for "Government Effectiveness" and the International Country Risk Guide data, (Charron and Lapuente 2011).

for example by increasing their work efforts, they will not reveal such correct information, which will make it impossible for the principal to set correct incentives (Miller 1992). This asymmetry in information problem makes it impossible to steer organizations in the mechanical way that rational choice theory presumes – if this is tried, the organization is likely to fall into a situation known as a *social trap* where everyone involved will lose because lack of mutual trust (Rothstein 2005). In corruption research, this principal – agent theory represents a serious misspecification of the problem since it relies on the existence of "the honest principal". However, in a situation characterized by systemic corruption, we should expect the actors at the top, i.e., the principal, to earn most of the rents from corruption. The implication is that such principals will have no incentive to change the incentive structure for the corrupt agents (Persson et al. 2012).

This rational-choice based theory of organization has been successfully challenged by a more cultural approach. In this model, scholars rightly stress the importance of commonly held believes, mutual trust, informal norms, communicative leadership and so on (Miller 1992; Ashkanasy et al. 2011). The problem here is that any notion of even a semi-rational steering of the organization to a set of goals, such as improving the economy and social welfare of a country, tend to get lost. One widely held view in this approach to organizations and public administration systems views them as "garbage cans" to which uncoordinated streams of problems, solutions, participants and choice opportunities flow, creating an anarchic situation that cannot be governed in any meaningful sense of the word (Cohen et al. 1972).

Although mostly ignored in organization and management theory as well as in theories of public administration, there is an alternative form of public administration that avoids the pitfalls of the two models above. It can be described as an "ideal-type" in the same manner as the well-known Weberian ideal type of the legal bureaucracy. The terminology I prefer for this organizational type is *the cadre organization* (Balla 1972, cf. Rothstein 1996). This type of organization of public administration has a rational that is distinct not only from the economic incentive driven model and anarchic garbage can culture- based model, but also from the Weberian bureaucratic ideal-type. The cadre type of organization is neither based on steering by formal and/or precise rules, by any "rule-of-law" conception of tasks, or on steering by economic incentives. Instead, the basis for this organization is a strong ideologically based commitment from the personnel (the cadre) to the specific *policy doctrine* of the organization. As opposed to the Weberian bureaucrat's neu-

tral "sine ira et studio"[12] orientation, the cadre is characterized by his or her strong loyalty to or even passion for the *policy doctrine* of the organization. The cadre's key skill is the ability to understand and embrace the organization's policy doctrine and to implement this doctrine in varying circumstances, in which the tools used are constantly adapted to the specific circumstances at hand. The difference between the cadre and the Weberian bureaucrat is not primarily in their education and skills, but in what these are used for and how. The cadre organization can have as much professionally skilled personnel as the bureaucratic organization, but the skills are applied according to a very different logic. In an early and remarkable work on this topic, the Hungarian-German sociologist Balint Balla described the difference between the bureaucratic and cadre organization in the following way:

> While bureaucracy is characterized by reliability, continuity, efficacy,
> precise application of prevailing instructions….. cadre administration is
> marked  .. by flexible immediate 'line-oriented' dynamism, by superior-
> ity over formalities  and pragmatic ability to adjust to changing situa-
> tions (Balla 1972, 203, my transl.)

I would like to stress that the existence of this type of organizational structures is not confined to the public administration in communist regimes or religious or otherwise highly motived voluntary organizations in Western societies.[13] Mainstream organizational theorists in the West have made occasional references to this organizational form. For example, in his well-known taxonomy of organizations, Henry Mintzberg mentions the existence of what he calls "the missionary organization" (Mintzberg 2010). Likewise, William Ouchi identifies what he labels "the clan organization" (Ouchi 1980). Although hardly ever theorized by public administration scholars, it has been empirically verified in for example the buildup of the Swedish Active Labor Market Administration from the 1940s to the 1970s (Rothstein 1996). Another case in point is a classic in public administration from the United States, namely Herbert Kaufman's study of the Forest Service published in 1960 (Kaufman 1960).

In *The Forest Ranger*, Kaufman describes the severe problem of how to apply the quite loose laws and regulations to the 792 different districts that the Forest Service was responsible for.

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[12] Latin, translation is not easy but should be something like "without anger or passion".
[13] Those interested in military strategy will recognize that the cadre-organization model is very similar to the famous (and very successful) "Mission type tactic" (in German: "Auftragstaktik") developed by the German Army during the late 19th century.

Since they could not be supervised in any meaningful way, Kaufman asks why the district rangers he studied did not de facto implement 792 different policies. The answer he came up with is largely in line with the cadre organization model. Kaufman stressed the importance of leadership for the creation of a common ideological orientation in the organization. The methods used by the leaders of the Forest Service involved: 1) recruiting persons strongly inclined to the type of work that was to be done; 2) using extensive internal training to nurture "the will to conform" to the organization's goals, and; 3) organizing the work so that the will by the Rangers to identify with the Forest Service was strengthened. "Without realizing it", wrote Kaufman, "members of the Forest Service thus internalize the perceptions, values, and premises of action that prevail in the bureau, unconsciously, very often, they tend to act in the agency-prescribed fashion because that has become natural to them" (Kaufman 1960, 162, 171, 176). However, although empirically verified, scholars in public administration hardly ever analyze this type of organization.[14]

While the Weberian bureaucratic rule-of-law model has many advantages, not least in its predictability, process-bound qualities and meritocratic recruitment, the cadre-organization has at least one feature that can be particularly important in a very large and rapidly developing country. The studies referred to above show that this type of organization is particularly apt to solve the famous *delegation problem* in organizational theory. It is well-known in public administration research, especially in research about implementation of social and educational reforms, that the rule-of-law model is difficult to apply in many areas where there is a need to adapt the interventions to the specific circumstances of the case (for an overview see Rothstein 1998, ch. 4). There are a number of ways in which this can be solved, for example by using staff with a strong professional knowledge about what to do in such cases (like medical doctors handling patients with bacterial infections). However, for many public policies, for example in areas such as education, social work, industrial policy and urban planning, such applicable professional knowledge does not exist but the principal still has to allow for a wide degree of discretion by the agents, if they are going to be able to perform their tasks (as was the case with the Forest Service in the U.S).

The possibility to solve the delegation problem in areas such as these with increased "rule-of-law" type of regulations, is in fact minimal. If this is tried, the layer of rules and regulations will become so complex that it works against predictability and increases the problem of delegated discretion (Rothstein 1998, ch 4). However, the cadre type of organization is meant to solve this

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[14] For example, it is not mentioned in the recently published *Handbook of Public Administration* (Peters & Pierre 2012) which, I admit, is partly my fault.

complicated steering problem. When it works, the ideological commitment and training of the cadre in the general policy doctrine handles the problem of delegated discretion because *the agents will chose the measures the principal would have applied in the specific situation if the principal would have had the same information about the case as the agent has.* This is why the cadre organization relies much more on internal ideological schooling than merits from outside training or from work outside the organizations when they recruit and promote staff. Simply put, faced with a new and unprecedented case, the cade-agent is supposed to do what the principal would have done for promoting the policy doctrine had he/she "been there".

An example can be taken from the implementation of the Active Labor Market Policy (ALMP) in Sweden starting in the 1950s. The policy was created by two economists from the blue-collar union federation (Gösta Rehn and Rudolf Meidner). Their idea was that the unions, in order to increase unity and avoid inflationary wage-demands, should strive for a universal (solidaristic) wage policy. This would imply that individual companies as well as whole sectors of the economy that were making low profits would pay wages at the same level as those who had high profits. Instead of fighting against economic rationalization what would put less profitable industries out of work, the unions should embrace this development because it would increase economic growth since capital and labor would flow to the more expansive sectors. The problem was of course how to take care of and compensate workers that were laid off because of this policy. The policy doctrine, known as the Rehn-Meidner model, was that through "active" measures, such as extensive vocational training, highly qualified job finding services, and generous support for relocation, laid-off workers should be moved to the more profitable and successful areas of the economy. However, the proponents of this (then quite unique) economic model realized that this would not be an easy thing to implement since many workers would be reluctant to change location and type of work. In order to handle this problem, a new type of "cadre" administration was established known as the National Board for Labor Market Policy. Recruitment of personnel to this organization, not least it's street level organization, he labor exchanges, were in practice reserved for people with experience as local union officials. Their argument was that this was needed in order to get legitimacy in the implementation process from the "target group" because people with a background in the union movement had been "walking the walk and could talk the talk". It was again and again underscored by the proponents of the model that the organization was not to be governed by strict rules and regulations. Instead, it was given a large discretion and freedom in how to apply its extensive funds to the varying local and industrial specific circumstances. The schooling and training

of the "cadres" was extensive and consisted on creating understanding and support for the policy doctrine. The implementation problem was of course that each individual worker that became unemployed through this massive structural economic transformation had very specific capabilities for handling the situation. Some could be re-educated through various forms of vocational training, but others not. Some could be persuaded to move to another location, but for others this was not a possible solution. Some just needed assistance to search for new work and should get temporary unemployment insurance while doing so. And some would be more suitable for various forms of temporary relief works that were set-up and administrated by the Labor Market Board. In reality, the measures had to be almost tailored made for each person, which in many cases included a fair amount of persuasion. It was obvious for the "policy-makers" that solving this through a rule-bound and legal type of Weberian steering would have been impossible and resulted in a bureaucratic nightmare that would have severely de-legitimized the whole policy.[15] Instead, they created a cadre-organization to solve this through customizing the "active" measures according to the specific needs and capabilities of each individual in accordance with the overall goal of this policy doctrine. The organization was deliberately infused with a strong ideological commitment to the policy-doctrine through various educational, social and cultural measures (Rothstein 1996b; Milner and Wadensjö 2001). For several decades (until the early 1990s) this policy was generally seen as a success story, both within Sweden and among the OECD countries.

What took place in the Active Labor Market Policy in Sweden during it's heydays in the 1960s and 1970s looks remarkably similar to analyzes of how the local administrative cadre works in China when deciding which local companies to support. When the traditional central planning system was abandoned in the early 1990s, it was replaced by "active industrial policies" where the local cadres were given the responsibility to decide which companies to support by "concentrating local resources on strategic key enterprieses". General policies were set at the national level but it became up to the local cadres to "pick the winners". Instead of central decisions on what products to produce, the local cadres had to decide which companies that could become economically successful (Edin 2005, 112-114). The success of the local cadres was of course monitored and they were held accountable, but they did not operate through a set of central rules or regulations. Edin (2005,117) labels this system " the cadre responsibility system" and stress that "soft"

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[15] This seems to have been the case when a similar policy, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), was established in the United States during the 1970s. Despite strong public support for the work ethic that this program was based on, it came to an end because of accusations of "corruption, waste and mismanagement" (Weir 1992, 126). According to one observer, by the time it was discontinued, the CETA had almost become "a four letter word" in the public debate (Donahue 1989, 181).

ideological targets could often be as important as "hard" production targets. Among the former could also be things like handling protests, securing the social order and preventing environmental problems.

Thus, while it is true, as stated by the cultural school in organization theory that norms play a central part in organizations, this does not imply that organizations should generally be understood as "garbage cans", to which norms flow in an unregulated and un-coordinated manner. In the cadre organization model as illustrated above, the norms are manufactured "from above" giving a high level of stability and co-ordination to the organization. This cadre-organization approach has the advantage of not conflating the importance of norms in organizations with making what the organizations do indeterminate (Fukuyama 2004:65). On the contrary, in the cadre type of organization, the strong concentration on the importance of the ideological commitment to a specific policy doctrine, be it how to preserves national forests, get unemployed back to work, teach students science or chose which small companies have the best future, is meant to make norms determine action at the point of implementation. Another advantage of the cadre organization is that its personnel are usually trained to rapidly follow changes of operative ideology that comes from the top. While the policy doctrine is general, the implementation of the doctrine will usually have to vary depending on the specific circumstance. In sum, in a rapidly changing society in which interventions under uncertain and varying conditions are needed, this may be the most important advantage the cadre model has compared both to the Weberian bureaucracy and to the economic-incentive based type of organization.

From the view of representative democracy, the cadre organization is clearly problematic since the very idea of representative democracy is that a new majority should also result in important shifts in various policy doctrines. For a cadre-organization, this spells problems since its personnel may be so strongly committed to the previous majority's policy doctrine that it cannot or will not change.[16] However, this problem does of course not occur in a non-democratic country such as China. From a liberal rights perspective, another disadvantage of the cadre organization is that citizens and private companies cannot predict government actions since they are not rule-bound. However, I want to stress that the cadre type of public administration should not be conflated with a politicized public administration in which positions are given to people in exchange

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[16] An example of this can be taken from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency that for a very long time had been steeped in a policy doctrine shaped by the Swedish Social Democratic party. When in 2006, a conservative led government took power which adhered to a quite different policy doctrine about how international aid should be carried out, this created a lot of turbulence in the organization.

for political support. Neo-patrimonial clientelism and US-style "spoils" systems are different since for the cadre administration, it is support and ability to perform according to a specific *policy doctrine* that is paramount. The difference between the Weberian bureaucracy and the cadre-organization can be summarized as below (from Rothstein 1996:31).

TABLE 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF BUREAUCRATIC AND CADRE ORGANIZATIONS

| Characteristics | Bureaucracy | Cadre Organization |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Recruitment | Formal merits | Commitment |
| Internal steering | Universal rules | Policy doctrine |
| Formal control | Substantial | Negligible |
| Operational logic | Legal rationality | Performance rationality |
| External relations | Predictable | Change oriented |
| Internal cohesion | Weak | Strong |
| Leadership style | Rule-oriented | Mission-oriented |
| Relation to clients | Neutral | Persuasive |
| Motivation | Incentives | Goal fulfillment |
| Tools | Routine | Flexible |

It follows that the cadre is not impartial or neutral in the same manner as the Weberian bureaucrat since fulfilling the (often shifting) specific goals, which are derived from the organization's general policy doctrine, is the primary norm. However, this is not to say that impartiality is irrelevant for the cadre (as for the professional) at another and more basic level. While the cadre is not supposed to be neutral in relation to the policy doctrine, he/she is not supposed to sway away from implementing this doctrine because of bribes, prejudices against ethnic or other minorities, or engagement in nepotism or clientelism. In the two western cases mentioned above (The US Forest Service and the Swedish Labor Market Authority), corruption, clientelism and nepotism has not been predominant. On the contrary, the "cadres" in both these public administrations seems to have been models of honesty.

The same type of impartiality seems to exist for professionals in many public organizations. Doctors, nurses, pre-school teachers and social workers are not supposed to act as neutral rule-of-law Weberian bureaucrats when deciding how to deal with their "cases". Instead, the pre-

sumption is that that they should be able to not only differentiate their actions, according to the specific needs of each and every case, but also to show emphatic skills. However, they are not supposed to differentiate their efforts depending on bribes, personal connections, political leanings, or ethnic or racial prejudices. The ability of cadres and professionals to differentiate their efforts, without making considerations that may influence the case (like the factors mentioned above), can be thought of as a *second order impartiality*.

As is well known, both the Weberian bureaucratic type of organization and the cadre organization can go astray. In the quote below by Balla, he states that while the former can also be characterized by "pedantry, formalism, red tape and… trained incapacity", the cadre organization can be marked by "dilettantism, amorphous aversion to responsibility, rigid authoritarianism, rule-resistant, incompetence and emotional paternalism" (Balla 1972, p203). My point is thus not to make a normative argument for one or the other, but to emphasize that a high level of economic growth and increased human well-being can be reached not only by the Weberian type of rule-of-law oriented type of meritocratic bureaucracy but also by the cadre type of organization. The high level of corruption and low QoG that according to various measures exist in China may be for real, but the negative effects of this may be compensated for by the cadre type of administration.

The hypothesis I want to put forward is that, when assessing the quality of government in China, the possibility that the remarkable development in economics and social welfare can be attributed to the use of this organization mode for large parts of the public administration, can have been overlooked. Three things speak in favor of this hypothesis: 1) First, in the rare cases when such organizations have been used (and theorized) in the public administration in Western Democracies, they have been shown to perform extraordinary well under quite difficult circumstances (Kaufman 1960, Rothstein 1996, cf. Mintzberg 1990); 2) Secondly, my reading of the reforms of the civil service, that have taken place in China since the early 1990s, speaks in favor of this interpretation – especially the combination of party dominance, ideological training, increased accountability for performance, high levels of legitimacy, and the increased educational demands that have been put on the personnel; 3) Thirdly, this hypothesis speaks against a relativistic or cultural understanding of the "puzzle with China" since, albeit usually overlooked by western public administration scholars, the cadre type of organization has been shown to exist in cultures as different from China

as Sweden and the United States.[17] I'm confident that a closer look at the public administration in many other countries would reveal many more cases of cadre type of public administrations. Thus, this hypothesis is in line with the universalistic ambitions in defining and measuring QoG as stated above. This is not to deny the many studies and media reports that have documented rampant corruption in parts of the Chinese state apparatus, but it may be the performance based cadre type of public administration that serves as a counterforce to the problem of corruption and the lack of the rule-of-law.

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[17] Thus, research in public administration can be as scientific as economics if the ideological blinders produced by Weberianism and Rational Choice are taken off.

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