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Integrity and governance: What is wrong? What is good? What is next?



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INTEGRITY OF GOVERNANCE: WHAT IT IS (NOT) AND WHAT IS NEXT



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INTEGRITY OF GOVERNANCE: WHAT IT IS (NOT) AND WHAT IS NEXT

Leo Huberts, VU University Amsterdam

1 Introduction

The 13th Winelands Conference focuses on three inter-related themes, summarized as ‘Integrity and governance: What is wrong? What is good? What is next?’ This paper builds on that agenda, with a focus on the content of ‘integrity of governance’ and an impression and interpretation of the state of the art of our research and theory development in this field.

In this paper I will reflect on the basic concepts on our agenda’s (corruption, integrity, governance) and thereafter focus on the consequences (‘what is next’).

To summarize, I will argue for

- broadening (and specifying) the topic of interest in our research from corruption to integrity of governance;
- more clarity on what integrity of governance is: it is about the governance process and not about the content of policies;
- an integrity turn in governance studies by taking moral values and norms more serious in the description, explanation and evaluation of governance;
- an empirical turn in our own work, towards studying good and bad and putting it into context, instead of thinking in terms of good and bad;
- thus opening up new questions and areas of research.

The paper is derived from a book project I am working on. The book will sketch the state of the art of our research and theory development on ‘Integrity of Governance’. With chapters on the content of the problem, on what is good (bright side of governance: values), on what is wrong (corruption and beyond: integrity violations), on the causes of corruption, on the instruments, policies, agencies and systems that try to curb corruption and safeguard integrity and what should/might be ‘next’ (towards quality of governance, including anti-corruption and integrity).

Integrity

The extant literature provides eight easily recognizable views on integrity¹, four of which may be considered “mainstream”: integrity as “wholeness, consistency, and coherence,” integrity as “professional responsibility,” integrity as a “(number of) value(s) including incorruptibility,” and integrity as “accordance with relevant moral values and norms.” In my view, the first two miss the crux of the concept— the relationship with ethics and morals, with right and wrong, good and bad— while the third is too specific (i.e., it only refers to certain values). For me, therefore, the preferred definition is as follows:

Integrity is a characteristic or a quality that refers to accordance with the relevant moral values and norms.

¹ For a discussion of the concept of integrity, see, for example, McFall (1987); Anechiarico and Jacobs (1996); Dobel (1999); Huberts and Van den Heuvel (1999); Montefiore (1999); Uhr (1999); Van Willigenburg et al. (1999); Chapman (2000); Jeurissen and Musschenga (2002); Preston and Sampford (2002); Brenkert (2004); Musschenga (2004); Van Luijk (2004); Audi and Murphy (2006); Huberts et al. (2008); Kaptein (2008); Cox (2009); Kouzmin (2010).

A politician, for example, is a man or woman of integrity if his or her behavior (as a politician) is in harmony or accordance with relevant moral values and norms. Such integritous behavior, however, is not limited to individuals: the characteristic or quality can also be applied to other “subjects.” Indeed, when the relevant moral values and norms for any such subject are distinguishable, the issue of integrity can be considered.

Moral values, norms, laws, and rules lie at the heart of integrity analysis. As emphasized in earlier chapters, a “value” is a belief or quality that *contributes to judgments about* what is good, right, beautiful, or admirable and thus has weight in the choice of action by individuals and collectives.² The more specific “norm” tells us *whether* something is good or bad, right or wrong, beautiful or ugly. Hence, for types of behavior, these parameters answer the question “what is the right thing to do.” Integrity, however, does not concern what is beautiful (aesthetics), what is conventional (etiquette), or what works (technology). Rather, it focuses on “moral” norms and values; that is, those that refer to what is right or wrong, good or bad. It thus refers to the values and norms that engender strong feelings in people because they are important for their community (and hence invoke a claim to more general validity and conformity). Nevertheless, because both “morality” and “ethics” refer to what is right or wrong, good or bad, the terms are commonly used interchangeably, as is also done in this book.

2 Corruption or Integrity

In our work on the ethics of governance, at VU University we have moved from “corruption research” (in the more specific sense) toward “integrity research.” It is therefore important to understand the reasons and arguments for this shift toward more “diversity and complexity,” as well as its limitations.³ Why, for example, focus on integrity (violations) instead of on the appealing concept of corruption?

The first and most obvious reason is that our focus is on the moral dimension of (the behavior of) individuals, organizations and even countries, with integrity as the central concept. That is, we are interested in violations of “relevant moral values and norms,” which by definition begs for a broad framework. Therefore, although it is certainly worthwhile to know more about the amount of bribery and favoritism in government and administration (corruption), it is also important to discover more about such violations as waste and abuse of (public) resources, discrimination, improper use of authority, and private time misconduct. It thus seems advantageous to distinguish clearly between *subtypes* of “corrupt” or “unethical” behavior (or integrity violations).

In the literature, three basic definitions of corrupt behavior have been offered:⁴ The first, and most specific, interprets corruption as acting in a particularistic interest because of advantages

² See for the debate on (public values): Rokeach (1973); Schmidt and Posner (1986); Heidenheimer, Johnston, and Levine (1989); Cooper (1998, 2001); Lawton (1998); Sampford and Preston (1998); Van Wart (1998); Della Porta and Vanucci (1999); Williams and Doig (2000); Van den Heuvel, Huberts, and Verberk (2002); Kernaghan (2003); Van der Wal et al. (2006); Vrangbaek (2006); Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007); Van der Wal (2008); Demmke and Moilanen (2011); de Vries and Kim (2011); Beck Jørgensen and Soerensen (2012).

³ See for more extended texts on this topic Huberts, Lasthuizen and Peeters, 2006; Huberts, 2007.

⁴ See, for example, Caiden (1988); Klitgaard (1988); Heywood (1997); Huberts (1998); della Porta, and Vannucci (1999); Newburn (1999); Rose-Ackerman (1999); Crank and Caldero (2000); Caiden, Dwivedi, and Jabbar (2001); Fijnaut and Huberts (2002); Gardiner (2002); Heidenheimer and Johnston (2002); Van den Heuvel, Huberts and Verberk (2002); Bull and Newell (2003); Johnston (2005); Kaufmann and Vicente (2005);

promised or given, and thus includes bribery (often found in legal frameworks) but also influence peddling, kickbacks, and forms of favoritism and conflict of interest. The second interprets corruption in line with the definitions in use by international anti-corruption organizations: corruption as the abuse of office for private gain (Pope, 2000). These definitions portray corruption as a breach of moral behavioral norms and values involving private interests but do not see the presence of a third party or interest as conditional (which brings fraud, theft, embezzlement under the corruption “umbrella”). The third and broadest definition views corruption as synonymous with all types of wrongdoing by functionaries in terms of acting contrary to the “public interest.” In its broadest form, corruption then becomes synonymous with the vices, maladies, and sicknesses of politics and bureaucracy. Referring specifically to the bureaucracy, Caiden (1991: 490) termed these deviations bureaupathologies and distinguished 179 types, including corruption, deceit, discrimination, fraud, injustice, mediocrity, red tape, and waste. In this latter definition, therefore, corruption is identical to unethical behavior or the violation of integrity.

We, however, do not opt for the third interpretation because of our view on the essence of corruption (its relationship with private interest) and because doing so would not solve the problem, only move it. That is, when everything is corruption, it becomes crucial to distinguish between subtypes of corruption in order to cope with the diversity of moral misbehavior or integrity violations (including, e.g., discrimination and manipulation of information).

The second reason for choosing a broad and complex integrity framework has to do with the diversity of the phenomena under study. Researchers that label manifold integrity violations as “corruption” have problems investigating, for example, the causes of “corruption” and the effectiveness of “anti-corruption” policies because such phenomena as patronage and favoritism might be caused by factors other than bribery, private time misbehavior, fraud, intimidation and discrimination, and so forth. Differentiation is also important because it is probable that organizations or governments will have to develop specific policies against different types of integrity violations. When you want to fight fraud, for instance, it might be effective to be strict and tough in terms of norms, leadership, and policies, whereas this toughness might lead to negative effects like intimidation and discrimination (Lasthuizen, Huberts, and Kaptein, 2002). Our research experience has also taught us a clear lesson: umbrella concepts limit the possibilities for expanding our knowledge about unethical behavior (content, causes, effects, solutions).

The third reason relates to the country we are working in. Although the integrity of government and governance involves a variety of violations, serious bribery, nepotism, and patronage are rather exceptional in the Netherlands, which makes other types of unethical behavior—for example, conflict of interest through sideline activities, fraud, and private time misbehavior—more decisive for the legitimacy and credibility of the political and administrative system.

In addition, our research on internal investigations by governmental organizations has shown that the number of investigations on corruption specifically is limited compared to that on other violation types. The internal integrity investigations of Dutch regional police forces, for example, primarily concern six types of integrity violations (Lamboos et al., 2002; Punch et

Lawton and Doig (2006); de Sousa, Larmour, and Hindess (2009); de Graaf, von Maravic, and Wagenaar (2010); Woods (2010); Graycar and Smith (2011).

al., 2004). The clear front-runner, accounting for 23.5% of the investigations,⁵ is off-duty private time misconduct, which concerns a wide range of behavior (most prominently, contacts with criminals, theft and fraud, violence, and driving under the influence of alcohol). The other frequently investigated types of behavior are the improper use of force (17.1%), waste and abuse of organizational resources (14.3%), abuse of information (13.6%), inappropriate manner, including discrimination and intimidation (11.3%), and theft and fraud (14.7% combined). Far fewer were investigations on perjury in court (0.2%), conflicts of interest through gifts and discounts (0.2%), the use of dubious investigative methods, corruption (1.5%), and moonlighting (2.0%).

These findings are supported by comparable evidence from many other research projects; for example, on the reports of integrity violations⁶ to local government in the Netherlands (Van den Heuvel et al., 2010) and on work place misconduct in the government and the business sectors (Integrity Scan by KPMG; e.g., Lasthuizen, 2008). The same conclusion can be drawn based on a wide body of research from other countries on the misconduct occurring in the workplace. Based on employee reports of observing at least 1 of 15 behaviors in the past 12 months, nearly half (49%) of U.S. employees observe some type of misconduct on the job (ERC, 2009).

This percentage is based on employees’ indication that they have observed at least one of fifteen behaviors in the past 12 months. The Top 5 of behaviors concerns Misuse of company time (33%), Abusive behavior (21%), Company resource abuse (20%), Lying to employees (20%) and Email or Internet abuse/Violating Company Internet Policy (16%). Conflicts of interests also score high (15%), but more specific ‘corruption related’ behavior is less often seen (Accept (gifts) kickbacks or bribes 5% and Offering public officials bribes/ improper payments 5%).

Of course, this scarcity is related to the character of the behavior, but that is not my main point. The main argument for broadening the scope is the relevance of a variety of behaviors that are immoral.

It should also be noted that not only does the frequency of observed violations differ greatly but so does the acceptability of the behavior. For example, Lasthuizen (2008: 103–107) asked police officers how often they had observed specific integrity violations in their work unit over the last 12 months and how acceptable they found these behaviors. As Table 1 shows, 51% reported never having observed favoritism by supervisors (observed once or several times by 38%, and regularly or often by 11%), and 64% of the officers perceived this behavior as “never acceptable.”

Table 1: *Moral Judgments on and Observed Frequency of Integrity Violations in the Police*

Types of integrity violations	Observed frequency percentage “never”	Acceptability percentage “never acceptable”
Corruption: bribing	96%	98%
Corruption: favoritism by supervisors	51%	64%

⁵ Total percentages exceed 100% because the same investigation can address more than one form of misconduct.
⁶ See for our developed and validated typology: Lasthuizen (2008) and Huberts, Lasthuizen and Heres (2011).

Corruption: favoritism by employees	80%	78%
Fraud	25%	25%
Theft	82%	96%
Conflict of interest through gifts	72%	60%
Conflict of interest through jobs	83%	57%
Improper use of authority	78%	83%
Misuse and manipulation of information	84%	89%
Discrimination against colleagues	85%	96%
Sexual harassment of colleagues	92%	99%
Indecent treatment of colleagues	54%	72%
Indecent treatment of customers	58%	80%
Waste and abuse	60%	85%
Private time misconduct	73%	71%

Neither too complex nor too broad

Even though we are arguing in favor of broadening the perspective from corruption to integrity, we believe we must be careful not to broaden the scope too much. Even when the discussion is limited only to the behavior of public officials (rather than to all “evil” in policies as well; Adams and Balfour, 2004), there are, as Caiden (1991) so convincingly argued, many bureaupathologies. Not of all of these should be considered integrity violations, however; a functionary can do something wrong, can make mistakes, even stupid mistakes, without committing an integrity violation. Yet when this distinction is blurred too much, an organization loses sight of what is morally important and what is not, leading possibly to very negative outcomes. For example, employees may become too afraid to risk doing anything wrong or become paralyzed, for good reason, by the idea that making a mistake might lead to investigation of their integrity. To avoid such repercussions, therefore, organizations must clearly identify their central moral values and norms, develop organizational ethics that clarify what type of value or norm violation is considered serious (enough) to warrant an investigation of integrity. Although never easy, this undertaking is crucial for any organization that take ethics and integrity seriously and that wants to prevent the over-simplification and/or overgeneralization previously defined as integritism (Huberts, 2005).

3 Integrity of Governance

3.1 Governance⁷

In general, “governance” refers to “authoritative policy-making on collective problems and interests and implementation of these policies.” Public governance, specifically, tackles social problems and issues through action by not only public actors but also by private actors or networks involving both. One important characteristic in this definition is “authoritative,” which relates the governing actor(s) to the collectivity involved. The definition also refers explicitly to policy-making, as well as to policy implementation, which makes it easy to relate

⁷ For an overview of the development of governance (and related concepts), the debates about it, and its meaning in different disciplinary contexts, see Kjaer (2004); Bevir (2009).

governance to familiar bodies of knowledge on the “political system” and on the policy process.

A “systems” approach focuses on the input, throughput, output, and outcome of the political and administrative system (Easton, 1979). The policy process model (Dunn, 2008). explicitly distinguishes between agenda building, policy preparation, decision-making and decision-taking, implementation, evaluation, and feedback. In all phases, as has been and will again be argued, integrity and ethics play an important and but often underestimated role. Nor can moral values and norms be ignored in any description, explanation, and evaluation of governance processes. Hence, the main reason for stressing the importance of ethics and integrity is empirical: it is doubtful that we can understand and explain, for example, a government decision without taking into account the basic values of the decision-makers.

The underestimation of ethics and integrity in governance studies today seems to be related to the conceptualization of governance itself. Although we agree that governance is broad, from input to output and outcome as shown in Figure 1, many scholars tend to concentrate on input and output, forgetting the throughput phase.⁸ Such neglect of throughput is exemplified in the literature on the legitimacy of political or governance systems, which treats input and output legitimacy as the basics of the legitimacy of political order in democracies (Scharpf, 1999; Hemerijck, 2003; Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden, 2004).

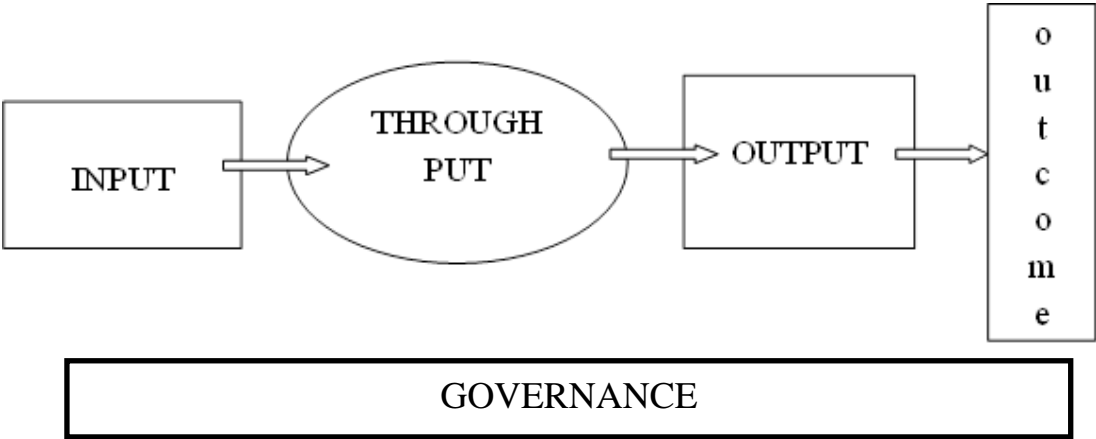


Figure 1: System model of governance.

Specifically, this perspective sees the participatory quality of the input and the problem-solving quality of the output as essential and ignores the legitimacy of the throughput phase. As a result, many aspects of the integrity of governance that relate to how politicians and civil servants operate in that phase are overlooked.

Ignoring throughput legitimacy is a serious problem for two reasons: First, there is overwhelming evidence that the quality of governance in the throughput phase is crucial for the problem-solving quality of the output (output legitimacy). For example, Rothstein (2011) concluded that the success of policies in terms of the resulting quality of life depends primarily on the impartiality of the governance process. The second reason refers specifically

⁸ For a notable exception, also with reference to the legitimacy of the three phases, see Hendriks, van Ostaaijen, and Boogers (2011: 11–12).

to the consequences of the legitimacy or integrity of the throughput process. Individuals and communities are willing to accept the results of an “integritous process,” even when they disagree with the content of the resulting policies. This willingness is amply supported by theory-based research on procedural and substantive justice: process that is considered just leads to tolerance about the outcome, even when one’s own interests are damaged (Tyler, 2006, 2007). In fact, according to Hough et al. (2010: 205), Tyler’s survey-based findings clearly demonstrated that

public perceptions of the *fairness* of the justice system ... are more significant in shaping its legitimacy than perceptions that it is *effective*. Tyler’s findings suggest that procedural justice—that is, fair and respectful treatment that “follows the rules”—is more important to people than obtaining outcomes that regard either as fair or unfavourable to themselves.

This observation should teach us a lesson on governance studies. Although we often concentrate on input and output legitimacy, thereby ignoring the throughput phase that translates interests and demands into policy decisions and into activities and instruments that implement those decisions, this throughput phase may be more important for the legitimacy of government and governance than input legitimacy or output legitimacy.

3.2 Ethics and the integrity of governance

Integrity, in my view, is the concept that should be applied to the behavior of the participants in decision-making and decision implementation. That is, it does not concern everything in politics and business nor even the content of government policy (or business strategy); rather, it concerns *behavior, process, and procedure* (in a broad sense).

This is not to deny that many important ethical controversies and debates concern policy *content*, often stemming from intense feelings about the right or wrong of certain policy areas (e.g., war and peace, abortion, euthanasia) and frequently fueled by religious convictions. This focus, however, should not distract us from the fact that all policy areas involve choices about good and bad, about social equity, social justice, and other crucial values. The ethics of the content of decisions, policies, and laws, however, is the subject of policy ethics, a subdiscipline of public ethics, whose several subfields include environmental ethics and the ethics of war. Policy ethics focuses specifically on the consequences or results of policy, which of course are crucial for both citizens and society. In this book, therefore, I refer to the moral values and norms at stake in policies as “grand ethics.”

It is, however, important to distinguish between policy content and policy process because the central topic of this paper, the “integrity of governance,” refers to the policy process: how policy is made and implemented. This process includes the input phase of agenda building, the throughput phase of policy preparation and decision-making, and the output phase of decision and policy implementation and evaluation. In all these phases, the actors operate with the (additional) guidance of the moral values and norms within the institutional framework, which itself also contains moral values and norms. I therefore hypothesize that the phases of the policy process bring in different values on how to operate and that these values differ for politicians and civil servants. One limitation of this framework, however, is that it only addresses part of the input phase. That is, it concentrates on how politicians and civil servants translate the system’s input (demands, support) into political and administrative policy-making. As a result, part of what I label as “input ethics and integrity” remains out of sight (including political parties and elections).

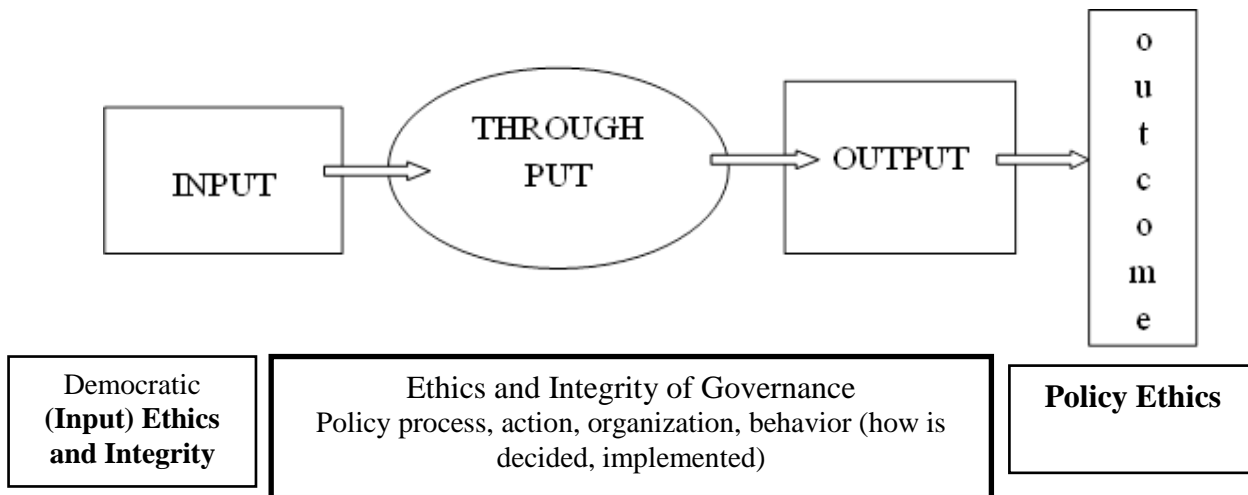


Figure 2: Ethics and integrity of governance.

The variety of phases and categories of actors lead to the distinction of a number of categories of governance process ethics and integrity, which are outlined below.

“Decision-making ethics” concerns the moral norms and values related to the preparation and making of decisions. Which values and norms are at stake in that process? How important, for example, are legitimacy, incorruptibility, accountability, and transparency? A distinction can also be made between the preparation of decisions (by administrators and advisers: “administrative ethics”) and the taking of decisions (by the political and administrative elite: “elite ethics”). Hence, “elite integrity” refers to the actual behavior of the makers and takers of the decision. Other important questions include which moral values and norms were leading during this behavior and whether these correspond with the relevant ethics. For example, did they violate the law or applicable codes of conduct or more informal norms, thereby constituting an integrity violation (judgments always depend on the context)? As the opposite of “grand corruption,” we might also speak of “grand integrity” when decision-makers succeed in safeguarding moral values and norms while making crucial decisions. Parallel to “grand integrity” is “administrative integrity,” which focuses on the behavior of civil servants and others involved in policy preparation.

“Implementation ethics” refers to the moral values, norms, rules, and procedures for the actions and behavior of the people and organizations responsible for implementing policies. Implementation ethics, or street-level ethics, clarifies what is morally acceptable during specific activities; for example, in a police context, they would concern the values and particularly the norms on interrogation, taking prisoners, gathering intelligence, handling arrests, or reacting to suspected violence. Hence, “street-level integrity” relates street-level ethics to “street-level” performance: How do policy implementers actually operate, what are their moral values and norms “in action,” and do these coincide with implementation ethics?

If there are contradictions between the relevant and actual morals, actors are committing an integrity violation. Such integrity violations can be distinguished into many types, all of which are relevant for elite, administrative, and street-level integrity.

4 Integrity in context: Good governance and quality of governance

The previous paragraphs were meant to clarify what integrity of governance is. However, we should become also more conscious about the partiality and relativity of the significance of the issue. The next segment therefore places the integrity issue in context, by first delving into the relationship between integrity and good governance, afterwards I draw on seminal recent work on the “quality of governance” to reflect on the topic.

Good governance and integrity

Both governance theory and practice offer many interpretations of “good governance,” most of which select a number of seemingly more prominent values to distinguish between good and bad or better and worse governance. A more disputed element, however, is how these values relate and what strategies can appropriately deal with them in governance practice (Andrews, 2010). The most influential “good governance” framework is that of the World Bank (WB), which sees good governance as participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and in accordance with the rule of law. The WB also adds that it is important that corruption be minimized, the views of minorities be taken into account, and the voices of the most vulnerable in society be heard in decision-making. Good governance is also responsive to the present and future needs of society.

Three observations on this approach are important. First, the WB selects a number of values, which leads to the question whether this list is adequate. Second, the WB focuses on both the governance process and the outcome of the resulting policies. The values “equitable” and “needs of society,” specifically, refer to outcome. As previously argued, however, even though outcome is of course very important, it is not self-evident that good governance in terms of process is dependent on “good” outcomes. Third, and most important, by apparently presupposing that all the criteria must be optimized, the WB is failing to recognize the tension between values and the importance of context for the choices that must be made in actual governance. This failure has led to widespread criticism of the WB policy as limited and “Western,” as imposing a framework that does not suit the conditions in many (developing) countries.

Another good governance framework I have employed (and reinterpreted) in research focuses on four families of values (Bovens et al., 2007). In this paradigm, good governance concerns (political) democracy and responsiveness, lawfulness, effectiveness and efficiency (policy performance), and integrity (incorruptibility and accordance with professional ethics). One challenging aspect of this paradigm, however, is that integrity is part of the framework. An even more complicated aspect is that integrity is connected to incorruptibility and professional ethics. Yet it seems obvious that other criteria like democracy/legitimacy and lawfulness also have moral connotations for governance at all levels. The approach also raises serious questions for good governance and integrity researchers, who seem to be using two different conceptions of integrity: integrity as the overall aspect of morality (of governance and involved professionals) versus integrity as a moral quality measured primarily in terms of incorruptibility and impartiality (I return to this issue below). Another questionable aspect of the framework is the incorporation of “effectiveness and efficiency” as criteria. Not that I doubt these criteria can have explicit moral meaning for individuals and organizations: what I question is that its standard interpretation refers to the *outcome* of policies and not to the governance process itself. Both aspects are of course important; however, it is also relevant to distinguish between them.

Quality of government

A framework that clearly differs from the good governance paradigm is that proposed by the Quality of Government (QoG) Institute in Goteborg Sweden, which was summarized by one of the institute's leading scholars, Bo Rothstein, in his *Quality of Government* (2011). This framework positions impartiality as the central characteristic of quality and relates it to the quality of the governed society (wealth, welfare and social security, health, education). Hence, as Rothstein convincingly argued, impartial governance leads to better policies and more developed societies. Rothstein's analysis, however, raises crucial questions. Most especially, in my view, it fails to consider the possible importance of separating the quality and integrity of the governance process from the quality of the policy outcomes (in terms of quality of life). What this omission should lead to is reflection on research and policy agendas and how they connect the quality of the governance process and the quality of policies in terms of the results for the quality of society.

One first point for reflection concerns the dependent variable, the quality of output and outcome or the quality of society. I tend to agree with Rothstein (2011) that the work of Nussbaum (2011) and Sen (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993) on human development offers an intriguing starting point for considering this issue because social outcome involves not only wealth, income, and economy but also such factors as health, education, and gender.⁹ Yet the question of how the quality of society relates to the way society is governed is a topic that has not attracted the interest it deserves.

A second point, and one of utmost importance for the "ethics and integrity of governance," is the question of which characteristics of the governance process actually influence the outcomes. That is, I do not question that impartiality is a crucial characteristic, as Rothstein has argued (Rothstein and Teorell, 2008; Rothstein 2011), but I doubt that it is the only aspect of the governance process that matters. Indeed, this book clearly suggests that several values and criteria are relevant for the "quality of governance" and also that this quality is decisive for appreciation of governance by society. Quality of governance, therefore, although it does include incorruptibility and impartiality, also has democracy, accountability and transparency, lawfulness, effectiveness and efficiency, professionalism and civility, and robustness as central values. Thus, there is a great need for valid research on the relationship of those values or the quality of the governance process with policy quality and human development.

A third point for reflection is how the "integrity" of governance relates to the "quality" of governance. As already pointed out, as researchers, we seem to use two conceptions of integrity: as the moral quality of the governance process and as an element of that quality, in particular, incorruptibility and impartiality. I tend to stick to the interpretation which relates integrity to accordance with the relevant moral values and norms. For this moral interpretation of quality, although incorruptibility and impartiality are crucial, other values and norms can also be important (depending, as stressed before, on the context). This latter recognition, however, raises yet another relevant question: whether there are qualities other than moral qualities that matter for the "quality of governance." In my opinion, the answer is that there are. That is, although such factors as the effectiveness of the process, acting in accordance with law and rules, and doing what interested publics prefer can all be related to the relevant

⁹ Other values referring to the output might be added though. Among them might be 'public interest, common good, effectiveness and efficiency (in terms of policy outcomes related to policy goals), social equality (social cohesion, social justice, equity, equality) as well as sustainability (Beck Jørgensen and Bozeman, 2007; Minderman, 2008; Demmke and Moilanen, 2011).

moral values and norms, they also encompass different elements. To phrase it in terms more open to challenge and debate, the governance process can be characterized in terms of capacity and power (effectiveness); and democracy, in terms of responsiveness and participation, lawfulness and legality, and integrity.

Quality of governance and values

When we reflect on the quality of governance, the central question, of course, becomes “what is “quality?” I propose to answer that question based on research on the (moral) values and norms of governance, which focuses on the following: the values that motivate and inspire politicians and civil servants, the values that are present in the laws and codes, and citizens’ views on the moral quality of governance. Researchers have come up with different sets of values that seem crucial. My attempt to summarize the overall results of that research for the governance process identified seven types of values as important. When this overview is reinterpreted in terms of quality of governance, quality means governance that is democratic, accountable and transparent, lawful, incorruptible and impartial, effective and efficient, professional and civil, and robust.

I immediately add that of course the exact meaning of the values, as well as the priority they deserve, differs greatly in different contexts. To use or even prescribe the same criteria and policies in contexts that vary enormously between countries, societies and cultures, would be unrealistic and counterproductive, an issue that in my view relates directly to the crux of the pluralistic view on values: that policy-making and implementation will always demand the management of tensions between values and will thus result in different outcomes in different contexts (Spicer, 2010). Hence, value pluralism senses the reality of actual governance processes and convincingly questions the view that the same values can and must be implemented independent of the context. Recognizing this fact has consequences for interpretations of what constitutes good governance or quality of governance. Most especially, because it will be impossible to optimize all values at the same time in governance, quality of governance means that the tension between relevant values must be “managed” in order to establish a “good governance” process.

Another aspect of “managing values,” then, is whether all values deserve the same priority in the process. Rothstein and Teorell (2008), for example, argued for “impartiality” as the central value, but other scholars have focused in their research on accountability (Bovens, 1998; Dubnick and Yang, 2011), transparency (Piotrowski, 2007), lawfulness (Rosenbloom, 2011), or, as in this book, integrity. For now, I think it is premature to argue against the importance of the seven quality of governance criteria selected, not least because the concept of value by definition refers to something valued and hence inherently a “quality.” In the end, the proof of the pudding will have to be in the eating, meaning that we need research to establish the relative importance of these criteria.

Which values really matter?

A quality of governance framework with as its starting point the seven types or families of values does not answer the question which criteria might be used in actual governance processes in which these values are dealt with or “managed.”

What really matters might be established through research on the *effects* of governance in accordance with these values, as carried out by Rothstein (2011) with impartiality as the central governance characteristic contributing to a good society. A second criterion might be which values contribute most to the trust in governance by citizens and other stakeholders. Trust research, however, is not easy to interpret because citizens answer questions on trust in government or governance almost identically to questions on the quality or integrity or

incorruptibility of systems of governance (Bouckaert and Van de Walle, 2003; Van de Walle, 2008). Nevertheless, as research on procedural justice has shown, those governed seem to appreciate the quality of how they are governed more than the results of the policies issued. This observation raises the interesting research questions of whether this finding of procedural priority remains valid for governance and which (procedural) values contribute (most) to trust in governance. Are impartiality and incorruptibility the central values or are accountability, civility, and robustness, for example, also important?

A third criterion focuses on “who is governed.” That is, if public governance is policy-making on public problems and interests and the implementation of these policies, why not let the involved public “decide” what quality is even when values are in competition or contradiction? I favor this approach, in line with that on integrity (Huberts, 2005: we as researchers are not the referees who decide about integrity, but the publics with an ‘interest’ are the central referees to decide what constitutes integritous governance).

Also when we want to evaluate governance in terms of quality, the relevant publics are, in my view, the referee. This assumption, however, begs the question that the members of the “public” are able to referee, which in turn presupposes their ability to come to an informed judgment. Thus, when a country’s population considers robustness and decisiveness as more important than impartiality and incorruptibility or democracy and accountability in distinguishing bad from good governance, that “actor” as referee is important for reaching conclusions about the quality of governance in that country.¹⁰

What is good or bad governance in terms of the relative importance of the governance values thus differs in various contexts. Managing the values in context in accordance with what the public considers good governance is in the end the proof of the pudding for actual governance. The result can thus be stated in terms of the integrity of governance (the moral quality with the public as referee) but also in terms of the quality of governance or good governance.

Quality and integrity

The quality of governance framework also raises the question of how the “integrity” of governance relates to the “quality” of governance. Is integrity more or less synonymous with quality in the sense that it refers to accordance with the values that matter, or is it more specific, with a focus on, for example, incorruptibility and impartiality? I relate integrity to accordance with the relevant *moral* values and norms, which leads to the question of whether there are differences between moral values and other “quality” values. In other words, are there qualities other than moral quality? I think there are; for example, the “democratic quality,” which refers to the participation of interested publics and whether the policies are responsive to their preferences, and the “technical quality” related to the methods and practicalities of the process (decisiveness, robustness). Although these qualities and values are not by definition seen by the involved publics as essential for moral quality in terms of good and bad (policy-making and implementation), they may be seen as essential for good and bad by the relevant public in specific cases, which complicates matters, albeit not by definition and not under all circumstances. Nevertheless, this observation illustrates the complexity of the analysis in terms of moral quality (or integrity); that is, democracy may be part of the evaluation, but not necessarily. It also signals that the moral quality of the governance process seems crucial: “It is all about integrity, stupid,” possibly including all the governance values

¹⁰ As a consequence, it is in my view very important to pay more attention to ‘the public’ or ‘the citizen’ and what they value in governance (Salminen, 2010).

at stake. Yet at the same time, it clarifies that quality differs from integrity: quality refers to all values, integrity to the values with a more explicitly moral dimension.

This view on the close and complex relationship between integrity and quality differs greatly from a simpler and clearer alternative that relates quality of governance to conformance with all selected values and relates integrity to accordance with certain specifically “moral values.” This latter presupposes that it is possible to distinguish between moral and other values, with incorruptibility and impartiality as the oft-mentioned candidates for the “main moral” values. Although I have already argued against this view on the grounds that all values can be “moral” in the eyes of relevant publics, I acknowledge that further reflection and research on the views of these publics may lead to specification. For example, democracy, including accountability, robustness and decisiveness, lawfulness, and professionalism might, as Rothstein (2011) suggested, be considered morally less important than incorruptibility and impartiality. Civility, however, also seems to be within the moral nucleus, a fact clearly illustrated by the many discussions and scandals having morality and integrity at the center of debate (e.g., leaders that had to resign because of sexual behavior, plagiarism in a doctorate, lying about business relationships). Hence, the “morality” of the quality of governance values in the eyes of relevant publics is another topic for our agenda of reflection and research.

What explains (quality of) governance?

What, then, are the conditions and factors that influence the quality of governance? What makes governance more or less democratic or robust or incorruptible? This crucial issue of the causes of better and worse governance is essentially also a question on the factors and conditions that influence governance more generally. How important are values and how decisive are moral values, including when they are in competition with other dimensions and characteristics of the actors and the processes we study? Answering these questions will, require a turn in our research on values and quality. Do values really matter?

One useful approach to the problem stems from the classic and insightful work on decision-making by Allison (1971), who explained the outcomes of decision-making in terms of the existing (organizational) procedures, and the goals and power and power resources of the involved actors. He thereby highlighted explanations for the governance process and its results that compete with what we suppose to be a relevant factor, the (moral) values and norms of the actors and the institutions they operate in. Hence, the empirical turn I suggest would include incorporating the values of governance in the models we use to explain the process and results of public governance. Doing so would generate manifold research questions; most especially, how important are values for the goals and activities of involved actors and how are values embedded in the institutional framework that influences the process?

Another challenging aspect for future research to explain the organization, process, and results of governance concerns the relationship between existing explanatory models and the values and quality of governance. Specifically, these models focus on power and power resources, which may be related to “democracy”; on organizational procedures and practices, which directly relate to decisiveness, robustness, and professionalism; and on the goals and interests of involved actors, with incorruptibility and impartiality as relevant elements in the value framework. Hence, not only do values and quality add an explanatory factor to the research, they can also be combined with and related to existing explanatory models.

4 What is next

In this paragraph I will briefly reflect on our agenda for future research. What to do in governance studies? What to do in our niche of corruption, integrity, ethics and value research?

We all seem to agree on one important topic: the disastrous effects or consequences of governance with or without integrity and quality. These effects of bad and corrupt governance motivate many researchers and policy-makers to work in this area. I think that we make that assumption with good reason: it is supported by a large body of empirical evidence that corrupt, rather than integritous, governance leads to enormous harm for individuals, groups, and societies alike. For example, TI, although it admits that the political, economic, social, and environmental costs of corruption cannot be quantified, provides concrete information on the economic costs: “The annual total of bribes paid worldwide is US \$1 trillion. This is considered to be a conservative estimate of actual bribes paid worldwide in both developed and developing countries.”¹¹ I add just one figure about corruption’s effects as food for thought: Hanf et al. (2011: 4), in *Corruption Kills*, concluded that “it could be hypothesized that roughly 1.6% of world deaths in children could be explained by corruption, meaning that, of the annual 8,795 million [child] deaths, more than 140,000 annual [child] deaths could be indirectly attributed to corruption” (see also Kaufmann, 2004; Rothstein, 2011). The importance of the topic thus seems to justify that we pay attention to it, as researchers of governance, to put it euphemistically....

Turn, turn, turn

More attention to ethics and integrity is justified by the current state of multidisciplinary governance: scholars that do take this facet into consideration are working in niches in the field, while the mainstream tends to successfully ignore it. Admittedly, “ethics” is somewhat better represented in mainstream thinking than “integrity”; however, as pointed out before, this is partly because of semantics. Such lack of attention is unfortunate and limits our understanding of the phenomena under consideration; most particularly, studying integrity leads to a focus on the process of governance, the area most neglected in theory development and research. It is time, therefore, for an “integrity turn” in governance studies.¹²

The neglect of integrity (and ethics) in governance studies is related to the reputation of the research on this aspect of governance. That is, the study of ethics and integrity is associated with normative questions on the reality of governance rather than “real,” empirically tested, scientific enquiry. It therefore seems the domain of the philosophers and ethicists among us, not of mainstream scientists, to describe, explain, and understand the reality of governance and administration. As this book tries to show, however, I firmly oppose that view. Even though integrity research addresses moral values and norms, the suggestion that this work must therefore be normative is, in my opinion, ridiculous. It is as bizarre as the view that research on politics by political scientists equals political work.

Standard scientific work is and should be the central focus for integrity and ethics researchers, which, I acknowledge, presupposes that values and ethics play a significant role in daily

¹¹ <http://www.transparency.org.uk/corruption-data> (acc. 11 March, 2012). See also, for example, Rothstein (2011): 40–42.

¹² Of course, ‘turn’ refers to others with pleas for ‘turns’, in particular the argumentative turn advocated by Fischer and Forester (1993).

politics and administration, a fact it would be “unscientific” to ignore. Such empirical work includes topics like the moral norms and values in governance, the violations of integrity in governance, the causes and effects of what goes wrong and right, and the integrity policies and systems that are developed (or not). Some of us also translate these insights into a normative idea of how governance should work. I applaud that courage as long as the nature and limitations of the researchers’ involvement and mission are clear. The applause, of course, also stems from my view on the essentials of our discipline, my belief that the mission of governance studies includes the description, explanation, understanding, and evaluation of governance, as well as the improvement of governance. At the same time, we all should see it as our mission to relate our theoretical and empirical work to the available normative endeavors and frameworks.

We should also relate our work more explicitly to mainstream governance studies. That is, if we end up working in niches (and here, I include my own work), it is our own fault: integrity and ethics research involves much more than being normative missionaries on one topic. We are failing to simultaneously relate our work successfully to mainstream questions and topics. Instead, we should become more conscious about the partiality and relativity of the significance of our issues. That is, even though moral values and norms and integrity and ethics are crucial to understanding politics and administrations, there is more that matters. It should therefore also be our mission to relate the significance of these topics to power and power politics, to organization and management logics, and to other logics and rationalities of governance. In sum, we should aim for an *empirical turn* in the ethics and integrity of governance research, one that clarifies the empirical importance, or lack of importance, of moral values and norms for governance.

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