

# Measuring trust and transparency: Exploring a mixed methods approach

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# Introduction

- Trust & transparency lie at heart of contemporary debates on governance & democracy (Rothstein 2005; van Deth et al. 2007; Cook 2001)
- O'Neill (2002, p.8): 'Mistrust and suspicion have spread across all areas of life, and supposedly with good reason...Loss of trust has become a cliché of our times.'
- Key Questions - how can we conceptualise trust, is level of trust in democracy rising or falling & is citizen trust a prerequisite for good democratic government (Fisher et al., 2010; van Deth et al., 1991).
- Democratic deficit, misfit between politics-policy & political corruption appear to undermine trust in politicians & underpin emergence across EU of populist party responses



# Defining Trust

- Defining 'trust', 'political trust' & 'trustworthiness' focus of intense debate (Levi & Stoker 2000; Citrin & Muste 1993)
- Zmerli & Hooghe (2011, p.3) draw on Easton's (1965) idea of diffused support: 'at best political trust is a very thin form of trust, and it should rather be seen as the expectation that political actors generally behave in a fair manner.'
- Grimmelikhuijsen (2012, P.54) utilises definition by Rousseau *et al.* (1998): 'a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another'
- Multidimensional concept – perceived competence, perceived benevolence & perceived honesty (Grimmelikhuijsen 2012)

# Assessing Trust – Contemporary Themes

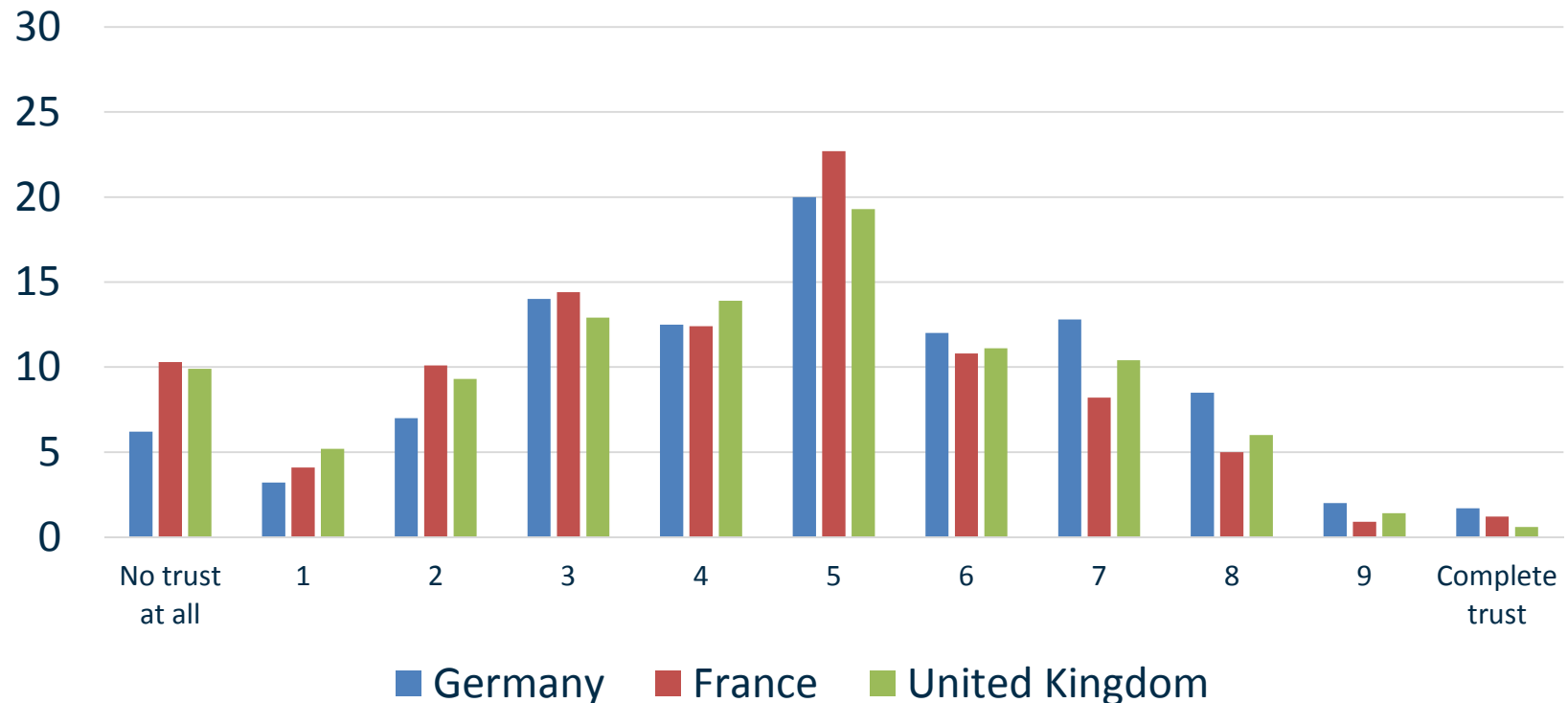
- Herbert Quandt Stiftung foundation study (2013) indicates that, while the public has confidence in democracy as a concept, many do not trust government & the way democracy is being implemented
- Whiteley et al. (2015) argue public perceptions of government honesty & trustworthiness are volatile over time but linked to indicators of policy performance & perceptions of fairness of the decision-making process
- There is a strong & growing demand for more diverse & effective forms of citizen engagement to increase levels of trust e.g. 'co-production' (Fledderus *et al.* 2014)
- Despite calls for more citizen involvement in decision-making (co-creation), however, citizen engagement & satisfaction rates are declining (Leading Cities 2015)

# Measuring Trust

- Citrin & Muste (1993) identify 3 main categories of indicators:
  1. Measures that capture trust in the incumbent national leadership
  2. Measures that tap a generalised cynicism about motives & conduct of professional politicians
  3. Measures of diffuse affect for the political regime based on perceptions of the fairness & responsiveness of major institutions
- They also note key challenges – notably ‘knowing that someone supports or rejects the political regime rarely tells us why this is so’
- Majority of studies characterised by ‘methodological nationalism’ (Jeffery & Wincott 2010) *but* greater levels of trust identified at lower levels (Jennings 1998; Hetherington & Nugent 2001)

# European Social Survey 2012: Country's Parliament

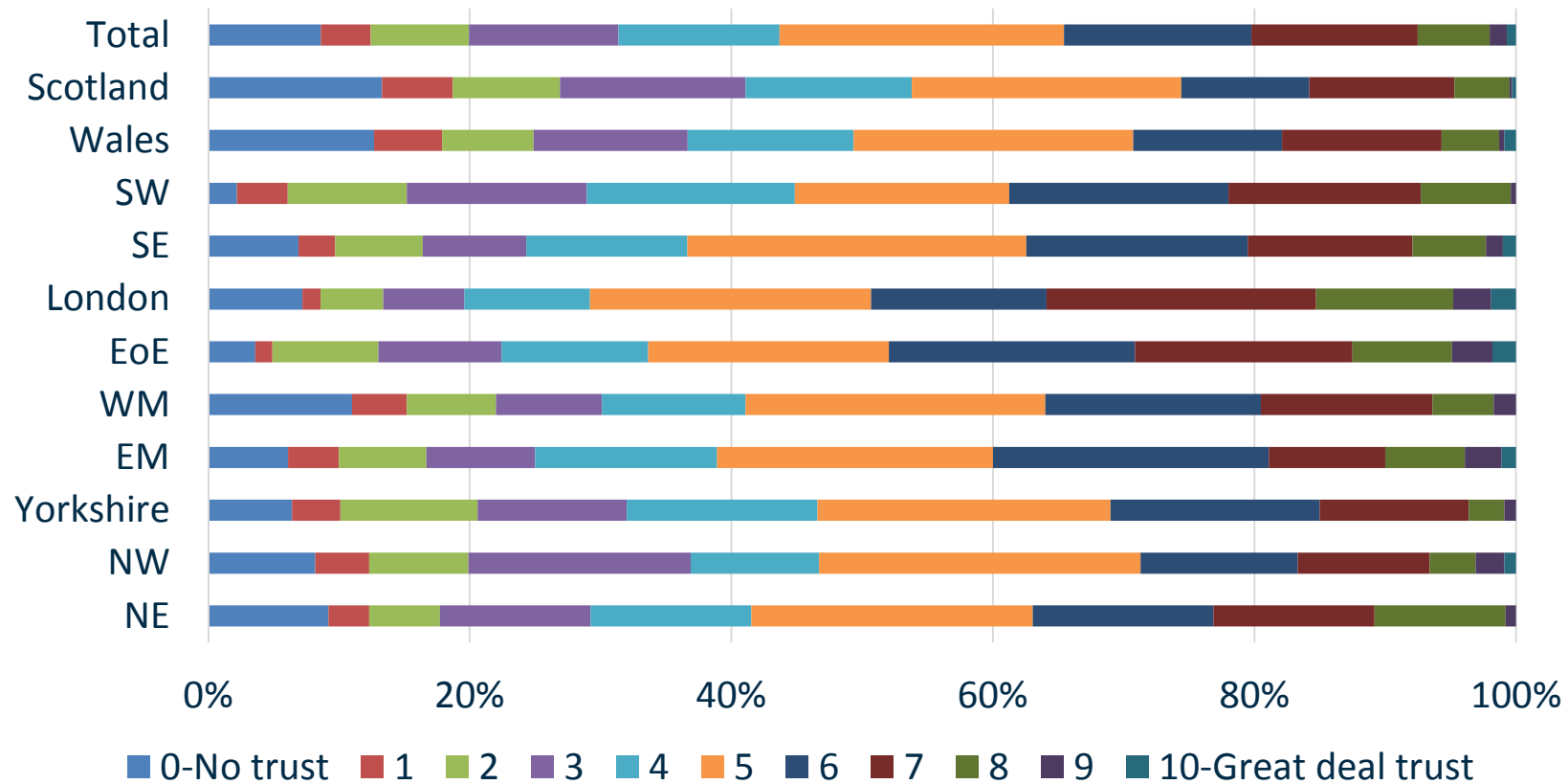
Please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust.



Source: European Social Survey 2012

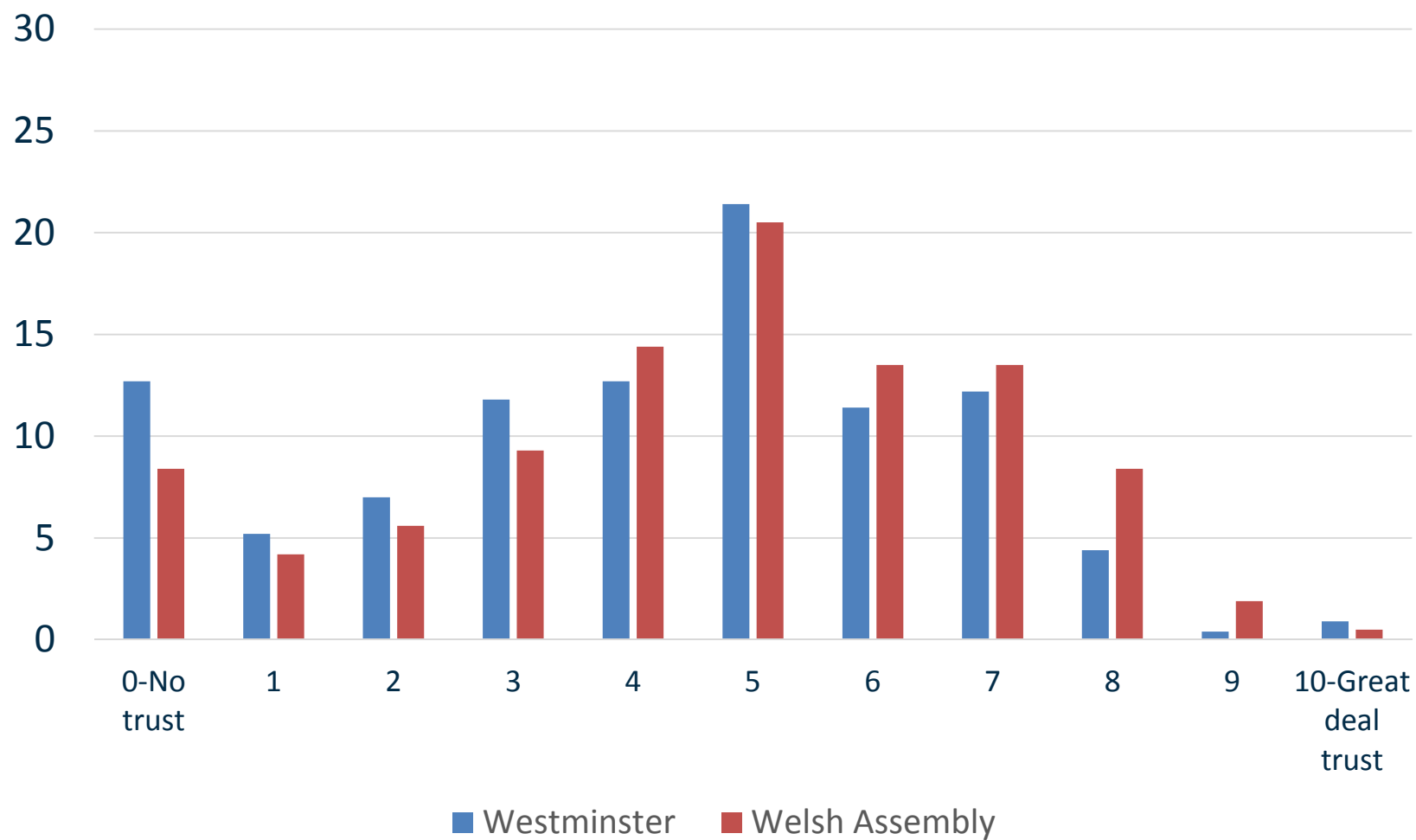
# British Election Survey 2010

Now, thinking about British political institutions like Parliament, please use the 0 to 10 scale to indicate how much trust you have for each of the following, where 0 means no trust and 10 means a great deal of trust. And how much do you trust the Parliamen



Source: British Election Study 2010

## Trust - Westminster vs Welsh Assembly, 2010



Source: British Election Study 2010



# Welsh Political Barometer June 2015

- To what extent, if at all, do you trust the NHS in Wales [England] to provide a high quality service?

	English adults	Welsh Adults	Mid & West Wales	North Wales	Cardiff & South Wales Central	South Wales East	South Wales West
Trust a great deal	17	12	9	10	15	13	12
Trust a fair amount	57	49	45	47	53	51	46
Do not trust very much	17	27	35	25	20	24	35
Do not trust at all	4	9	9	15	8	8	6
Don't know	6	3	3	4	4	4	1

Source: <http://blogs.cardiff.ac.uk/electionsinwales/opinion-polls/>

# Defining Transparency

- Transparency = ‘the availability of information about an organisation or actor that allows external actors to monitor the internal workings of performance of that organisation’ (Grimmelikhuijsen & Welch 2012, p.563)
- Can focus on different aspects of governance (Heald 2006):
  1. Decision-making processes
  2. Policy content
  3. Policy outcomes
- Debate between transparency ‘optimists’ & transparency ‘pessimists’ (Grimmelikhuijsen 2011)



# Assessing transparency: Contemporary Themes

- Transparency offered as a remedy to tackle distrust, but understandings are deeply ambivalent (Cole 1999; Hood & Heald 2006; Grimmelikhuijsen 2012)
- Also seen as a potential driver of improved governmental performance (Mulgan 2012)
- *But* does transparency necessarily correlate with trust?
- Presupposition underpins much contemporary policy: register of interests, Freedom of Information (FOI), publication of performance data etc..
- Some potential questions:
  - Do partnership-based models of delivery produce more effective policy outcomes but less transparency?
  - Does transparency hinder trust? Unnecessarily disrupting existing networks & mechanisms of providing public goods?

# Measuring Transparency

- Attempts to measure transparency have varied from computer-mediated transparency (Meijer 2009) to data dissemination (Hollyer et al. 2014) to surveys based on the perception of transparency (Park & Blenkinsopp 2016)
- Objective vs. Subjective indicators
- Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2013) note different characteristics of computer-mediated transparency:
  1. *Information completeness* – whether the information is disclosed fully (not simply quantity)
  2. *Colour of information* - the degree of positiveness of the information (extent to which information is coloured by a politically favourable interpretation)
  3. *Usability of information* – not simply providing information, but way in which information is offered to the public is key (timely & understandable)

# Objective Measure: HRV Model

- Hollyer et al. (2014) construct a measure which treats transparency as a latent predictor of the reporting or non-reporting of data in the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI) data series
- Analyses 240 items corresponding to 240 variables consistently collected by the WDI over time
- WDI data from other international agencies that, in turn, obtain their data from national statistical offices
- A proxy measure of governments' efforts to collect & disseminate economically relevant information
- Also WDI omits data considered "questionable"

Income payments (BoP, current US\$)  
 Goods exports (BoP, current US\$)  
 Net income (BoP, current US\$)  
 Goods imports (BoP, current US\$)  
 Net trade in goods and services (BoP, current US\$)  
 Commercial service imports (current US\$)  
 Service imports (BoP, current US\$)  
 Changes in net reserves (BoP, current US\$)  
 Exports of goods, services and income (BoP, current US\$)  
 Current account balance (BoP, current US\$)  
 Net trade in goods (BoP, current US\$)  
 Commercial service exports (current US\$)  
 Service exports (BoP, current US\$)  
 Trade in services (% of GDP)  
 Net current transfers (BoP, current US\$)  
 Transport services (% of service imports, BoP)  
 Computer, communications and other services (% of commercial service imports)  
 Income receipts (BoP, current US\$)  
 Computer, communications and other services (% of commercial service exports)  
 Communications, computer, etc. (% of service exports, BoP)  
 Gross savings (current LCU)  
 Travel services (% of service imports, BoP)  
 Travel services (% of service exports, BoP)  
 Adjusted savings: net national savings (current US\$)  
 Adjusted savings: gross savings (% of GNI)  
 Transport services (% of service exports, BoP)  
 Current transfers, receipts (BoP, current US\$)  
 Adjusted net savings, excluding particulate emission damage (current US\$)  
 Natural gas rents (% of GDP)  
 Oil rents (% of GDP)  
 CO2 emissions from transport (million metric tons)  
 Electricity production from renewable sources (kWh)  
 Alternative and nuclear energy (% of total energy use)  
 Electricity production from oil sources (kWh)  
 Energy imports, net (% of energy use)  
 CO2 emissions from other sectors, excluding residential buildings and commercial  
 Energy production (kt of oil equivalent)  
 CO2 emissions from electricity and heat production, total (million metric tons)  
 Electricity production from hydroelectric sources (kWh)  
 Electricity production from natural gas sources (kWh)  
 Combustible renewables and waste (metric tons of oil equivalent)  
 Electricity production from coal sources (kWh)  
 Fossil fuel energy consumption (% of total)  
 Electricity production from renewable sources, excluding hydroelectric (kWh)  
 CO2 emissions from residential buildings and commercial and public services (mil  
 Energy use (kt of oil equivalent)  
 CO2 emissions from manufacturing industries and construction (million metric ton  
 Electricity production from nuclear sources (kWh)  
 Road sector diesel fuel consumption (kt of oil equivalent)  
 Electric power consumption (kWh)  
 Electric power transmission and distribution losses (kWh)  
 Private capital flows, total (BoP, current US\$)  
 Trade (% of GDP)  
 Final consumption expenditure, etc. (constant 2000 US\$)  
 Adjusted savings: education expenditure (current US\$)  
 Household final consumption expenditure, etc. (constant 2000 US\$)  
 Foreign direct investment, net (BoP, current US\$)  
 GNI (constant 2000 US\$)  
 Gross capital formation (constant 2000 US\$)  
 General government final consumption expenditure (constant 2000 US\$)  
 Imports of goods and services (constant 2000 US\$)  
 Terms of trade adjustment (constant LCU)  
 Exports as a capacity to import (constant LCU)  
 Exports of goods and services (constant 2000 US\$)  
 Gross national expenditure (constant 2000 US\$)  
 Forest rents (% of GDP)  
 Agricultural raw materials imports (% of merchandise imports)  
 Adjusted savings: consumption of fixed capital (current US\$)  
 Total natural resources rents (% of GDP)  
 Food exports (% of merchandise exports)  
 Manufactures exports (% of merchandise exports)  
 Mineral rents (% of GDP)  
 Ores and metals imports (% of merchandise imports)  
 Agricultural raw materials exports (% of merchandise exports)

# **Subjective Measure: Park & Blenkinsopp (2016)**

- Face-to-face survey of citizens who visited district offices to file civil applications & public employees involved in processing these applications
- 200 individuals from three districts - total of 600 individuals: 300 citizens & 300 public employees
- Identified 3 measures for 6 attributes of transparency: access, comprehensiveness, timeliness, relevance, quality & reliability
- Respondents invited to score civil applications process against these on a five-point scale, where 5 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree
- Conclude that contextual factors are key – ‘evaluations of transparency by citizens or public employees may differ if the citizen or public employee is affected by an identity and/or negative perception’ (2016, P.16)

# Subjective Measure: Park & Blenkinsopp (2016)

**Table 2.** Question items for transparency.

Attributes	Items	
Access	t1	Few expenses are needed for citizens to get information.
	t2	Citizens can readily access necessary information anywhere.
	t3	The information is available when needed.
Comprehensiveness	t4	The Office provides information that is easy to understand.
	t5	Clear explanations are given.
	t6	Application instructions are easy to follow.
Timeliness	t7	Citizens can confirm the status of their application at any time.
	t8	The Office provides information when changes are made.
	t9	The information is provided in a timely fashion.
Relevance	t10	Civil application guides include all needed information.
	t11	The Office provides information that is essential for the applicants.
	t12	The disclosed information is relevant to citizens in helping them not to make mistakes in their applications.
Quality	t13	The disclosed information is complete.
	t14	The Office provides information that is accurate.
	t15	There are seldom flaws in the information.
Reliability	t16	The information is largely trustworthy.
	t17	The information is correct.
	t18	The Office provides information that is reliable.



# Exploring the Trust-Transparency Dynamic: Existing Studies

- Range of studies explore relationship between trust & transparency (Mason et al. 2013; Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer 2012; de Fine Licht 2011) & comparative, cross-national analysis (Denters 2002; Muñoz 2011; van der Meer 2010; Worthy & Grimmelikhuijsen 2012)
- Grimmelikhuijsen *et al.* (2013) draw on Hofstede (2001) to develop a cross-country comparison with an experimental design (Netherlands & South Korea)
- Conclude ‘national cultural values play a significant role in how people perceive & appreciate government transparency’ (p.584) – potential role of sub-cultures



# **Exploring a Mixed Methods Approach: Building a Trust-Transparency Matrix**

# The 'dependent variable': Trust profiles & the Trust-Transparency matrix

- Trust profiles represent a spectrum of positional types that are drawn from the existing literature
- For example, Putnam's (1995) distinction between generalised & interpersonal trust & Fisher *et al.*'s (2010) identification of three forms of trust: strategic, moral & deliberative
- The second dimension of the dependent variable is the trust-transparency matrix which draws on the developing literature focused on the interplay between trust & transparency (Grimmelikhuijsen, 2012; De Fine Licht, 2011).

# Project rationale:

## The Trust-Transparency matrix

- The project develops the *transparency-trust matrix* as a heuristic tool for comparing processes of multi-level governance, territorial capacity building & public service delivery in 6 territories in 3 comparable EU member-states:
  - *UK* – Wales & South-West England
  - *France* – Brittany & Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes
  - *Germany* - Hesse & Saxony
- Working hypothesis: differentiated polities require different mixes of trust & transparency to ensure the most effective service delivery
- The comparative dimension is strengthened by the concept of multi-level governance systems, which share common traits across our cases, but are also shaped by distinctive state traditions

# Case selection (1)

- EU membership provides the core similarity between the 3 states
- States cover range of logical possibilities for comparison:
  - A federal state (Germany)
  - A predominantly unitary state modified by forms of asymmetrical devolution (United Kingdom)
  - A decentralised but still unitary state (France)
- Working hypothesis: styles of democratic governance are influenced both by types of polity (communicative & coordinating discourse) & by the role assumed by territoriality within these basic constructions of the state (Schmidt 2008)

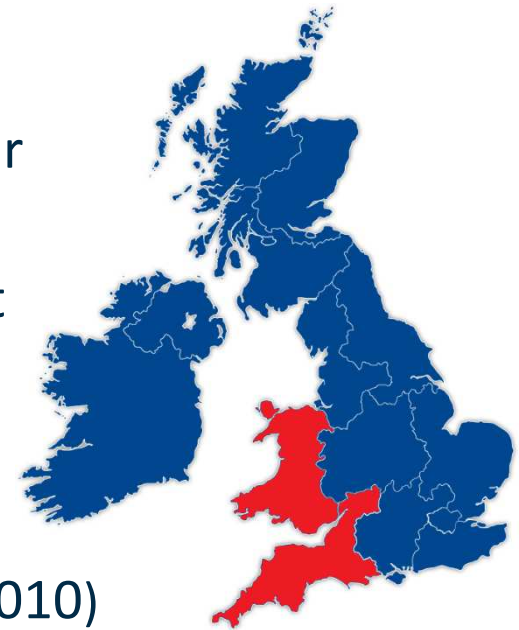
## Case selection (2)

- Furthermore, our case selection rests in part upon a most different logic, based on distinctive positions on the trust-transparency matrix:
- **UK:** high on transparency, low on trust
- **France:** is traditionally low on transparency, high on trust
- **Germany:** occupies a median position in relation to territory, transparency and trust



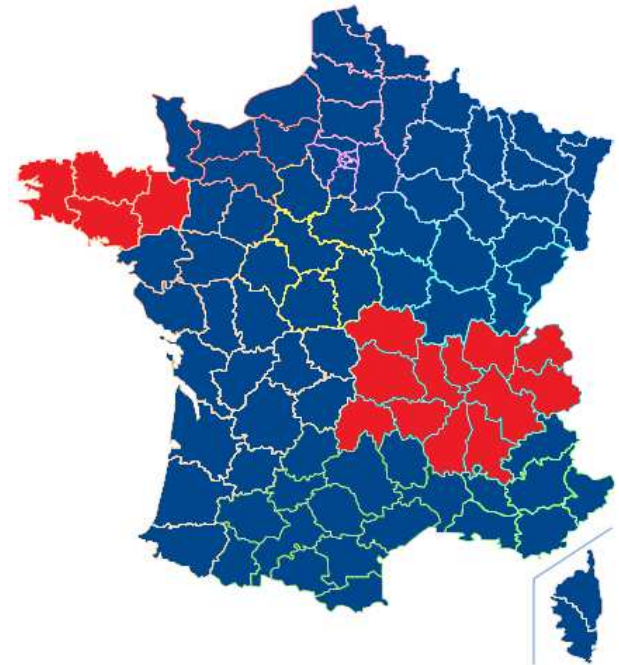
# UK: high on transparency, low on trust

- Concern with transparency interpreted primarily in managerial sense e.g. performance indicator driven regimes by UK central government (Le Grand 2003; Le Gales & Scott 2010)
- Transparency appears as a form of political control associated with central steering & weakness of territorial counterparts - at least in England
- Formal transparency creates low trust, typified in audit regime of local authorities under Labour government (1997-2010).
- Central government demands transparency, but lacks trust in local and devolved authorities
- A lack of trust thereby embeds the dual State, hollows out local authorities & encourages Policy divergence in devolved nations (Bevan, 2010)



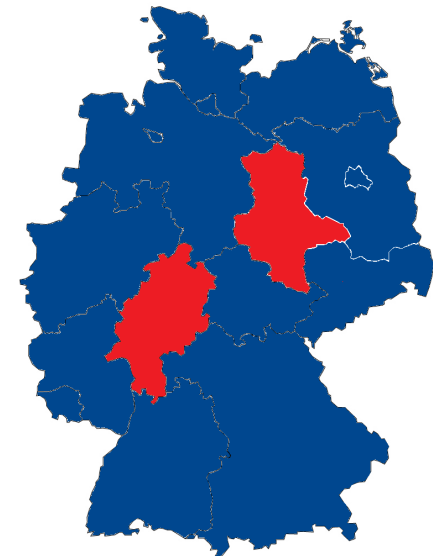
# France: low on transparency, higher on trust

- Fewer pressures for transparency, but a far richer intergovernmental & cross-sectoral landscape
- Cole (2011) concept of networked institutionalism to insist upon formal & informal modes of institutionalization of inter-organisational dynamics in post-decentralisation period
- Informal institutions continue to exercise influence horizontally (e.g. between regional prefects & the mayors of large cities) & vertically (interaction between political, administrative & business elites)
- Fewer pressures towards transparency but new public management doctrines increasingly influential, at least under Sarkozy (Bezes & Le Lidec, 2015)



# Germany: median position in relation to territory, transparency & trust

- If cooperative models of federalism produce the stasis of joint decision-trap, competitive federalism creates its own increasing tensions & incentives for stand-alone strategies from stronger regions (Benz 2007; Dyson, 2015).
- Tensions exist within the German federal model (fiscal transfers from richer länder, competition for scarce resources etc...)
- Exacerbated by formal transparency arrangements - reveal fiscal transfers from the 3 strongest länder to the others
- Economic crisis challenged solidarity basis of fiscal equalisation & produced stand-alone strategies from stronger regions

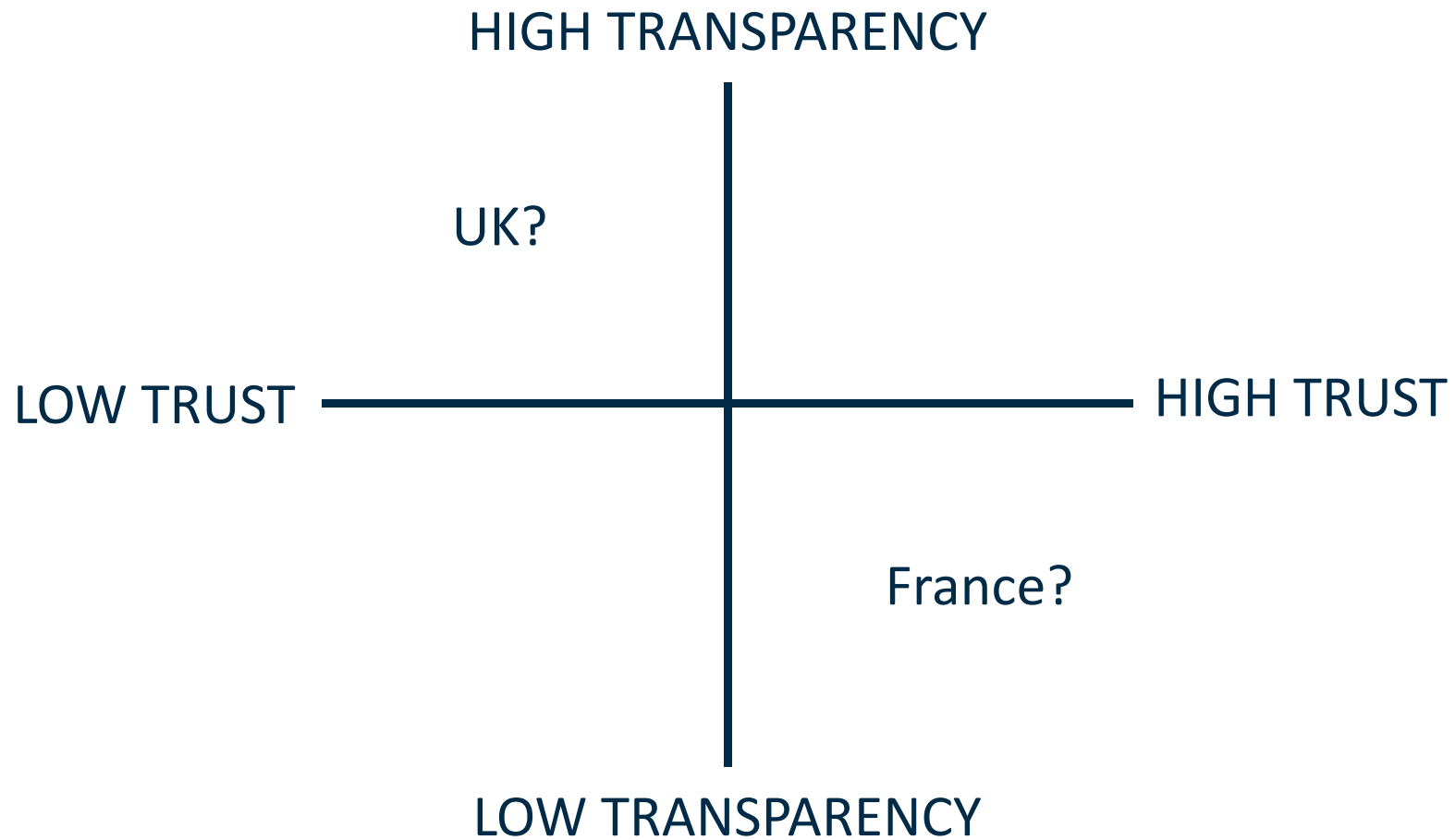




# Research Questions

- **Is there a pan-European convergence in norms of trust & transparency?**
- Are certain types of democratic polity/national systems of multi-level governance better equipped to retain trust than others? What role (if any) does transparency play?
- Are trusting relationships related to national systems of multi-level governance, & the emphasis they place on the scale of governance or the proximity of decision-making?
- Does Europeanisation engender more distant relationships across the policy spectrum?
- Or are these sentiments played out differentially according to the field of policy intervention, or multi-level interactions/national systems of multi-level governance?

# Towards a Tentative Transparency-Trust Matrix



# Research Design

- Mixed methods research design will allow associations between multi-level governance, trust & transparency to be mapped comparatively within & between States
- Enables both measuring of trust & transparency, & exploring the key factors shaping these attitudes
- Combines focus on both civil society & citizens
- 3 core elements:
  1. **National Trust Profiles**
  2. **Regional Trust Profiles**
  3. **Qualitative data analysis**



# National Trust Profiles (1)

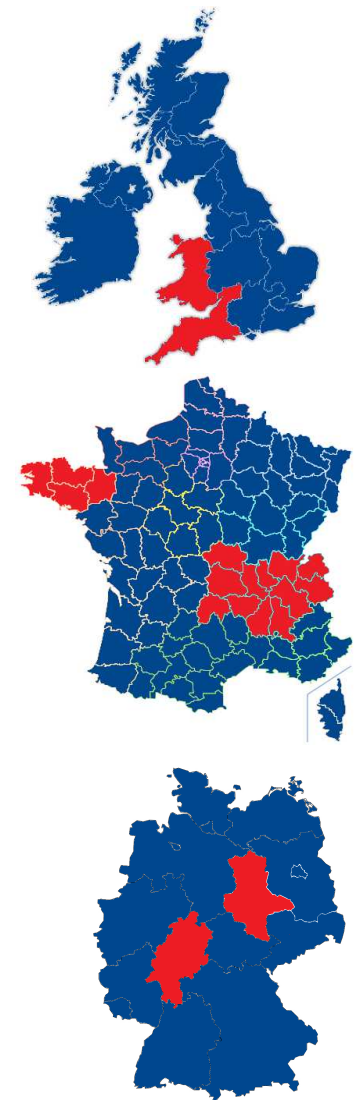
- Secondary quantitative scoping analysis of the 3 EU member-states to compile a cross-national 'trust' profile, designed to elicit variation in attitudes towards political institutions & policy arenas
- Existing data portals will be analysed, including:
  - *Eurobarometer (for levels of governance and the EU dimension)*
  - *European Social Survey (especially the modules in rounds 1-6 on trust)*
  - *Edunet resource on social and political trust*
  - *Edelman Trust Barometer*
  - *European Values Survey (for additional measures of trust)*
- Supplemented with a review of state level survey data which encompass questions around political trust & attitudes towards political institutions

## National Trust Profiles (2)

- To supplement trust indicators - index of key demographic variables at the NUTS 1 & 2 levels will be developed from the Economic & Social Data Service (ESDS), & the Eurostat database of regional statistics (REGIO)
- Explore secondary analysis of institutional capacities – updated Regional Authority Index (Hooghe et al. 2016) & existing research e.g. CANS Project (Henderson et al. 2013)
- This secondary scoping analysis is designed to provide mainly descriptive statistics that will map out their institutional capacities, material resources & trust profiles over time

# Building Regional Trust Profiles (1)

- Original design to undertake a cross-national online representative survey, with a target of 1000 individuals in each of the 6 regions
- Survey to combine core module questions (asked on at least 2 occasions in rounds 1-6 of the European Social Survey) with a series of questions framed to explore trust & transparency within the context of multi-level governance
- *However*, resource limitations will require a combination of secondary analysis of regional level survey data & findings from the qualitative data analysis



## Building Regional Trust Profiles (2)

- *Scalar dimension* - does scale matter, and, if so, how?
- *Social capital & co-creation/production* – does more inclusive decision-making enhance trust & transparency?
- *Institutional configurations & types of democracy* – how are trust & transparency mediated by varying institutional configurations?
- *Variation within states* – to what extent do trust & transparency diverge within States & between strong identity vs. ‘instrumental’ regions?
- *Output legitimacy: the qualities of multi-level governance systems* - delivery of public services involves rival imperatives of functional service delivery (who has the capacity to deliver services?), local political choice (who decides & delivers?), fiscal autonomy & its limits (who pays the piper?), managerial accountability (who regulates) etc...

# Qualitative Data Analysis Part 1:

## Comparing Policy Communities

- Semi-structured interviews with comparable members of territorial policy communities in 6 regions to explore perceptions of & links between trust & transparency within civil society
- Examine trust & transparency within the context of scalar preferences, institutional configurations, identity mixes, & perceptions of social & cultural capital & output legitimacy
- Around 60 semi-structured interviews will take place across the six regions (10 per region) with interviewees drawn from functionally equivalent panels, determined via purposive sampling
- Once anonymised & coded, the semi-structured interviews will be delivered as a dataset using NVivo 11



# Qualitative Data Analysis Part 2:

## Focus Groups

- Focus groups in each region to explore perceptions of & links between trust & transparency amongst citizens
- Focus groups will introduce an element of *experimental design*, following the approach adopted by Duchesne & Haegel (2004)
- Convening separate focus groups in each region will allow us to test for multi-level dynamics & their potentially differential reception in strong identity & more instrumental regions

# **Qualitative Data Analysis Part 3:**

## **Discourse Analysis**

- Analysis of representations of trust & transparency within the 6 territories
- Also explore relationship to other layers of the multi-level governance system (local, regional, central government & European Union)
- Questions concerning trust and transparency, expressed by politicians, civil society actors, journalists or by electors, will be the object of particular concern in order to allow a meaningful comparison with the focus group deliberations

# Conclusions

- Trust-Transparency matrix aimed at exploring assertion that trust & transparency mixes might vary as much within as across EU member-states
- Key challenges in developing & operationalising the proposed framework:
  - Exploring objectives & subjective measures of 'trust' & 'transparency'
  - Significance of alternative sources of 'trust' & 'transparency' e.g. league tables, performance indicators, interpersonal relations etc...
  - Wide range of potential variables: scale, social and cultural capital, institutional configurations, identity mixes & output legitimacy