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1 Public Values and Political Corruption

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the two main focal points of this study: public values and political corruption. First I discuss public values and value systems and the assessment of their change and continuity in historical perspective. In the same paragraph, since this study is about public values and political corruption, the public-private divide and notions of ‘publicness’ are discussed from a historical perspective. I then turn to the problem of conceptualizing, investigating and defining political corruption and propose a specific ‘neo-classical’ approach to the study of public values and political corruption. I end with a brief overview of existing work on Dutch political corruption to situate this study in its historiographical setting.

1.2 Public values: dynamics, classifications and ‘publicness’

Values are the subject of intense debate and study, especially when it concerns public life. ‘Good’ public administration can mean something different to every individual or group. Therefore, in making and executing public policy values are often contested and choices for specific values invariably have to be made. The importance of public values is reflected in much recent social scientific inquiry. Questions include what public values are (Bozeman, 2007, 2009; Gortner, 1994; Kamto, 1997; Kernaghan, 2000; Rezsohazy, 2001: 14; Stever, 2001: 629; Van Wart, 1998) or how to classify or arrange them (Bozeman, 2008; Rutgers, 2008b; Schein, 1987, 1999; Schreurs, 2003; Van Wart, 1998). Other questions concern public value ‘trade-offs’ in actual policy implementation (Bozeman, 2008; Dobel, 1999; De Graaf & Van der Wal, 2010) or which values are appropriate for public administration given its specific nature and responsibility (Bozeman, 2002, 2007; Denhardt, 2004; Gilman & Lewis, 1996; Spicer, 2001; Van der Wal, 2006, 2008). Likewise, the ‘balancing’ of values is a constant concern for many (Copp, 1995; Goodsell, 1989; Hood, 2000; Van Wart, 1998). Moynihan (2009: 820), for instance, mentions Wise who suggests that the ultimate legitimacy of administration rests on its ability to offer a framework to manage competing values and trade-offs.

Values, as MacIntyre (1981: 5-6) writes, are tied to changing social settings. For this reason a sociological definition provided by Oyserman is adopted in this study. To Oyserman “values are patterns of regulations, accepted as desirable by persons in a given culture or family environment, and serve as guiding principles in their lives [...] they can be thought of as priorities, internal compasses or springboards for action – moral imperatives. In this way values or mores are implicit or explicit guidelines for action, general scripts framing what is sought after and what is to be avoided” (2001: 16148, 16150). Oyserman furthermore writes how “values are at the heart of human enterprise; embedded in social systems, they are what makes social order both possible and resistant to change. Values are more than individual traits. They are social agreements about what is right, good to be cherished” (Ibid., 16151). Obviously, different societies or social orders judge behaviour differently and perceptions of what is right or good invariably change. As a result, ideas about what is considered corrupt
become highly contextual and contingent, implying that understanding changing values and perceptions of political corruption requires a historical contextual approach (see chapter three).

Value systems are collections of values. Again, Oyserman provides a suitable definition for this study. He writes how value systems “represent what is expected and hoped for, what is required and what is forbidden. Value systems are not reports of actual behaviour but systems of criteria by which behaviour is judged and sanctions are applied” (Ibid., 16151) More than one value system can therefore exist at any one time, which sometimes causes clashes of values in the same administrative system. This is essentially what Riggs (1964) has called ‘polynormativism’: the need to answer to two (or more?) normative frameworks, which are usually but not always incommensurable. Von Thiessen (cf. 2009: 94-98; 2010) takes a historical perspective on this and speaks of Normenpluralität or value pluralism (see also chapters eight and nine). Others equally point to this. Schreurs (2003: 37-39) has noted how value systems sometimes support one another but can also co-exist in completely isolated spheres.

Public value dynamics: diversity, change and continuity

In The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Max Weber (1864 – 1920) wondered how banking and other money-making pursuits become honourable at some point in the modern age “after having stood condemned or despised as greed, love of lucre, and avarice for centuries past?” (cf. Hirschman, 1977: 9, 130-131; Weber, 1958: 74). Weber's question essentially concerned diversity, change and continuity (cf. Raadschelders, 2000: 88; Tholfsen, 1967: 6-7) of public values and value systems. He noticed that acts are judged differently throughout time and depending on context (compare also the work of Norbert Elias). In the scale of medieval values money lending was for instance ranked lower than honour or courage. It is one of the essential aims of this study to shed light on how such value dynamics might occur. For Weber (see also chapter two) bureaucratization was a core element in this. From a Weberian point of view corruption is the deficient rationalization of the public service. It is a phase on the route from patrimonial to rational legal authority (Hoeijes, 1977: 53-55; see also Rubinstein, 1983). As such, Weber had a notion of changing value systems as a transition from one phase to another. “For him”, write Rubinstein & De Graaf, “corruption was the hallmark of an earlier, more ‘primitive’ stage of society, and would eventually vanish with the triumph of a professionalized bureaucracy” (2010: 21).

Clashing value systems do not, of course, necessarily have to lead to public value dynamics or evolution of values and value systems. Clashes are, in other words, neither necessary nor sufficient cause for change. At the same time, research has provided some interesting results with regard to this link. Various recent historical studies have shown how public values do come to change as a result of clashes and transitions between different phases of development. Wagenaar & Van der Meij (2006) have done so when discussing the moral dilemmas of a seventeenth century Dutch bailiff. In a different article (2005), they applied Riggs’ idea of polynormativism to a seventeenth century case of corruption to the same effect (compare also Nützenadel, 2009; Von Thiessen, 2009, 2010). In a corruption case of a seventeenth century public magistrate, Hoenderboom and Kerkhoff (2008) have shown how accusations of political corruption often occurred when different value systems clashed. Attempts to show the existence of different value systems over time have been made by Kerkhoff et al. (2010) and by Wagenaar (2010: 1-2) who juxtaposed so-called face-to-face...
societies with more bureaucratic ones. Face-to-face society’s highly personal and ‘particularistic’ norms could easily come into conflict with the impersonal and ‘universalistic’ norms attached to the budding bureaucracy also known in early modern society. In effect, there were often two distinct moral codes and administrators would often be judged according to both. Behaviour was considered corrupt as soon as the balance was disturbed (cf. Kerkhoff, et al., forthcoming).

Aforementioned studies show that clashes and coexistence of values and value systems bring about change in or at least debate on public values. They show that any public value system, as Alasdair Roberts puts it, is “the product of social struggles and popular arguments about proper conduct [...]. They are artefacts of human behaviour instead of inevitabilities” (1994: 412). This means that when value systems clash, people on all levels, in all times and in all functions have to balance old and new values. Somewhere and somehow, for instance, ‘bureaucratic’ values such as impartiality or neutrality might take over or are added to existing ‘pre-bureaucratic’ values such as honour or wealth. Rezsohazy stresses this very point when he writes that value systems are always ‘moving’. Values are “constantly being added, lost, strengthened, weakened which has an impact on the system as a whole” (2001: 16153). It is also “hierarchically built up, it is a scale of values. The more a value is deeply rooted, the more it takes a central place and the more it is lived intensely, arouses emotion, and mobilizes vehement motions and variations [...]. A set of values is a living system, very complex, open to seesaw motions and variations” (Ibid., 16154). This provides part of an explanation for historical diversity, change and continuity of public values. “Men”, as Rezsohazy writes, “progressively learn the rules of their society”, and that values and value systems are “maintained by conditions of real existence, i.e., if a value or value system appears to work as an efficient guide to life there is no reason to change them. Values are also maintained, reinforced, and changed through social approval or disapproval. Conformity is rewarded, deviance is penalized” (Ibid., 16154). Values in a system of course also change as they are “upgraded, downgraded, incorporated or exiled, intensified or weakened etc. according to changes in social environment”. This is in line with Beck-Jørgensen’s argument (2009: 456) that approaches to value change need to read values in their relevant political-ideological and philosophical context. This position is adopted in this present study as well.

Classifications of public values

While few would really argue that values are not contextual, contingent or changing, this has not stopped people from making lists and/or classifications. Well known are the four cardinal virtues of determination (fortitude), temperance (temperentia), justice (justitia) and practical wisdom (prudentia), or the three theological virtues of hope (spes), faith (fides) and charity (caritas) as they are provided by Plato’s Politia, Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics or Cicero’s De Officis and by Christian scholars such as Thomas Aquinas (Nieuwenburg, 2001: 33). In more recent times many others have tried to distinguish levels, classifications or categories of public values (See for overviews: Rutgers, 2008b; Schreurs, 2003). Recent attempts at categorization and classification can be found in the work of Schein (1987: 15-18; 1999: 15-26), Gilman & Lewis (1996: 517), Van Wart (1998: 166-171), Stever (2001: 629) and Beck Jørgensen & Bozeman (2007: 360-361). These attempts, despite definite merit, reveal some crucial difficulties that ensure that this present study does not provide a quantitative analysis, theoretical classification
and/or categorization of public values found in the cases between 1748 and 1813. A first difficulty, exemplified by the work of Schein and Van Wart (cf. Rutgers 2008b: 100-101), is that the basis for many classifications of and distinctions between different types of public values are not clear and that they often remain abstract and thus lack (much desired) precision. A second problem is that any classification and/or categorization inherently negates the contextual and contingent nature of public values. Rutgers (2008b: 109), for instance, states that “despite all these attempts it is hard to find any self-evident core values, or categorizations or hierarchies of values that can simply be applied universally in theory or practice”. Schreurs (2003: 41) similarly argued that lists, rankings and classifications do not actually teach us much about the meaning of particular values. Furthermore, while categorizations, classifications and rankings might bring order to the multitude of values, she argues that they tell us little about their actual foundation (Ibid., 35-36), about the relationship between public values, decisions and actions or about the actual function of a value in a specific context or situation (Ibid., 40). From a more historical point of view we can, thirdly, add to this that classifications and/or categorizations can only (potentially) tell us something about the relative importance of public values in a particular time and place. They are, therefore, unable or unsuitable to express or explain public value change over longer periods of time.

*Shifting notions of ‘publicness’*

Distinctions between something public and something private have always been a major element of almost any culture (Rutgers, 2004: 138). In public administration literature it has, in any case, been a fundamental empirical and normative distinction. If we want to understand public administration and its underlying morality – both in past and present – we need to know what ‘publicness’ means, not least because publicness is directly linked to public values and perceptions of political (i.e., public) corruption. Shifting or changing notions of publicness are, in other words, connected to changing notions of community, society and/or citizenship and therefore to changing public values and perceptions of political corruption. When ‘the public’ becomes increasingly separated from ‘the private’ we might, for instance, begin to find reasons why behaviour is judged differently in the two spheres. Expectations, assumptions and value judgments concerning the acts of public officials tend to vary as they are tied to varying notions of ‘publicness’ or ‘privateness’.

However, determining a public-private divide for times past is difficult. For most of history ‘modern’ notions of public and private – such as those based on organizational dimensions (cf. Rainey, et al., 1976) such as legal status and legal and regulatory power (cf. Dijkstra & Van der Meer, 2003) or funding and ownership (cf. Wamsley & Zald, 1973) – did not exist. A public office could often not be separated from a private person and his (women were rarely if ever involved in politics or administration) personal finances and the execution of what we would now call public tasks was often in the hands of ‘private’ actors such as the church or well-off individuals without formal legal status and regulatory power even being an issue. While a purely organizational perspective on the public – private divide is therefore too narrow for the question and aims of this study, the rise and/or increasing importance of legal criteria in particular will prove to be important. We will see how notions of publicness did indeed shift with their increased importance.
In addition, taking a somewhat broader perspective on the divide (or rather dichotomy, see Rutgers 2004), allows us to distinguish different notions of ‘publicness’ that have emerged throughout history. Weintraub (1997: 7) provides an overview of traditions that have affected the notion of publicness in history. Two of them especially help us determine publicness in the period between 1748 and 1813. The first is the so-called republican-virtue (or ‘classical’) model that sees the public realm in terms of a political community and citizenship, analytically distinct from both market and administrative state. Private, here, pertains to one’s household, the home and family. In general this classic model was a combination of attention for public duties and common good on the one hand and private interests and benefits on the other but in which the former was morally superior to latter (cf. Pesch, 2005: 39; Rutgers, 2003a: 20).

According to Weintraub this general classical model was replaced in more recent times by a second, liberal-economic, model in which a clearer separation was made between state administration and market economy. In this tradition scholars such as John Locke (1632 – 1704) and Adam Smith (1723 – 1790) created the idea of a private sphere of ‘natural’ individuals guided by self-interest and the market. It meant, according to Weintraub, the complete reversal of the classical republican virtue model in which cooperation and collaboration between equal individuals was supposed to lead to a public collective (the political community).

A similar and related shift supposedly occurred with regard to the meaning of ‘the common good’ and the ‘public interest’ as opposed to the ‘private good’ or ‘commercial interest’. According to Münkler & Fischer, the early modern period – roughly from the Reformation onwards – reflected a paradigm shift “in which the old European ideal of political virtue, in the sense of the citizen’s voluntary orientation toward the public good” was replaced (2001: 12527). Now, rational self-interest emerged as a core concept “in the context of a market society in the course of self-differentiation, with the state now simply expected to set the conditions for maximized economic well-being of the citizenry in a civil society” (cf. Hirschman, 1977: 32-33; Münkler & Fischer, 2001: 12527). It remains to be seen, however, whether the shifts described by Weintraub and, to a lesser extent, by Münkler & Fischer also occurred in the Dutch eighteenth century context. For instance, while various early-modern authors did in fact start to discuss economic self-interest, they often found this – or wanted this to be – fully reconcilable with attending to the common good. Examples of this can be found in Bernard Mandeville (1670 – 1733) (cf. Van Erp & Van Gils, 1987: 110; Münkler & Fischer, 2001: 12527), in Montesquieu (1698 – 1755) (cf. Hirschman, 1977; xxii, 10) or Adam Smith (1723 – 1790). The latter famously argued that citizens generally do not promote the public interest and only intend their own gain but also said that people (should) realize that a common good is essential to protect any self-interest (Münkler & Fischer, 2001: 12527).

It is not unimaginable that Dutch authors between 1748 and 1813 also favoured similar combinations of ‘classical’ and ‘modern’ value systems. This would shed more light on public value change and I will return to this question in chapters five and nine. For now, however, it remains to be specified that the link between private and public interest (and common good) on the one hand and public values and perceptions of political corruption on the other hand is very important for the purposes of this study. To Blitz “public interests are what several of us happen to desire, or means to satisfaction that we generally want” (2001: 12547). In this way the scope of public interests becomes very broad to signify “anything that is not private, so that regard for the public interests means any regard for interests or groups that are not strictly or exclusively one’s own” (Lewin, 1991). Adding to the confusion about how to define public interests (and common goods) is the fact that there often exist different publics or groups who
all have their own interests (cf. Rutgers, 2004: 140). This leads to important realizations: first, there are as many public interests and common goods as there are publics. Second, we therefore need to accept that there is no single public interest or common good and third, we need to realize that public interests and common goods are always contextual and open to debate and discussion. This has led Witteveen to call the public interest a “useful fiction” (op cit. Becker, 2007: 31). Becker (Ibid., 29) equally wrote that the concept “does not represent an actual existing value system but rather a point of orientation for everyone in society […] it is an imaginary, overarching moral focal point positioned away from all sorts of societal forces”.

While public interest and public good are notoriously difficult to define we still need to do so because they are invariably connected to what are considered public values and what is perceived as political corruption. One approach to the public interest is that of political philosopher Brian Berry who noted that “the only really satisfactory way of approaching ‘the public interest’ is to take a great number of examples of actual uses – and see what could be made of them” (op cit. in Bozeman, 2007: 84). According to Bozeman few have answered this call but in this present study I attempt to provide at least a sample. In order to do so I use Bozeman’s definition of the public interest as a guideline. This reads: “in a particular context, the public interest refers to the outcomes best serving the long-run survival and well-being of a social collective construed as a ‘public’” (Ibid., 12). It is a workable definition because it is changeable, adaptable, context-sensitive and situation-dependent. Finally, it helps us define what public values are. Bozeman again provides a definition – which is adopted in this study – of public values as “those providing normative consensus about (a) the rights, benefits, and prerogatives to which citizens should (and should not) be entitled; (b) the obligations of citizens to society, the state, and one another; and (c) the principles on which governments and policies should be based” (Ibid., 17).

1.3 Concepts, theories and definitions of political corruption

Any society needs a social moral code if people are to live together. Social codes consist of public values and serve as standards by which we judge our actions and those of others in society (cf. Copp, 1995: 19). However, these codes or moral standards are made by people with different and often conflicting agenda’s, priorities and ideas on right and wrong. This means there are often various different moral standards that are derived from different sources in any given society (what is corrupt, as mentioned, depends on the questions who, when and where). If we are to define political corruption as the deviation from certain standards in society this means that whether something is corrupt or not is continuously open for debate. Precisely for this reason Caiden wrote how “theorizing about corruption, like theorizing about most things, is a hazardous venture but probably even more so. It requires speculation and conjecture, concluding proof based on evidence, and universal acceptance. Speculation can be wide of the mark. Accumulated facts can be quite deceptive and misleading. Universal acceptance can be impossible to achieve given the variety of belief systems that exist at any one time” (2010: 9). In the following, the issue of delineating, defining and studying political corruption is discussed in more detail. I will deal with the concept of political corruption, with academic corruption discourses (concerning the way in which political corruption can best be investigated and understood) and with different associated definitions of political corruption. Benefits and downsides of the various approaches and definitions lead me to discuss a specific ‘neo-
classical’ approach. This approach will be one of the theoretical and methodological foundations of this present study because it is capable of tackling the contextual, contingent and changing nature of public values and perceptions of political corruption, also in historical context (see chapter three).

The concept of political corruption

Inherent difficulties to define political corruption have led Robert Williams to write that “it is a curious state of affairs when an academic mini-industry and the policy agendas of development professionals are dominated by a concept which most participants in the debate are reluctant or unable to define” (1999: 503). A single uncontested definition of political corruption seems nowhere in sight and it remains, in the words of Anechiario and Jacobs, “a social, legal, and political concept laden with ambiguity and bristling with controversy” (1996: 16). The truth of this statement quickly becomes apparent from a brief look at dictionaries or encyclopaedias. Contrary to the common modern-day negative connotation of corruption the first encyclopaedia of Diderot and d’Alembert, for instance, provided the philosophical view of corruption as a generating or creating (i.e., a positive) force. D’Alembert discussed the view that “corruption is the state by which one thing ceases to be what it once was. One can say that wood is corrupted when it is no longer in existence; and that instead of wood, we find fire. Similarly, an egg is corrupted when it ceases to be an egg and we find a chicken in its place for corruption is not taken here in the usual sense. Hence the philosophical axiom, that the corruption of one thing is the creation of another” (d’Alembert, 1754: 278).

However, corruption is more often regarded as something negative and/or detrimental. The Oxford English Dictionary provides a number of interesting and common definitions. Corruption means dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery or the action or effect of making someone or something morally depraved; the process by which a word or expression is changed from its original state to one regarded as erroneous or debased or the process of decay; putrefaction. The term stems from the Latin corruptus, past particle of corrumpere, which is to ‘mar, bribe, destroy’ and is built from cor ('altogether') and rumpere ('to break'). Many dictionaries define corruption similarly, for instance as the use of or participation in decay, bribery, and forgery. Sometimes it is equated to the sale of offices (venality) or is described more broadly as degeneration, deterioration, adulteration, bastardization, malversation, falsification, irregularities, shady dealings, being diluted or watered-down, depravation, perversity, turpitude or vice. The context and use of the word is – naturally in the case of language – decisive. Corruption in the sense of decay or degeneration can for instance equally be linked to food (a corrupt apple), language (the corruption of a text), honour (the corruption of blood) or behaviour (a corrupt official). In fact Heidenheimer (1989a: 7-8) once noted how only one of nine commonly accepted definitions for the term corruption in the Oxford English Dictionary is applicable to political contexts.

We are dealing with two important and related difficulties here. First, there is the issue of (seeming) anachronism. The use of the term political corruption for times when the term might not have existed or might not have been used can, in other words, be dangerous. The same goes, for instance, for terms such as civil servant or bureaucrat. At the same time, however, the historian of ideas and concepts needs such terms to be able to observe and make sense of things in times past. Also, it need not be anachronistic (or deterministic) as long as the
term is defined in a broad enough way. As I will explain later on in this section (on old and new definitions of political corruption and on the proposed neo-classical approach of this study) a broad definition of political corruption leaves room to use a single term for reasons of clarity without in any way fixing its meaning in advance.

The second issue concerns assessing continuity and change in language and meaning. This is an essential part of historians’ attempts to understand developments in political and social thought, intellectual history and history of ideas and can be vital to understand origins and past uses of concepts that are still central today (Richter, 1995: 5) but it remains a difficult task. Continuities in political language may, for instance, persist despite changes in political circumstances; shifts may also occur in the words or expressions designating a concept in the same or different periods; a concept may remain fixed while the terms regarded as its antonyms may alter (a term such as despotism may change meaning when opposite is thought liberty and another when opposite is anarchy). Furthermore, change in meaning can of course occur but then we have to ask ourselves how periods of crisis, of accelerated, radical, or revolutionary change produce fundamental disagreements about the languages of politics and society? (Ibid., 9-10).

I cannot here discuss all the problems associated with the conceptual history of corruption in detail. However, I do wish to mention two fundamental elements. The first has been noted by Richter, among others, who wrote that “the presence or absence of conceptual distinctions in the language of politics reveals much about the government of a society as well as about the conceptual resources available to those participating in discussions of its arrangements” (Ibid., 9). Such attempts to link changing language to descriptions of politics and political change have, most notably, been made by Reichardt and others (1985) in the case of France and by Brunner, Conze & Koselleck (1972; 1982; 1985) in the case of Germany. The latter’s Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe proposed their famous – and of particular relevance for this study, see chapters three and five – Sattelzeit hypothesis with which they marked the period 1750 – 1850 in German history as one of major transition in political and administrative development (cf. Van Sas, 2005: 18). Koselleck and others linked transitions in political, social and economic structures to changes in the meaning and function of key political and social concepts. They investigated not just the concepts but the wider history as well and connected conceptual and social history in which they related thought to changes in the structures of government and society (Richter, 1995: 19-20). For the German situation they found four crucial elements contributing to changing concepts: Demokratisierung (a broader public of readers and the emergence of new genres of communication), Verzeitlichung (concepts became more dynamic because of democratization and came to refer to an as yet unrealized future), Ideologisierbarkeit (the content of concepts shifted from being concrete and specific to being abstract, allowing them to be used for general ideologies) and finally Politisierung (concepts were connected to current political conflict). As we will see such things also happened in the Dutch context.
Discourses and theories on political corruption

Political corruption is a phenomenon studied in a variety of disciplines, such as economics, political science, law or anthropology. This has resulted in several academic discourses trying to theorize about the concept and explaining what political corruption is and why it occurs. Recently a useful overview of eight theoretical approaches has been provided (cf. De Graaf, et al., 2010a: 17-19). I will briefly discuss four of these that are most relevant for the conclusions of this study, i.e., the case studies that follow are meant to put these four in perspective and to assess them critically.

A first approach takes the institutional design of political systems as a core focus. Here, institutions are believed “to shape behaviour which makes some political systems (presidential, federal) more prone to political corruption than others (parliamentary, unitary)” (De Graaf, et al., 2010a: 18-19). Closely related to this approach are (neo-) institutional theories (Hall & Taylor, 1996; March & Olsen, 1989; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) that emphasize the influence of institutions (such as rules, symbols, routines, norms or scripts) on individual preferences and action in collective social settings. “To act appropriately”, as De Graaf et al. write, then “simply means to act in accordance with institutionalized practices of a collective. Corruption or deviance from accepted norms and standards occurs when institutions do not fulfil this ‘sense making’ function and therefore create uncertainty and disorder” (2010: 18). This “normative version of institutionalism”, according to Peters, “has direct relevance for understanding corruption” as it “stresses the central role of ‘appropriateness’ within organizations and institutions and assumes that individual behaviours can be shaped by institutional values, symbols, myths and routines” (2010: 83; cf. Tavits, 2007). Peters relates the institutional design of political systems to the quality of government and addresses the question “how to design the interaction between state and society in ways that facilitate the quality of governance, defined broadly as well, as to minimize the probability of corrupt practices”. An institutional design approach therefore makes sense to explain political corruption although we should be careful to directly link structure to levels of corruption (cf. Peters, 2010: 95-96).

Second there is a structural functionalist approach to political corruption. This approach views society as a collection of coherent systems in which all societal phenomena have a function. Scholars with this approach ask which function corruption fulfils in a specific society (Hoetjes, 1977: 55-57; 1982: 67-69; Riggs, 1964; De Zwart, 2010). Corruption can for instance provide protection and influence for groups in society that possess material wealth but lack political influence (Waquer & McCall, 1991: 62). Similarly, brokerage (according to some a form of political corruption) can serve to facilitate action between central and local levels (Blockmans, 1985; Huiskamp, 1995). A structural-functionalist approach raises many interesting issues. Could it be, for instance, that specific forms of political corruption, when the context allows them to exist, actually initiate and stimulate political processes that might otherwise never have been possible? (cf. Weliskopp, 2010: 222). Can political corruption also be a good thing? Without it, some things might simply not get done or continue to be done ‘the wrong way’. Such a perspective might also lead one to take a more relativist stance. If what some call political corruption simply works and/or is accepted in a specific context who is anyone to decide this is wrong? A closer look at the actual function of corruption can provide, as Weliskopp says, some distance between “real political scenario’s” and “moral-philosophical fiction” (2010: 221).
A third approach that is often used to understand and explain political corruption is the institutional economics (or rationality and economy) approach. It has, arguably, been the most dominant in recent decades (Lambsdorff, 2002, 2007; Rose Ackerman, 2010). Rose-Ackerman’s landmark study of 1978 was a first systematic application of economics to the study of corruption. In this view corrupt officials are rational utility maximizers who simply take the most profitable course of action in every situation (Rose Ackerman, 1978: 4) or, “corruption occurs where private wealth and public power overlap, it represents the illicit use of willingness-to-pay as a decision-making criterion. A private individual or firm makes a payment to a public official in return for a benefit or to avoid cost” (Rose Ackerman, 2010: 47). There are different sub-theories that belong to this approach as well. A notable one is principal agent theory (Klitgaard, 1988; Rose Ackerman, 1978) which sees “pathologies in the agency/principal relation”, Rose-Ackerman writes, as “at the heart of the corrupt transaction” (2010: 48). The core of the principal-agent problem according to Bozeman (2007: 57) is “how to ensure that the agent (a contractor or employee) will act in the best interest of the employing principal, given differences in motive, information, and preference”. It concerns difficulties that arise because of asymmetric relationships between principal (subordinate) and agent (superior), many of which are inherent in the delegation of legislative authority to bureaucratic agencies. Political corruption according to this approach can be explained as civil servants (agents) violating their official duties (imposed by principals) by favouring certain persons (clients) for material rewards (cf. Klitgaard, 1988: 24). However, both the institutional economics and principal agent approaches have attracted their share of criticism (cf. Rothstein, 2010; Williams, 1999). Most notable is the limitation to strictly economic motives and rational behaviour of individuals. Emotionally motivated political corruption employed for non-economic purposes seems to largely fall outside its scope. As we will see in the following case studies, this criticism can be verified.

The fourth approach is Weberian ideal-typical. The theoretical work on bureaucratization of Max Weber (1864 – 1920) has been of crucial relevance to the study of political corruption even though it seems not to have been a major (or rather: explicit) topic for Weber himself. His approach is often used to view political corruption as the deficient rationalization of the public service. Corruption is a phase on the route from patrimonial to rational legal authority (Hoetjes, 1977: 53-55; cf. Rubinstein, 1983). In short: the more bureaucratic a society becomes the less political corruption will occur because of the growing amount of and adherence to bureaucratic rules and regulations and (possibly) because of coinciding evolving ideas on neutrality, common good and public versus private interest. In many ways the Weberian ideal-typical approach is able to better incorporate and use elements that are problematic in some of the other approaches mentioned earlier. The bureaucratic ideal-type for instance enables us to analyze any shift from private to public or vice versa and is able to provide – at least in an ideal-typical way – solid standards (i.e., legal-rational rules) for a better use of more public office centred approaches. From a historical point of view it also helps to chart and understand important topics for the study of political corruption and public values such as state-formation or the link between state and society. Furthermore, it is able to tell us a lot about ‘old and new’ political corruption and the long term influence of new institutions and organizational reform on changing public morality (cf. Kerkhoff, 2011). I will discuss this in more detail in chapters two, six and nine.
Old and new definitions of political corruption

Since the concept of corruption is so difficult to delineate, problems of definition inevitably arise. These problems usually start with scope. In the introduction I mentioned that corruption in its ‘classical’ use (by Plato, Thucydides, Cicero and, partly, Machiavelli) was often understood in a general or broad way. It referred to the overall moral and political health or decay of whole societies (Friedrich, 1989: 18; Heidenheimer, 1989a: 4-5; Johnston, 1996: 322) and was often used to speak of “the corruption of the body politic” or “the decay of a political order” (Dobel, 1978: 959). Plato wrote of corrupted constitutions that were guided not by law but by the interests of the ruling elite. Cicero saw political corruption as one of the chief causes of the decay of the Roman Republic; Montesquieu (partially, see below) saw political corruption as the decay of an essentially good political system (i.e., monarchy) into despotism (Friedrich, 1989: 17-18). For Montesquieu, corruzione meant deterioration in the quality of government, no matter for what reasons it occurs (Hirschman, 1977: 40). Based on such views, Dobel defines this classical notion of political corruption as “the moral incapacity of citizens to make reasonably disinterested commitments to actions, symbols and institutions which benefit the substantive common welfare” (Dobel, 1978: 960). The essence of political corruption remains “the decline in the ability and willingness of the citizens to act spontaneous or disinteresting to support other citizens or communal institutions” (Ibid., 963). This understanding revolves around key concepts of loyalty and civic virtue and thus encompasses or needs an idea of community or communal welfare (see earlier in this chapter on public interest and common good) and is about selfishness as opposed to altruism. Johnston notes how in its classical (Republican?) meaning “politics was meant to transcend any clash of specific individual interests” (1996: 322).

Although political corruption in its classical sense was often linked to the general health of the body politic, it could also often refer to economically motivated behaviour and actions of individuals. Aristotle viewed political corruption as the embezzlement of common money and Cicero viewed it as self-interest of civil servants (Tühonen, 2003: 8). Machiavelli is a good example of how both classical (broad) and modern (narrow) understandings could go hand in hand. For him it “refers to a fall from general standards of honesty, fairness, and impartiality which essentially are bureaucratic standards” and “says nothing about the quality of our political leadership or the viability of our political values or style” (cf. Shumer, 1979: 6-7). According to Shumer, Machiavelli “stands in this older tradition of political discourse. For him as for previous political theorists, the concepts of political corruption and health were tools for critical understanding, for understanding the personality of whole political systems, thereby illuminating the significance of specific actions within the polity”. Shumer believes how political corruption to Machiavelli was the mirror image of the healthy Republic but that Machiavelli at the same time deduced from this general view several characteristics of the good individual official or ruler. Healthy politics supposedly created actors who “subordinate all of their own advantage to the common good” and who “with the greatest diligence cared for and preserved things private and public” who were “prudent and just” and “conducted themselves according to the laws”. Political corruption was consequently described by Machiavelli as abuse of liberty, licentiousness, lust, lavishness, avarice, ambition, violence, and acting without having any regard to any civil rights (Shumer, 1979: 8-9).
Some authors (cf. Hirschman, 1977: 40) have suggested that the ‘classical’ component of a definition of political corruption has vanished in recent decades to make way for entirely narrow and legally and/or economically based definitions. Shumer (1979: 6-8), for instance, wrote how “the sense that the polity itself may be corrupt is [at present, TK] lost from an older usage”. Political corruption has become “a form of personal dishonesty. Acts of corruption are the misdeeds of some politicians, or of some citizens […]. Corruption refers to the use of bribes, to gain political ends or positions”. In order to “break the bonds of contemporary concepts with their claims of neutrality,” Shumer continued, “we must recall an older vocabulary designed for understanding and judging the fundamental bases of political life”. More recently Johnston wrote how “as the scope of politics broadened, our conception of corruption has however narrowed. Societies have become secularized and fragmented; many are seen more as arenas for contention among groups and interests than as embodying any coherent system of values; and ethical issues in politics now seems to revolve more around maintaining the fairness of this competition than around the pursuit of fundamental moral goals” (Johnston, 1996: 322; 2005: 62-63).

The ‘narrowing’ of the definition can be seen in various studies over the past few decades that seem to have taken wider moral issues out of the equation (cf. Williams, 1999: 504). Significant in a move from a ‘wide classic’ to a ‘modern narrow’ definition, as noted by Tihonen (2003: 9), was James Bryce’s late nineteenth century definition of political corruption. This was (1) cash payment to civil servants, (2) another kind of payment to civil servants, (3) speculation on agreements, and (4) favour in nominations. In hindsight, Bryce was an early example of Rose-Ackerman’s institutional economy approach. Much like Rose-Ackerman the crucial elements were bribery and personal gain. With the narrowing of definitions of political corruption (and perhaps of politics itself?) many have taken the same route as Bryce in attempts to find some kind of (single) objective standard to define political corruption and/or improper individual conduct. As Rose-Ackerman wrote: “normative statements about corruption require a point of view, a standard of ‘goodness’, and a model of how corruption works in particular instances” (1978: 9).

Well-known in this respect is Heidenheimer’s distinction (cf. 1970; 1989a) between definitions centred on public office, market and public interest. First, a typical public office centred definition has been provided by Joseph Nye as “behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (close family, personal, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence” (Nye, 1967: 417). Similarly, Scott found the standard of corruption in legal codes and rules that apply to the holder of a public office. To him political corruption was “the violation of formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding wealth or status gains” (Scott, 1972: 4). Of course legal rules and regulations seem solid enough standards by which to measure political corruption. This makes this kind of definition relatively easy to operationalize. However, the obvious downside is that it does not take into account the normative element of political corruption. For this legal rules of public office are too rigid and formal because legal acts can still be morally reprehensible. It also presupposes formal rules, regulations, and clearly defined public roles that do not always exist or have not always existed in times past (cf. Johnston, 1996: 323; Williams, 1999: 504-505).

As a result of the problems inherent in the legal public office definition some tried to break away from it early on. Leff, for instance, viewed political corruption as an ‘extra-legal institution’ (1970: 510). Second, a typical market-centred definition is found in the work of Van
Klaveren who wrote that “a corrupt civil servant regards his public office as a business, the income of which he will […] seek to maximize. The office then becomes a ‘maximizing unit’. The size of his income depends […] upon the market situation and the talents for finding the point of maximal gain on the public’s demand curve” (Heidenheimer, 1989a: 9; Van Klaveren, 1989: 26). This definition is able to take into account the crucial element of maximizing gain but raises much criticism at the same time. Johnston noted it is difficult to say which market one should refer to and the definition also “overlooks the intangible benefits (prestige, promises of political support etc.) that can flow from the abuse of authority” (1996: 323-324).

Third, a public-interest definition has been provided by Carl Friedrich who wrote that “the pattern of corruption can be said to exist whenever a power holder who is charged with doing certain things, i.e., who is a responsible functionary or officeholder, is by monetary or other rewards not legally provided for, induced to take actions which favour whoever provides the rewards and thereby does damage to the public and its interests” (1966: 74). This kind of definition is plausible, for instance, when Scott’s formal legal standards are difficult to find. It also takes into account an important moral aspect of political corruption: the harming of public interests (Johnston, 1996: 324). It becomes less plausible when we notice that it presupposes a distinction between public and private and a fairly clear idea of what constitutes public interests. As we have seen, these two issues are highly contested especially in historical context (cf. Rutgers, 2003a; Wagenaar, 2003).

Between Scylla & Scarybdis

The downsides of the various academic discourses, narrow definitions and single standards make it seem unlikely we will ever be able to present one definition of political corruption. Furthermore, as Kurer notes: the “discussion of the definition of corruption has progressed little since Heidenheimer’s groundbreaking distinction” (2005: 222). While such a statement is somewhat too gloomy it does point to a fundamental problem of common approaches and definitions: they are often too narrow to encompass the broad contextual meaning political corruption often acquires. Some therefore argue for a broader approach. Tiihonen (2003: 9) for instance noted a shift from broad to narrow definitions and in a critique of the use of too narrow definitions by international organizations (such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) he attributed this to the fact that “broader definitions are difficult to handle in comparative studies”. However, to him a broad definition of political corruption is necessary “as a deep feature of political culture. It is not just a question of individuals, but also a question of the political system” (2003: 10). At the same time it is true that while a broad approach might be sensitive to context and is able to provide much detail it is also likely to be unclear, inconsistent and difficult to operationalize. There have been several scholars who “cast their net as widely as possible” (Heidenheimer, 1989a: 7) to come up with a broad definition. Berg et al. (1976: 3) for instance wrote how political corruption refers to any behaviour which “violates and undermines the norms of the system of public order which is deemed indispensable for the maintenance of political democracy”. Such a broad definition essentially prevents people, in the words of Mény & De Souza “from establishing empirically what standards defined political corruption”, which led them to “sacrifice clarity to brevity, in so far as it leaves too implicit how or why behaviour is deviant from which norms” (2001: 2828).
Thus we find ourselves between Scylla and Charybdis. This is described by Williams (1999: 504) who wrote that “if they are to serve a useful role in the subsequent analysis, definitions of social phenomena need to be capacious yet discriminating. If they are too narrowly drawn, they will not be comprehensive. If they are too broad, they may be seen as vague and imprecise”. Both narrow and wide approaches and definitions have benefits and downsides. Each approach and definition discussed so far offers interesting elements that can (at least partly) explain the occurrence of political corruption and its underlying values and assumptions. For example, while Nye’s public office definition or Rose-Ackerman’s institutional economics have their downsides it would be unwise to discard them entirely. On the other hand the downsides of each individual approach and/or definition are such that we have to move beyond their limitations and look for an alternative. Therefore I argue in this study (see also chapter three) that we should return to the classic notion of political corruption in our discussions on the topic while not forgetting more narrow standards. We should adopt a ‘neo-classical’ approach and definition. When we relate political corruption not just to such individual acts but also to wider notions such as (harming) the common good or the public interest it becomes clear why the ‘classical’ idea should be revisited and why the ‘modern’ idea should be revised.

A neo-classical approach

There have been various attempts to overcome the limitations inherent in all too narrow or too wide approaches and definitions of political corruption. Most of them are to be found in a family of approaches labelled ‘neo-classical’, ‘post-positivist’, ‘cultural’ or ‘constructivist’. The various labels point to different common characteristics that are particularly advantageous for investigating changing public values and perceptions of political corruption, especially in historical context. The core of these approaches is a focus on the contextual and contingent nature of political corruption and its various definitions (De Graaf, et al., 2010b: 99). Tänzler (2007) advocates a cultural approach as he investigates the social realities of how political corruption is perceived. Sissener (2001) advocates an ‘anthropological’ perspective and discusses how cultural or anthropological differences (between ‘Western’ and ‘non-Western’ societies for instance) have different opinions on what is corrupt. Foremost in theorizing about a neo-classical approach (I will stick to this term for reasons of clarity) is the American political scientist Michael Johnston who also coined the phrase. Johnston (1996: 329) believes that definitions that classify (individual) behaviour are often too rigid to apply to all times and places. Adapting them to specific historical contexts is likely “to yield categories vague in content and soft at their boundaries”. This should be changed.

Johnston’s approach encompasses all major ‘standards of goodness’ as presented earlier. First it is ‘neo-classical’ as he aims to combine classical notions of the corruption of the body politic with modern notions of individual political corruption (legal, office-centred, economic, public interest etc.). Johnston sees political corruption and improper official conduct as a political and moral issue and not solely as individual acts of public officials. He has a view that is broad enough to encompass wrongful individual behaviour as well as the political and social processes that define it as such. Any definition of political corruption should, according to Johnston, therefore not just look at specific individual actions but at the broader contextual processes of consent, influence, and authority as well (1996: 329-331). Second, his approach is ‘post-positivist’ and ‘cultural’ in that it is not after one truth or out to
find and agree on one correct definition or meaning of a concept (De Graaf, et al., 2010b: 98). Johnston states that “corruption cannot be defined exclusively by legal, market or public opinion criteria” and adds that “a concept of corruption has to be flexible enough to include all these sets of norms” (1996: 333). His definition of political corruption (which is adopted in this study) then becomes “the abuse, according to the legal or social standards constituting a society’s system of public order, of a public role or resource for private benefit” (Ibid.). As such Johnston combines the commonly separated standards such as public office, market, public interest, public opinion into one. Third, the approach is ‘social constructivist’ because it is based on the idea that political corruption is defined through the contestation of aforementioned concepts in specific places and periods. ‘Corrupt’ is what is considered corrupt at a certain place and time and there is no universal or specific definition we can or should all agree upon. In this social constructivist view political corruption is understood as having a social meaning that must be understood in relation to its social setting. This means that its content differs between societies, and groups and individuals within societies and throughout history. Various political and social forces construct the public order of any society. Law, general interest, public opinion and economical motivation are all factors that influence the public domain and each other in one way or another. The neo-classical approach invites us to “consider not only how laws affect behaviour, but also how they might come to fit established customs” (Johnston, 1996: 331). We are invited to investigate how the content of notions such as (but not limited to) ‘abuse’, ‘public role’ and ‘private benefit’ are contested in specific places and periods.

According to Johnston concepts such as political corruption therefore acquire their true meaning in clashes between different views on what is right or wrong. Political corruption is socially constructed because of disagreements between fundamentally different notions of what government or administration should or should not be about. Johnston’s combination of broad and narrow allows for a kind of flexibility that is needed if we are ever to trace changing public values and perceptions of political corruption. It is precisely the contextual nature of political corruption that rules out any universal understanding or specific definition of political corruption. In a way only value judgments that change in time, place and setting, determine what constitutes political corruption in any practical historical sense. A neo-classical approach does not try and find any single meaning, standard or definition over time but focuses instead on how political corruption is actually constructed and how it acquires meaning in social-political context and contest. As such, as I aim to show in this study, the main characteristics of the neo-classical approach make it very suitable for historical research on changing public values and political corruption.

### 1.4 Existing work, voids and opportunities

The need for a renewed and different (i.e., historical and neo-classical) focus on changing public values and political corruption becomes even clearer when we contrast the research presented in this study with existing historical work. Such a comparison is provided below and essentially pertains to relevance. It serves to situate this research in its wider historiographic context and demonstrates that while we can build on and learn much from what has already been uncovered, there undoubtedly is a need for the (new) questions, research and approach presented in this study.
Existing historical research on political corruption and morality of Dutch public administration can roughly be divided in three categories. First, there is a small category of single descriptive historical case studies on Dutch political corruption (cf. Al & Van Cruyningen, 1992; Boels, 1988; Japikse, 1907; Van Maanen, 1997). A second category involves studies of political corruption as part of wider explorations and different questions and contexts. This makes sense because political corruption is a phenomenon that pervades society and can accordingly be studied in the context of a wide variety of disciplines, topics and questions. It often appears in historical research on crime, punishment and the legal system of the Low Countries, most notably in the work of Blockmans (1995), Diederiks (1976, 1988, 1989, 1992), Huissen (1976) and Egmont and Faber (2001; 1989). Historical perspectives on political corruption have also appeared in the context of studies on state formation. Blockmans (1985) famously discussed how the weak Burgundian state needed informal and personal (i.e., ‘corrupt’) systems to relieve strain and tension between highly autonomous layers of administration.

At the same time the resulting patronage kept that state weak and also enabled different rival parties to access or disrupt each other’s powerbase. De Wit (1965) discussed political corruption in his description of the ‘state formation struggle’ between aristocracy and democracy (see also chapters five and seven below) and Witte van Citters (1873) and Schutte (1978) did the same in discussions of the forming of oligarchies in the Dutch cities. Huiskamp (1995) investigated gift giving and patronage as essential parts of establishing a relationship between centre and periphery in the early modern Netherlands. A similar perspective was taken by Gabriëls (1989) who shows how elaborate structures of patronage in the second half of the eighteenth century were increasingly used in competition between different opposing factions in the Dutch Republic. His descriptions of ‘Lieutenant-Stadholders’ (see also chapter seven below) offer many interesting perspectives of Dutch political corruption. A third category of historical research on Dutch political corruption consists of overviews. First and foremost (essentially one of its kind) is work by Raadschelders and Van der Meer (2003) who traced academic attention for political corruption in the Netherlands in the post-Napoleonic era, provided a literature review and categorized types of political corruption that occurred in the Netherlands from 1800 onwards. Other works provide an overview of political-administrative culture of the Netherlands in which sometimes played a recurring role (cf. Hendriks & Toonen, 1998; Randeraad & Wolffram, 1998). Others have provided overviews of ‘political culture’ in specific periods in which corruption sometimes plays a part as well. Klein (1995) discusses the Patriot era and Lok (2009) discusses the period of the Restoration in the Netherlands (1813 – 1820). Van Zanten (2004) provides a view on the period 1813 – 1840. Recently Van den Heuvel (2010) also published an impression of corruption and morality in the Netherlands for the seventeenth and eighteenth century. For an overview of corruption in the Netherlands in most recent times, the work of Huberts and Nelen (2005) has to be mentioned.

The final context for historical research into Dutch political corruption is that of bureaucracy, bureaucratization and Dutch political culture. Numerous studies on these topics pay attention to political corruption and moral behaviour of public officials. In the nineteenth century Fruin (1885: 389ff; 1904: 189) investigated and condemned the corrupt practices of city regent elites. In the first half of the twentieth century, Elias studied the Amsterdam regents to the same effect (1923; see also Van Sas, 1992). More recent explorations have been made by Diederiks (1977), Schama (1977: 48ff), Van Deursen (2004a: 277), Van Bockel (2009) or De Jong (1987: 56). A continuous line in these studies is the importance of obtaining office in the
political culture of the early modern Dutch Republic (see chapters four and five) that meant that administrators of all sorts attempted to abuse their powers and offices. They could for instance hand them out to friends or family (nepotism), sell them (venality) or occupy multiple offices at the same time using so-called substitutes (cf. De Jong, 1987: 52-53). Corruption in the context of bureaucracy, bureaucratization, collegial administrative structures and the ‘game’ of obtaining offices is also discussed by Raadschelders (1992: 28-31), De Vries (1977), Van IJsselmu- den (1988), Boels (1993) and Knevel (2001). Dekker (1986) provided a rare and early historical contribution to our understanding of political corruption.

The aforementioned body of existing historical work is of course highly valuable. It provides crucial in-depth images of political corruption and morality in times past. However, the brief overview presented in the above also exposes some problems. This especially goes for the older literature that provided rather one-sided and occasionally subjective moralizing or judgmental images of the supposed immorality of early modern Dutch public administration. Te Velde (2005) noticed how ‘the early historians’ (mainly Fruin and Elias) were quick to present an image of a closed, pedantic, hypocritical clique of regent administrators who simply served their own needs. This image remained dominant well into the 1970s through writings of Rogier (1954: 292-311), Blok (2002: II: 267, 423-427; III, 376-378, 431-437), Geyl (1938: 105) and Jan and Annie Romein (1973: 247, 260ff). For all the good these studies have brought us, they also present some difficulties. Most importantly, as noted by Te Velde (2005: 4-5), this concerns the fact that critique of early modern public administrative morality has been anachronistic at times since it has as much to say about present as past conceptions of what is right or wrong behaviour. Many of these studies found that public administrators were ‘corrupt’ according to the authors’ own standards and ideas (Rogier’s Catholicism and Jan Romein’s Marxism must have affected their view on political corruption). Given the somewhat biased nature of many of these studies we have to wonder whether the image they provided is correct. Furthermore, these images still often persist until this very day.

In recent decades various scholars have dealt with this problem by taking a prosopographic approach that is, in part, also taken in the following. Among others, Roorda (1979), Kooijmans (1985, 1987), De Jong (1985, 1987), Prak (1985) and Gabriëls (1986, 1989) attempted to understand the world of the regent administrators (see chapters four and five) according to past standards instead of condemning it outright according to their own. Rather than providing the ‘old’ stereotypical image of the corrupt regent, they tried to understand administration in its own historical context. Roorda, for instance, showed how the regents in the Dutch Republic saw plans of civic reform and increased influence of wider parts of the population in administration as detrimental to the health of the Republic. Administration was meant for insiders who had the necessary connections and know-how. According to existing beliefs at the time it was morally fully acceptable to keep offices within families in order to avoid ‘unnecessary’ conflict that would only slow things down (Roorda, 1979: 25). This change in historical attitude in recent years (i.e., a stronger focus on existing practical attitudes to public administration in their original context) is related to what Van Eijnatten and Wagenaar (2007) have called the ‘cultural turn’ and is exemplified by authors such as Kooijmans (2000), Panhuysen (2005) and Janssen (2005) who have taken a ‘micro-perspective’ on the history of ideas and administrative practice and focused on such things as values inherent in education of administrators or the practical (structural-functional) workings of patronage. They thereby provided a more authentic, explicit and detailed view of public values and political corruption in the past. This ‘cultural turn’ obviously opens up promising ways to examine changing public
values and perceptions of political corruption. Taking a historical ‘micro-perspective’ (as is done in the case studies of this book as well) allows us to view morality as it was actually perceived and advocated at the time.

A second and perhaps more obvious problem with existing work on Dutch political corruption that needs to be dealt with is that there has been relatively little of it (cf. Van der Meer & Raadschelders, 2003: 182). Also, apart from a very limited number of case studies (see earlier), most authors seem to have treated corruption and public values merely as a side event in the context of other topics and/or did not consider it worthwhile to systematically, comparatively or theoretically study changing public values. Little existing research is systematic in nature or regards political corruption (or public values for that matter) as a topic worthy of independent study. Historical or social-scientific research that is specifically and/or exclusively focused on and designed for investigating changing values and perceptions of Dutch political corruption is virtually non-existent, with the obvious exception of my colleagues in our shared wider research project. This has resulted in fragmentation and one struggles to find more than isolated impressions of past assumptions and interpretations of corrupt behaviour and public morality. While some (cf. Kloek & Mijnhardt, 2001) provide discussions on public and/or political morality this largely remains descriptive and non-comparative.

Other ‘big’ works on the history of Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for instance by Israel (1998), Schama (1977) or Van Sas (2005) also seem to deal with public values, political corruption and morality as side issues instead of topics in their own right. Hardly ever are these impressions in some way connected to each other, either by means of direct comparison or through the use of shared theoretical and/or methodological frameworks. Comparisons over time are almost never made and when overviews are given (cf. Van den Heuvel, 2010) they often – purposefully, it has to be said – lack systematic, comparative or explanatory frameworks. This is a problem noticed elsewhere as well. According to De Haan and Van den Heuvel (2003: 27) a lack of systematic historical-administrative research, for instance, has to do with the fact that political corruption is difficult to trace, is often out of view and things we would now consider to be corrupt were not always regarded as such in times past. As a result they seem (too) pessimistic about future opportunities to rectify the situation. A solution to the problem of a lack of systematic, comparative or theoretical analysis can however be found and was already present in early theoretically inclined social scientific work on the subject in the 1970s (cf. Van der Meer & Raadschelders, 2003: 184-185). Scholars such as Brasz and Hoetjes discussed political corruption from systematic perspectives of, respectively, sociology and anthropology. From the 1990s onwards, Huberts and Van den Heuvel took a more public administration and integrity-oriented perspective (cf. Van den Heuvel & Huberts, 1994; Van den Heuvel, et al., 2002; Huberts, 1994).

Apart from these efforts more recent years have seen a rekindling of systematic, theoretically inspired work on political corruption from a combined historical and social-scientific perspective (cf., among others, Hoenderboom & Kerkhoff, 2008; Kerkhoff, et al., 2010; Kroeze, 2008; Nützenadel, 2009; Schattenberg, 2009; Von Thiessen, 2009; Wagenaar, 2003, 2008, 2010; Wagenaar & Van der Meij, 2005). This present study takes further steps in a similar direction and, finally, aims to add to attempts that use Dutch history to explain and understand changing public values and political corruption in a wider European or global context. In Palmer’s seminal work on the Atlantic revolutions he exclaimed that “it is unfortunate that the affairs of the smaller European peoples do not enter more fully into our general histories, for
their experience has been illuminating” (1974: 323). Similar sentiments have been conveyed by Leeb who wrote how “those ill-assorted, ever-quarrelling, often disunited United Provinces stand as a special model to which the course of history and politics elsewhere can frequently and fruitfully be compared” (1973: 247). The a-typical nature of the Dutch Republic (see chapter four) seems to be a main reason for this (Davids & Lucassen, 1995; Van Sas, 2005: 272-273; Schama, 1977: 15-23). Dutch history can be and has often been an interesting background from which various phenomena can be viewed that occurred outside its borders. Ample evidence for this can be found in a recent special issue of the Low Countries Historical Review (Van Berkel, et al., 2010). Strangely enough changing public values and perceptions of political corruption have not been among topics believed to be suitable for international comparison (unlike, for instance, water management, emerging capitalism and colonialism or tolerance and secularity, cf. Frijhoff, 2010: 7). This seems to be in line with a general trend in which discussions on developing public morality and changing public values in the early modern and modern age tend to focus on Germany/Prussia (cf. Rosenberg, 1958; Wagner, 2005), France (cf. Ford, 1953; Simon, 2001) or England (cf. Rivers, 1991; Wilson, 2007). Cameralism (the early modern science of administration with distinctly normative elements) is for instance hardly ever associated with the Netherlands. This research seeks to remedy this situation. While it does not compare Dutch morality of the period with other countries, a first necessary step in that promising direction does require more knowledge of Dutch morality and/or public debates on issues of political corruption and administrative moral reform.