

# Disappointed Expectations

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Working paper series 2021:8

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## Abstract

The quality of government (QoG) is a concept without an undisputed benchmark. To contribute to its clarification, we propose a novel model of analysis that incorporates formal and informal institutions and operationalizes such an abstract and debated concept, applying it empirically to the study of two Spanish regions, the Basque Country and Andalusia, which, in principle, have extremely different QoG values, according to the European Quality of Government Index (EQI). Our results do not find the differences that might be expected between regions with such different EQI scores. One explanation for this is the excessive weight given in these indices to the perception of the quality of public services, a component notably influenced by the level of public spending in each society. We conclude that QoG indexes need to adequately weight differences in the levels of wealth of the societies being compared.

Keywords: quality of government; corruption; particularism; universalism; European subnational governments.

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# Particularism and quality of government

The quality of government (QoG) is crucial to fight against corruption and the waste of public resources (Rothstein, 2011). Although the concept is controversial and its use in empirical research gives rise to considerable discussion (Agnafors, 2013, Grindle, 2007), some basic normative criteria can be found that encompass the essential content of what would be a government with high quality (Holmberg, Rothstein and Nasiritousi, 2009).

Attempts to specify the set of instruments, processes and structures that ensure the quality of government are doomed to failure. The different political cultures, historical trajectories and institutional legacies that we find in each country mean that the same institutional solution cannot travel comfortably from one country to another without being distorted. However, following Holmberg et al. (2009: 157), what is really important to understand QoG is not so much the set of specific institutions that may coincide in the same country, but the normative foundations under such institutions. And in these foundations, there is a certain space of coincidence between the literature that has worked on this issue.

Indeed, there are three different theories in the contemporary literature on QoG that account for the essential content of this complex concept. These are the following: the principle of impartiality in the exercise of public power (Rothstein and Teorell, 2008), the open access orders versus those of limited access (North, Wallis and Weingast, 2006), or, finally, the universalistic political culture versus the particularistic one of Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (2006). Taken from different points of view, these three theories have much in common and serve to distill the essentials of QoG. Ultimately, it is about making the principle of political equality a reality (Dahl, 1989). These proposals are based on the arbitrary non-discrimination of citizens and on preventing all privileged access to government institutions by particularistic interests of certain groups compared to the rest of society.

In this paper, after asking ourselves how to measure QoG in democracies, we propose two objectives. On the one hand, we build a model of analysis to detect and understand the differences in this essential core of QoG. On the other, we apply this model to two case studies that we have chosen for two reasons. First, these are two cases of regional governments that have belonged to the same country for centuries and therefore share, to a large extent, a similar political culture and a similar institutional legacy. It is true that these two territories already have a history of forty years of political autonomy in which they have been developing different experiences of institutional construction and diverse styles of public policies, although the weight of historical legacies and institutional isomorphism, together with the fact of sharing the same constitutional order, makes the differentiation not so great.

The second reason for choosing these two cases is that, despite all that they share, they present a notable difference in their levels of quality of government (see table 1), according to the measurements of this made by the Institute of Quality of Government from the University of Gothenburg on subnational governments in Europe using its European Quality of Government Index (EQI) (Charron et al., 2019). The Autonomous Communities of the Basque Country and Andalusia rank first and last in the latest EQI available when we started this research corresponding to 2017 among the 17 Spanish Autonomous Communities, it being also the case that Spain is the second European country after Italy in which the disparity in the quality levels of regional governments is the greatest. The EQI is the only global measure of the quality of government in sub-national areas, hence its importance for our study. The 2017 edition was carried out from a survey of 78,000 citizens from 193 regions in 21 European countries. In this selection of cases, we follow the strategy of George

and Bennett (2005: 23) that this is an adequate strategy to identify "the possible causal routes and the variables that lead to the dependent variable of interest."

TABLE 1: BASQUE COUNTRY AND ANDALUSIA IN EQI 2017

	BASQUE COUNTRY		ANDALUSIA	
	SCORE	RANK	SCORE	RANK
EQI 2017	63,6	67/202 (EU) 1/17 (ESP)	33,2	154/202 (EU) 17/17 (ESP)
EU AVERAGE	49			
QUALITY	77,1	37/202	44,2	152/202
IMPARCIAL- ITY	69,7	68/202	39,9	152/202
CORRUPTION	55,8	88/202	36,2	152/202

*Source: Data from the scorecards of EQI2017 published by DG Regio at the European Commission. These data are standardized between a minimal value of 0 and a maximum of 100:*

*[https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/information/maps/quality\\_of\\_governance%232#2](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/maps/quality_of_governance%232#2)*

From now on the paper proceeds as follows. The following section presents the theoretical foundation and the methodology used in two separate subsections: first we describe our model of analysis on the determinants of the quality of government; in the second subsection, the operationalization that has been carried out of this model is presented. We have recurred to three different sources of data: an original public opinion survey, interviews with experts from the regional governments analyzed, and statistical data on our two cases. In section 3 the key results of the study are shown and in section 4 we discuss their main implications. Finally, the last section concludes.

## Material and methods

### *A model to analyze the essential core of the quality of government*

As mentioned above, by "essential core of the quality of government" we mean the coincidence that can be observed in the meaning that Rothstein and Teorell, North, Wallis and Weingast, and Mungiu-Pippidi give to the three terms that they employ in their studies. In short, we will focus on the terms used and contrasted by Mungiu-Pippidi (2006) of universalism and particularism. In this way, these two terms try to differentiate between two types of opposite social orders (Parsons and Shils, 1951). In a society in which universalism rules, we find that general laws and rules are more important than personal relationships in guiding the behavior of its members, while, in particularistic societies, personal relationships take precedence above the rules as the criterion to determine what is ethically acceptable and how to behave (Banfield, 1958).

In particularism, politicians advance in their careers by developing the capacity to catering very specific interests of small groups of citizens, rather than large programmatic objectives that can be shared by many different social sectors. In this way, ties of personal loyalty develop between political leaders and the groups of citizens whose interests they seek to serve. This results in the fact that, in order to comply with these particularistic obligations in the exercise of public power, the rule of impartiality

in the operation of public administrations is undermined, since it is often necessary to skip the general rules in order to be able to comply with the commitments that give rise to the relationships of personal loyalty on which political representation is based.

Based on contributions such as those of Piattoni (2001), Sousa (2009), de Blasio et al., (2014) and Rotondi and Stanca (2015), an analytical tool has been developed that can be used to study particularistic attitudes. The goal is to evaluate the different dimensions that such a tool should have (see Table 2).

The starting point of this tool is, following Simona Piattoni (2001), to distinguish between the supply and demand sides of particularism. Therefore, our questionnaires got information about both spheres. Regarding the supply side, it is important to know two things. On the one hand, a key aspect is to evaluate how wide is the margin of discretion that politicians on top of public organizations have to distribute public resources in a particularized way. This means paying attention to the degree of politicization / partisanship of public administrations. On the other, it is necessary to know if political leaders are inclined to build their social support through a particularized distribution of divisible public benefits.

With regard to the demand for particularism, we can group all the relevant dimensions around two main axes. The first set of dimensions has to do with an assessment of citizens' resources to mobilize in pursuit of their demands, paying attention to their greater or lesser capacity to unite interests. This means looking at the following dimensions: education (the lower the educational level, the more difficult to add interests); organization (skills and resources to articulate the aggregation of interests); financial means; main sources of political information; and membership in civic associations that have general objectives.

The second group of dimensions is the set of attitudes and beliefs that allow people to discount the moral cost of behaving against the rules, helping them to resolve cognitive dissonance to justify behaviors contrary to socially accepted rules. In this sense, trust in others and in the main political institutions is a key aspect to assess how costly it is to behave opportunistically against the general interest of society. Therefore, a low level of generalized trust or a low level of institutional trust (trust in major political institutions, such as parliament or government, and in public officials) makes it easier for an individual to justify opportunistic behavior.

**TABLE 2: DIMENSIONS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT FOR ASSESSING THE DEGREE OF PARTICULARISTIC ATTITUDES**

SUPPLY SIDE	DEMAND SIDE	
Politicization of public administrations	Resources for mobilization	Education
		Organization
		Financial means
		Sources political information
		Membership civic associations
Proneness of leaders to build support through distribution of divisible benefits	Conditions for solving cognitive dissonance	Generalized and institutional trust
		Perception of corruption
		Shared expectations
		Particularistic values

## *The operationalization of the model: data and methods.*

We have collected the information for our analysis from three very different sources: official statistical data; a public opinion survey of a representative sample of Basque and Andalusian citizens; and in-depth interviews with good connoisseurs of the operation of these two regional governments.

Specifically, we conducted 12 in-depth interviews in the Basque Country with 14 people, and 8 interviews in Andalusia with 10 people. Most of those interviewed have held senior positions in the autonomous administrations of our two regions and have recently retired, although we also spoke with some academics, a journalist and a representative of a civic association.

Regarding the survey, the field work was carried out by Metroscopia company with a sample of 600 cases for Andalusia and 500 for the Basque Country<sup>1</sup>. Table 3 summarizes the indicators with which we have collected the information corresponding to each of the dimensions of our model of analysis.

TABLE 3: INDICATORS USED TO OPERATIONALIZE THE VARIABLES IN THE MODEL

VARIABLES	INDICATORS
DV: Quality regional government	Values for Basque Country and Andalusia at EQI2017
SUPPLY SIDE:	
Politicization of public administrations	Interviews to experts. Poll: perception of partiality at the autonomous administrations (perception on whether assignments are based on merit and capacity, and perception on whether people and entities linked to the government are treated with favoritism)
Proneness of leaders to build support through distribution of divisible benefits	Experts' interviews
DEMAND SIDE	
A) Resources for mobilization:	
Education	Official statistics and rate of early school abandonment
Organization	Statistical data as proxy on the organizative skills of different citizens groups: percentage of active population in agriculture and companies' sizes
Financial means	Through proxies: GNP per capita; gross disposable income of households per capita; population at risk of poverty and exclusion
Sources of political information	Proxy: newspapers reading levels in each AC according to data from the EGM (Mass media general study)
Belonging to civic associations	Official data from the regional administrations on associative density and indicator in the survey on the perception of usefulness of associating to achieve collective goals, as well as whether the respondent is associated
B) Factors for solving the cognitive dissonance:	
Generalized and institutional trust	Poll: generalized and institutional trust.
Perception of corruption	Poll: perception of corruption in different institutions; perception of whether corruption is pursued or not; echo in the media; perceived honesty of public office holders; and level of transparency
Expectations on others' behavior	Poll: if Basque / Andalusian citizens are honest; if they comply with the laws; if you recur to influential contacts; if in this society contacts are not needed; how a public official is expected to face a conflict of interest; the extent to which contacts are necessary for professional or financial success; possibility of skipping the waiting lists in health services if you have the right contact.
Particularistic values	Poll: what should an official do when faced with a conflict of interest; acceptability of doing favors, gifts or giving money to obtain something from a public administration; and whether the pursuit of effectiveness can excuse non-compliance with the law.

<sup>1</sup> The interviews were distributed proportionally to the population of each of the regions by size of municipality and establishing sex and age quotas for the last sample unit (individual). The field work was carried out between October 25 and 31, 2019. Assuming the maximum indeterminacy ( $p = q = 50\%$ ), the sampling error that would correspond to the data referring to the Andalusian sample would be around  $\pm 4.1$  points and the sample from the Basque Country would be  $\pm 4.5$  points. It was a computer-assisted telephone interview, with a structured and precoded questionnaire lasting approximately 15 minutes. Finally, having detected an over-representation in both samples of people employed in the public sector and since this is a variable with high influence on the results, it has been weighted to adjust it to the real distribution of the population according to the INE data, maintaining the weight of the variables that constituted the quota criteria to establish both samples.

If we accept the measurement of the QoG levels of the EQI2017, we would expect that we will find notable differences in each of the four main dimensions of our model of analysis. Specifically, the hypothesis we propose is that in each of the dimensions the values corresponding to Andalusia will be clearly more negative than in the Basque Country: greater politicization of public bodies; leaders more inclined to build their social support by distributing divisible benefits; fewer resources for social mobilization; and easier ways to smooth out cognitive dissonance. We review the results found for each of these four dimensions in the next section.

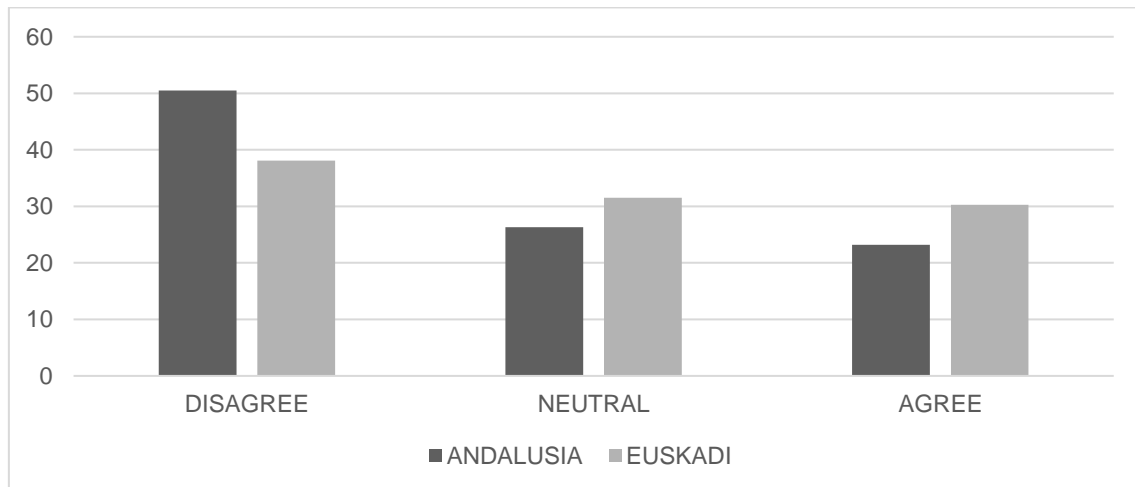
## Results

Results corresponding to the four main dimensions of our model are shown separately.

### *Degree of politicization of public administrations*

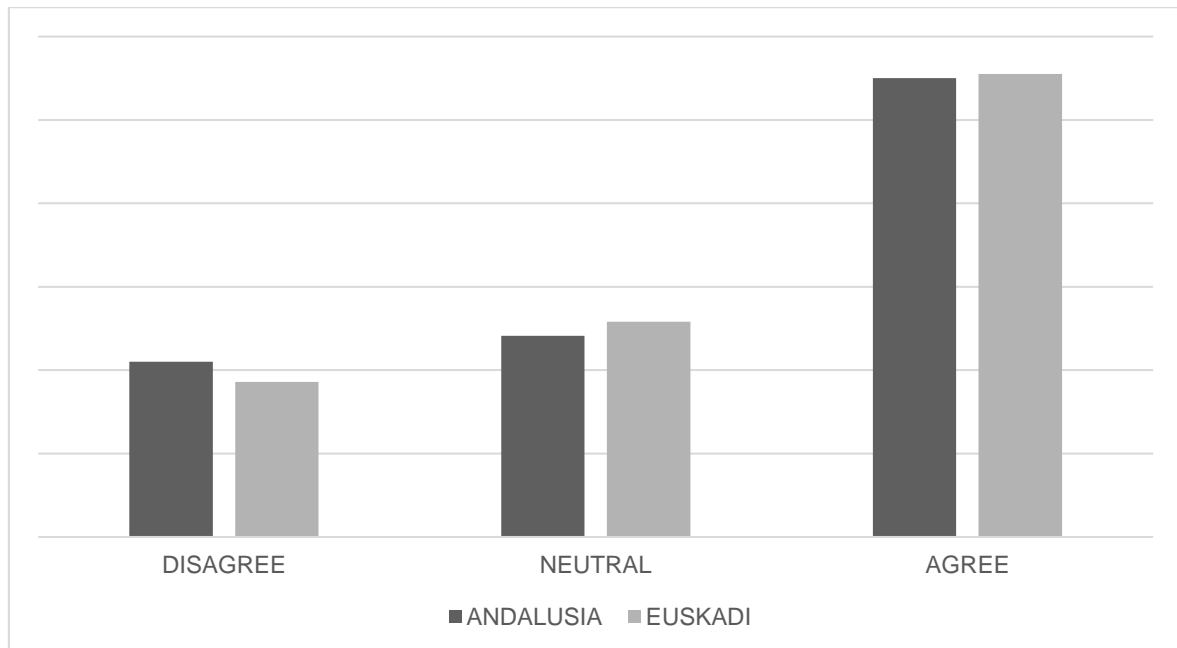
Although finding sufficiently reliable information on this dimension from survey data is difficult, we introduced two related indicators in our questionnaire. We ask citizens if the appointments made in the respective autonomous administrations respect the principles of merit and capacity and if such administrations treat people and entities related to the respective governments with favoritism. The results as a percentage of each of the responses in each region are shown in figures 1 and 2.

**FIGURE 1: APPOINTMENTS IN BASQUE/ANDALUSIAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION ARE BASED ON MERIT AND CAPACITY.**





**FIGURE 2: IN BASQUE COUNTRY/ANDALUSIA PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS TREAT WITH FAVORITISM OR IN A PRIVILEGED WAY THOSE PEOPLE OR ENTITIES LINKED TO THE BASQUE/ANDALUSIAN GOVERNMENT**



The perception that respondents have about whether appointments in autonomous administrations respect the constitutional principles of merit and capacity is significantly better among Basques than among Andalusians, although the intensity of the association between the autonomous community of the respondent and their response to the question is relatively low. In fact, if we compare the percentage of responses accumulated in the values of both extremes of Figure 1, also among the Basques there are more critical responses (38.1%) than positive ones (30.3%). Regarding the perception that the regional administrations give favorable treatment to those related to the government, the responses are similarly critical in both regions and the difference is not significant.

We have done several Multiple Correspondence Analyses (MCA) in order to perceive which are the dimensions of our model where we can find a greater distance between our two regions. Figure 3 summarizes the dimension of the politicization of public administration according to the respondents of our poll-survey. In this first MCA we show the two variables of figures 1 and 2 in one graph.

FIGURE 3: MCA ABOUT THE POLITICIZATION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

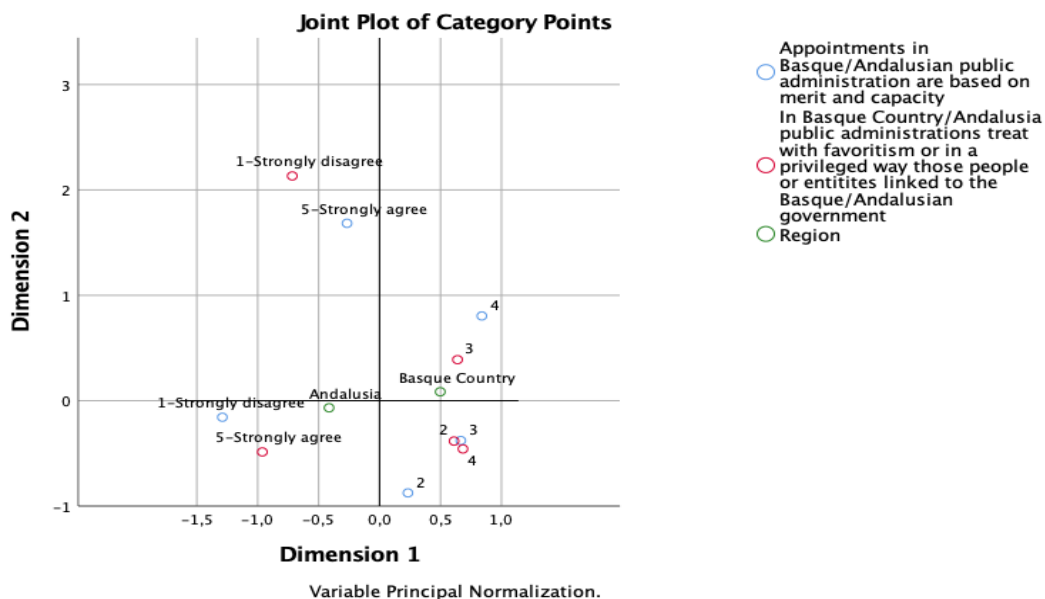


Figure 3 shows that the highest perceptions of impartiality are not related to either of the two Autonomous Communities. It is true that perceptions of higher politicization are related more directly to Andalusia, while meritocracy in the selection of personnel is more strongly perceived in the Basque Country. But, as observed in figures 1 and 2, negative perceptions are stronger than positive ones in both regions.

We also asked about this dimension to the 20 experts we interviewed. The majority opinion among them does find a lower degree of politicization in the Basque administration than in the Andalusian one, although the experts also introduce interesting nuances in this general opinion. Indeed, the interviewees who served as senior officials of the Basque government agreed that political leaders on top of the government do not have a great deal of room for maneuver to make patronage use of jobs in the administration (interviewees 1, 3, 6 and 7). After a few first years of implementation of the regional administration in which the margin was higher (interviewee 6)<sup>2</sup>, a series of changes were introduced to objectify the hiring of new public employees and it was centralized in the Basque Institute of Public Administration (IVAP) control over the selection and careers of officials (interviewees 1, 3, 6 and 7). The IVAP is even in charge of selecting the civil servants of some city councils and the temporary workers, who today represent 54% of the total public employees of the Basque government and 60% among the group A1 (the top group among civil servants in Spain) (interviewees, 1, 3, 6 and 7). These same interviewees point out that the positions with managerial functions that are filled by free appointment are very few and are mostly occupied by career civil servants, although there is no professional public management yet.

One of our interviewees points out that this same system of little politicized administration also extends to the three Provincial Councils (Diputaciones forales) and the large city councils. For example, in Bilbao, freely appointed positions are filled after public announcement among all municipal officials, which allows political representatives to know the potential of these officials and "generates a very positive work environment" (interviewee 5). This same interviewee acknowledges, however, that in these positions political loyalty and commitment are also valued, although guaranteeing professional worth.

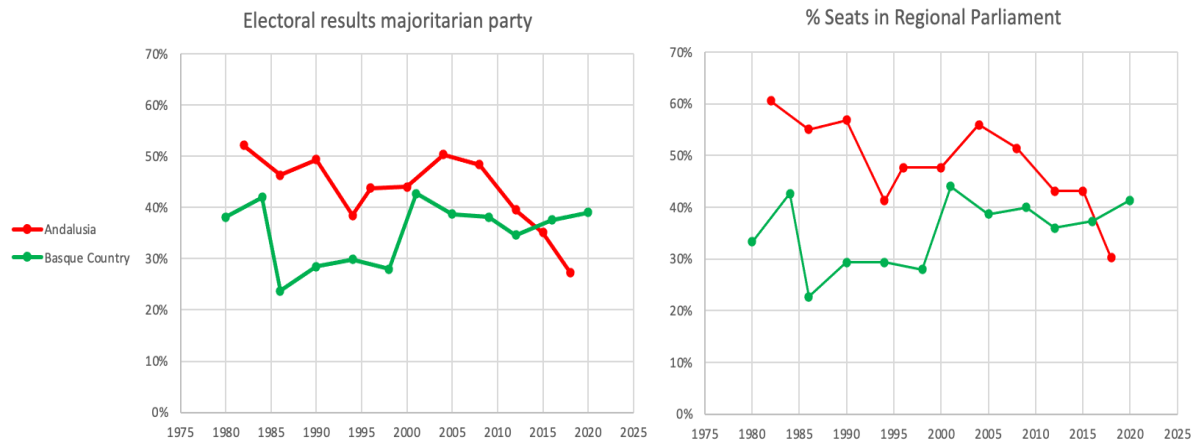
<sup>2</sup> The institutions of self-government in the Basque Country were created anew from 1979 onwards.

This group of interviewees also mostly coincide in pointing out how the Basque government is usually a coalition government and how the Provincial Councils (except the Biscayan) have been led by different parties over the years. In addition, they also point to a factor that could explain why the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), which, except for the period 2009-2012, has always been in charge of the Basque government, would not have used this hegemony (despite the absence of majorities in the Basque Parliament) for a greater politicization of the public administration (see Figure 4). The key lies in the peculiar role played by the machinery of party organization vis-à-vis the leaders who are in government. Unlike the rest of the Spanish parties, the PNV maintains a clear separation between the party and the government in such a way that the leading cadres of the party remain in the organization and do not disembark in the governments. In this way, the party acts as a permanent counterweight to the government that helps it not deviate from the social commitments acquired in the elections (interviewees 1 and 5).

With regard to the degree of politicization of the public administrations in Andalusia, our interviewees pointed out that, in general, the officials of the Andalusian autonomous administration are “very capable and professional” (interviewee 15). However, there is a great consensus also when it comes to pointing out the problems. In the first years in which this administration was created ex novo, it was possible to bring together a group of competent and committed young professionals who worked with great enthusiasm to leave behind a territorial public administration inherited from the Franco regime in which widespread corruption was nested: "My impulse to enter the administration was to try to end this corruption" (urban planning expert, interview 13). "At the head of the regional ministries there were prepared people, except a few individuals" (interviewee 17).

This promising initial impulse gave rise to a stage of “great brilliance”, which fed a “collective morale for the improvement of public management, thanks to the coincidence of good, highly committed professionals, bosses with moral prestige and prestigious advisers” (expert in education, interview 13). However, as the political hegemony reached by the Socialist Party in Andalusia (PSOE-A) from 1980 onwards was prolonged, not only through its excellent results in the Andalusian Parliament (see Figure 4), but also in the municipalities and provincial councils, this system of government began to deteriorate and the interests of the party began to prevail more clearly: “it becomes politicized in terms of the party”, until “there comes a time when an unknown corruption appears that we, technocrats, had not intuited” and that was related to the irregular party financing (urban planning expert, interview 13). Beyond corruption, this drift led to a loss of “institutional quality” closely related to “poor selection of public managers” (social studies expert, interview 13): “The problem is in the selection of those who occupy the charges, which is very lacking; it has always surprised me that my party (the PSOE-A) did not have a system to filter the merits of the nominees”; in such a way that "the system of cooptation of political parties favors mediocrity" (interviewee 14).

FIGURE 4: ACCUMULATION OF POWER BY THE MAJOR PARTIES IN BASQUE COUNTRY (PNV) AND ANDALUSIA (PSOE-A)



Source: Electoral data from the electoral administration bodies of both regions.

The result of this evolution, to which the loss of quality of the political class in recent years has also contributed (interviews 13, 14, 16, 18 and 19), is that our interviewees consider that the main problem today in the Andalusian public administration is not so much the level of corruption as the "dejection" of the officials (interview 13), "a great disappointment and a great demotivation" (interviewee 17), the reigning "bureaucracy and mediocrity" (interviewee 14), and the "lack of ambition" in public organizations" (interview 13). Curiously, it is a partially coincident diagnosis with the one offered to us by the interviewees in the Basque Country who best valued the professionalization of the autonomous administration. As one of them told us, despite the high degree of professionalization of this administration, "there is a very strong routinization and bureaucratization, a lot of micromanagement, and there is no innovation for fear of any error or lack of control"; to which he adds that "the civil service is quite unmotivated by routines and the lack of exciting projects, not by corruption or politicization" (interviewee 1).

### *Proneness of leaders to build support through distribution of divisible benefits*

For this dimension of our model of analysis we do not have any indicators based on the survey, as asking citizens about this issue does not seem the best way to get sound information about it. For that reason, it has been a topic that we have tried to raise in all our interviews. In general terms, there has been much more consensus in Andalusia (although not unanimous) than in Euskadi regarding the tendency of political leaders to build their social support on the basis of clientelistic or patronage exchanges.

One of our interviewees in Euskadi summarizes very clearly the majority opinion of a good part of our interviewees: "The elections are won by giving stability and confidence to the Basque business community; the Basque business fabric is strong; this business community is innovative and demanding; it is not about clientelistic exchange, it is about providing stability and certainty; within this framework, there may be mutual support strategies, but the key is that there is employment and stability". This also leads to "a high concern to avoid episodes of corruption" (interviewee 1).

However, as we said above, some of our interviewees have a very critical view regarding the use that the main government party in Euskadi, the PNV, has made of public resources: "Euskadi presents itself as the oasis, but do not believe it, then it is not so different, everything goes through the PNV" (interviewee 11). There are not too many incentives to denounce the clientelistic use of public resources because the Basque is "a satisfied society" with very good services (interviewee 11). Or as another says, "it is a party that has

been in power for many years and has generated such a dense clientele network that there is no one interested in reporting" (interviewee 9). This interviewee also points to the existence of "irregular financing" of the PNV through public contracting (interview 9).

One of our interviewees tells us a possible mechanism by which this particularistic use of public resources would be carried out in the form of jobs in the administration and its public sector. It would be "a hidden form of discrimination, not only in access but especially in the professional career" and that has to do with the use of the requirement of a certain level of knowledge of Basque language to be able to enter and ascend in the autonomic administration, the provincial councils and the municipalities. The fact that Basque language is a requirement and not a merit in many positions becomes a factor that "blocks many people from entering" these positions (interviewee 11). Some other interviewee had also mentioned how the requirement of a certain level of Basque to be able to access the positions of national qualification officials (secretary, controller and treasurer) in Basque municipalities would have become in practice, in small and medium-sized municipalities, in a factor that prevented finding people who met the requirement and that forced to fill these positions so delicate, due to their control functions, with temporary personnel (interviewee 6)<sup>3</sup>.

However, these critical interviewees acknowledge that "the PNV may have some corruption, but the day-to-day is clean" (interviewee 12). Or that "the party as such does not have a clientelistic system, but there are many people around it who resort to clientelistic and particularistic relationships" (interviewee 11). Another of these critical interviewees points out that "there is better public management than in the rest, but that does not mean that it is good" and points to the cases of the Zaldibar landfill disaster<sup>4</sup> or the poor management of the coronavirus pandemic as examples (interviewee 9). Finally, other interviewees tell us that "the PNV has never monopolized all power, so corruption is not as blatant as elsewhere" (interview 8).

In the Andalusian case, the opinion on the extent of clientelism is almost unanimous with the sole exception of a former regional president. But for the rest, "the social pressure for particular solutions, the recommendation, is in the whole society, cronyism is everywhere" (interviewee 14). One of our interviewees points to the key role of the mayors of the party at the head of the Andalusian government: "a mayor told me that the rules are made for enemies, not for friends" (interviewee 15).

Probably, the interviewee who was most forceful on this issue was someone who had responsibilities in the water policy of the Andalusian government (interviewee 18). At least in this sector of public policies, "important decisions are taken behind the scenes" and "favor the interests of construction companies, irrigators and hydroelectric plants", leaving aside the objectives of environmental protection and with "officials captured" by those interests. The reason that this interviewee finds for this result also came out in many more conversations. For our interviewee 18, "the Andalusian PSOE has always bought social peace" and "the rural is very important in Andalusia": "the mayors have been more concerned with irrigation than with supply water". In this way, when the regional administration "hit the mayor, they told you 'you're going against the interest of the party because I'm running for the elections'" (interviewee 18).

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<sup>3</sup> We do not know of any study on the sociodemographic characteristics of the personnel at the service of Basque local, foral or autonomous administrations, but historian Manu Montero studied the composition of Basque elected positions in representative institutions and found that people with a Basque surname were notably overrepresented regarding the distribution of these surnames among the Basque population in general (Montero, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/basque-landfill-accident-leaves-two-missing-health-fears-1.4178738>

When asked about the ERE case, probably the largest case of embezzlement of public funds that has occurred in Spain (Jiménez, 2014), many of our interviewees again mentioned the same idea that the Andalusian PSOE governments tended to achieve the objective of maintaining “social peace” by distributing public aid as quickly as possible and without carrying out overly efficient control (interviews 13, 14, 15, 18).

### *Resources for mobilization*

Many of our interviewees referred to factors such as the greater relative economic backwardness of Andalusia, the importance of its primary sector and the relevance that its rural population still has as important elements that made this AC a society more inclined to the development of clientelistic relationships: “There is a lack of dynamism in Andalusian society, except in Almería; they are waiting for the Administration to come to solve their problems” (interviewee 18). Or as another interviewee who is an expert in spatial planning sums up, Andalusia “is a clientelistic society, it is more agrarian, accustomed to the favors of the gentleman; the PSOE clearly took the place of the landlord (señorito)” (interviewee 15).

By contrast, many of those interviewed in the Basque Country described a very different type of society: “Here [in Euskadi] you don't wait for aid to arrive; here [society] is more about generating its own resources by itself; the cooperative tradition, like that of the Mondragón group, has led to the development of a democratic culture of participation and transparency that is not found elsewhere” (interviewee 7). The interviewees also referred to the existence of dense social networks in Basque society (interviewees 1, 2, 4, 7), although some of them also pointed out that behind this positive facade “there is a lot of subsidy culture that you don't see, mainly consulting companies and contractors, although some are not favored more than others, but companies know very well how to behave so as not to antagonize the government” (interviewee 9).

Beyond these impressions, the statistical data also clearly contrasts two very different societies with very different mobilization capacities for collective action in favor of Basque society. Table 4 lists a selection of some of these indicators that illustrate such differences with sufficient clarity.

**TABLE 4: STATISTICAL DATA ON RESOURCES FOR MOBILIZATION**

DIMENSION	INDICATOR	ANDALUSIA					EUSKADI				
		1*	2*	3*	4*	5*	1*	2*	3*	4*	5*
ORGANIZATIVE CAPACITY	PERCENTUAL DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT BY COMPANIES' SIZE, 2015	5,9	43,1	29,5	12	9,4	5,1	35,3	27,6	17,4	14,6
ORGANIZATIVE CAPACITY	% ACTIVE POPULATION IN AGRICULTURE, 2019 T4			9,7%					1,1%		
EDUCATION	% POPULATION WITH HIGHER EDUCATION, 2019 T4			24,9%					40%		
EDUCATION	EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING RATE, April 2020 (% youth between 18 and 24 y.o.)			21,6%					6,7%		
FINANCIAL MEANS	PER CAPITA GNP, 2018			19.107,5€					33.222,93€		
FINANCIAL MEANS	GROSS AVAILABLE INCOME PER HOUSEHOLD PER CAPITA, 2017	€ per inhabitant		Spain Index = 100			€ per inhabitant		Spain Index= 100		
		11.942		78,6% (17ª AC)		19.604		129,1% (1ª AC)			

FINANCIAL MEANS	% POPULATION AT RISK OF EXCLUSION (AROPE), 2018	38,2%	12,1%
SOURCES OF INFORMATION	PERCENTAGE OF NEWSPAPER READING POPULATION (PAPER AND DIGITAL VIEWER), 2018	17%	32,8%
BELONGING TO ASSOCIATIONS	ASSOCIATIVE DENSITY, 2019**	99	113

\* 1: without employees; 2: microenterprises (<10 employees); 3: small (between 10 and 49); 4: medians (between 50 and 249); 5 large (250 or more).

\*\* Associative density calculated from the total number of associations divided by every 10,000 inhabitants.

Sources: Employment distribution by company size (INE 2015 data prepared by Reig Martínez et al., 2016); INE for Active Population in Agriculture; INE for population with higher education; Eurostat for early school leaving; Eurostat for GDP per capita; INE for gross income per household 2017; INE for AROPE rate; EGM 2018 data for newspaper reading; Regional registries of associations (data from 2019 for Euskadi and 2018 for Andalusia) and 2019 municipal register of the INE for associative density.

As we can see, in each of the five components in which our model of analysis divides this dimension of resources for collective action, the data show a greater capacity for mobilization in the Basque Country. Regarding the tendency to associate, we see that the statistic on associative density does not make great differences, so we asked directly about this matter in our survey. Specifically, we include two indicators: one on whether the respondent believes that it is a waste of time to associate with others to pursue collective goals, and another on whether or not they belong to an association and of what type. The differences do not reach statistical significance.

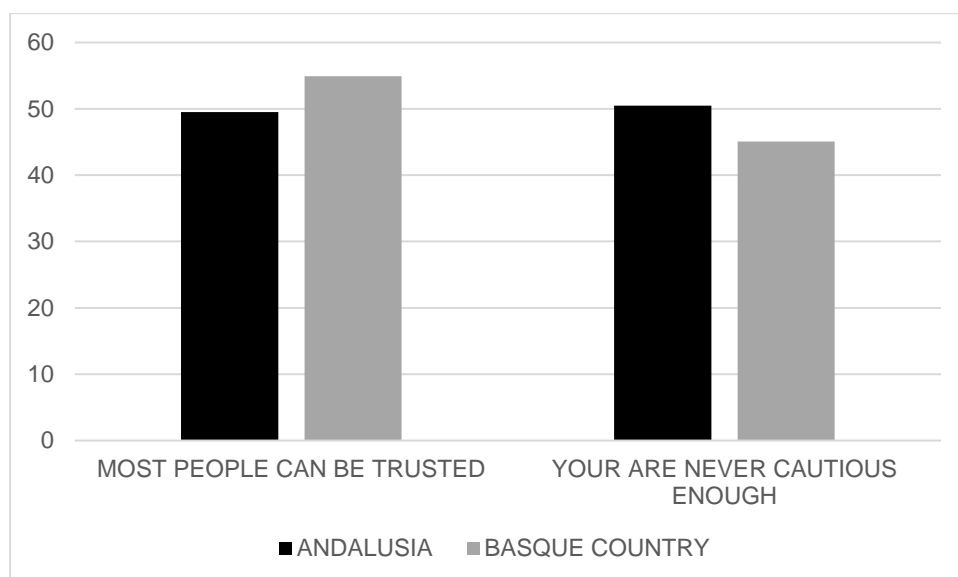
### *Attitudes and beliefs that help resolve cognitive dissonance to carry out or justify behaviors contrary to socially accepted rules*

The fourth and last dimension of our model is the one that we have studied in more detail through our survey and the results obtained are interesting. They are presented grouped around the four components that we have differentiated in the model of analysis: trust; perception of corruption; expectations about others; and particularistic values.

#### *Generalized and institutional trust*

The first of these elements is the trust that citizens place in other members of society and in the main public institutions. From what we know of those countries that stand out for their QoG, a high value in it is associated with high values in both generalized and institutional trust levels (Uslaner, 2013). Therefore, we should find substantial differences in these variables between our two cases. Figure 5 shows how there is a slightly higher level of generalized trust in the Basque Country than in Andalusia. However, the association between social trust and the region is not statistically significant.

FIGURE 5: IN GENERAL, WOULD YOU SAY THAT MOST PEOPLE CAN BE TRUSTED OR THAT YOU ARE NEVER CAUTIOUS ENOUGH WHEN TREATING WITH OTHERS?



Where we do find very substantial differences between our two Autonomous Communities is in institutional trust. Except for the high mistrust that political parties arouse in both territories, all the differences are statistically significant and, in some cases, such as the security forces or the regional government, they reach quite intensity.

These significant differences present very different patterns in both regions. While in Andalusia, confidence in the central institutions of the State, such as the central government, the administration of justice or the security forces is positive, that raised by the institutions closest to citizens such as the regional government, the provincial council and the city council it is much smaller. And the opposite happens in the Basque Country: the closest institutions are valued positively while those of the central State are highly negative. We only show, as an example, the differences raised by the respective autonomous governments in figure 6.



FIGURE 6: TRUST IN THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

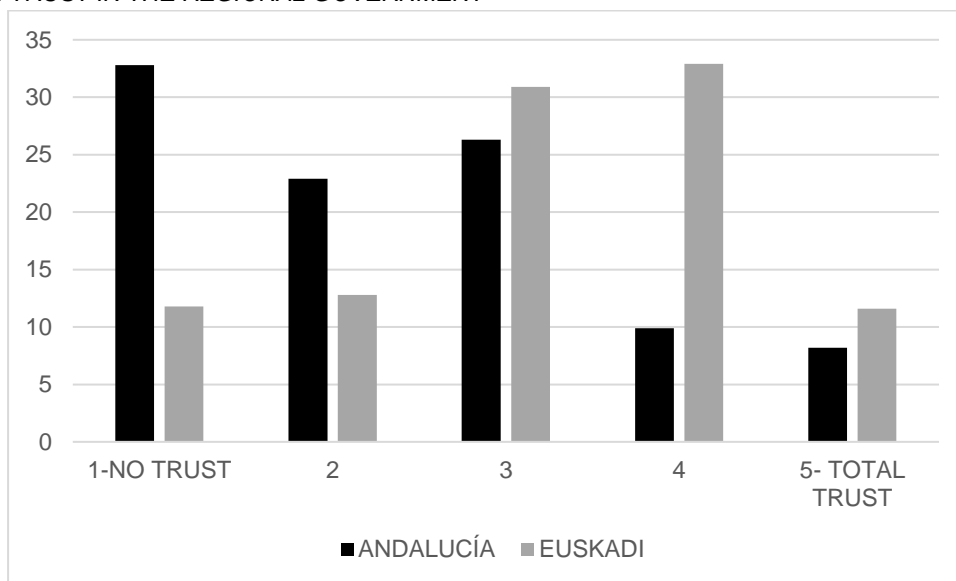
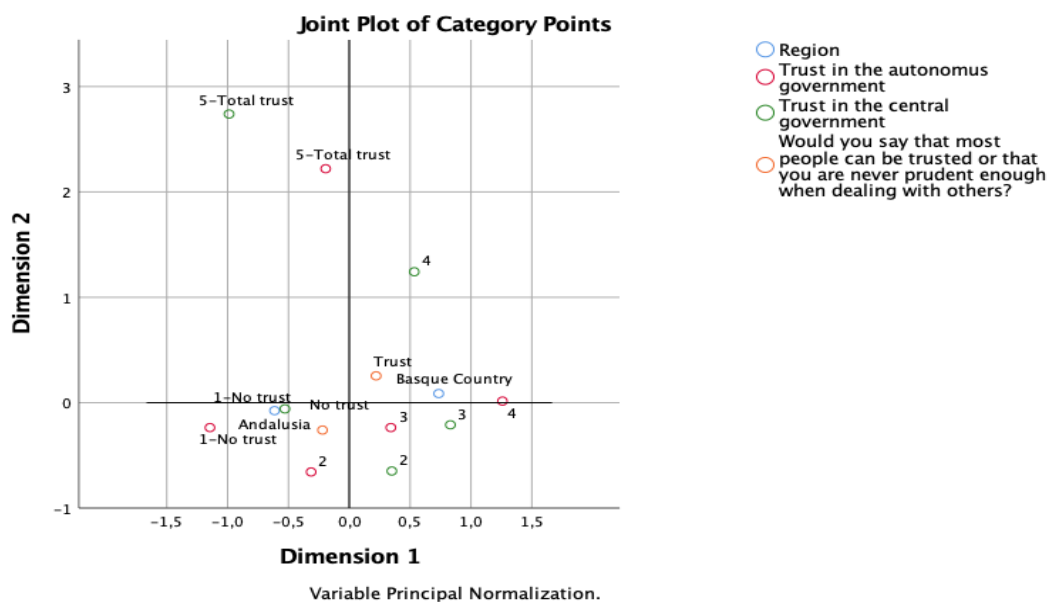


Figure 7 shows the result of the MCA for this first component of the fourth dimension of our analysis. We include also trust in the central (federal) government. The graph shows a better level of trust of our Basque respondents than of our Andalusian ones although, as already said, the differences in generalized trust are not statistically significant.

FIGURE 7: MCA FOR GENERALIZED AND INSTITUTIONAL TRUST



### *Perception of corruption*

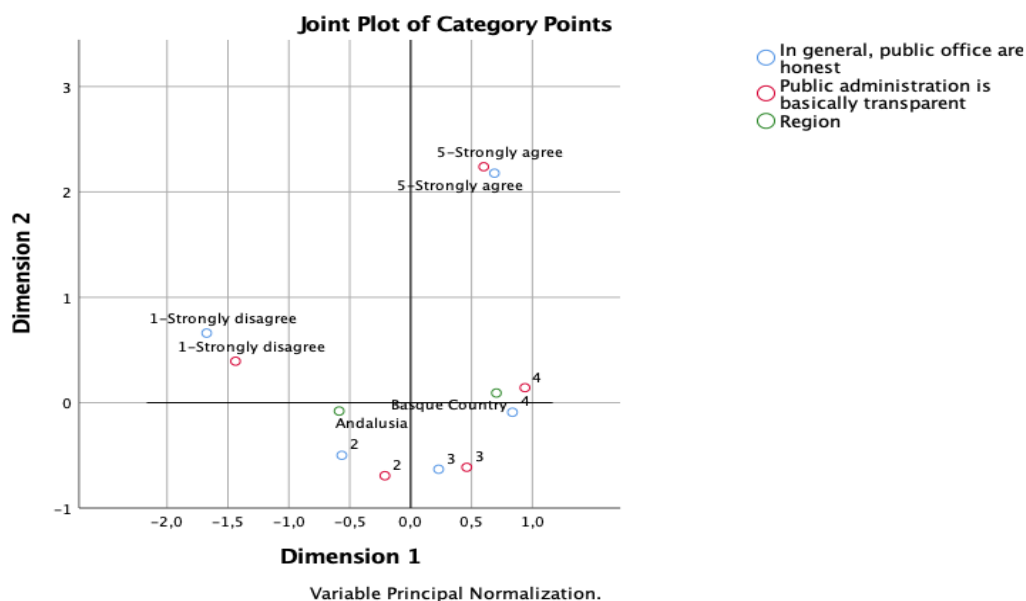
As shown in Table 3, in order to analyze the differences between our two territories regarding this subdimension of our model of analysis, we pay attention to five indicators from our survey: the perception of the existence of corruption in the autonomous government; the belief that corruption is not adequately prosecuted in the respective Autonomous Community; the conviction that no information would appear in the local press if a corruption case occurred; the degree of agreement with the idea that, in general, in that AC public officials are honest; and the perception that the public administrations of the CA are basically transparent.

Except for the assessment of the capacity of the local press to report on cases of corruption in which there are no significant differences between the two Autonomous Communities, in the rest of the indicators the differences are very significant, although not equally intense. The most intense are given in the assessment of the transparency of public administrations and in the perception of the honesty of those who hold public positions. In both cases, the most positive view corresponds to Basque citizens, as would be expected from a territory with a higher level of quality of government according to EQI.

Likewise, it is Basque citizens who perceive less impunity for corruption and a lower level of corruption in the autonomous government, although here the association is less intense. In general, we can say that suspicions about possible corrupt behavior in public administrations are notably more widespread in Andalusia than in Euskadi. This fact fuels a spiral of a vicious circle of corruption in Andalusia compared to the Basque Country, since it becomes easier to face the cognitive dissonance produced by non-compliance with formal rules when you think you are surrounded by people who violate them.

Figure 8 shows an MCA for a couple of these variables. For this map, we have selected the perception of our respondents about both the honesty of public officials and the transparency of public administrations. Again, the figure shows how Basque respondents have more positive perceptions on both issues, although the best values (score 5) are very distant from the average position of both regions.

FIGURE 8: MCA ON PERCEPTION OF CORRUPTION



### *Expectations on opportunistic behavior*

Along the same lines, we should also find that expectations about the behavior of others are clearly more negative in Andalusia than in the Basque Country. We introduced seven indicators in our survey to collect expectations about the particularistic behavior of others in the respondents' environment: we asked if the Basques / Andalusians are honest people; if they generally comply with the laws; if many people turn to a 'contact' to solve their problems and if it seems logical that they do so; if in Basque / Andalusian society no one really needs to recur to a contact; if faced with a conflict of interest, a public official is expected to act partially or impartially; if to be successful in Spanish society, the most important thing is to have good contacts and nurture them; and if you can skip the waiting lists in the Basque / Andalusian healthcare system if you have a good contact.

It is true that we found significant differences in five indicators of this set of expectations about the opportunistic or particularistic behavior of the others between the Basque Country and Andalusia.

The expectations of the Andalusians are significantly worse than those of the Basques. However, unexpectedly since the difference in QoG between the two regions is so high, the intensity of these differences is low.

In fact, the differences in terms of pointing out the importance of cultivating contacts to achieve economic or professional success are non-existent, and the difference in the fact that a contact is used to solve problems and that this seems logical to us is not significant (figures 9 and 10).

FIGURE 9: THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO BE PROFESSIONALLY SUCCESSFUL IS SPAIN

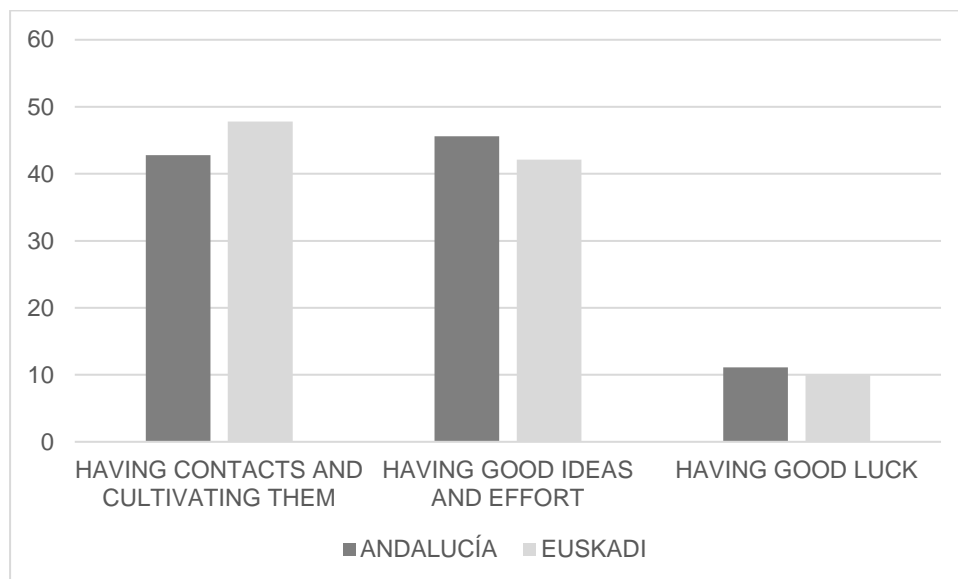
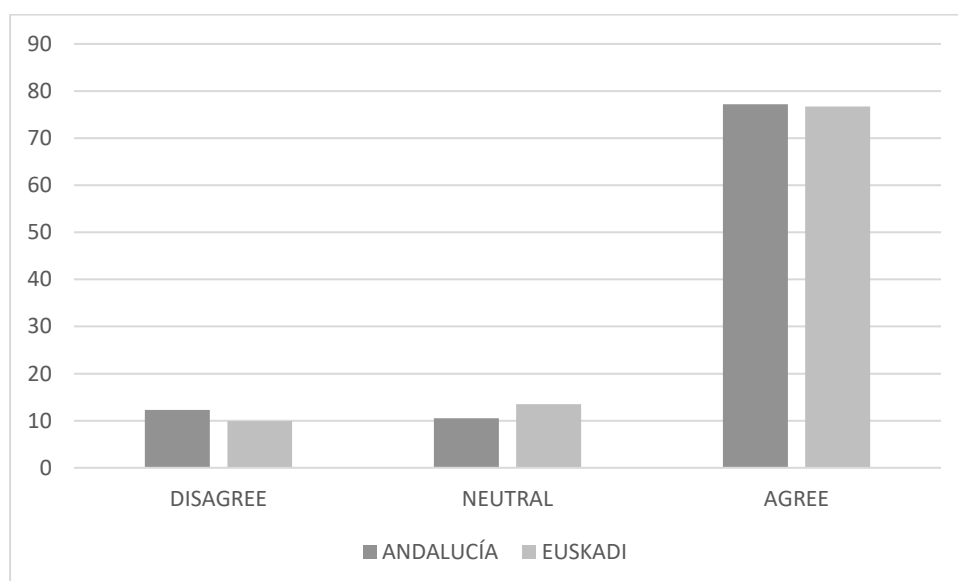


FIGURE 10: IF POSSIBLE, MANY PEOPLE TURN TO A CONTACT TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS MORE QUICKLY AND IT SEEMS LOGICAL TO ME THAT THEY DO SO



Among the other 5 variables where differences between both regions are statistically significant, it is convenient to group them into two different sets. On the one hand, there are two variables that show expectations that do not encourage opportunistic behaviors in either of the two regions. The perception that our respondents have about the honesty of the rest of their fellow citizens and whether they generally comply with the laws is highly positive, although it is somewhat better in the Basque Country. Figures 11 and 12 show these two positive expectations.

FIGURE 11: BASQUES / ANDALUSIANS GENERALLY COMPLY WITH THE LAWS

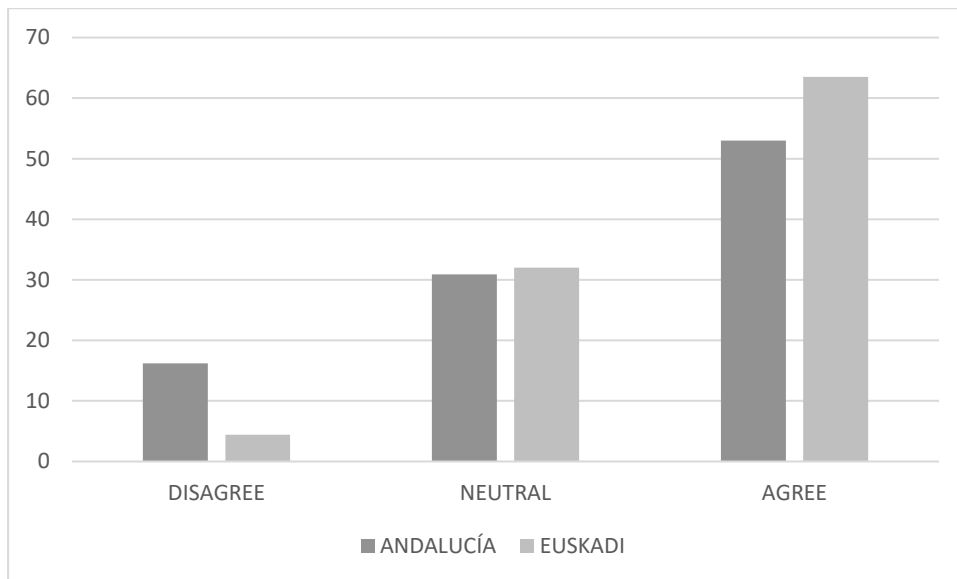
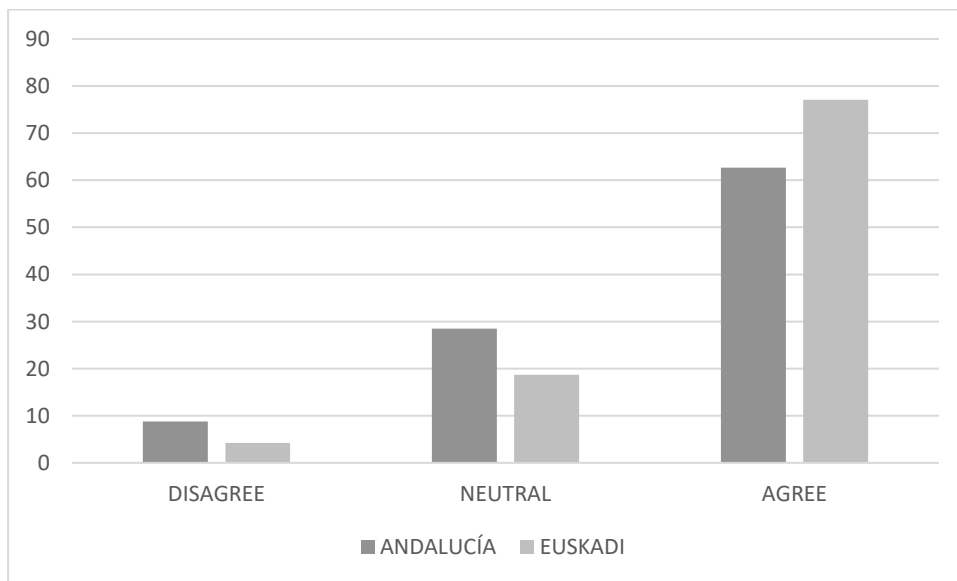
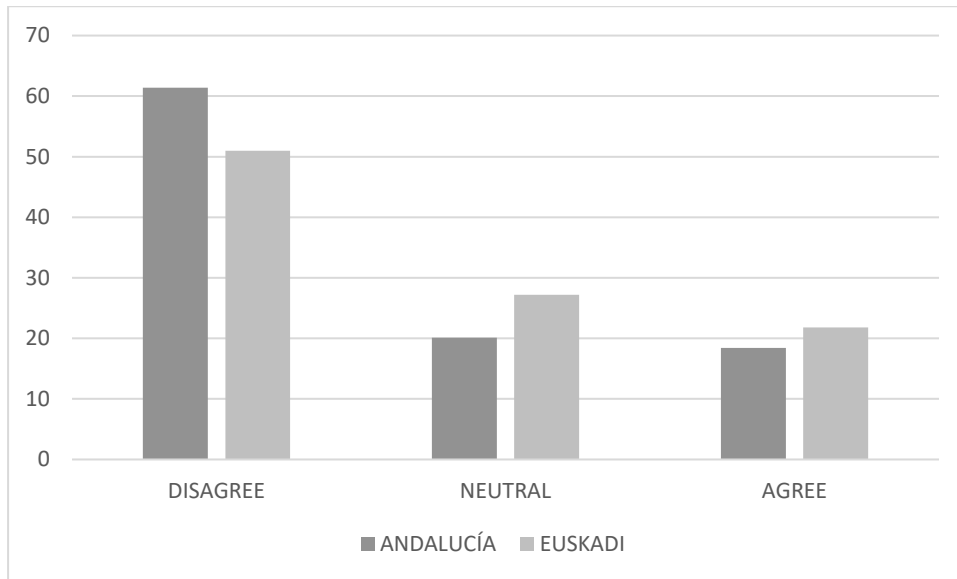


FIGURE 12: IN GENERAL, BASQUES / ANDALUSIANS ARE QUITE HONEST PEOPLE



On the other hand, the remaining three variables on the perception of the behavior of fellow citizens in our survey show an evident preference for particularistic expectations in both societies, despite their higher value among Andalusians.

**FIGURE 13: IN FACT, IN BASQUE / ANDALUSIAN SOCIETY ALMOST NO ONE NEEDS A CONTACT TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS**



**FIGURE 14: WHAT DO YOU THINK MOST PUBLIC OFFICIALS DO WHEN THEY HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND OF THEM IS ENTITLED TO SOCIAL HOUSING?**

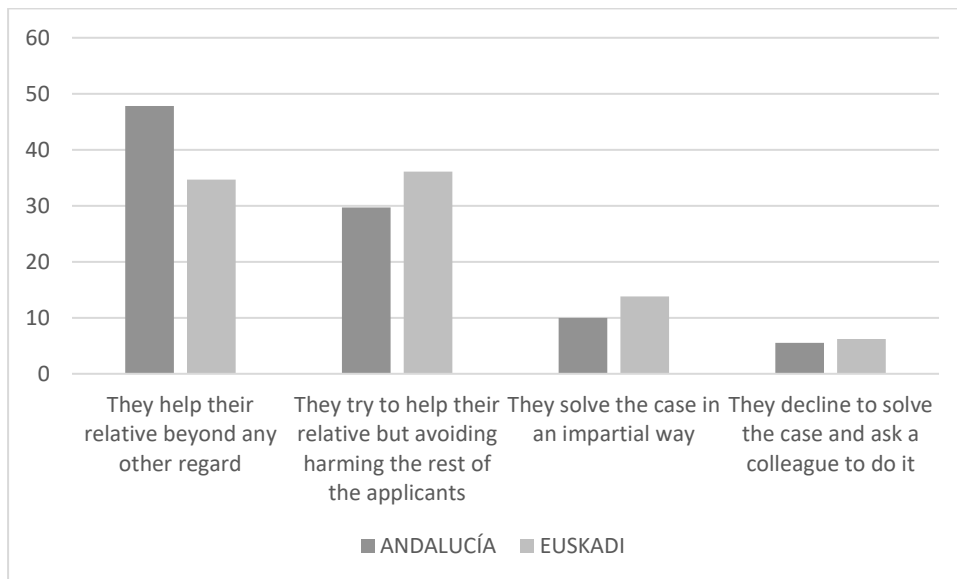


FIGURE 15: DO YOU THINK THAT IN BASQUE / ANDALUSIAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IT IS POSSIBLE TO SKIP THE WAITING LISTS IF ONE HAS A CONTACT?

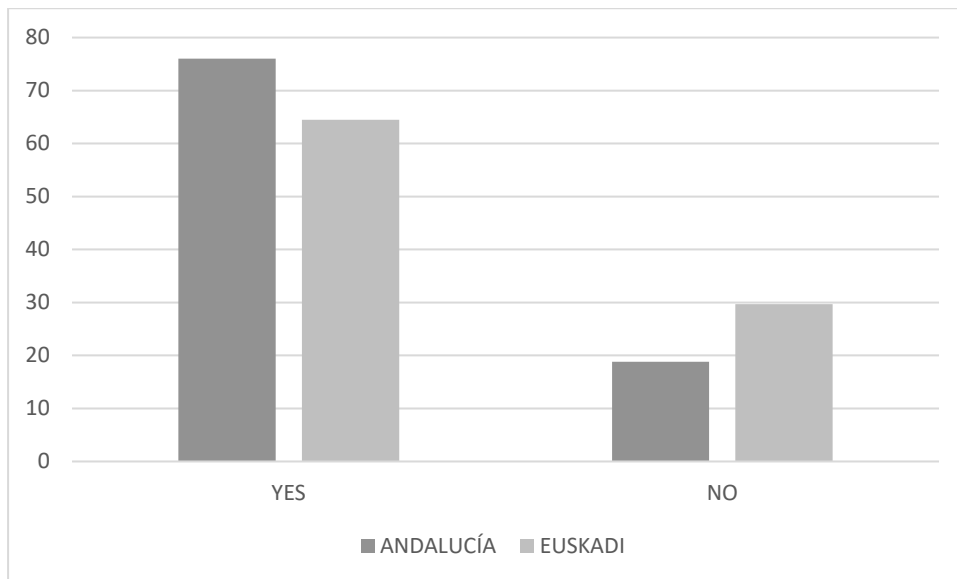
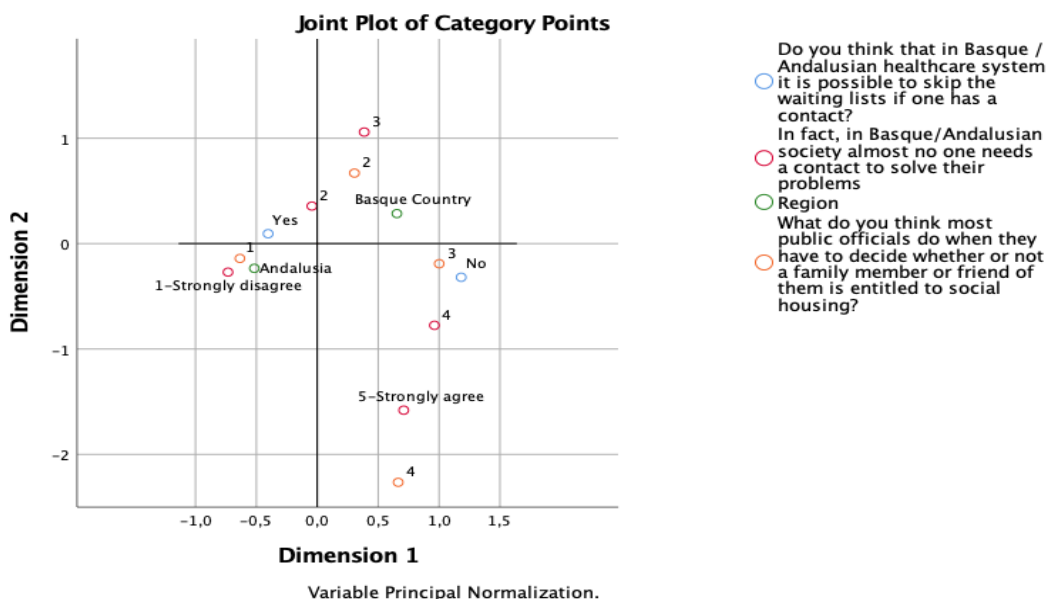


Figure 16 shows our MCA with three of these variables on expectations together. In this case, we show the indicators on how the respondents expect a public official will solve a conflict of interest, on whether they think contacts are needed in their society and, lastly, on whether they think it is possible to skip the waiting lists in the health system if one has a contact. We can see that, although Andalusia is closer to the most particularistic options, the Basque Country is still too distant from the options that we could regard as the most universalistic.

FIGURE 16: MCA ON EXPECTATIONS FOR OPPORTUNISTIC BEHAVIOR



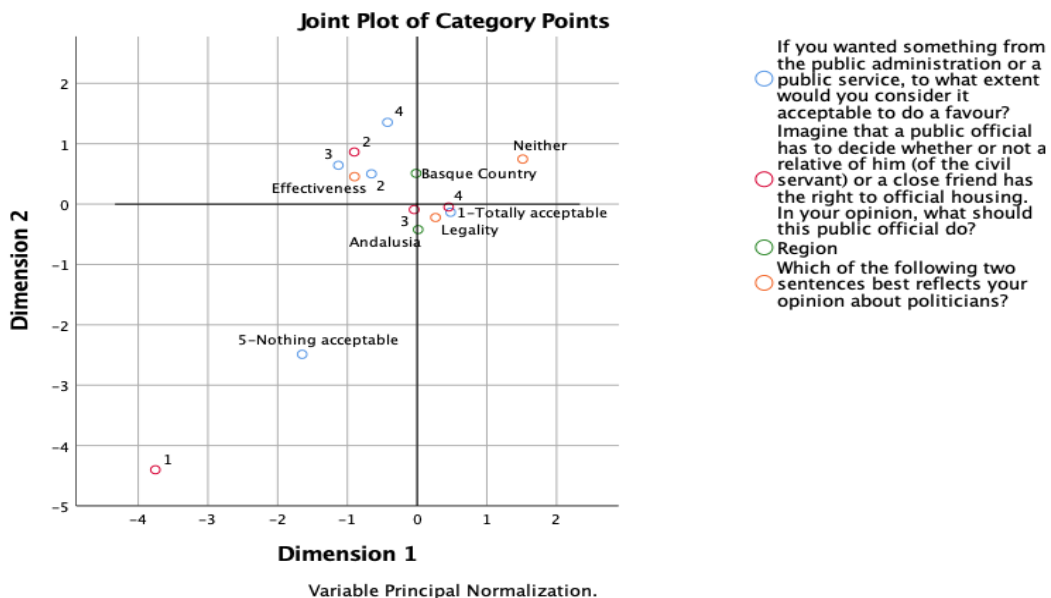
## Particularistic values

At first sight, it would be expected that between two territories with such different QoG values we could find notable differences in the range of values that we could consider as particularistic. However, the literature on corruption has been pointing out at least since the early work of Robert Klitgaard and Susan Rose-Ackermann that expectations about the behavior of others matter much more to the extent of corruption than people's own values. In fact, Klitgaard (2015) has always argued that not even in the most corrupt societies on the planet there are individuals who consider corruption as a value. For this reason, we do not expect the results in these indicators to show relevant differences between our two territories.

As anticipated in Table 3, our questionnaire contained five indicators to measure the extent of particularistic values in our two Autonomous Communities: we asked how an official should resolve a conflict of interest situation when deciding a matter that affected a family member or a friend; on whether it is acceptable to do a favor, give something away or give money to obtain something from a public administration; or, finally, if it is admissible for a politician to break a law to be effective in solving a public problem. In none of the five indicators significant differences have been found between our two communities.

Figure 17 shows the MCA for this fourth component of the fourth dimension of our analysis. It can clearly be seen that differences between our two regions are non-existent on the very limited spread of particularistic values among their populations.

FIGURE 17: MCA FOR PARTICULARISTIC VALUES





## Discussion

Talking about each one of the four main dimensions in our model of analysis, clear differences have been observed in the degree of politicization of the Basque and Andalusian public administrations, although some nuances have been detected in the Basque Country. Specifically, our interviewees have referred to some problems such as the following: the inexistence of a professional public management; the accumulation of a very high volume of temporary workers; and, finally, the growing primacy of the criterion of political trust over professional worth when selecting officials to carry out managerial tasks.

Regarding the second dimension of our analysis, which has to do with the inclination of political leaders towards clientelism, the differences found have also been clear, but, once again, doubts have arisen in the Basque Country about the consequences of the PNV's political hegemony to when it comes to developing clientele exchange networks.

Concerning the resources for mobilization that allow collective action, it is probably the dimension of our model in which the differences between our two cases are greater and more evident. However, many of these differences are the result of a different degree of economic development, although it must be remembered that development is usually pointed out in the literature as a consequence of the level of institutional quality and not vice versa (North, 1990; Acemoglu et al, 2005).

Finally, with regard to the elements that contribute to reducing cognitive dissonance, the following three findings can be drawn. In the first place, we find substantial differences in the levels of institutional trust, although with different standards depending on whether we speak of central (federal), on the one hand, or regional and local institutions, on the other, but, strikingly, we do not find differences in terms of generalized trust.

Regarding the perception of corruption, we find notable differences in the perception of the honesty of public officials and the transparency of public administrations, in both cases in favor of the Basque Country. Finally, it is striking that the differences in the extent of particularistic expectations, which could lead to an easier justification of opportunistic behaviors, are not too intense between our two territories and that, even in the Basque Country, relevant particularistic expectations prevail.

This being so, we should end up drawing two main conclusions from this analysis. In the first place, the most obvious is that, although there are many elements that support differences in the quality of government in our two cases, the detection of a notable degree of particularism in the Basque Country could lead to question whether we are really facing such a clear case of high QoG. This assessment should lead us to the second conclusion of this study.

It is necessary to fine tune the measurement of the QoG. The measurement used by the University of Gothenburg for its EQI includes three pillars, the perception of the respondents about the extent of corruption, the impartiality with which public administrations operate and the quality of public services such as education, health and police. Although it seems reasonable to assess the quality of public services when considering QoG, it will surely be necessary to connect this dimension with the economic resources available to some governments or others. As can be seen in Table 1, the true strength of the Basque Country

QoG according to the EQI is this pillar of the quality of services, a pillar in which the Basque Country comes to occupy the 37th position of all the European regions studied. However, as we see in Table 5, the comparison between the economic resources per inhabitant managed by the Basque government in relation to the Andalusian government shows the enormous comparative advantage that the former has over the latter. Surely, it is more adjusted to reality and to the good analysis of the quality of government that a weighted formula is found so that differences due to available resources do not weigh so much when determining the level of QoG of one society or another generating tautological explanations.

TABLE 5: DIFFERENCES IN THE VOLUME OF AVAILABLE ECONOMIC RESOURCES FOR THE BASQUE AND ANDALUSIAN GOVERNMENTS

VARIABLE	BASQUE GOV.		ANDALUSIAN GOV.	
	€ X inhabitant	% of autonomic GNP	€ X inhabitant	% of autonomic GNP
Executed public budget (expenditures) per capita, 2018	5.504,4	16,57%	4.312,8	22,57%
Health spending per capita, 2018	1.753	5,3%	1.212	6,3%
Per capita spending on education, 2018	1.258	3,79%	969	5,07%
Per capita R&D expenditure, 2017	623	1,94%	169,2	0,95%

Sources: Ministry of Finance for executed budgets (expenditures); Ministry of Health for health spending; Ministry of Education for spending on education; Eurostat for expenditure on R&D; INE for population census.

## Conclusion

This paper makes two relevant contributions to the study of the quality of government. On the one hand, a new model of analysis has been built based on 4 large dimensions that cover both supply and demand for an impartial exercise of public power. In addition, an operationalization of this model has been carried out using information from three different sources: expert interviews; a public opinion survey with original indicators; and data from official statistics. On the other hand, this model has been applied to contrast two case studies chosen for their opposite values, reaching the conclusion that the differences found between them are not as substantial as might be expected. This fact invites us to develop measures of the quality of government that are not as influenced as to date by differences in access to resources on which the quality of public services may depend.

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## List of interviews

1. Former senior official of the Basque government with long experience in personnel management. Madrid, February 15, 2020
2. Associate professor of political science at the UPV. Durango, March 3, 2020.
3. Former senior official of the Basque government with responsibilities in public administration. San Sebastián, March 4, 2020.
4. Professor at the UPV and essayist on issues of good governance. San Sebastián, March 4, 2020.
5. Councilor of the Bilbao City Council. Bilbao, March 4, 2020.
6. University professor and public administration consultant. San Sebastián, March 4, 2020.
7. Former senior official of the Basque government with responsibilities in matters of public function. Vitoria, March 5, 2020.
8. Physician complaining of fraud in the Osakidetza opposition, and two heads of an anti-corruption association. Vitoria, March 5, 2020.
9. Journalist. Bilbao, March 5, 2020.
10. Professor of political science at the UPV. Bilbao March 5, 2020.
11. Union leader. Bilbao, March 6, 2020.
12. Lawyer. Bilbao, March 6, 2020.
13. Retired experts in social studies, spatial planning, and education. Córdoba, March 9, 2020.
14. Former senior official of the Junta de Andalucía with responsibilities in Education and RTV. Seville, March 9, 2020.
15. Professor at the US and former senior position in land planning issues in the Junta de Andalucía and the Ministry of Development. Seville, March 10, 2020.
16. Former president of the Junta de Andalucía. Seville, March 10, 2020.
17. Former senior official with responsibilities in R&D management on the Junta de Andalucía. Seville, March 10, 2020.
18. Former senior official of the Junta de Andalucía with responsibility for water and irrigation policies. Seville, March 10, 2020.

19. Former high position in the Junta de Andalucía and secretary general in a large city council. Malaga, March 11, 2020.

20. Professor at the UMA expert in urban planning. Malaga, March 11, 2020.