



**Livability, insecurity, social capital and trust in local  
government**

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*Paper to be presented at the XVI ISA World Congress of Sociology.  
Durban, South-Africa, 23-29 July 2006.*

*RC03 Sessions: Quality of Social Existence in Local Democracy.*

## 1. Introduction

The emerge of extreme right wing parties in several European countries is often associated with growing feelings of insecurity. In the traditional extreme right wing discourse, the presence of large numbers of migrants are the main source of different types of blue collar criminality and by consequence feelings of insecurity. Growing feelings of insecurity are in the Belgian context also associated with different scandals (failures during several police investigations, e.g. the case of the murder of a former socialist party leader and a paedophile case that caused emotional shock waves in public opinion) that shook the political system (Hooghe & Deneckere, 2002). Particularly the performance of the judiciary system and of the different existing police forces was in the second half of the nineties of the previous century criticized by politicians, media and public opinion (Van Ostrive, 1996). This dramatic episode brought the federal government to a drastic transformation of the police landscape. This reform was based on a merger of different police forces and a scale enlargement (Maesschalck, 2002). One of the main targets of this transformation was to increase the presence of the police in streets and city quarters.

Research relates feelings of insecurity with different factors (De Hart, 2002; Elchardus & Smits, 2003). In the past, the main attention was focused on criminality in city quarters as one of the most important influencing factors (Parker & Ray, 1990). Later on, criminologists and social scientists paid attention to the social structure of neighbourhoods. Concentrations in city quarters of lower income groups, single parent families, unemployed people, ethnic minorities and youngsters would increase the risk of falling victim and by consequence affect feelings of insecurity (Hale, 1996). More recently, feelings of insecurity are associated with nuisance and the quality of social interactions in city quarters (Quillian & Pager, 2001). The passed decade is also characterized by a growing awareness for the impact of feelings of insecurity on public confidence (Elchardus & Smits, 2002).

Till now, we used interpretation schemes conceptualized by criminologists and social scientist specialized in research on deviant behaviour. However, within the discourse of political scientists, according to the insights entered in the debate by Robert Putnam (1993), the existence of social capital seems to play a major role in understanding (the lack of) public confidence. The more people interact with each other, the more they trust each other, which finally results in a general rise of trust in public institutions.

Research executed in different municipalities in Belgium allows us to combine the insights delivered by 'deviance' theories with instruments belonging to the toolbox of political scientists and sociologists. In fact, the 'deviance' theorist discourse about the quality of social interactions in particular neighbourhoods sounds very familiar with the fundamentals of the 'social capital' political scientists: the first ones interpret social interactions within a framework of social control, the latter ones describe it as a vehicle towards public confidence.

Doing so, according to the model of a three-stage rocket, this paper deals with three questions:

1. What explains feelings of insecurity at the level of the neighbourhood?
2. What explains feelings of insecurity at the level of the municipality?
3. What is the relation between feelings of insecurity and confidence in local government?

Concerning feelings of *insecurity* in the own residential *neighbourhood*, we firstly expect that being a victim of a criminal offence in that neighbourhood has an important negative influence. Secondly, the presence and performance of the police is one of the most important instruments in the toolbox of policy makers (on all levels of government). This necessitates an examination of the relation between the perceived of the police by the citizens and their feelings of (in)security. Thirdly, we will include in the analysis variables concerning the physical/material as well the social quality (social capital) of neighbourhoods. Fourthly, feelings of (in)security seem to be related with the presence of ethnic minorities (Meuleman & Billiet, 2003), so indicators of ethnocentric attitudes will be inserted in the models. Finally, building on empirical findings and theories concerning the impact of age, gender, SES and ethnic origin, the models will contain different social-demographic background variables.

We expect that the described determinants also have an impact on the feelings of *insecurity* in the entire *municipality*. Some will have a direct impact, other will have an indirect impact because we assume that feelings of insecurity in the neighbourhood intensify feelings of insecurity in the entire municipality. Our hypothesis is that experiences in the own neighbourhood and experiences in the entire municipality will determine the overall perception of safety.

The third part of this paper deals with the relation between feelings of insecurity (at the level of the global municipality) and trust in the local administration, assuming firstly that people who feel unsafe will demonstrate a lack of trust in the local administration and secondly that social capital reinforces confidence (Elchardus & Smits, 2002).

The data material presented in this paper find its origins in two different surveys. The first survey was organized within a framework concerning victimization, feelings of insecurity, livability of city quarters and the performance of the local police forces (Van Craen & Ackaert, 2006). This research focused on the Limburg province of Belgium and was executed in spring 2004. Two examined police districts contain municipalities which at the end of the eighties and beginning of the nineties were confronted with the closure of coal mines. The coal exploitation was in these municipalities the major source of employment. After the second World War, the coal exploitation brought about a large immigration flow. Coalminers were in the fifties mainly recruited in Italy, and later (in the sixties) in Turkey and Maghreb countries (mainly Morocco). However, the end of the coal exploitation undermined the integration of several ethnic-cultural minorities in these municipalities (Denolf & Martens, 1990).

The second survey (spring 2005) tried to measure the overall satisfaction with the performance of the city of Hasselt. Hasselt is the main city of the Belgian province of

Limburg (Van Craen & Ackaert, 2005). The city has no industrial root or affinities with the coal mine exploitation. Neither did it undergo large immigration waves.

Since we aimed to compose a sample under the condition that every item in the population had an equal opportunity to appear in the sample, we used for both projects the technique of the random sample. Respondents were selected out of the registers of the municipalities. The selected respondents have been interviewed face to face, with the use of a standard questionnaire (that contained ‘open’ and ‘closed’ questions). The major relevant characteristics of the concerned municipalities are:

	Former coal mine municipalities		Hasselt
	Heusden-Zolder	Maasmechelen	
Number of inhabitants	30648	36175	69538
Pct. non-Belgians 1992	19,3	26,1	
Pct. non-Belgians 2004	3,5	18,3	
Pct. unemployed	11,7	16,1	9,9
Parties in board of aldermen	Christian Democrats Socialists Local list	Christian Democrats Socialists	Christian Democrats Socialists Liberals Greens
Opposition parties	Extreme right wing Liberals Greens	Extreme right wing Liberals Greens	Extreme right wing
Number of respondents in survey	417	400	905

This table contains two figures that indicate the presence of ethnic minorities in the former coal mine municipalities (1992 and 2004). At first sight, their presence seems to have been reduced. However, this reduction is the result of different waves of reforms in the Belgian nationality legislation, opening the Belgian nationality to people with foreign origins on a more easy way. Taking the fact into account that the birth rate among ethnic minorities is higher than among the natives, the share of ethnic minorities within the total population in both municipalities will not be reduced compared with 1992.

## 2. Evidence from the coal mine area

### a. Operationalisation<sup>1</sup>

*Victim* is an index of several incidents and criminal offences that the respondents were confronted with the previous 12 months. The nature of the incidents were: crime against cars (theft of a car, theft of something in a car or attempt to), vandalism against personal

<sup>1</sup> The appendix presents information about the direction of the variables.

properties, traffic incidents (traffic accidents and traffic aggression), violence (suffered violence or confrontation with a threat of violence), bicycle theft, theft of hand bags/wallets, burglary in houses (or attempt to), discrimination and stalking. For each incident (exception made for burglary in houses, discrimination and stalking – for obvious reasons) the questioner registered whether these events happened in the residential neighbourhood of the respondent or in another part of the municipality.

Of course questions may arise about the relation between on the one hand the reports of criminal offences during the interview and on the other hand the real number of these facts. This is particularly a problem for facts as stalking, traffic aggression and discrimination. Depending from personal background characteristics, particular incidents can by some people be labeled as traffic aggression while other may consider it as an ordinary response to an irritating manoeuvre in daily traffic. However, this research does not focus on the real ‘objective’ frequency of certain incidents. From a social constructionist point of view, we consider the report (in the course of the interview) of certain (undergone) facts as people’s reality to which they adjust their behaviour, “if men define their situations as real then they are real in their consequences” (Thomas, 1928).

*Feelings of (in)security* were measured by the question ‘In the quarter (municipality) where you live, how do you feel?’ Answer categories: very safe, safe, neither safe nor unsafe, unsafe, very unsafe.

The *performance of the police* is a Likert-scale constructed of questions registering the satisfaction with the presence of the police in the streets, the rigour of their way of acting, the way police officers are approachable, the amount of information about the services rendered by the police and the possibilities to contact the police.

For the volume of *social capital*, we used two variables. The first one measured the number of contacts people have with other people living in their neighbourhood. The second one was a Likert-scale based on items that roughly measured how many times neighbour and family quarrels happened in the neighbourhood.

Concerning the *livability* of the neighbourhood, we distinguish four dimensions: how many times people took offence at (1) *disturbing behaviour* (drug use/dealing, nuisance produced by night life and by loitering youngsters), (2) *environmental problems* (street litter, smell nuisance and dog dirt) and (3) *traffic nuisance* (speed, unlighted bikes, incorrect parked cars and illegal high speed motorbikes). We also measured the perceived occurrence of *vandalism* and *street fighting*.

*Ethnocentric* attitudes are measured by means of two propositions (different cultures enrich our society, one may not trust people with another culture).

*Trust* in local government is measured by the question ‘how much trust do you put in your local administration: ‘very much, much, neither/nor, few, very few’?

As social-demographic background variables we selected *age*, *gender*, *education* and *ethnic origin*. The ethnic origin of the respondents is derived from items concerning the home land of the grandparents. We divided our respondents in two groups: citizens with European roots and citizens with non-European roots (mainly Turks).

#### *b. Determinants of feelings of (in)security in the neighbourhood*

As mentioned above, we expect an effect of age, gender, level of education, victimization (cfr. supra) in neighbourhood, performance (cfr. supra) of the police, livability,

ethnocentrism and social capital on feelings of (in)security. Table I presents the results of the multivariate analysis (linear regression, method: forward).

**Table I: Multivariate analysis of feelings of (in)security in the neighbourhood.**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	0,533	0,336		1,587	0,113
Disturbing behaviour	0,106	0,016	0,300	6,441	0,000
Ethnocentrism	-0,077	0,021	-0,155	-3,698	0,000
Traffic nuisance	0,022	0,011	0,095	2,007	0,045
Age	0,008	0,002	0,161	3,762	0,000
Performance of police	0,056	0,022	0,116	2,530	0,012
Contacts in neighbourhood	0,087	0,034	0,108	2,575	0,010
Vandalism & street fighting	0,105	0,051	0,092	2,043	0,042
R=	0,505				
R <sup>2</sup> =	0,255				

This model explains about 25 percent of the variations in feelings of (in)security. Let us start with commenting the remarkable absence of some variables. Firstly, as the model does not contain the index ‘victim’, falling victim does not seem to influence feelings of (in)security in the neighbourhood. However, we should be cautious. Maybe this index of victimization is too general. In future analyses we will insert different types of victimization in the model. Maybe burglary has another effect on feelings of insecurity than bicycle theft.

We also notice the absence of the influence of the ethnical background. In previous analyses we found a strong relationship between falling victim and the ethnic roots of the respondents (in the sense that people belonging to minority groups are more vulnerable) (Ackaert & Van Craen, 2005). So we expected that respondents with non-European roots would feel more unsafe than respondents with European roots.

The impact of age is highly striking. Finalizing the global research project we concluded that the younger people are, the more they run a risk to be pushed in the role of victim (Van Craen & Ackaert, 2006). This model reveals a relationship in the other sense: the older people are, the more they feel unsafe. Table I also shows that feelings of insecurity are strongly related with ethnocentric attitudes. Respondents who developed a negative attitude towards other (minority) cultures feel more unsafe than respondents presenting a positive attitude towards minority groups.

Feeling unsafe also results from traffic nuisance, disturbing behaviour (mainly of youngsters) and the occurrence of vandalism. This makes very clear that feelings of insecurity are strongly affected by the livability of city quarters. Being satisfied with the performance (cfr. supra) of the local police reduces feelings of insecurity. Finally, table I

supports the hypothesis about the impact of social capital on feelings of (in)security. The more contacts people have with their neighbours, the safer they feel.

*c. From safety in the neighbourhood towards safety in the municipality*

What is the link between feeling (un)safe in the neighbourhood and feeling unsafe in the global municipality? We earlier assumed that feelings of insecurity in the global municipality can partly be explained by experiences of citizens concerning safety in their neighbourhood. From this point of view, their perception of the safety in the global municipality is partly a result of the feelings developed in their immediate environment. Secondly, we expected also relations with the amount of social capital, livability, perception of the performance of the local police, ethnocentrism and different social-demographic background variables. Table II presents the results of the multivariate analysis (linear regression, method: forward).

**Table II: Multivariate analysis of feelings of (in)security in the global municipality**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0,666	0,249		2,673	0,008
Feelings of security in neighbourhood	0,336	0,046	0,329	7,364	0,000
Performance of police	0,093	0,022	0,189	4,127	0,000
Traffic nuisance	0,032	0,010	0,142	3,106	0,002
Age	-0,004	0,002	-0,087	-2,026	0,043
R=	0,494				
R <sup>2</sup> =	0,244				

From all the different variables entered in the model, only four seem to affect feelings of insecurity in the global municipality. At first sight victimization (in the municipality) does not seem to have an effect. But further research should reveal whether particular criminal offences cause feelings of insecurity.

As expected, the perception of (in)security in the neighbourhood has a strong impact on feelings of (in)security in the global village. Secondly, the more positive citizens evaluate the work delivered by the local police forces, the less they feel unsafe. Thirdly, citizens who complain about the nuisance caused by traffic feel more unsafe than others. Fourthly, this model suggests that younger people tend to feel more insecure than the older ones. This result is not only completely conflicting with our expectations

concerning the impact of age, it also differs from the results of the analysis concerning feelings of insecurity in the direct environment of citizens. There, we noticed that older people tend to feel more insecure than younger residents. As the effect at the level of the global municipality is weak ( $p = 0,043$ ), we expect that when different types of victimization are included in the analyses, this effect of age will disappear (see: Van Craen & Ackaert, 2006).

In addition to the variables that seem to explain the feelings of insecurity at the level of the global municipality, it is also worthwhile to have a look at the variables that have been rejected from the multivariate analysis, particularly in comparison with the results of table I. Firstly, table II does not contain any variable that is related to the provision of social capital. Extend social interactions in the neighbourhood only indirectly improve the feelings of security in the global municipality. They have a direct effect on feelings of insecurity in the neighbourhood but not on feelings of insecurity in municipality. Concerning the impact of livability factors, we only notice a direct relationship with complaints of traffic nuisance but no direct effects of the other variables concerning livability we took into account (e.g. disturbing behaviour). How to interpret this findings? Firstly, we may not forget that although these variables are not present in table II, they do influence the feelings of (in)security in the neighbourhood and that particularly these feelings explain for a large part the related feelings at the level of the global municipality. Secondly, fear for the risks in daily traffic is not restricted to the boundaries of the neighbourhood where people live. The answers on an open question in the surveys about priorities that the police should take into account, revealed that traffic safety is the first matter that troubles citizens.

*d. From feelings of insecurity in the global municipality towards confidence in local government*

The third step in our assumption was the link between feelings of insecurity at the level of the global municipality and confidence in the local administration. Beside of this effect, we hypothesized that, according to the Putnam theorem, trust in the local political institutions will also be based on the presence of social capital in local communities. Further on, we expected relations between the satisfaction about the performance of the local police (as a main agent of the municipalities), evaluations of the livability of municipality quarters and social-demographic background variables on the one hand and confidence in local government on the other hand. Given the fact that the examined municipalities count a considerable share of inhabitants with non-European roots among their citizens, we also suppose that the perception of undergone discrimination will affect the level of public trust. Table III presents the results of the multivariate analysis (linear regression, method: forward).



**Table III: Multivariate analysis of confidence in local government**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	-0,249	0,332		-0,749	0,454
Performance of police	0,122	0,029	0,199	4,206	0,000
Ethnic origin	0,706	0,126	0,253	5,606	0,000
Discrimination	0,602	0,157	0,174	3,834	0,000
Quarrels neighbourhood	0,214	0,065	0,147	3,304	0,001
Feelings of security municipality	0,181	0,059	0,143	3,074	0,002
Education	0,045	0,019	0,107	2,420	0,016
R=	0,481				
R <sup>2</sup> =	0,231				

Corresponding with) our main assumptions, feelings of (in)security affect trust in local government. People who consider their municipality to be unsafe, demonstrate a lower level of trust in local administration. In the same direction goes the relation with satisfaction of the performance of the local police. The more satisfied people are with this institution, the more they trust local government. In a sense, these relations remind us of the crucial role of monopolizing violence in the hand of one institution (the public state) in the building of a modern state, as it has been described by Elias (1987)

Secondly, ethnicity seems to influence public trust in a double way. First of all, we notice that citizens from non-European origins demonstrate more trust in local public institutions than residents with European roots. This confirms earlier findings in the Netherlands and Germany (Demant, 2005). At first sight, this result might feed the belief in the future of multicultural societies as long as it is not harmed by discriminating actions towards non-European citizens. Indeed, table III points out very clearly that the people who complain about discriminating treatments lose their faith in (local) democracy. It is important here to stress the fact that about a quarter of the non-European citizens complains about discriminating treatments (Ackaert en Van Craen, 2005).

Besides the ethnic roots, this table also relates confidence in local government with another social-demographic background variable: the level of education. Yet, the direction of the relation is just the other way round the expectations. It seems that higher educated people show a lower level of confidence in the local public institutions than the lower educated ones. However, it is too early to refute existing theories about the relationship between public trust and educational background. In this research, it was not possible to enter many variables concerning political attitudes, voting behaviour etc. It might be that the negative relation between the level of education and public trust covers in fact other (in this paper not examined) relations, e.g. voting behaviour. We assume that up to a certain level, trust in local administration reflects the voting behaviour. In other words, it is not difficult to imagine that people who voted for one of the parties who are

represented in the board of alderman and mayor show more confidence in the political institutions than voters of parties who remain in the opposition seats of the city hall. In none of the two examined municipalities, the liberal party (VLD) was able to make a breakthrough during the 2000 elections towards the board of alderman and mayor and resides by consequence on the local council opposition banks. According to electoral analysis, the educational level of the average liberal voter is higher than the educational level of socialist or Christian-democratic voters (Billiet, Swyngedouw a.o., 2001).

Finally, this table also underlines the impact of social capital in the neighbourhood on trust in local institutions. Not the number of interactions with neighbours seems to affect the level of confidence (though, it already affected the feelings of security in the neighbourhoods) but the number of neighbourhood quarrels people perceive. The more quarrels they notice, the more they lose confidence in local government.

### **3. Evidence from the Hasselt survey**

The final objective of this paper is to study profoundly the impact of livability, feelings of security and social capital on the level of trust put in local administration. The data of the former coal mine municipalities provided already some evidence. Yet, we know that confidence in institutions depends on more than the variables used in the previous section of this paper. Confidence in institutions is also associated with factors such as political efficacy and political knowledge (Carton & Pauwels, 2005). A survey organized among the inhabitants of the city of Hasselt (2005) allows us to take these variables into account: the main focus of that survey was to measure the overall level of satisfaction of the inhabitants with the administration of that city (Van Craen & Ackaert, 2005). These data also enable us to clear up the fuzzy relation between the level of education and trust we described in the previous section. The most remarkable thing in the political setting of that city is the fact that (exception made for the very small extreme right wing party) all political parties are represented in the board of aldermen and mayor. In other words, the voting behaviour of the citizens does not disturb our analysis of the effect of education. Hasselt is also an interesting city from another point of view: the administrators are quite inventive in experimenting with different programs in order to build up social capital in different city quarters and to increase the responsiveness of the administration towards demands of the inhabitants (De Rynck, 2005).

#### *a. Operationalisation*

First of all, in the Hasselt survey we reused the types of variables and operationalisation described in the previous section. However, since Hasselt is a provincial city with no industrial tradition, the data collected among its citizens do not allow us to measure the impact of ethnic origin on feelings of security, livability and confidence in institutions. Secondly, since the target of the Hasselt survey was to analyze the overall level of satisfaction with the city administration, we added different variables in the research. Concerning the livability of the different city quarters, we introduced a variable that

measures the level up to which people are congenial with the direct environment they live in.

With regard to social capital, the survey also registered whether respondents are member of organizations, they attend their activities, whether they organized activities in the city or the neighbourhood and whether they attended neighbourhood activities (BBQ, celebrations, etc.).

Political efficacy is distilled from questions about the sense of local elections, the appreciation of the amount of information provided by the local administration, the level up to which local politics is perceived as being complex and the perception of the possibilities to participate in local decision making.

The variable political participation is a scale of items as reading political and social news in the newspapers, discussing political issues with family and friends, contacting local politicians and organizing city or neighbourhood actions.

Political knowledge is based on the number of aldermen respondents know.

*b. Determinants of feelings of (in)security in the neighbourhood*

Again, we expect an effect of age, gender, level of education, victimization in the neighbourhood, performance of the police, livability, ethnocentrism and social capital on feelings of (in)security in the neighbourhood. Table IV presents the results of the multivariate analysis (linear regression, method: forward).

Table IV: Multivariate analysis of feelings of (in)security in neighbourhood.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0,351	0,216		1,620	0,106
Congeniality neighbourhood	0,205	0,042	0,236	4,876	0,000
Performance of police	0,056	0,018	0,144	3,043	0,003
Ethnocentrism	0,179	0,038	0,224	4,784	0,000
Quarrels neighbourhood	0,152	0,035	0,199	4,362	0,000
Membership organisations	0,053	0,020	0,121	2,635	0,009
Participation neighbourhood meetings	-0,074	0,031	-0,114	-2,394	0,017
R=	0,526				
R <sup>2</sup> =	0,277				

There are similarities between the results of Hasselt and those of the former coal mine municipalities. This is clearly the case for feelings of ethnocentrism (again, people who develop a negative attitude to minority groups seem to feel more unsafe than others) and the satisfaction with the performance of the police. Although the variables in this model differ from the ones in the model of the coal mine municipalities, table IV also reveals strong relations between social capital and feelings of (in)security. Quite logic, inhabitants who feel congenial with the neighbourhood feel more safe within their neighbourhood. The same logic occurs in the relation between the perception of quarrels in the neighbourhood and feelings of (in)security. Moreover, people who join more frequently neighbourhood meetings feel more safe. The finding that the more membership cards citizens have of organizations, the more they feel insecure is pretty dissonant within this story: we expected the reverse relation. Of course, being member of organizations says nothing about the involvement in the daily functioning of these organizations. Yet, the regression model contained originally this item but is was excluded during the regression analysis. Other explanations have to be found. It is not unlikely that the negative relation between memberships of organizations and feelings of security is related with the fact that the survey did only count the number of memberships but did not collect information about the type of organizations. So, during the data analysis, it was e.g. impossible to discern the local orientation of the organizations.

There are also differences with the findings in the coal mine area. We found e.g. no relation between the perception of livability-problems (traffic nuisance, disturbing behaviour) and the examined feelings of (in)security. However, we pointed out that considering the neighbourhood as congenial affects these feelings. This perception of congeniality is strongly associated with on the one hand environmental factors (street litter, dog dirt, ...) and on the other hand irritation originating from disturbing behaviour

in the neighbourhood<sup>2</sup>. In the city of Hasselt, age does not seem to influence directly feelings of (in)security in the neighbourhood.

*c. From safety in the neighbourhood towards safety in the city*

In this section we examine determining factors of feelings of safety in the global city. The method is similar to the one explained in the paragraph concerning the former coals mine municipalities. Table V presents the results of the multivariate analysis (linear regression, method: forward).

**Table V: Multivariate analysis of feelings of (in)security in the global city**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1,733	0,206		8,420	0,000
Feelings of security in neighbourhood	0,267	0,044	0,303	6,017	0,000
Political efficacy	-0,034	0,010	-0,169	-3,355	0,001
Ethnocentrism	0,102	0,037	0,143	2,754	0,006
R=	0,455				
R <sup>2</sup> =	0,207				

Similar to the findings presented in table II, feelings of (in)security in the neighbourhood intensify feelings of (in)security in the global city. Secondly, ethnocentrism does not only affect these feelings in the neighbourhood but also the feelings in the global city. Thirdly, people who say that the city is responsive to their concerns feel more safe.

In contrast with table II, we found no effect of the satisfaction with the performance of the local police. It is not impossible that the (general latent) variable ‘political efficacy’ swallows up the evaluation of the work done by the police. Also contrary to the findings presented in table II, age does not seem to influence directly feelings of (in)security in Hasselt.

*d. From feelings of insecurity in the global city towards confidence in local government*

As mentioned above, the survey in the city of Hasselt allows us to put more variables in the analysis scheme of trust in local administration. Table VI presents the results of the multivariate analysis (linear regression, methode: forward).

<sup>2</sup> Regression model not included. R = .483, R<sup>2</sup> = .233 and significant for disturbing behaviour (sig. = .000) and environmental nuisance (sig. = .021).

**Table VI: Multivariate analysis of confidence in local government**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2,010	0,325		6,195	0,000
Education	0,046	0,014	0,151	3,431	0,001
Ethnocentrism	0,113	0,043	0,119	2,596	0,010
Environmental quality neighbourhood	0,029	0,011	0,113	2,590	0,010
Contacts with neighbours	0,064	0,033	0,084	1,969	0,050
Violence and vandalism in neighbourhood	0,064	0,033	0,087	1,971	0,050
Congeniality neighbourhood	0,066	0,047	0,064	1,406	0,161
Congeniality city	0,197	0,060	0,146	3,300	0,001
Feelings of security city	0,168	0,060	0,125	2,787	0,006
Political knowledge	-0,054	0,017	-0,131	-3,082	0,002
Political efficacy	-0,105	0,013	-0,395	-8,207	0,000
R=	0,639				
R <sup>2</sup> =	0,409				

The enlargement of the number of variables (by adding variables related to political efficacy en political knowledge) is reflected in an increase of the explained variance. Again, we notice resemblances and contrasts with the results of the former coal mine municipalities. The main similarities are the effects of feelings of security, social capital and education. In both types of municipalities, feelings of (in)security are important for estimating the level of confidence in local government. Besides the environmental quality, the amount of social capital in neighbourhoods does affect trust in local administration. The more contacts people have with neighbours, the more they put trust in the administration of the city. The more people describe the global city as congenial, the more they trust their administrators.

As expected, there is a strong relation between political knowledge and political efficacy on the one hand and confidence in the local administration on the other hand. Compared with the results of the former coal mine municipalities, the regression analysis excluded the variable ‘satisfaction with the performance of the local police’. This does not necessarily mean that this factor is not important. As mentioned above, it is possible that the perception of the performance of the police is strongly related with the overall feeling of political efficacy.

We ended the section about the former coal mine municipalities with questions concerning the fuzzy relation between trust in local government and the level of education. We assumed that this relation was affected by the political voting behaviour of the respondents (taking into account the fact that parties with an higher educated electorate were not present in the executive boards of the municipalities). Yet, in the city

of Hasselt, where all parties are present in this board (exception made for the extreme right wing party), we are still confronted with the same relation: lower educated respondents put more trust in local government than higher educated respondents. A bivariate analysis points out that this relation is more complex than might be assumed at first sight. Table VII shows the results.

**Table VII: Confidence in local administration and level of education**

	Level of education				Mean
	Low	Mid-low	Mid-high	High	
<b><u>Coal mine area</u></b>					
Much	48,5	45,0	40,4	32,5	42,0
Neither/nor	25,8	26,0	33,8	35,7	30,2
Few	25,8	29,0	25,9	31,8	27,8
N=	194	200	228	154	776
Chi <sup>2</sup> = 12,364, d.f. = 6, sig. = ,054					
<b><u>Hasselt</u></b>					
Much	49,6	55,2	54,5	53,2	53,4
Neither/nor	39,4	29,9	40,2	42,7	39,0
Few	10,9	14,9	5,3	4,1	7,5
N=	137	154	264	293	848
Chi <sup>2</sup> = 24,538, d.f. = 6, sig. = ,000					

For the respondents of the survey in the previous coal mine municipalities, this table suggests that higher educated citizens develop a lower level of trust in local institutions. This finding does not conflict with our assumption with regard to the relation between trust in local administration – voting behaviour – level of education. The figures from Hasselt show a more differentiated relation. Corresponding to the traditional hypotheses, trust seems to be least developed among the lower educated citizens, but the relation between the level of education and confidence in the local government is not a linear one. Moreover, we can not neglect the fact that several variables used in the linear model are strongly influenced by the level of education and that researchers here have to be aware of problems of multicollinearity. This is particularly the case for ethnocentrism (Meuleman & Billiet, 2005), political knowledge (Billiet, Cambre & Swyngedouw, 1997) and political efficacy (G. Dierickx & P. Thijsen, 1993).

#### 4. Conclusion and debate

Let us start from the last question: what explains confidence in local government? There are several similarities between the results of the former coal mine municipalities and these of Hasselt. In both cases, feelings of security influence the level of trust put in the local administration. Secondly, the level of confidence partly results from the amount of

social capital. In the coal mine area we found a negative indication – the number of neighbourhood quarrels – while in Hasselt we found a positive one – the number of contacts with neighbours. Differences between the two samples occurred concerning the impact of livability. Only in Hasselt we found a *direct* relation (congeniality, environmental quality of the neighbourhood and violence/vandalism in the neighbourhood).

Feelings of insecurity in the global city are intensified by feelings of insecurity in the own residential neighbourhood. Concerning the latter feelings, again we found similarities between the two samples. In the former coal mine municipalities we identified disturbing behaviour, traffic nuisance, vandalism and violence as important factors that affect feelings of security. In Hasselt the perception of the general congeniality of the neighbourhood has an impact. With regard to social capital, we found in the two former coal mine municipalities that the number of contacts with neighbours has a significant effect on feeling safe or unsafe in the own residential neighbourhood. In Hasselt people who perceive hardly any neighbourhood quarrels and who attend neighbourhood events feel more safe. We did not find a direct relation between social capital and feelings of security at the level of the global municipality. Yet, these feelings are strongly affected by the way people feel in their own residential quarter (that feeling is influenced by social capital).

Although there are some differences in the results of the former coal mine municipalities and these of Hasselt, both cases underline that social capital and livability are important factors for explaining feelings of security and trust in local government. As mentioned, the city of Hasselt is pretty creative in inventing new techniques in order to improve the level of social capital in different city quarters (such as stimulating citizens to organize different types of neighbourhood events). Yet, similar to all research results concerning political participation, also this kind of participation is strongly influenced by a social bias as table VII points out.

**Table VII: Level of education and attending neighbourhood events**

Participation events	Level of education				
	Low	Mid-low	Mid-high	High	Mean
Never	74,1	65,9	60,8	58,4	63,1
Once	22,4	20,7	24,6	22,6	22,9
Twice & more	3,4	13,4	14,6	19,0	14,0
N=	147	164	268	305	884
Chi <sup>2</sup> = 22,397, d.f. = 6, sig. = ,001					



The higher people are educated, the more likely they are to join neighbourhood activities. In fact this social bias reflects a mirror image of social variations in political participation (Milbrath & Goel, 1977). In spite of the low thresholds characterizing the pathways towards this kind of participation, education clearly hampers or facilitates the accumulation of social capital. So, local governments that try to stimulate neighbourhood activities and social networks should in the process of conceiving and implementing this kind of strategies take this bias into account. Otherwise they will run the risk of being confronted with a Matthew effect: higher educated people will have more political knowledge, will develop a more positive attitude towards migrants, will have a more extensive social network, will feel more safe and will be more satisfied with the working of local democracy. Social capital helps, social bias harms...

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## Appendix: direction of variables

Variable	High value means:
Victimisation	High degree of fallen victim
Feelings of (in)security	Feeling unsafe
Performance policy	Low performance
Contacts with neighbours	Many contacts
Quarrels neighbourhood	Many quarrels
Disturbing behaviour	Many incidents
Environmental problems	Many problems
Traffic nuisance	Much nuisance
Vandalism & street fighting	Many incidents
Ethnocentrism	Low degree of ethnocentrism
Confidence local government	Low degree of confidence
Congeniality	Low
Membership organisation	Many memberships
Being active in organisation	Highly
Participation neighbourhood events	Highly
Political efficacy	Efficacious
Political knowledge	High degree
Political participation	High degree
Age	Old
Gender	Male
Education	High
Ethnic origin	Native

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