Undoing the *cabinets ministériels.* A scoping review on "decabinetisation" in Napoleonic systems

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ABSTRACT:

Unlike Westminster systems, Napoleonic countries featuring ministerial cabinets, such as Belgium or France, have a long tradition of "cabinetisation". In the last 25 years, researchers have observed a trend whereby in those political systems, some have begun to question the size and prominence of ministerial cabinets in the core executive. This paper seeks to understand where and why such reverse process of "decabinetisation" is taking place. Through a systematic scoping review, in both English and French, it maps 98 articles on ministerial cabinets and analyses 21 articles addressing the recent question of cabinet reforms.

KEYWORDS: policy advice, Napoleonic administrative tradition, ministerial cabinet, decabinetisation

INTRODUCTION

Ministerial cabinets (*cabinet ministériels)* are the institutional habitats of political advisers and administrative support staff of executive politicians in Napoleonic administrative systems. As such, they should not be confused with what is commonly referred to as cabinets of ministers. Originally coming from France (beginning of the 19th century), ministerial cabinets have long been institutionalized organizations in Belgium (also 19th century), and more recently in Italy (post-War), the European Commission (1980s), Spain (late 1970s) Greece (1980s) and Portugal (1980s). They are essentially the products of a process of 'thick institutionalisation' (Selznick, 1992, p235), which lasted for decades and during which formal/regulative and normative features, as well as organizational boundaries and practices amalgamated. Ministerial cabinets are, therefore, useful laboratories for examining a series of phenomena and political and policy dynamics. From the process of institutionalization to political-administrative relations and the very emergence of political advisers in contemporary democratic settings. Late arrivals in the world of political advisers, such as most Westminster tradition systems, could potentially learn a lot from the ministerial cabinet tradition. Indeed, a discussion is emerging as to the extent to which ministerial offices in Westminster systems are increasingly resembling to ministerial cabinets in Napoleonic systems, going through a process of "cabinetisation" (Gouglas and Brans, 2016; Gouglas and Brans, 2017).

However, contrary to this process, reforms such as the Copernicus administrative and state reform in Belgium in the early 2000s and the Kinnock-Prodi changes in the European Commission during the same period, have signaled the possibility of a reverse process termed by some as "decabinetisation" (Brans et al, 2017). Contrary to the trend for bigger and more powerful political offices to be found in many OECD countries (OECD 2011), the process of decabinetisation suggests a rebalancing of the relationship between ministerial cabinets and the public service, via a reduction in the power of ministerial cabinets and a strengthening of the administration's role in policy-making (Brans et al., 2017, p58). If such a process exists, it is affecting the relationship between politicians and administrators, which for many decades now has been considered to be titling in the favor of politicians. Is such a process really happening, where exactly and under what circumstances?

In this paper, we seek to uncover the topic and investigate it further. Our research is guided by three research questions. Generally speaking, we seek to scope what the literature says about MCs from a comparative perspective. More specifically, we want to know :

- What do decabinetisation attempts consist of and where have they been located?
- What explanatory factors are pointed out in the literature to explain those attempts?

We do this via a scoping review of the literature based on the methodology suggested by Arksey & O'Malley (2005) and the adapted PRISMA approach (Tricco et al., 2018). While similar in methodology to systematic reviews, scoping reviews have a different purpose. They aim at mapping what the literature says about an emerging field rather than assessing the best quality evidence, which the systematic literature review does in an already mature field in which critical amount of evidence already exists (Peters, M. et al., 2015).

The article is organized as follows. The next section lays the foundations of our article. It defines ministerial cabinets and elaborate on the process of institutionalization. Then follows the methodological part which details what the systematic process of scoping review has led us to analyze 98 articles. We then present and discuss the result of this review and identify gaps in the literature. The final section concludes.

DOING AND UNDOING THE MINISTERIAL CABINET

(DE)CABINETISATION AND (DE)INSTITUTIONALIZATION

Ministerial cabinet (MC)

Walgrave et al. (2004, p7) define a MC as consisting of "a staff of personal advisers, who are hired when a minister takes office, and are not part of the administrative hierarchy. They assist the minister in identifying and formulating problems, in outlining policy, and in everyday decision-making". This definition is too broad and risks of encompassing any type of political office in any kind of politico-administrative system.

Ministerial cabinets are institutions, not simply structures/organizations. As Scott (2014, p. 56) argues institutions comprise "regulative, normative and cultural cognitive elements that together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life".

In view of this, Gouglas and Brans (2016, pp7-10) have identified have certain fundamental features of MCs.

1. **Structure and size.** An MC is typically a big office of staffers surrounding an executive politician (prime minister, minister, deputy minister). It can include anything between 20 to even more than 100 staff, comprising a minimum of 6/7 political advisers (Ministerial Cabinets Advisers, MCAs) and administrators. MCAs can come from the administration or can be external appointees. Ministerial cabinets are run by a Head of Cabinet (*chef de cabinet*), who line manages the MC staff and has also the power to sign internal/administrative documents on the behalf of the executive politician. Deputy chief(s) of cabinet might also be in place, depending on needs and traditions.

2. **Partisanship.** Ministerial cabinets are formally partisan. The principle of *non-impartiality* is a given and it also covers seconded public servants in those offices who are expected to drop their neutrality and become temporary partisans. This clearly distinguishes MCs from the administration constituting them typical instances of what Peters and Pierre (2004) have coined as redundant politicization. This also differentiates MCs from political offices in Westmister systems where civil servants usually are obliged to maintain their neutrality even when working in the office of executive politicians. The UK is here a typical example. By contrast, Australia allows its public servants to become temporary partisans and this, among others, has led to talk about its potential cabinetisation (Gouglas and Brans, 2017).

3. **Career hoping and public servants.** *Career hoping* from public servants, that is going from an administrative to a cabinet position and back, is allowed and regulated in such a way, as to not hinder the administrative career progression of public servants upon their return to their departments.

4. **Politicization.** MCs exist within public administrations, which are constitutionally expected to offer neutral, expert, free and frank advice. However, there is a strong normative and cultural acceptance of MCs acting as sources of *politicization of the administration*. Not by law, but by tradition, MCs work as mini public administrations that direct politically the work of the formally neutral public administration, involve themselves in every day management decisions, especially personnel selection and control the whole decision-making process, very often by sidelining public servants to mostly implementation roles (Gouglas and Brans, 2016, pp7-10).

MC are clearly made of regulative aspects. They are explicitly recognized legally and allocated a specific budget. They have to comply to specific rules provided by law. MC can thus be understood through the prism of rational choice institutionalism: institutions are made of formal rules, which constrain behavior, and incentives which stimulate and reward individuals (Peters, 2019, p53-54).

However, cabinets are not subject to much legal scrutiny and enjoy some liberty of action given the legal vagueness of their functions. Rules and laws regarding ministerial cabinets exist but are often neglected or bypassed (James, 2007; Di Mascio and Natalini, 2013; Eymeri-Douzans, 2015).

The absence of clear and straight forward legal aspects give great importance to the normative aspect of ministerial cabinets. Here we are not talking about legal rules, but rather of values, norms and roles (Scott, 2014, p64). Within a cabinet, it is assumed that all members share and support the Minister's views (references). While its roles are not (clearly) legally defined, their seems to be a shared understanding about it: it goes from advising the Minister, to dealing with its agenda, coordinating with other stakeholders within the Government (other Ministries and their cabinets) or outside of it (Parliament, unions, interest groups,…) to dealing with the administration.

Such elements are clearly related to March and Olsen's conception of normative institutionalism (cited in Peters, 2019). In such perspective, institutions corresponds to a collective understanding embedded with norms and routines (pp31-35). While it does not deny the influence that individuals can have on shaping an institution, institutions primarily influence behavior not because of formal rule constrain

its members (coercive) but rather because institutional norms and values guide their behavior following a certain "logic of appropriateness".

Finally, ministerial cabinets are profoundly embedded in specific cultural-cognitive elements that are neither of legal or normative values (Scott, 2014, pp66-70). Institutions in general, and MC in particular are also constituted with external cultural frameworks, that are hardly perceivable as they are usually taken for granted (ibid).

Here, the historical institutionalist perspective is clearly present. Indeed, this perspective stresses the importance of historical preconceptions and understanding in shaping an institution (Peters, 2019, pp85-86). These ideas, these shared cultural understanding are integrated when one institution is created while then continuously have an impact on the evolution of the very institution. Path dependency is thus fundamental and we clearly see it for ministerial cabinet. They exist and were created because they belonged in a specific administrative culture: the Napoleonic one.

This last feature also explain why MCs are found in political system of Napoleonic administrative tradition. Indeed, this tradition is characterized by a specific conception of the relation between administrative and political sphere (Peters, 2008). As echoed by Ongaro (2009) four sub-criteria are defined by Peters to define the relation between politics and administration in Napoleonic system. Firslty, a certain degree of political involvement in the bureaucracy: top CS are expected to be politically responsive to their Minister. Secondly, in term of career, political criteria are important, particularly for top position within the administration. Moreover, Napoleonic systems bureaucracy becomes a general-purpose elite for the state, there is high porosity between CS career and political ones. Finally, one observes a tendency to pursue a whole career in the administration. CS have a rather limited mobility between public and private sectors (with the notable exception of the French phenomenon of *pantouflage*) and come from specific background. Altogether, these four features point in the same direction: there is a tendency for Napoleonic administration to be politicized. It clearly differs from the Anglo-American tradition where there is a clear separation between administration and politics (Lodge, 2010, p116).

The institutionalization of MCs

This paper starts from the assumption that MCs are institutionalized organizations composed of key actors, MCAs. Institutionalization is here understood as a process: it is not stable and can evolve (through institutional change) over time. We endorse Selznick's view on institutionalization (cited in Scott, 2014, p146) as a two-step process. The first step is functional, an organization is created to solve a specific problem. It follows a very rational

logic. The second step, what Selznick calls the "thick institutionalization", a cumulative process during institutions truly builds itself:

> *"by sanctifying or otherwise hardening rules and procedures, by establishing strongly differentiated organizational units, which then develop vested interests and become centers of power; by creating administrative rituals, symbols and ideologies, by intensifying "purposiveness", that is, commitment in unifying objectives, and by embedding the organization in a social environment"*
> *(Selznick, 1992, p235 in Scott, 2014, p146)*

Simply put, institutionalization is a process, usually rather lengthy, of defining an organization in term of regulative, normative, and cognitive characteristics that go beyond its original, rational purpose.

Table 1 presents a brief history of the time when and the reasons why MCs were created. While it is not the purpose of this paper to investigate this process, some remarks can however be made

Table 1 Doing the cabinet – Countries, years and reasons for creation

Country	Year of creation	Reasons for creation	Authors
France	1840	Break from monarchial rule	Thuillier, 1982; Bouvet, 2015
Belgium	1840	Independence from monarchial rule	Molitor, 1973; Van Hassel, 1988; Luyckx and Platel 1985
Italy	1924	Break with fascist regime	Putnam, 1975; Cassese, 1984
Commission	1988	Creation of the High Authority for the European Coal and Steel Community	Ritchie, 1992
Spain	1982	Break with Franco's regime	Fleischer and Parrado, 2015
Greece	1982	Break with old regime	Sotiropoulos, 1999; Tsekos 1986
Portugal	1974	Break with former regime	Silva (2017)

As it was already pointed out by Gouglas and Brans (2017) it seemed that MC were created during critical time of change or crisis: following the end of dictatorial regime in Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal; right after the creation of the European Economic Community for the European Commission or to break from monarchial rule right after the state was created for Belgium. Here, historical institutionalism and particularly the

concept of critical juncture seems relevant (pp14-15). Institutions are created, shaped, or changed in time of crisis and instability.

Beyond such foundational moments, ministerial cabinets have developed into 'thick institutions' in all systems with their own boundaries, rules and logics, both formal and informal. They have reached a point today, where in the majority of cases, they are very different political organization when compared to what they initially started as. Some quick examples.

- In term of size, 1939 Belgian law provided that MC should be composed of a maximum of four MCAs while now the number of advisers greatly varies between 7 and 40 per cabinet (Brans et al., 2017, p63).
- Regarding its composition, European cabinets were originally composed of members of the same nationality as the Commissionner they served while the cabinet population has greatly evolved now (Spence, 2006). In Italy, the royal decree 1100 of July 1924 which recognized *gabinetto* officially imposed that it should be composed of CS exclusively (Cassese, 1984,p60), a practice that has then changed.
- It also evolved in term of role. In the French case, the role of the cabinet was originally limited to dealing with urgent issues of the Minister as well as his relation with different institutional and external actors, it progressively extended to supervising and managing the administration (Bouvet, 2015, p171)

The decabinetisation of MCs

While we see that MCs have long been institutionalized, it has been argued that in the recent years that there have been attempts to "reduce and revise the MCs in favor of strengthening the administration's role in policy making", what is labelled "decabinetisation" (Brans et al., 2017, p58).

We know very little about that phenomenon. Given that it is understood as the reverse image of cabinetisation (ibid), and building on the literature on cabinetisation, we can however point out to different ways through which decabinetisation may crystalize:

a) *Decreasing* number of advisers
b) *Reduced* scope of adviser's policy work
c) *Reduced* pressure towards the administration for political responsiveness
d) *Less* blurred politico-administrative boundaries
e) *Decreased* use of advisers for coordination

f) *Decreased* public sector and citizen concern over advisers' roles (derived from Gouglas et al., 2015, p2)

It will also be part of the analysis to see whether decabinetisation can crystalize in different ways than identified here. For now, we adopt a very large understanding of decabinetisation as a process of reforming MC to reduce their influence.

To put it in institutional terms, we understand it as a process of institutional change. What is striking is that the literature defines institutionalized organizations such as MCs as defined by a certain stability in its characteristics and typically resistant to change (Oliver, 1992, p580, see also for example Simon 1945, 1997; Hannan and Freeman 1984, 1989 cited in Scott, 2014, p151). It will thus be particularly interesting to understand *why*, despite those expectations of stability, are they attempts to break that stability.

While the concept of deinstitutionalization of MC and decabinetisation seem close, they should not be used irrespectively. Like decabinetisation and cabitenisation, we can intuitively define deinstitutionalization as a reverse process of institutionalization, thus understanding it as a process by which those regulative, normative and cognitive characteristics are changed or adapted defining simply deinstitutionalization as a process by which institutions weaken and disappear" (Scott, 2014, p166). Thus, while deinstitutionalization is about reducing the regulative, normative or cognitive characteritics of an institutions; decabinetisation is about reducing its influence.

The scoping review will allow us to better understand what this phenomenon consists of and what factors explain it.

METHODOLOGY

In the present paper we seek to map and explain the process of decabinetisation. Where, how and why is it happening? Instead of using primary empirical research we will dig into the knowledge from past studies. We will be reviewing the literature in an unbiased and reproducible way, based on the so-called PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses) approach (Liberati et al., 2009). However, as the literature on the topic of interest is still emerging we will be employing a scoping review as more appropriate for "reconnaissance" (Peters et al., 2015). Such a review does not evaluate the quality of evidence but seeks to map all existing evidence in the field (Munn et al, 2018). The main difference between the two approaches is that scoping does not entail a critical appraisal phase. Scoping reviews are however systematic as they also follow an adapted PRISMA approach (Tricco et al., 2018) which guarantees transparency and reproducibility. It is also complemented of a flow diagram which illustrates the article selection process, from the searching process to the actual selection of articles included.

Besides the PRISMA-adapted checklist by Tricco and colleagues, this review uses Arksey & O'Malley (2005) recommendations for building a strong methodological framework. Their approach is based on a four-step process that intends to guarantee comprehensiveness and quality of the analysis. The first step consists of searching electronic databases, the second hand-searching key journals, the third checking bibliographies of the articles identified and finally discussing the whole process with experts in the field.

Eligibility criteria

We distinguish here between report and study eligibility criteria (Liberati et al., 2009).

In regards, to report eligibility criteria, three aspects were taken into account:
- Year of publication : We limit the scope of our research to pieces published between 1960 and 2019. The year 1960 is the time limit for the search of certain electronic databases.
- Language of publication: We use both English and French. English as it is the most commonly used language in the academic world. French is considered for two reasons. Firstly, we expect to find a large amount of literature regarding typical cases such as France, Belgium and the European Commission in French. Moreover, French speaking academics tend to publish more in French than English.
- Type of publication: journal articles, conference papers, book (chapters) and PhD thesis are all accepted. The rationale here is that we want our literature review to be

comprehensive. Moreover, in the specific study field of ministerial advisors, we have noted that many analyses are published in academic books that we do not want to ignore.

In regards to the content of the publication (study eligibility criteria), the following aspects were taken into account for including or excluding studies:

- Research design: Only empirical and theoretical papers were included. It is very common to include empirical papers as they bring new evidence on a topic. We decided to include theoretical papers as they may be relevant to help us generalize our understanding of ministerial advisers and cabinets. Even thought, they helped us grasp better the case profile, descriptive (text-book like) papers were excluded from the review.
- Research focus: the articles should primarily be focused on ministerial advisers and/or ministerial cabinets. Some exceptions were made if the record did not address primarily MA or MC but included on subsequent section on the topic.
- Political systems considered: We limited ourselves to cases where ministerial cabinets existed. Regarding the level of governance included, our first focus was the national level. However, sub-(regional) and supra-national (European) were accepted if the MC was functionally equivalent to a national one in term of regulative and executive functions.

Research strategy and process

We firstly conducted an electronic database research using French and English keywords. As most electronic databases (Google Scholar being an exception) have a language bias, we used different ones according to the main language used. We ran keywords search, using Boolean logic OR and AND, as well as the asterisk sign, allowing for multiple form of a word[1]. We searched exclusively abstract, title and keywords[2]. The keywords used in French and English were equivalent in number and meaning.

- For English material, we relied on Web of Science (398 hits) and Scopus (470) and Google scholar (639), using the following key words:

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[1] For example advis*, include singular and plural form, as well as the English and American spelling (advisor/ adviser)   .
[2] For Google Scholar, we only searched the title (using the "allintitle" function) as abstract search was only possible per year.

"political advis*" OR "special advis*" OR "ministerial advis*" OR "political staff*" OR "minister* cabinet*" OR ("top civil servant*" AND pol*) OR (politicization AND administration AND advis*)

- For French material, we searched Cairn (364[3]), HAL-SHS (217) and Google Scholar (497), using the following key words:

"conseiller* politique*" OU "conseiller* spécia*" OU "conseiller* ministériel*" OU "personnel politique" OU "cabinet* ministériel*" OU (haut* fonctionnaire* ET pol*) OU (politisation ET administration ET conseil*)

While it would have seen obvious to use terms related to institutions such institutionalization or institutionalism, it proved (after some tries) to increase the number of results without adding substantive quality in the results.

The flow diagram following this section illustrates the whole research process: after removing duplicates, we had a total of 2072 pieces identified.

The screening phase allowed us to exclude 1891 papers. Records were excluded for three main reasons: they were either (1) not book chapters/ journal articles/ conference papers or PhD thesis; (2) explicitly off topic (in doubt, the record was not excluded); or (3) focused on non-Napoleonic cases.

204 articles were then assessed for eligibility. One key characteristic of scoping review is that eligibility criteria are not necessarily fixed beforehand. Thus, the eligibility phase also allowed us to assess how the literature related to ministerial advisers looked like. Specifically, we decided to exclude articles in which ministerial advisers were not the main unit of analysis. Namely, articles which addressed primarily elitism and top civil servants were excluded. We also excluded pieces that addressed situation prior to 1960. Additional duplicates were spotted. They were generally conference paper that lead a publication. The conference version was excluded (for example, Brans et al., 2002 was excluded because it was very similar to Brans et al., 2006).

In total, 72 articles through electronic database searching are included in the scoping review.

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[3] The actual number was 204 because sometimes Cairn only identifies book and journal topic while they include several chapters/ articles – we decided to consider them individually thus resulting in 364 hits.

After collecting all these articles, the second step was to hand-search key journals (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005, p24 – it is also suggested for systematic review by Petticrew and Roberts, 2005, pp116-118). To avoid language bias, we searched an even number of French and English speaking journals.

The following French-speaking journal were hand-searched:
- Revue française de science politique (n=0)
- Courrier hebdomadaire du CRISP (n=1)
- Revue française d'administration publique (n=6)
- Revue administrative (n=1)
- Revue internationale des sciences administratives (n=0)

The following English speaking journals were also hand-searched:
- Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory (n=0)
- Public Administration Review (n=0)
- International Public Management Journal (n=0)
- Journal of European Public Policy (n=0)
- Public Administration (n=0)

While this strategy was unfruitful for English articles, it allowed us to identify eight relevant records in the French-speaking literature.

Using both the articles retrieved from electronic searched and hand searching key journals, we then checked their reference list so as to insure that we did not miss important records. This strategy revealed to be very relevant, particularly for identifying older journal articles (3 records published before 1998) and book chapters (n=9). In total, 15 records were identified that way.

Finally, once we had completed our list of articles with hand searched articles, we presented and discussed the process and result of our work.

This was done in Leuven (16/6/19), as part of a meeting with a group of top researchers working on political advisors and politico-administrative relations. It proved to be very successful as it allowed the authors to identify three additional records. Two that were pointed out by the group of experts and one that was found in the bibliography of one of those articles. Besides the identification of additional records, it allowed further reflexion on the link between the deinstitutionalization of MCs and their decabinetisation.

Moreover, the authors presented a second time the result of their work in Aix en Provence (21/6/19), as part of an international partnership between three universities. While no additional literature was found, it led to a stimulating discussion on decabinetisation and the potential alternatives to MCs[4].

Search

We downloaded all our results into EndNote and, after removing duplicates, created an Excel File with all the papers.

We can point out to three main challenges while doing this search.

Firstly, Google Scholar does not allow for combined search of abstract, title and keywords. We thus adapted to that in conducting exclusively a title search (using the "allintitle" function). This proved to be relevant as the number of articles identified through that channel is equivalent to the number of articles identified through other electronic database using keywords/title/abstract search.
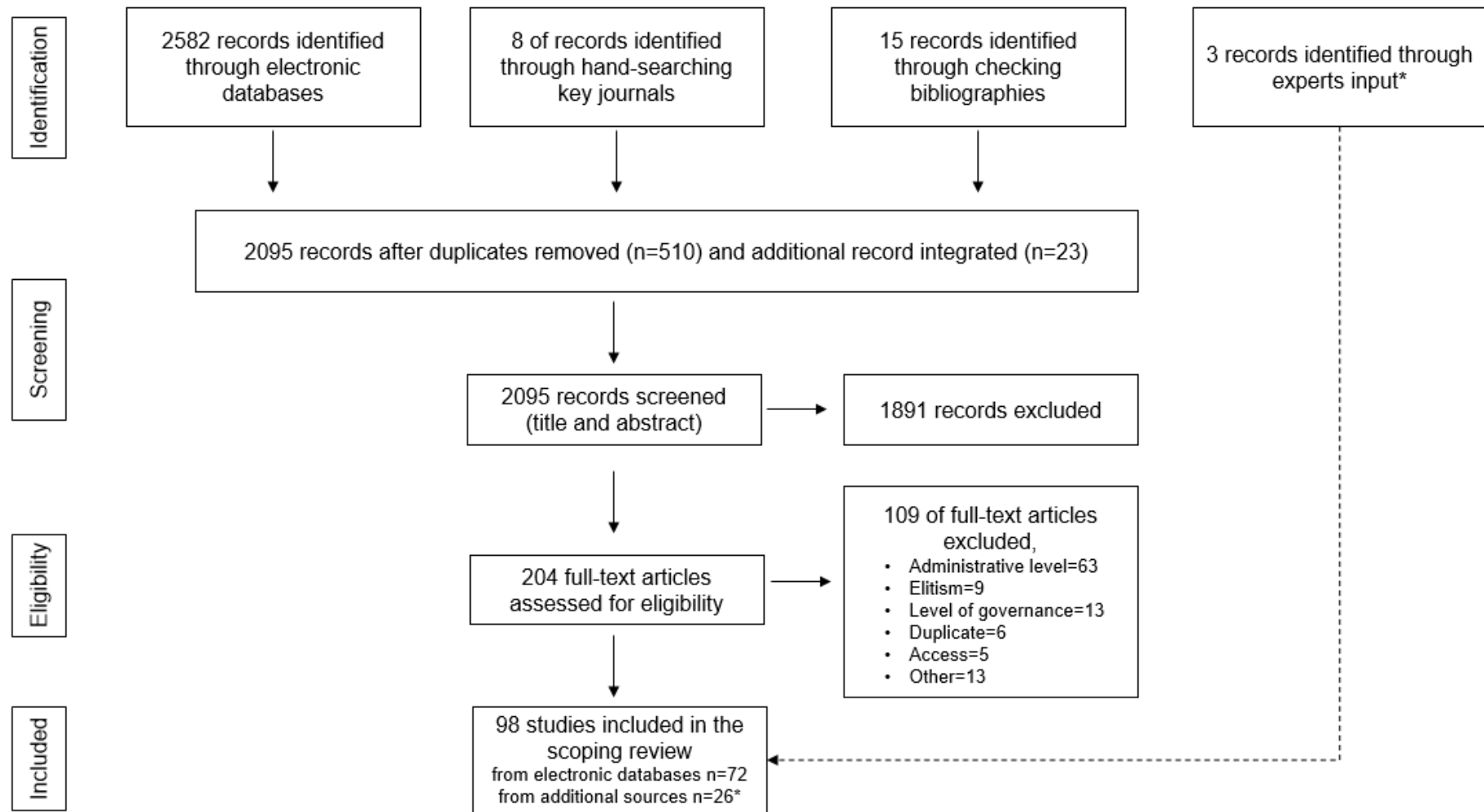
Secondly, two databases, namely Google Scholar and HAL-SHS, did not allow single search using so many keywords. It led us to conduct multiple search, separating keywords in smaller groups, and excluding duplicates results from the different search.

Thirdly, bilingual search implies that we ended up with articles that were both published in French and English that were not identifiable using the duplicate function of Excel. However, sorting the article by author and year proved to be a good approach to identify those duplicates.

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[4] The authors would like to warmly thank all the experts consulted both in Leuven and Aix-en-Provence

Flow diagram

Identification	2582 records identified through electronic databases	8 of records identified through hand-searching key journals	15 records identified through checking bibliographies	3 records identified through experts input*

2095 records after duplicates removed (n=510) and additional record integrated (n=23)

Screening

2095 records screened (title and abstract) → 1891 records excluded

Eligibility

204 full-text articles assessed for eligibility →

109 of full-text articles excluded,
- Administrative level=63
- Elitism=9
- Level of governance=13
- Duplicate=6
- Access=5
- Other=13

Included

98 studies included in the scoping review
from electronic databases n=72
from additional sources n=26*

*records identified through experts input were identified after the whole research process was achieved

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RESULTS

General results on MC literature

Record characteristics

Out of the 98 records identified[5], the majority were book chapters and journal articles. We identified also four books[6] and one PhD thesis, as Table 2 shows.

The vast majority of studies were focused on single-cases. Moreover, among those studies, only seven brought some theoretical or conceptual insights about ministerial cabinets. Our approach which seeks to be both comparative and bring theoretical insights is further reinforced and justified by these observations.

Table 2 Records characteristics

Type of publications	
Book	4
Book chapter	44
Journal article	44
Conference paper	5
PhD thesis	1
Type of studies	
Comparative	14
Single-case	84
Theoretical/ conceptual	7[7]

First, we observe the literature to be both modest in numbers and stable in the period between 1970 and 2000. Second, it is clear that the literature has critically increased since the 2000 and even more since the 2010. However, one should be aware that the older the literature is harder to access, which may have widened the observed gap. For example, V. Crabbe wrote an article on Belgian MC in 1960[8] that we were unable to access and thus excluded from our review.

[5] They are underligned in the reference list of this paper

[6] We considered as "book", pieces from which all chapters were written by the same (group of) person(s)

[7] Studies with theoretical or conceptual insights were either single-case or comparative

[8] Crabbe, V (1960), "Cabinets ministériels et organisation administrative", *Revue de l'Institut de sociologie*, pp531-555

Figure 1 Number of publications per year
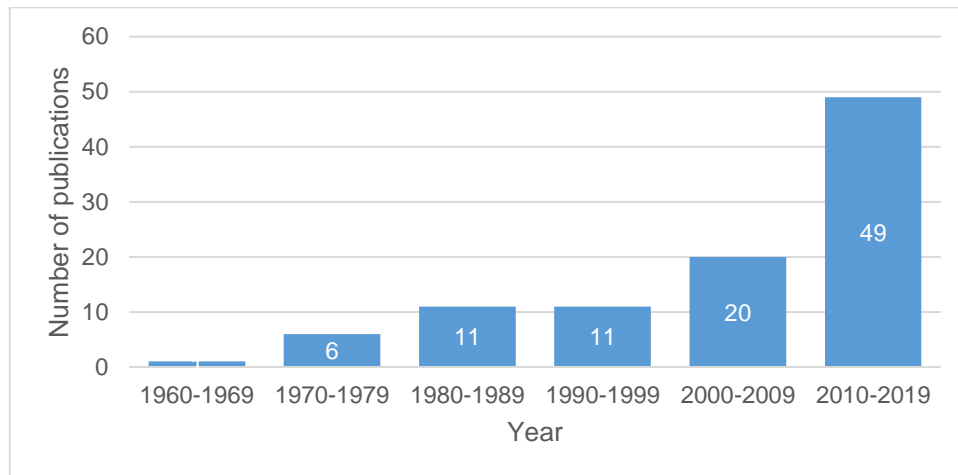
A French and Belgian bias

Figure 2 provides an historical and per country-perspective on the literature. One can clearly see a French and Belgian bias from the 60's until the 90's. This is probably explained by the fact that in the other countries, MCs did not exist and just had been created in the 60's while they had been present for over a century in both France and Belgium. Such bias may also be explained by the language selection the authors have made for this literature review.

In the 90's, the literature on the European Commission started to flourish followed in the 2000 by Italy and Portugal then Greece since the 2010's. We can clearly see a diversification of the countries considered even though the French and Belgian bias is still present to a certain extent.

Figure 2 Publications per year and per country
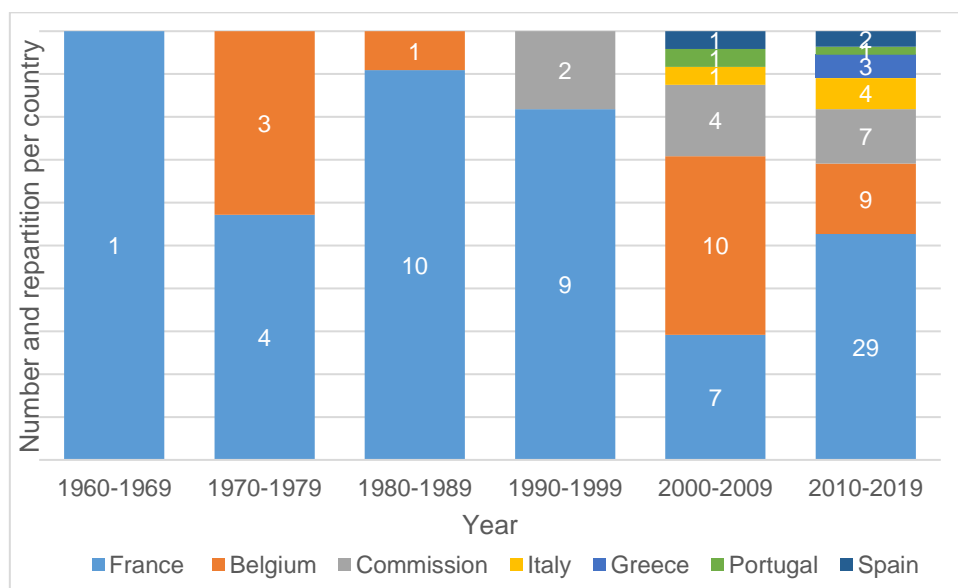
In most of the records analyzed, the MC in its "most classical form" is discussed. The "most classical" MC is one that depends of a national Minister who does not hold a special position.

However, a certain number of records consider MC at a different level of governance. Thirteen records address MCs at the European level (for example: Jacob, 2001; Joana and Smith, 2002) while seven also look at cabinets at the subnational level (see for example: Jottrand, 2001; Vancoppenolle and Brans, 2006). These last records are exclusively looking at the Belgian situation, in the different Regions and Communities of the country.

Some records also focus on most "influential" MCs: those who work for political actors particularly influential in a government: Prime Minister and (if any) the President. In France, the cabinet of the Prime Minister and the one of the President (Vadillo, 2015) have received special attention, also comparatively (Dreyfus, 2015; Rouban, 1998). The Spanish Prime Minister cabinet has also received attention (Fleischer and Parrado, 2010; Heywood, P. and Molina, 2000). We observe a similar trend at the European level, with the cabinet of the Commission President at the European level (Ross, 1994). The extent to which the MC of the Commission President should be further compared to the one of a President or to the one of a Prime Minister should be investigated.

Finally, we can point out two political offices that are not MCs as such but that are considered as equivalent. Firstly, the Italian Council of Minister (Ciolli and Grazia Rodomonte, 2015) and the Secretariat general of the French government (Eymeri-Douzans, 2015).

Key themes addressed

As Figure 3 illustrates, we have identified six key themes that come back most regularly in the literature[9]. Five of the six themes are briefly presented in this section. The literature on MC reform is elaborated on in the following part as it directly touches upon our research questions.

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[9] Themes were coded from 1 to 6; multiple themes per articles were allowed.

Figure 3 Key themes: frequency table
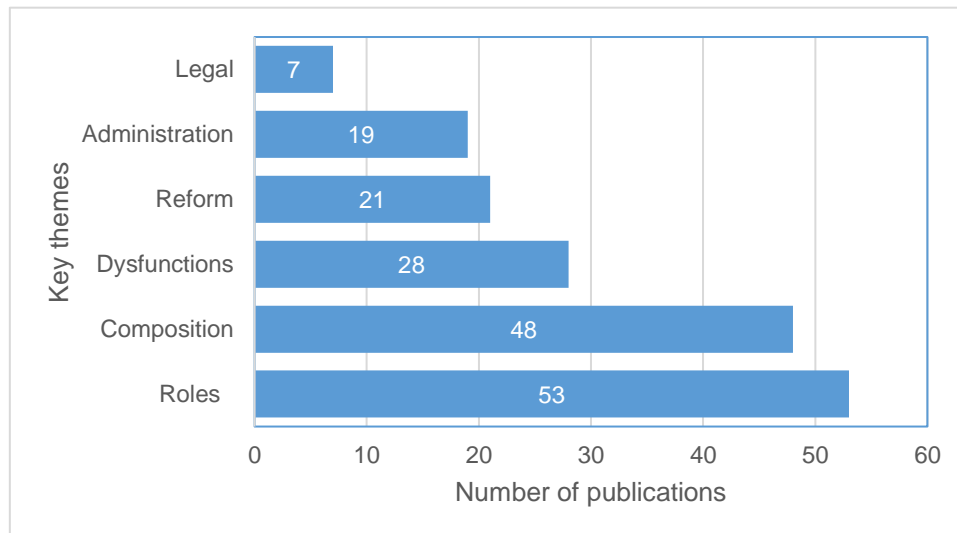
More than half of the literature reviewed (n=53) looks at the roles and functions of MCAs. Some literature applies typologies coming from the Westminster studies to Napoleonic cases. For example, Connaughton's policy advisory roles (2010) or Craft (2011) typology on the nature of policy advise is applied to the Belgian (Brans et al., 2017), Greek (Gouglas, 2015) and European case (Gouglas et al., 2017). Other records describe the different functions of MA on a purely empirical bases. Interestingly, Fleischer and Parrado (2010) have also addressed how a period of (financial) crisis positively impacted the role of the Prime Minister chief of cabinet.

A lot of records (n=48) also address the composition of MC. They focus on recording the number of members within those cabinets (Eymeri-Douzans, 2015; Dreyfus, 2015), their career pattern (Coutrot, 1982; Alam et al., 2015) and their sociological background (Achin and Dulong, 2018; Sawicki and Matthiot, 1999). Such approach to studying MC is typically French (but not limited to it, for example see Joana and Smith, 2002 or Norrenberg, 1972), where extensive research of *prosopographie* have been conducted for more than 30 years (Boussard, 1982; Sawicki and Matthiot, 1999; Rouban, 2002; Martinache, 2018).

A subsequent number of articles (n=28) address dysfunctions of the MCs. It must be pointed out that there is a significant (and logical) overlap between the dysfunction literature and the one on MC reforms: out of the 28 articles that former first theme, thirteen of them also address the second (and will thus be discussed below). Out of the fifteen articles exclusively focusing on cabinet issues, we can point out to certain recurring issues such as the tensions between top CS and MCAs (Suleiman, 1972), the lack of accountability of the latter (Blondeau, 2003; Ségur, 2015) or their challenging working conditions (Audé, 2010; Quermonne, 1994). The reform-focused literature (see below) also points out to those criticisms.

There is also a relatively large part of the literature (n=19) that looks at the (evolving) relation between MC and the administration (Penaud 2004, Vancoppenolle and Brans, 2006). It must be noted that there exist a much larger literature on the topic than the one included in this review. In fact, many papers touch upon MC(A)s when they address the role of (top) civil servants (for example: Silva and Jalali, 2019; Sotiropoulos, 2007; Stevens, 2006) . However, we have chosen to limit our selection to those papers whose focus was primarily MCAs.

Interestingly, only seven records look at the MC from a legal perspective. In Belgium Jottrand (2001) has devoted a chapter on the legal status of MC. The rest of the literature focuses on the French case. It deals with the issue of accountability of MCAs (Ségur, 2015; Catta, 2012) or financing of MCs (Caron, 2015).

Finally, we can point out to several studies which appear to take an original approach to the study of MCs. Lhommeau and Aubin (2017) have looked at it from a policy utilization perspective and tried to understand how MAs deal with the various advices they receive from stakeholders and how that affects their own opinion. Dalhstrom (2011) has focused on one specific policy (welfare state cut) and assessed the role of MCAs in the policy-making process. Finally, Gouglas (2018) has addressed the relation between Minister and their ministerial advisers as an issue of trust.

The following section addresses the literature that discuss (1) MC reforms and (2) MC dysfunctions.

Specific results on decabinetisation

Within our final selection of 98 articles, 21 of them contribute to answering our more specific research questions:

- What explain the decabinetisation attempts in political system of Napoleonic administrative tradition? (RQ1)
- What do these decabinetisation attempts consist of? (RQ2)

In our selection of article, we have included those which address decabinetisation attempts (n=21), which usually provide answers to both RQ1 et RQ2. Among those articles, eighteen of them discuss decabinetisation cases. Five of them approach decabinetisation from a normative perspective[10]. A table listing all the articles is provided in Appendix 1.

The literature dealing with decabinetisation in general (n=21) addresses in numerical order the Belgian case (n=8), the European Commission (n=7), France (n=5) and Italy (n=2)[11]. A first observation that can be made is that the decabinetisation research is limited in Italy and almost absent in both Greece[12], Portugal or Spain.

Figure 4 Decabinetisation literature (n=21)
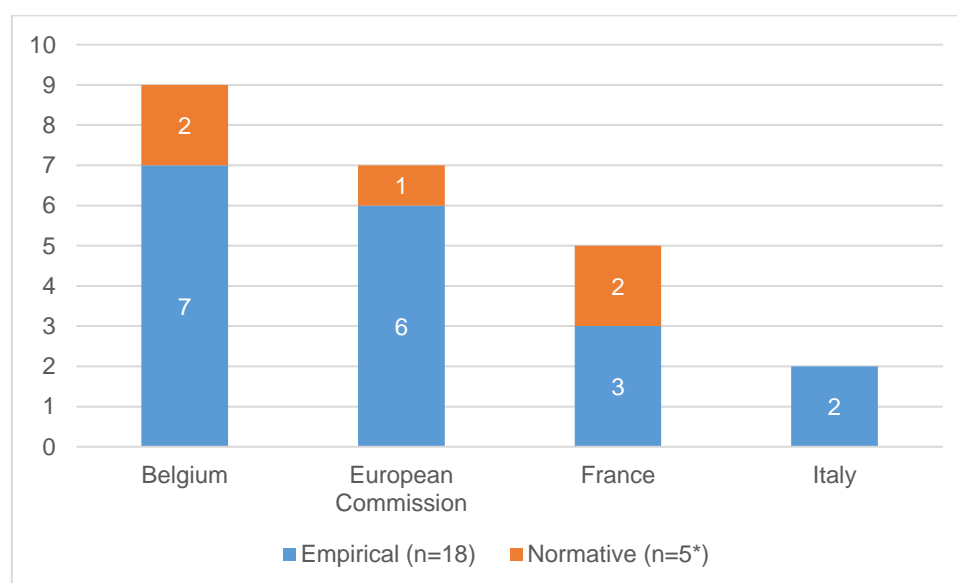
The following section describes the different cases identified.

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[10] Two articles consider both decabinetisation from a normative and factual perspective.
[11] Spence (2006) and Suetens and Walgrave (2001) consider both empirical and normative aspects; Norrenberg (1972) formulates normative consideration for both France and Belgium
[12] To be accurate Gouglas (2018) mentions in his introduction Greek prime ministers' "intention to reduce the number of advisers in [...] ministerial offices" and the fact that "advisers' salaries were significantly reduced" (p91) – however the focus of his chapter is on the trust relation between MCAs and their Minister which explain why it was not included in this section.

Belgium

Three decabinetisation cases have been identified in the literature reviewed: two national reforms: the Camu reform (1937), the Copernicus reform (2000), and one regional reform, the "Beter Bestuurlijk Beleid" (BBB, or Better Administrative Policy) that took place in Flanders (2000).

The Camu reform (1937) was also part of a bigger administrative reform. It most importantly limited the number of members of managerial level in MC to four (while no limit was set regarding administrative personnel) and defined meritocratic recruitment criteria (Van Hassel, 1973).

No specific explanation is given by Van Hassel (1973) nor de Visscher and Salomonsen (2013). The former author points to the Camu report which led to the reform. The origins of this report should be investigated.

Regarding theories, de Visscher and Salomonsen use the Public Service Bargain (Hood and Lodge 2006) model to explain the evolution of the *ménage à trois* relationship between top CS, MC, and the Minister.

The Copernicus reform is the most researched one (n=6). It was a comprehensive administrative reform, at the federal level. It reduced the size of the cabinets (limited to a secretariat, a political council and a media organ), and functionally replaced it with a strategic council (composed of the Minister, the chief of cabinet, and the director of the administration) supervising a strategic cell and a management board that would respectively have a more political and executive role (Eraly, 2001, p82). Those new entities were to be integrated within the administration as a way to reinforce it. A mandate system was set up for top civil servant and recruitment process was regularized in order to develop meritocratic and transparent practices.

The reform is explained by a number of factors. There was a window-opportunity for reform: the signature of the Maastricht Treaty implied budgetary and expenditure reform, reforming the administration seemed logical (Goransson, 2015). There was also a general political climate of citizen distrust towards politics related to differents scandals such a Dutroux, Agusta Dassaut or the dioxin scandal (Suetens and Walgrave, 2001; Goransson, 2015). The recent election had seen the rise of extreme right parties which was also interpreted as a demand for change (Goransson, 2015; Brans et al. 2006). Those elections led to the formation of a new government, excluding the Christian Democrats from the coalition for the first time in a long time (Suetens and Walgrave, 2001)/ Moreover, there was a general wave of NPM reforms in neighbouring countries (Goransson, 2015; Suetens and Walgrave, 2001). Additionnaly, many criticisms were directly pointed out to MC themselves. There was citizen distrust towards this body (Suetens and Walgrave, 2001). Criticisms were

related to the tensions existing with the administration (Brans et al., 2006), alleged incompetence, elitism and severe working conditions of MCAs. Moreover, they were perceived as an *ecran* between the Minister and the administration (Eraly, 2001).

The Public Service Bargain (Hood and Lodge, 2006) has been used by both Brans et al. (2017) and de Visscher and Salomonsen (2013) to describe the evolution of MC situation describing it as a "PSB combining serial- and personal agency bargains with a trustee bargain" (p77). Moreover, Brans et al. (2006) and Brans et al. (2017) also applied Peters (1987) typology of politico-administrative relation to the Belgian case impliying that it "best fits Peter's (1987) formal/legal model" (p70). Suetens and Walgrave (2001) also insist on the idea of partitocracy as understood by De Winter, Della Porta and Deschouwer (1996) to understand Belgian MC.

While promising but not without issues (Eraly, 2001), the reform was eventually deemed as a failure. Goransson (2015) explains such failure by the resistance of the Ministers (only two implemented the reform), cabinets members (who did not want their position to be affected), and political parties[13]. Such resistance was crystalized the 19/7/2004 royal decree which allowed strategic cell members to be appointed by the Minister (while it was originally not the case), functionally recreating MCs (Brans et al., 2006).

The Beter Bestuurlijk Beleid reform (Better Administrative Policy, BBB reform) took place simultaneously at the regional level in Flanders. Also consisting of a general administrative reform, it reduced the size of MCs and relied on various organs - administrative departments (policy formulation), agencies (implementation), management board (coordination and supervision) for taking care of the whole policy making process.

For this case, Goransson (2015) points out to two similar explanatory factors for reform to the federal level: the political crisis of the 90's as well as the creation of a new government(p24).

The reform was not fully successful as the management board was not created in the end, but still contributed to reduce the number of MCs members and improved the coordination between the administration and the cabinets (ibid).

Finally, on a normative note, Norrenberg (1972) and Snoy and d'Oppuers (1974) suggested that MC should be reduced in number and that the administration should complementarily be strengthened.

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[13] While it is not made explicit, we find in Goransson's argument clear traces of actor-centered institutionalism

Table 3 Decabinetisation: Belgium

Decabinetisation case (year)	What does it consist of?	Articles
Camu reform (1937)	• Size limit: max. 4 advisers of managerial level • Recruitment criteria	Van Hassel (1973)
		de Visscher and Salomonsen (2013)
Copernicus reform (2000)	• Size reduction • News organs: Strategic council, strategic cell, board of directors • Recruitment criteria	Brans et al. (2017)
		Brans et al. (2006)
		Eraly (2001)
		Suetens and Walgrave (2001)
Beter Bestuurlijk Beleid (2000) (Better administrative policy)	• Size reduction • Decentralized organization: administration, agencies, management board	Goransson (2015)
Normative[14]	• Limit the number of MCAs • Strengthen the (top) administration	Snoy and d'Oppuers (1974)
		Norrenberg (1972)

European Commission

The European Commission is the most successful example of MC reforms (Wille, 2013; Egeberg and Heskestat, 2010; Rogacheva, 2018). While it took off via the Kinnock reform and was given wind by the influence of the Commission President at the time, Romano Prodi, it was followed by another reform in 2004 by the new Commission President, José Manuel Barosso.

The Kinnock reform carries the name of the Vice President of the Commission responsible for administrative reform in the new Commission following the fall of the Santer Commission. Part of a comprehensive administrative reform, it affected MCs in two ways. It strengthened the power of the Secretariat general (decreasing consequently the role of MC) (Kassim et al., 2013) and restricted the composition of MC: six MCAs were allowed of minimum three different nationalities. Moreover, MCs were delocalized close to their DGs (Spence, 2006).

The resignation of the whole Santer Commission (following a conflict of interest scandal) is one key explanatory factor for bringing such reform to the top of the agenda (Wille, 2009; Wille 2013; Spence 2006). Such scandal further harmed the legitimacy of the Commission in the eyes of European citizens (Wille, 2009). Moreover, there was a shared feeling that MCs were bastions of national interest (Egeberg and Heskestat, 2010; Rogacheva, 2019; Spence 2006). Other more general elements are common to both European reforms and are identified after presented below.

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[14] All normative cases are identified with italic in tables

In fact, four years later, when the new Commission was launched under the presidency of Jose Manuel Barosso, it was imposed that out of the six cabinet members, a minimum of three should be recruited internally.

Such reform sought to counter accusations of favoritism and nepotism (Wille, 2013). Other more general factors, that apply to both reforms, have also been pointed out in the literature. As in the Belgian case, there were tensions with the administration (Spence 2006), the MCs bypassing administrative hierarchy or creating their own shadow administrations (Kassim et al., 2013). Moreover, MCs, negotiating among themselves, were perceived as taking over decision making power and strengthening intergovernmental bargaining (Kassim et al., 2013). More generally, the wave of NPM reform and the prospect of enlargement (and reforms that would go with it) facilitated those decabinetisation reforms (Wille, 2013).

While they were not implemented, it is also worth mentioning that there were many reports and committees that had been pointing at problems and reform proposal regarding MCs since the 70's with the Spierenburg Report but also with the Commission de Demain paper as well as the Herman Report (Spence, 2006).

In regards to theories and concepts used to discuss the European cases we can identify four. Rogacheva (2019) uses both Craft and Howlett (2013) framework of politicization of policy advice and Pierre and Peters (2004) politicization concept.. She understands politicization as the increased use of political advisers in MCs (p2). Wille (2009) uses both Aberbach et al (1981), 4-image relationship and Peters (1987) ideal types to describe politico administrative relation in the European Commission. Finally, Wille (2013) uses the concept of recruitment as a marketplace (Norris 1997) to understand how cabinet reforms have impacted recruitment procedure and criteria for MC positions.

Table 4 Decabinetisation: European Commission

Decabinetisation case (year)	What does it consist of?	Articles
Kinnock reform (2000)	• MC size limitation: from 9 to 6 • Increased power of the Secretariat General • Recruitment: chef cab of ≠ nationality; 3 nationalities min. within the cabinet • Relocation: cabinet moved closer to DG	Rogacheva (2019) Kassim et al. (2013) Spence (2006)* Wille (2009) Wille (2013) Egeberg and Heskestat (2010)
Barosso (2004)	• Recruitment: 3 MCAs should come from the Commission administration	
Spierenburg Report (1970); Commission de Demain; Herman Report	• Limiting the role of MCs • Increased respect for administrative hierarchy • Fair recruitment procedure	Spence (2006)*

France

The case of France differs significantly from the one of both Belgium and the European Commission. Indeed, in France, decabinetisation waves have never been part of a comprehensive administrative movement reform. Inversely, it resulted from isolated decisions.

The 2002 reform is the first of three identified by Edel (2018). It consisted of two decrees[15] guaranteeing transparency regarding the bonus payment of cabinet members from regular or presidential offices (Caron, 2015, p326).

This reform was the result of a scandal involving the Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin and the President Jacques Chirac regarding the opaque use of a *fond special* to remunerate MCAs. The decrees followed the recommendation made in François Longerot's (president of the *Cour des Comptes*) report on the topic (Caron, 2015, p215).

The Sarkozy reform (2008) was institutionalized through a letter from President Sarkozy to the President of the *Cour des Comptes* requiring him to check the budget of the Presidential MC every year (Caron, 2015, p322).

As Caron (2015) explains, this reform was the result of the hard work of a French deputee (Rene Dosière) who put such question at the top of the political agenda, asking parliamentary questions and sending letters to the President about it. In 2007, the President declared himself favorable of more transparency and the Balladur report suggested the same thing (pp321-322).

In 2013, a new law (11 of October 2013) imposes on all cabinet members to submit to the *Haute Autorité pour la transparence de la vie publique*, two official statements regarding their patrimony as well as potential conflict of interest they may have (Edel, 2018).

Additionnaly, in 2014, following his election, the newly elected French President, F. Hollande, gave clear instructions to his Ministers to reduce the size and the public role (more discretion) of their respective cabinets. Such decision from the President is explained by a clear willingness from him to break from the practices of his predecessors (Eymeri-Douzans, 2015)

The 2017 reform consisted of the decrees imposing number restriction of cabinets (which was already defined by a 1948 decree but not respected) and imposed transparent recruitment criteria (Edel, 2018).

This last reform launched under the Macron Presidency is explained by his

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[15] Décret n°2001-1147 du 5 décembre 2001

willingness to counter the de-responsabilisation and demotivation of CSs. More generally, it was part of his political discourse on bringing politics closer to the citizens (ibid).

While none of them led to MC reforms, Schrameck (2006) points out to several reports, notably the Picq Report (1994), which advocated for smaller MCs, limited to a personal secretariat, a political adviser, a chef de cabinet, an a media officer (p191). It is also interesting to note that Schrameck himself seemed generally opposed to many reform suggestions (pp190-196) and was only in favor of increasing transparency (p197).

While rich in term of number of decabinetisation cases, the French literature does not include theoretical considerations.

Table 5 Decabinetisation: France

Decabinetisation label (year)	What does it consist of?	Articles
2002 reform	• Transparency: regarding bonus payment of MCAs	Edel (2018)*
		Caron (2015)
Sarkozy reform (2008)	• Transparency on budget and composition of Presidential cabinet	
2013 reform	• Transparency: MCAs requested to make patrimonial and conflict of interest statement	Edel (2018)*
2017 reform	• Restriction on the number of MCAs • Recruitment: more transparent	
Hollande reform (2015)	• MC size restriction • Role: more discretion	Eymeri-Douzans (2015)
Rapport Picq	• Reduced size of MC	Schrameck (2006)
Normative	• Limit the number of MCAs • Strengthen the (top) administration	Norrenberg (1972)

Italy

The literature provides limited insights for the Italian case.

Di Mascio and Natalini (2013 and 2016) have addressed the failure of cabinet reforms in 1999. They particularly insist on the Legislative Decree 300/1999 which intended to limit the role and influence of MC. This decree was to be considered in the broader perspective of administrative reform where new management tools such as tools of performance management as well as regulatory assessment tool were to functionally compensate it.

The political climate of the 90's, identified as a critical juncture by Di Mascio and Natalini (2013) was key in opening a window for reforms. Indeed, corruptions scandals and the collapse of post-war party systems are presented as the two main factors that facilitated the call for reform in general.

Theoretically, Di Mascio and Natalini see the increasing role and influence of Italian

MCs as an illustration of the politicization of the administration described by Peters and Pierre (2004). More generally, the two authors rely on historical institutionalism (Barzelay and Gallego, 2006; Bezes and Lodge, 2007) to explain the failure of MCs reform. In their 2013 article, they insist on the importance of the legacy of the past in shaping reforms. They explain the failure of decabinetisation as a problem of timing. In their most recent article, they insist on the concept of "ciritical juncture", time of crisis where institutional change can happen. They define it empirically with the 92-96 period in Italy (Di Mascio and Natalini, 2016, p521). Moreover, they also distinguish period of stability, radical change and gradual change (ibid).

Table 6 Decabinetisation: Italy

Decabinetisation case (year)	What does it consist of?	Articles
Legislative Decree 300/1999	• Limit the number of MCAs	Di Mascio and Natalini (2013)
	• Redefinition of MCAs' role	Di Mascio and Natalini (2016)

DISCUSSION

What do decabinetisation attempts consist of?

Through this literature review, we have identified a total eleven decabinetisation cases as well two[16] normative views on cabinet reforms (see Appendix 2 for a summary table). As we have seen it, decabinetisation comes in many guises.

It can be part of a whole reform as it was the case in Belgium (Copernicus) or the European Commission (Kinnock) or can it be an more isolated decision as it is more the case in France. Some have been really successful (Kinnock reform in the European Commission) while others not (Copernicus reform in Belgium, 1999 reform in Italy)[17].

Most cabinet reforms are of legal nature (the Copernicus reform was implanted through royal decree, the 1999 reform in Italy is based on a Legislative act). Some nuances, coming from the French cases, can be brought. In fact, both the Hollande reform (2015) and the Sarkozy reform (2008) were not based on legal tool *per se*. Sarkozy institutionalized the practice of overseeing the president cabinet in term of composition and budget by sending a letter to the Cour des Comptes (Caron, 2015) while Hollande only "gave instructions" to his Ministers to reduce the size of their cabinet. Going further, the action of Rene Dosière, who repeatedly asked for report on the composition and budget of MCs through parliamentary questions could also be considered as a decabinetisation case (ibid).

Our understanding of decabinetisation does not depend on success or failure, nor on the importance of the reform, or the shape it took; decabinetisation is defined by its content, and its impact on MCs.

Looking at the thirteen decabinetisation cases we can categorize the decabinetisation attempts into five groups of measures:

- Transparency measures are self-explaining. Their specificity lies in the fact that they do not directly legally restrict MCs but impose them to disclose information on their functioning. Indirectly, however, they may constrain the practices of MCs as public scrutiny will reduce attempts from the cabinet to circumvent the law (as it has been the case a lot in France for example see Eymeri-Douzans, 2015 and Caron, 2015).
- Size measures are the most popular type of decabinetisation measure if we refer to our sample. They simply consist of imposing restriction regarding the number of MCAs allowed. To be effective, those measures need to be very accurate. For example, a weakness of the Camu reform was that it defined a maximum number of

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[16] Norrenberg (1972) normative case is referred to twice in the table as it applies both to France and Belgium.
[17] While this analysis focuses on description and explaining the origins of decabinetisation cases, further research should be conducted to understand this difference of outcome.

advisers of managerial level for the MC while not specifying any number regarding administrative personnel (Van Hassel, 1973).

- Composition measures are not to be confused with the previous one. They do not restrict the number of members present in the cabinet but impose that they should fit a certain profile or be recruited in a certain way. The Kinnock reform was composition measure based on sociological criteria: it imposed that MC should be composed of members of minimum 3 nationalities. The Barosso reform that followed was also a composition measure based here on professional criteria: a minimum of three members should be recruited from within the Commission.

- Roles measures are of two different types. On one hand, they intend to reduce the role of MCAs. On the other, some measures seek to strengthen existing offices and creating new ones. Those measure usually go hand in hand. The Spierenburg report (1970) suggested to limit the role of MCs while strengthening the administration. The BBB reform in Flanders sought to decrease the role of MCs and re-allocate their competence in a decentralized way (Goransson, 2015).

- Delocalization measures are the least popular from our sample. They consist of physically moving cabinets, usually closer to the administration building. There have been two attempts: one during the Copernicus reform, and one during the Prodi era. Both failed.

These measures have been coded from 1 to 5. Figure 5 offers an overview of their relative popularity.

Figure 5 Decabinetisation measures: frequency table

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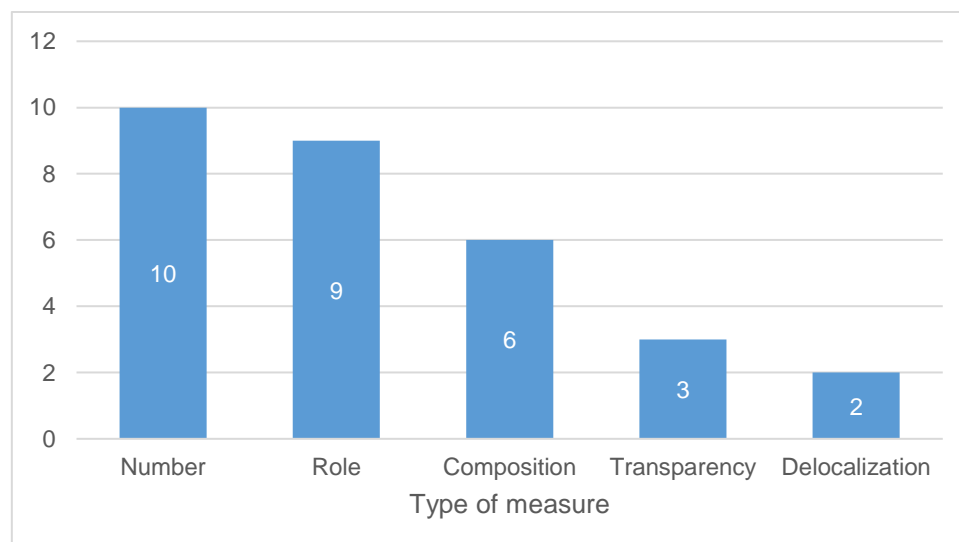
What factors explain such attempts at MC reforms?

From the cases we have been to identify, we have been able to point out to different categories of reasons that may lead to decabinetisation attempts.

One key group of explanatory factors is crisis. Crisis can take very different forms but have in common that they create a certain momentum for reform.

One finds crisis in the form of scandals. Those scandals can be external, i.e. not specifically related to MC. For example, the multiple political scandals happening in the 90's in Belgium (the Dutroux affair, the dixionin crisis, Agusta Dassault) contributed to trigger a call for administrative reforms (Goransson, 2015; Suetens and Walgrave, 2001). In other cases, scandals are directly related to MCs. It was for example the case when in France the Prime Minister Lionel Jospin and the President Chirac argued publically about the opaque use of a special fund by the former to give bonus payments to his ministerial cabinet members (Edel, 2018; Caron, 2015).

Besides scandals, another type of crisis is what we have labelled "political crisis". By that, we understand critical change in the political scene that opens or calls for reform. In Belgium, this took the form of a good result from extreme right party in the federal elections (Goransson, 2015). In Italy, cabinet reforms can about after the fall of the post war party system (Di Mascio and Natalini, 2013; 2016). Such collapse was itself explained by a corruption scandal (ibid), illustrating the thin line between scandals and political crisis.

The perspective of other reforms seems to be important for explaining MC reforms. For the Copernicus reform, Goransson (2015) explains that the signature of the Maastricht Treaty and the necessary budgetary reforms that it would entail facilitated the call for administrative and MC reform. Moreover, multiple MC reforms were part of larger administrative reforms (for example Di Mascio and Natalini, 2016; Brans et al., 2006; Wille, 2013). Finally, the wave of New Public Management reform going through Europe in the 2000's has been pointed out by several author as facilitating, legitimizing or speeding up the call for administrative reforms in a given country (Wille, 2009; Suetens and Walgrave, 2001). In the European case, Wille (2009) also points out that the perspective of enlargement, which would also entail reforms facilitated the cabinet reform.

Another type of explanatory factors is political strategy. Here the launch of a reform is motivated by its expected positive impact on the reputation of the reformer. Cabinet reforms are "used" as a communication tools. The Hollande reform (2015) was the result of his presidential campaign where he distinguished himself from the former President Sarkozy, presented as extravagant and omnipresent, where Hollande wanted to be seen as the "Président normal". Downsizing MCs and reducing their visibility was a way to illustrate that difference (Eymeri-Douzans, 2015). In a similar vein, the Macron reform (2017) was a way

for Macron to present himself as doing politics differently, bringing politics and citizens closer together, restoring the trust of the latter in the former (Edel, 2018).

One has, however, to be cautious with political strategy factor. In fact, while it is presented that way in the literature reviewed, it is difficult to assess the extent to which those two reforms were primarily motivated by the positive political gain it would imply rather than by the true conviction that MC should be reformed.

The individual influence of isolated actors can be considered as another set of factor. We refer here to the work of a French deputee, Rene Dosiere, who brought, through parliamentary questions and letter to the President, questions about MC composition and budget to the top of the agenda (Caron, 2015).

Finally, and maybe most importantly, cabinet reforms are motivated by a shared feeling that MC should actually be reformed. Here, we point out to actual MC criticisms.

A wide range of criticism are related to the relation between MCs and the administration.

The MC is presented a not trusting the administration, and creating a shadow administration or a parallel bureaucracy (Wille, 2013). It creates a vicious circle where there is a sense of de-responsabilisation and demotivation within the administration.

Moreover, the system of appointment in top position of the administration is perceived as unfair, creating hierarchal tensions (particularly for seconded civil servants, who, after having worked in a MC, are awarded a higher position within the administration, becoming the superior of their formal boss), and politicization.

Other criticisms do not specifically address tensions between MC and the administration.

A more general criticism, which affects the administration but not only, is related to the idea of the *cabinet-écran*. The cabinet écran implies that one role of the cabinet is to be a gatekeeper between the Minister and any sources of questions, informations etc. Such situation gives the MC a tremendous power to decide which information get to the Minister (Eraly, 2001). Moreover, it has also been argued that MCs take over the whole decision making process, by-passing both the administration but also the Parliament since all negotiations regarding policies where actually run by MCs before any piece would be submitted in the Parliament (Suetens and Walgrave, 2001; Kassim, 2013).

Another key criticisms regarding MCs is that they serve as bastion for "private" interest. At the national level, particularly in Belgium, it has been repeatedly argued the MCs was also a partytocratic tool that insured a certain political control by the political party organisation over the Minister (Brans et al., 2006; Goransson, 2015). A parallel argument is made at the European level, where it has been argued that MCs serve as a bastion of national interest. The Kinnock reform, imposing that at least three nationalities should be

represented within a six-member cabinet clearly targeted this problem (Spence, 2006).

Additionally, Eraly (2001) points out to more general criticisms such as their to the lack of competence of MC members or their bad working conditions.

We have so far identified five types of explanatory factors that foster MC reforms. Table 7 synthetizes it.

Table 7 Type of explanatory factors for decabinetisation

Type of explanatory factors	Sub-types
Crisis	External scandals
	Internal scandals
	Political crisis
Other reforms	Administrative (in particular)
	Any reform (in general)
Political strategy	/
Individual actors	/
Criticism on MC	Shadow administration
	Politicization of the administration
	De-responsabilisation of and distrust towards the administration
	Cabinet-écran
	Dominate decision-making process
	Serve other interest
	Incompetence

It should be stressed that this categorization has been developed based on what the reviewed literature provided. By no means is it exhaustive. It is subject to edition and improvement. It must rather be viewed as a first step towards better understanding what leads to reforms of MC. For the time being, we sense that those factors interact and that we have not been able to point out to conditions that are either sufficient or necessary.

CONCLUSION

This paper has addressed decabinetisation through a scoping review of the literature on ministerial cabinets in both French and English. Our goal was two-fold. Generally, we sought to map and organize the literature addressing MCs. Our general research question was: "What does the literature say about MCs?" More specifically, this literature review intended to build on the decabinetisation question (Gouglas et al., 2015; Gouglas and Brans, 2016; Brans et al., 2017) through two research questions:

- What do decabinetisation attempts consist of? Where have they been located?
- What explanatory factors are pointed out in the literature to explain those attempts?

Methodologically, following a scoping review and the methodology suggested by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) proved its relevance. Not only focusing on searching electronic databases but also searching key journals, checking bibliographies has allowed us to increase the breadth of our sample. Had we only focused on electronic database searches, we would have missed almost 25% of the literature considered here. Moreover, contacting experts in the field and presenting them our work has allowed to enrich and nuance the analysis.

Our methodology has also its limitation. Defining inclusion criteria led us to naturally exclude some interesting literature from the review.

As mentioned above, we limited ourselves to literature focusing on MCs. The administrative reforms that we have addressed are also discussed in the literature that we excluded from our review, particularly the ones on top civil servants. The two books edited by Page & Wright in 1999 and 2007 could for example be very helpful in complementing our knowledge on the topic.

Our focus on academic literature has also led us to exclude some grey literature that would be relevant for better understanding ministerial cabinets. We think particularly of the two OECD studies published in 2007 and 2011. While not being academic records as such, they provide an interesting comparative perspective on ministerial advisers.

Our language criterion are also a limit. Integrating French has allowed us to locate more articles, particularly for the case of Belgium and France. However, one cannot say the same for Italy, Greece, Spain or Portugal. During our review, we have come across articles that seemed relevant but could not be accessed for language reasons. Further research should follow a similar methodology in Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Greek.

Taking into account those remarks, our review led us to analyze 98 papers addressing ministerial advisers working in MC among which 21 addressed our specific RQs.

We have been able to identify six key themes addressed in the MC literature: roles of ministerial advisers, composition of ministerial cabinet, relation with the administration, legal

status as well as their dysfunction and (attempts of) reforms. The literature that addressed those two last themes have allowed us to answer our specific questions.

We have identified decabinetisation attempts in four countries. From our review, it appears that nor in Greece nor Portugal have there been attempts to reform MCs. From the other four cases (France, Belgium, European Commission, and Italy), eleven empirical cases have been identified. That does not mean that other cases do not exist. Some cases may be too recent to be addressed in the academic literature. As a matter of fact, in the Walloon Region (Belgium), the MR-cdH government respected his promises of decreasing the size of MCs by 10% (le Vif l'Express, 2018), a cabinet reform that is not yet addressed academically. Additionally, there may be cases identified in the academic literature that is neither in French or in English.

Taken that note into account, we have been so far able to identify five types of MC reform measures:

- Size measures that seeks to reduce the number of MCAs
- Role measure that seeks to limit the role of MCAs and increase the role of other offices
- Composition measure that imposes recruitement criteria for the MC
- Transparency measure that impose the disclosure of informations by the MC
- Delocalization measures that geographically relocalize the cabinet closer to the administration

The records that we have analyzed also informed us on the reasons that led to such reforms. A set of criticisms on the MC have been identified. Those criticisms relate administrative tensions but also to more general issues such as elitism. However, there appears to be other explanatory factors such as crisis and scandals, the perspective of other reforms, isolated action by individual actors or political strategy. As mentioned earlier, such list is limited to what the reviewed literature revealed about it. It is by no mean exhaustive and should be improved and edited.

More generally, this paper has allowed to further discuss decabinetisation. While the concept is still building, this review deepened our understanding of what decabinetisation can consist of and what factors do trigger such attempts. To further our understanding of this concept, future research should also address the extent to which MC are functional necessities (Goransson, 2008) and what would be the consequences of downsizing or truly suppressing them (Schrameck, 2006).

APPENDIX 1: list of the 21 articles on decabinetisation

#	Authors	Year	Title	Case(s)	Decabinetisation	
					Empirical	Normative
1	Brans, M., de Visscher, C., Gouglas, A. and Jaspers, S.	2017	Political control and bureaucratic expertise: policy analysis by ministerial cabinet members	Belgium	X	
2	de Visscher, C. and Salomonsen, H. H.	2013	Explaining differences in ministerial menages a trois: multiple bargains in Belgium and Denmark	Belgium	X	
3	Eraly, A.	2001	Les cabinets ministériels et la décision politique	Belgium	X	
4	Snoy et d'Oppuers, J.-C.	1974	Encore les cabinets ministériels	Belgium		X
5	Suetens, M. and Walgrave, S.	2001	Belgian politics without ministerial cabinets? On the possibilities and limitations of a new political culture	Belgium	X	
6	Van Hassel, H.	1973	Belgian ministerial cabinets: spoils in a spoiled merit-system	Belgium	X	
7	Brans, M., Pelgrims, C. and Hoet, D.	2006	Observations comparée sur les tensions entre les conseils stratégiques professionnels et le contrôle politique en Belgique et aux Pays-Bas	Belgium	X	
8	Göransson, M	2015	La réforme des cabinets ministériels	Belgium (national and subnational level)	X	
9	Norrenberg, D	1972	Cabinets ministériels en France et en Belgique	France; Belgium	X	X
10	Caron, M.	2015	Chapitre 9 / L'opacité financière régnant dans les entourages de l'exécutif	France	X	
11	Edel, F.	2018	Les réformes de l'encadrement juridique des cabinets ministériels en France: quelle amélioration de la transparence et de la probité?	France	X	
12	Eymeri-Douzans, J-M.	2015	Chapitre 15 / Quel entourage élyséen pour François Hollande ?	France	X	
13	Schrameck, O.	2006	Dans l'ombre de la République: les cabinets ministériels	France		X
14	Egeberg, M. and Heskestat, A.	2010	The Denationalization of Cabinets in the European Commission	EU	X	
15	Kassim, H. et al	2013	Cabinets and Services	EU	X	
16	Rogacheva, A.	2019	The demand for advice at the European Union level: policy advice politicization in the European Commission	EU	X	
17	Spence, D.	2006	The President, the College and the Cabinets	EU	X	X
18	Wille, A.	2009	Political and administrative leadership in a reinvented European Commission	EU	X	
19	Wille, A.	2013	From National Agents to EU Advisers: the chef of cabinets	EU	X	
20	Di Mascio, F. and Natalini, A.	2016	Ministerial advisers between political change and institutional legacy: The case of Italy	Italy	X	
21	Di Mascio, F. and Natalini, A.	2013	Analysing the role of ministerial cabinets in Italy: legacy and temporality in the study of administrative reforms	Italy	X	

APPENDIX 2 : summary of decabinetisation cases

Country	#	Decabinetisation case	Type of measure(s)
France	1	2002 reform	Transparency - bonus payment of MCAs
	2	Sarkozy reform (2008)	Transparency - budget and composition of Presidential cabinet
	3	2013 reform	Transparency - MCAs requested to make patrimonial and conflict of interest statement
	4	2017 reform	Size Composition
	5	Hollande reform (2015)	Size Role – less public visibility for MCAs
Belgium	6	Camu reform (1937)	Size - max. 4 MCAs of managerial level Composition
	7	Copernicus reform (2000)	Size Role - new offices: strategic council, strategic cell, board of directors Composition
	8	Beter Bestuurlijk Beleid (2000)	Role - decentralized organization: administration, agencies, management board Size
European Commission	9	Kinnock reform (2000)	Size - from 9 to 6 Role - increased power of Secretariat General Composition - 3 nationalities min. within the cabinet, chef cab of ≠ nationality Relocalization
	10	Barosso (2004)	Composition - 3 MCAs should come from the Commission administration
Italy	11	Legislative Decree 300/1999	Size Role
Normative (summary)			Size Role - decreased for MCAs increased for the administration Transparency Composition - fair recruitment procedure

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