

Memos for the Research Workshop on Successful Public Governance

Table of content

1. 't Hart Paul. "Introductory memo"
2. Alon-Barkat, Saar. "Successfull governance"
3. Ansell, Chris. "Public Sector Success as Virtuous Cycles"
4. Beyens, Stefanie. "Thriving against the odds: Individual organizational success in an embattled"
5. Bil, Hans & Geert Teisman. "Complexification as a paradoxically effective way to satisfactory solutions and better outcomes in public decision-making"
6. Blondin, Donald. "On successful governance of transboundary crises"
7. Boin, Arjen. "Why We Must Study Institutions"
8. Boon, Jan, Heidi Salomonsen & Koen Verhoest. "Reputation and Success in Governance"
9. Buerkli, Danny. "Decoding government effectiveness with the Public Impact Fundamentals"
10. Busuioc, Madalina. "Successful Governance"
11. Compton, Mallory. "A Preliminary Public Policy Success Research Agenda"
12. De Bosscher, Veerle. "SPLISS-intro"
13. Douglas, Scott. "A Subject in search of an Object; Thinking and talking about small manifestations of large successes in complex collaborations"
14. Ebinger, Falk. "Success in Public Governance"
15. George, Bert. "Successful Governance as a Practice"
16. Gilad, Sharon. "Government Responsiveness to the Demands of Unpopular Social Groups"
17. Groenleer, Martijn. "Why regions succeed"
18. Koop, Christel. "What role for public governance in a globalised world"
19. McConnell, Ansell. "Dark Side of Success"
20. Moore, Mark. "Thoughts about Successful Governance"
21. Parker, Charles. "Successful Public Governance Think Piece Memo"
22. Putten, Robert van. "Do we need a new round of social engineering"
23. Salomonsen, Heidi Houlberg, Lotte Bogh Andersen & Thy Jensen. "Leadership for success in public organizations: Reflections on leadership behavior, value alignment, visions and performance in the public sector"
24. Sancione, Alessandro & Danilea Christofoli. "Short Memo: How to govern rationality and emotions in socially co-constructing successful collaborative governance?"
25. Sørensen, Eva. "Political robustness as driver of success in public governance"
26. Termeer, Katrien. "Successful governance of wicked problems"
27. Torfing, Jacob. "Co-creation as a key to governance success"
28. Trommel, Willem. "Rethinking success and failure in Public Governance on the importance of fit and skill"

29. Van der Torre, Lieske. "Successful public value creation by municipalities"
30. Van Erp, Judith. & Scott Douglas. "Workshop memo PhD project legitimacy"
31. Verhoest, Koen, Jan Wynen & Kleizen Note autonomy performance legitimacy of agencies
32. Walker, Richard. To be published at later stage.
33. Zabler, Steffen. "Public governance success – Suggestions and thoughts from a research process perspective"

Memo SFG Workshop, Utrecht 1-3 March 2017

Paul 't Hart

Dear colleagues,

A few weeks after receiving word that the ERC had seen fit to fork out the dough for five years of sustained team research on 'successful' governance I wrote the following 'memo to self' revealing the bewildering array of questions that came into my head now that I had been handed this rare opportunity. I presented them in no particular order then, perhaps reflecting the sense of confusion I felt at the time. Please have a look at it now:

Got the grant, now what? Ten questions (PtH, 30 March 2016)

1. What outputs and outcomes do we strive for. When can this project on success itself be considered a success?
2. How to create a project that is 'scientific' (analytically sophisticated) and 'pragmatic' (utilization-focused) at the same time?
3. How to combine the power of large N with the power of in-depth process narrative?
 - balance between 'explaining'/'understanding' components
 - balance between academic and public/applied publication strategies
4. How to design pertinent and productive comparisons?
 - Theoretical and/or empirical generalization
 - IV/DV variation: MSSD/MDSD logics of comparative design and case selection
 - Clearly defined population-based comparisons (e.g. functional bodies/regions, provinces, G32 municipalities, inspectorates, RIECs)
 - Social, physical, economic, safety/security domains
5. How to study success without being naïve, teleological, and uncritical?
6. How to build critical mass within and beyond the research team?
 - Team: composition and management
 - Team and University Utrecht context (USBO/IOS: associate researchers/collaborations, IOS co-funding, IOS-meetings)
 - Team and Dutch Public Administration scholarship: VB, NIG and other forums
 - Team and international peers: academic reference group, academic workshop; collaborative projects;
7. How to embed the project in practitioner world?
 - Reference group
 - Contract research
 - Field experiments

8. Nature of, balance between and comparison/synergy the three key objects/loci of analysis identified in the ERC applications:

- organizations, units/teams within organizations
- policies, programs or 'initiatives'
- collaborations, networks

9. How to be innovative and yet not reinvent the wheel in terms of methodology, theory, and contributions to the field?

- Public policy studies: moving beyond our own shadow (decades of my prior research on crises, fiascos, reforms, and the concepts, frameworks, propositions used therein)
- Governance studies: benefitting from but moving beyond the already voluminous 'normal science' of network/collaborative/interactive governance, regulation?
- Public management studies: *ibid*, but in relation to e.g. the mass of work on performance measurement, agencies

10. How to communicate and brand who we are and what we do?

Now, a year later, some of these questions have been tackled. There is, for example, now a complete international, intergenerational and team of 10. The first practitioner workshop has been conducted, various key notes and training sessions have been delivered, and the interest in the project among Dutch public sector elites is high. Additional funding for a 2-year project of public value creation in local government has been obtained, for example. Exploratory reconnaissance of sectors and cases that might be the focus of study is in progress as we speak.

But the main strategic, intellectual and methodological questions identified back then still stand before us today. In the intervening months, I have learned about many inspiring efforts to raise and address these or highly similar questions, and some of the authors of those efforts will be joining the workshop as a result. As usual, reading excellent work by others yields answers, but also more questions. One in particular has been coming back to me recently:

11. Making the notion of 'success' so central to the endeavor was probably instrumental in getting the grant, but is analytically and methodologically messy. Mark Bovens and I spent six years taming the highly similar messiness of the notion of policy fiasco/failure, and were at best only partially successful in doing so, judging by the modest uptake and use of the insights presented in our various 1990s/early 2000s publications on the subject. Allan McConnell's brave 2010 monograph on policy success shows how hard it is to define, assess and explain policy success. No doubt the same applied to organizational, collaborative or local government success. Hence the question: should we not ditch 'success', or at least trade it in for more commonly used, and therefore better operationalized and understood proxies/components of 'success', such as (high) 'performance', (high) 'effectiveness', (strong) 'reputation', (high) 'reliability', (strong) legitimacy as the all-important 'dependent variable' in the various studies that we will conduct as part of this program?

Of course I have started to develop my thoughts about these questions, and so have the colleagues that have since joined me on the team. Pretty soon, we shall have to make big design decisions, as our postdocs have finite contracts and need to get on with things. So the timing of this workshop is opportune. Could I therefore ask you:

1. To help us make these decisions prudently by doing some reflecting on (some of) the 11 questions posed here, *as if* you were me? (Perhaps also in light of what I promised the ERC I would deliver, see Appendix B) What would YOU do with this pot of money and with the exciting team that I have been fortunate enough to recruit, in other words? And, at least as important, what would you definitely NOT do, and why?
2. To make yourself available to SFG team members during breaks and meals, and share your thoughts and experiences on these issues with them. We consider ourselves beginners, and are keen to be advised, brainstorm and learn.
3. To consider seriously how what SFG looks like doing fits with your own agenda for the coming years, and identify concrete possibilities for collaboration between you, us, and other colleagues?
4. To have a read of the first tangible project proposal that I have worked up recently (see Appendix A). It amounts to a belated counterpoint to Peter Hall's *Great Planning Disasters*. Please let me know – verbally or in correspondence – what you think of it, how it might be improved, what ‘must-have’ cases I have overlooked, and whether you want to contribute.

Many thanks,

Paul

Appendix A – Book Proposal

Great Policy Successes:

How Governments Get It Right in a Big Way at Least Some of the Time. Or, A Tale About Why It's Amazing That Governments Get So Little Credit for Their Many Everyday and Extraordinary Achievements as Told by Sympathetic Observers Who Seek to Create Space for a Less Relentlessly Negative View of Our Pivotal Public Institutions

Edited by Paul 't Hart, Utrecht University/Netherlands School of Public Administration

Why this book, why now?

For those wanting to know how public policy is made and how it moves from aspirations and ideas expressed in speeches and documents to tangible social outcomes (or lack thereof), the 1970s produced some classic accounts that found a place in academic curriculums and the academic research canon world-wide. The two best known are Pressman and Wildavsky's *Implementation* (with its iconic epic subtitle emulated here) and Peter Hall's *Great Planning Disasters* (emulated in the main title). The former was an intensive, book-long case study of how a riots-induced federal job employment creation program played out on the ground, with very limited success, in Oakland, California. The latter contained a well-written collection of public policy failures from around the Anglosphere: 'positive' ones (planning projects that get adopted but run into costs escalation, underperformance, withdrawal of political support or unintended consequences problems that are all so big as to completely dwarf any of the intended aims), and 'negative' ones (instances where pressing planning problems do not get tackled or well laid plans do not get implemented because of political stalemate).

Taken together, these studies were emblematic of an era in which the alleged 'ungovernability' of Western societies and their welfare states was becoming a dominant theme (Crozier et al, 1975, Rose, 1979, Offe, 1984). Having seized a much more prominent role in public life following World War II, Western governments were ambitious to achieve planned change, but their internal complexities and the vagaries of the democratic political decision making process often worked to conspire against the realization of those ambitions. Generations of public policy and public administration students inhaled the pessimistic diagnoses of these classic studies. Waves of similar studies in the 1990's (Butler et al, 1994; 't Hart and Bovens, 1996; Gray and 't Hart, 1998) and the 2010s (Allern and Pollack, 2012; Crewe and King, 2013; Light, 2014; Schuck, 2014; Opperman and Spencer, 2016;) have given us a pretty firm analytical grip on the institutional, behavioural, political and media dynamics contributing to the occurrence and escalation of public policy failure. They also, however, seem to imply that governments are up to no good, incompetent,

politically paralysed and/or chronically overreaching much of the time (e.g. Scott, 1998; Schuck, 2014). And yet in many parts of the world in many areas of public policy, the great bulk of public projects, programs and services perform not so bad at all, and sometimes even incredibly successfully (Goderie, 2015). But these are chronically underexposed and understudied. Major policy accomplishments, striking performance in difficult circumstances, and thousands of taken for granted everyday forms of effective 'public value creation' are not deemed newsworthy and cannot be exploited for political gain by oppositions and critics of incumbent governments. Academic students of public policy have had almost nothing to say about them (cf Bovens, 't Hart and Peters, 2001; McConnell, 2010; Moore, 2013), despite vigorous calls to recognize the major and often hidden and unacknowledged contributions of governments to successes claimed by and widely attributed to now revered companies like Google (Mazzucato, 2013).

We cannot properly 'see' let alone recognize and explain variations in government performance when not just media and political but also academic discourse on politics and governance is saturated with accounts of their shortcomings and failures but next to silent on their opposites. The dominance of the language of disappointment, incompetence, failure, unintended consequences, alienation, corruption, disenchantment, and crisis in public and academic discourse about government, politics and public policy is not inconsequential – on the contrary (Hay, 2007). It risks creating self-fulfilling prophecies in the way we look at, talk about, think, evaluate, and emotionally relate to public institutions. The current ascent of 'anti-system' populists speaks volumes, and the message is hardly reassuring.

This volume therefore aims to help redress that imbalance, and think again. Accepting the risk of being accused of naivete or willful lack of critical thinking, it presents a series of close-up, in-depth case-study accounts of the genesis of stand-out public policy accomplishments across a range of countries, sectors and challenges. Analytically, it engages with the conceptual, methodological and theoretical challenges of studying the nature (and construction) of 'success' in politics and governance, and the making of 'successful' governments, public policies and agencies.

Approach and design

Success, like 'failure' is not just a matter of fact but one of perceptions, values, and interests. Labelling a policy or agency as successful depends on which stakeholders are involved in the process and on the positions they take. Actual performance and measurable 'social outcomes' are not the only things that matter. Public perceptions, political support, program legitimacy and institutional reputations all come into play in shaping whether a particular government initiative or entity is considered to be successful or not. Questions for analysis thus abound: Successful in what regard, for who, at which point in time, relative to

what? Successful in actually ‘doing better’ to achieve public purposes, or primarily in making the public ‘feel better’ through more effective framing and dramaturgy? At what level(s) of analysis and abstraction? When comparing clearly outstanding to average to clearly failed instances of government action (programs, policies, agencies), which factors and mechanisms best explain the difference (see eg Patashnik, 2008)? Luck (context, zeitgeist, chance events, crises) or skill (political and public service craftsmanship in design, timing, political management, public relations)?

There are many ways to ‘get at’ these questions. The volume proposed here follows in the footsteps of Hall and Pressman/Wildavsky by presenting up-close, single case studies, each selected on its own terms rather than as part of a comparative design. These serve two purposes. Descriptively, they are important in their own right – rich narratives about instances of policy success in a variety of contexts can help to increase awareness that at least some of the time, government and public policy actually work remarkably well. Analytically, the book is an exercise in exploratory and inductive research. In the final chapter(s), like Hall did, we will work our way up from the particulars – in time, space, sector, context, personalities – of individual cases to generalized insights about preconditions, facilitators and levers of success in public policy. Whilst this analytical strategy is hardly the only game in town available to anyone sharing the objectives of this volume, it does emulate highly powerful examples of case-study approaches to theory formation in the study of successful, high-performing, highly reputed public organisations (Selznick, 1949; Kaufman, 1960; Carpenter, 2001; Goodsell, 2011).

To increase the book’s accessibility and the likelihood of productive induction at the end of the road, each case study chapter will have a single format and proceed to tackle the following basic questions:

Section 1

1. Why is this case included in this volume? What, in other words, is its fundamental ‘claim to success’?

Section 2

2. What was the social, political and institutional context in which the policy (program, project, initiative) was developed?
3. What specific challenges was it seeking to tackle, what if any specific aims did it seek to achieve?
4. Who were the policy’s main drivers, sponsors, entrepreneurs, and how did they operate to create and maintain momentum for the policy?

Section 3

5. How did the policy design process – the progression from ambitions and ideas to plans and instruments – unfold, and what (f)actors shaped it most?

6. How did the political decision making process leading up to its adoption – the progression from proposals/bills to commitments/laws – unfold, and what (f)actors shaped it most?

Section 4

7. How did the implementation process – ‘what happens after a bill becomes a law’ (Bardach, 1977) – unfold, and what (f)actors shaped it most?
8. How did the impression management process – the public and political framing of the rationale, operation and effects of the policy post its political adoption – unfold, and what (f)actors shaped it most?

Section 5

9. How at the time of writing do the public value ‘scorecard’ (Moore, 2013) and reputational ‘balance sheet’ (Maor, 2014) look like?
10. What, overall, can policy analysts and policy actors (of different ilk) learn from this instance of policy success?

Outline

Chapter 1 – Public policy *successes* – really?

Editorial introduction chapter, elaborating the above in greater detail.

Chapter 2 - Making sure the Dutch live safely far below sea level

Theoretically, the Netherlands cannot exist, and least of all in an era of sea level rises. Yet it does, and it will. This is, literally, a man-made success, made possible by cooperative action, sound and long-term oriented public policy, and creative design and management of governance structures.

Chapter 3 – Why you should consider raising your kids in Finland

Why has Finland become the endemic best-performing non-SE Asian country in the global education system performance rankings? Why is teaching valued – and paid – so much more in Finland than elsewhere in the Western world?

Chapter 4 – The British love affair with socialized health care

The remarkable endurance of the National Health Service – despite its arguably variable performance – provides an intriguing case study in policy and institutional support-building. Even Margaret Thatcher could not get rid of it, and this was not for lack of trying. How have the British come and continued to love their particular form of socialized health care so much?

Chapter 5 – Curbing drink driving in Scotland

Bringing down the often shocking levels alcohol related deaths and injuries on the roads is an objective shared by many national and subnational governments. Yet the extent to which they manage to achieve their objectives varies markedly. Of late, Scotland has been one of the leaders in the field. How did this come to pass?

Chapter 6 – Building a multicultural nation in Canada

With most Western countries experiencing policy paralysis, policy reversals, crises and political upheaval over immigration, refugees and multi-culturalism, Canada has been quietly yet relatively consistently and with a large degree of public support continued to forge a managed immigration programme, an openness to refugees and a broad commitment to building a multicultural nation.

Chapter 7 – The spectacular drop in infant mortality in Singapore

Forty years ago, giving birth to a child in Singapore was dangerous. Infant mortality rates were staggering. Now, Singapore has the lowest infant mortality in the world. In the intervening years, it has become much richer, more 'developed'. But so have many other nations in the region and in the West. Why has progress on this issue in Singapore outpaced that achieved everywhere else?

Chapter 8 – Why the whole world has been watching Danish drama

Borgen, the Bridge, the Killing, Those Who Kill – the list of internationally acclaimed and commercially highly successful Danish television drama series made during the last 15 years is long and growing. How can a small, non English speaking country be so consistently successful in a highly competitive sector? There is more at play than the coincidental confluence of an unusually talented cohort of writers, directors, actors and producers.

Chapter 9 - Germany's second economic miracle

Germany has become the leader of the European Union, and one of the most resilient economies on earth. It has survived and thrived during the 'global economic recession'. And yet only a decade before it was widely derided as stagnant, and ridden by political paralysis in reforming its rigid labour market and welfare state policies. How has this turnaround been achieved and consolidated?

Chapter 10 – How Melbourne became the world's most livable city

For what it is worth, Melbourne has been voted world's most livable city for the last 7 years in a row. Melbournians take immense civic pride in their place of residence. No longer is it an economic basket case suffering from jarring industrial decline in the 1980s and a conservative monocultural backwater. Its economic resurgence, ascendancy in attracting large public events, magnet for the arts, higher education hub, and successful model of multicultural co-existence has been as remarkable as it has been forged by a series of bold policy initiatives.

Chapter 11 – The New Zealand economy from basket case to high performer

By 1983, New Zealand had come dangerously close to falling off the world economic wagon. Its boom and bust economy was in a downward spiral, government finances looked terrible, loans were increasingly hard to come by, unemployment ran high, as did public despair. Many Kiwis voted with their feet. Thirty years later, still as geographically isolated as it always was, the country has gloriously withered the storm of the 2008-9 global recession. It has reinvented its economic model, experiences an unprecedented period of prosperity and sees emigrants return in remarkable numbers. How did this happen?

Chapter 12 – Estonia’s rebirth from Soviet backwater to European innovation hub

Of all the ‘new members’ of the European Union – code language for former members of the Warsaw Pact – Estonia has been the most rounded and consistent high achievers. This is particularly so in gearing the operation of both its economy and its government to the information revolution. Estonia is a leader in E-governance, and its economy has managed to move from low-grade to high-grade exports on the strength of a massive investment in IT and high tech expertise and infrastructure.

Chapter 13 – Sweden’s commitment to preserving its ecosystems

Sweden has been a consistently early adopter and over-implementer of environmental legislation, despite facing significant value trade-offs and rent-seeking lobbies from its entrenched industrial interests. It has embarked and continued on a path of progressive environmental reform regardless of the political complexion of its governments. What has driven and enabled this consistent, and successful, record of reform?

OPTIONS:

- Ozone layer preservation regime
- Small pox eradication
- NBC non proliferation regimes
- Uruguay, softdrugs liberalisation
- UK elite sports policy: from Sydney to London

Chapter 15 – Learning From Policy Success

In this chapter, we compare and contrast patterns of policy success, revisiting the key themes driving the 10 case-study questions, teasing out elements of a practice-oriented theory of policy success.

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Appendix B ERC proposal

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A note for "Successful Public Governance (SPG) workshop" – Utrecht 1-3 March 2017

The main argument I would like to contribute to the discussion is the following:

Thinking about successes in governance in terms of enduring performance and legitimacy (as suggested in the attached research proposal) underestimates the concern that policy measures which might seem successful at a certain time, will be revealed later as inefficient. Yet, at that stage, altering or abolishing those inefficient policies might be extremely difficult, and therefore they may further persist for a long period of time. Thus, paradoxically, incidences of successful governance may evolve into enduring failures. This is a serious concern which should be acknowledged. It calls for theoretical exploration and the development of practical measures for enhancing bureaucracies' capacity to adjust their policies to changes in their environments, and "prepare for the unknown".

In the following pages, I explain this general concern, and its main implications on the proposed research. In this note, I focus mostly on the prism of government policies, yet I believe that my argument can be similarly applied to evaluation of government organizations and networks.

Modern governments can be seen as complex adaptive systems, which are expected to detect, prioritize, and address a dynamic flow of changes in the societal and physical environment, on numerous highly complex issues. Not all of these changes are detectable, and even when they are, policymakers have limited ability to process them, due to their bounded rationality and inefficiencies in their allocation of attention (Baumgartner and

Jones 2015; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Performance, thus, is inherently a *limited* standard. It is based on policymakers' definition of problems and prioritization at a particular point, based on their current, limited understanding of their environment and of citizens' preferences.

An important implication of these limitations is that even when bureaucracies are considered successful in achieving desirable outputs and outcomes, it is possible that these consequences will be judged differently in the future. Problem definition and prioritization may change due to the incorporation of new information which was previously unavailable to policymakers, and/or due to new circumstances, which policymakers did not predict (and perhaps may have not been able to). For instance, US defense and security agencies may have been considered successful during the 1990s', given that at the time they did not acknowledge the scope of the threat of terrorism, which was later revealed in the 9/11 attacks. Similarly, prior to the 2008 global financial crisis, the British Financial Service Authority (FSA), enjoyed high reputation as a world-leading regulator (Gilad 2015).

The notion that bureaucracies need to be responsive to changes, despite their limited ability to understand their external environment is almost trivial now. Still, the consequences of this issue are often not sufficiently acknowledged in research and practice. I argue that the possibility that bureaucracies will struggle to change seemingly successful policies once they are no longer justified is a serious concern.

Public policy research have suggested that policy instruments may often persist, regardless to their instrumental value or the extent to which they achieve their goals. These sustaining over-investments in policies have been recently termed "policy bubbles" (Jones, Thomas, and Wolfe 2014; Maor 2014). Policies may become self-sustaining, or locked-in, due to policymakers' "identification with the mean", risk aversion, and perceptions of sunk costs, and due to interest groups' and bureaucracies' reliance on these policy and efforts to preserve them. Unlike economic bubbles, which tend to be relatively short-termed, in the public governance, inefficiencies can be maintained for very long periods of time. For example, Jones et al. document how levels of incarceration in the US steadily increased for nearly four decades after crime rates started to decline. In other

words, the policy measure was maintained for a very long period of time, despite clear evidence that it was ineffective.

Moreover, those seemingly successful policies are particularly prone to turn into bubbles, and persist long after they are no longer justified. This is because enduring high performance and audiences' favorable responses to policies, provide positive feedback and overconfidence, which are likely to reinforce the persistence of these policies (Jones and Baumgartner 2005; Jones, Thomas, and Wolfe 2014; Maor 2014). This expectation aligns with a recent study, which was based on punctuated equilibrium theory (Flink 2015). Flink theorized and empirically demonstrated that higher levels of performance yield more incremental policy changes and fewer substantive changes. True, maintaining policies which yield favorable outcomes might make sense, inasmuch as there has not been a substantive change in the environment, which requires revising goals and priorities. Yet, an important question remains: when circumstances do change significantly, will those seemingly successful organizations be more or less capable of adjusting their existing policies? A possible interpretation of Flink's findings is that high performance levels may render organizations less adaptive and responsive. If this is the case, then high performing successful bureaucracies/policies might have more negative than positive consequences in the long run. Take for instance a policy which is relatively successful for 10 years, but then remains inefficient for another 40 years (perhaps as in the case of US imprisonment policy).

Taken together, the potential negative consequences of seemingly successful policies is very serious. One can argue that this problem can be addressed by including the dimension of endurance, because incidences of periodical high performance will not be regarded as successful governance. Yet, I argue that this does not solve the problem. Addressing this concern must be primarily based on acknowledging the inherent limitations in the setting of policy goals and means, due to humans' limited capacity to process information, prioritize and define problems, and make "accurate" decisions in a complex, and dynamic environment. Under these assumptions – no time period will be sufficiently long to constitute "success".

The modest insights raised in this note entails that in addition to exploring bureaucracies' capacity to efficiently achieve predefined goals, we should dedicate more attention to

exploring their responsiveness and adaptability. The latter dimension includes bureaucracies' capacity to quickly identify significant changes in their environments, and efficiently adjust themselves and their actions to these changes. A few tentative directions can be derived from the current literature. As recently suggested by Baumgartner and Jones (2015), general research units that provide diverse information (which they term "entropic search", as opposed to "expert search"), are likely to improve policymakers' information processing, thereby enhancing their ability to track significant changes which justify revising their policies. The ability to smoothly adjust policies in accordance with these substantive changes (or abolish them) may depend on the design and structure these policies, and their level of flexibility and/or reversibility. Furthermore, the existence of several, alternative, policy programs (as opposed to the reliance on a single one) is also likely to facilitate the system's adaptability, and reduce the possibility that policymakers will prefer to stick to current policies, despite their inefficiencies. The latter factor can be regarded as system's "redundancy" (Baumgartner and Jones 2015; Landau 1969).

Enhancing the theoretical understanding on this issue, may further enable to develop practical measures for enhancing governments' capacity to adapt and respond to changes. The latter dimension becomes tremendously important, insofar as governments nowadays face an increasingly highly dynamic and complex environment. To address these challenge, policymakers should be equipped with better information search capacities, and tools for designing flexible policies, which would be more easily changed or abolished in case they will be revealed as ineffective. To use a metaphor, policymakers should design new policy programs, much like architects design new buildings. They should anticipate that there will be substantive changes which they cannot forecast, and therefore their design should enable and facilitate substantial adjustments to them in the future as much as possible. Above all, they should acknowledge the limitations of their ability to understand the world and the possibility and costs of policy persistence, and hence – the importance of responsiveness and adaptability to changes.

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Public Governance Success as Virtuous Cycles¹

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The argument I want to explore is that public sector success is often based on the creation of positive feedback loops that I will call “virtuous cycles.” One way to motivate this argument is to emphasize that much social action rests on rather fragile organizing conditions. Authority and resources are limited and dispersed, good will is scarce, and cats don’t like to be herded. Collective efforts are thus highly prone to the negative effects of entropy and conflict. Virtuous cycles can help to combat this entropy and conflict and become building blocks for sustainable success.²

Successful collaborative governance is fragile in this sense. In my work with Alison Gash on collaborative governance, we conceptualized collaboration as a social learning cycle where positive feedbacks—cognitive, emotional, and epistemic—reinforce commitment to the enterprise of collaboration.³ In more recent work on collaborative innovation, I have also characterized creative problem-solving as a positive feedback loop and Jacob Torfing and I have argued that design thinking is a valuable resource for collaborative innovation because, in part, it stresses the value of iterative design-redesign cycles to exploit both positive and negative feedback.⁴

One of the most insightful works that inspired my early thinking on positive feedbacks is Karl Weick’s essay on “small wins.”⁵ Small wins provide quick feedbacks that can create the basis for “large wins.” In the context of collaborative governance, small wins can produce feedbacks that deepen efficacy, commitment and trust. This perspective leads to greater sensitivity towards intermediate process outcomes.

I recently reviewed a book by Rebecca Abers and Margaret Keck on the development of water governance in Brazil.⁶ They describe how water governance institutions were created all over Brazil, but only a certain number of them flourished. As described in my review, here is one of the pathways they found leads to flourishing water governance institutions:

Abers and Keck describe two strategic pathways that river basin actors utilized to successfully create practical authority. The first was to “find spaces of action in the interstices of contending power structures, where they can build capabilities and recognition at a small scale” (p. 23). To do this, river basin actors engaged in experimentation to address concrete water management problems. These experiments

¹ Prepared for the *Successful Public Governance Workshop*, Utrecht, 1-3 March 2017

² For a similar argument focusing on innovation, see Padgett, J. F., & Powell, W. W. (2012). *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets*. Princeton University Press.

³ Ansell, C., & Gash, A. (2008). Collaborative governance in theory and practice. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 18(4), 543-571.

⁴ Ansell, C. K. (2016). Collaborative Governance as Creative Problem-Solving. In: Torfing, J., & Triantafyllou, P. (Eds.). (2016). *Enhancing Public Innovation by Transforming Public Governance*. Cambridge University Press; Ansell, C., & Torfing, J. (2014). *Public innovation through collaboration and design* (Vol. 19). Routledge.

⁵ Weick, K. E. (1984). Small wins: redefining the scale of social problems. *American Psychologist*, 39(1), 40.

⁶ Abers, R., & Keck, M. E. (2013). *Practical authority: Agency and institutional change in Brazilian water politics*. Oxford University Press.

were small in scale and, hence, avoided political contestation. Critically, however, the early results of these experiments reinforced collective action and produced capacity and experience. This mode of action can gradually attract wider participation and can lead to a more ambitious agenda.

Note how success here builds on “small wins” and how positive feedbacks deepen capacity over time. In other words, water governance institutions flourished as a consequence of virtuous cycles.

Leadership is critical for setting up positive feedback loops in both public organizations and in collaboratives and networks, though it is rarely explicitly conceived in this way. However, I would suggest that Selznick’s model of leadership as a process of institutionalization is essentially about setting up a positive feedback loop and Boin’s extension of Selznick’s model suggests that good leadership itself can be understood as a virtuous cycle.⁷

In more recent work, I’ve begun trying to think more generally about what sets up positive feedbacks in collaborative settings. I’m not fully satisfied with this, but I have begun distinguishing *attractor effects*, (“success begets success”), *learning*, *leverage* (i.e., multiplier effects), and *synergy* (exchange between complementary knowledge, resources etc) as key mechanisms. My recent work suggests that we should think about how leadership can become more effective by taking advantage of these mechanisms.

In my book, *Pragmatist Democracy*, I developed an argument about “recursive” learning cycles in public agencies and I interpret the NYPD’s successful Compstat program in this light.⁸ Compstat has largely been viewed as a New Public Management mechanism to achieve accountability through “management by results.” I argue that interpreting it as a form of recursive learning sheds new light on how, why, and when it works. For recursive learning, agencies must become “problem-focused,” have the capacity to engage in timely and customized inquiry into problems, and develop the capacity for thick deliberation across silos and levels of hierarchy. Performance evaluation must be more “diagnostic” than “transactional” (i.e., a mechanism for structuring rewards and punishments) and building capacity for learning is crucial.

This recursive learning model is also at the heart of what Sabel and Zeitlin call “experimentalist governance,” which they describe as having five key elements: 1) deliberation among stakeholders about a shared problem; 2) leading to the development of open-ended framework goals (as opposed to prescriptive regulations); 3) which are delegated to the stakeholders themselves, so as to leave them free to experiment and customize their strategies; 4) while requiring them to report on their progress, which is monitored and subjected to peer review, and which 5) becomes the basis for the periodic reevaluation and updating of framework goals.⁹

⁷ Selznick, P. (1957). *Leadership in administration: A sociological interpretation*. Berkeley: University of California Press; Boin, A. (2001). *Crafting public institutions: Leadership in two prison systems*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

⁸ By “recursive,” I mean activities that iteratively feed back into themselves. See Ansell, C. (2011). *Pragmatist democracy: Evolutionary learning as public philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁹ Sabel, C. F., & Zeitlin, J. (2012). Experimentalist governance. *The Oxford handbook of governance*.

With Gabrielle Goldstein, I have been evaluating the application of this model to the relatively successful global effort to fight AIDS, focusing on how the coordinating body—UNAIDS—orchestrates this recursive learning system.¹⁰ Leadership of recursive learning is more facilitative and catalytic than control-oriented and transactional (as it is in principal-agent models).

A very similar management strategy has recently been proposed for development work. Andrews, Pritchett, and Woolcock describe a development strategy they call “problem-driven iterative adaptation” (PDIA), which they argue is superior to the standard “blueprint” approach to development.¹¹ They describe it as having four steps:

First, PDIA focuses on solving locally nominated and defined problems in performance (as opposed to transplanting pre-conceived and packaged ‘best practice’ solutions). Second, it seeks to create an ‘authorizing environment’ for decision-making that encourages ‘positive deviance’ and experimentation (as opposed to designing projects and programmes and then requiring agents to implement them exactly as designed). Third, it embeds this experimentation in tight feedback loops that facilitate rapid experiential learning (as opposed to enduring long lag times in learning from ex post ‘evaluation’). Fourth, it actively engages broad sets of agents to ensure that reforms are viable, legitimate, relevant and supportable (as opposed to a narrow set of external experts promoting the ‘top down’ diffusion of innovation). (p. 234).

This may sound to some degree like classic incrementalism. What my recursive learning model, experimentalist governance, and the PDIA model add is an appreciation for the need to engage actors collaboratively in constructing learning/feedback mechanisms that support joint problem-solving.

While I have so far stressed the institutional design features of virtuous cycles, power dynamics are often critical. The possibility of recursive learning may be supported or undermined by the wider political context. In work with Margaret Weir and Jane Rongerude, we found that a virtuous cycle of political reform in transportation policymaking occurred in Chicago because powerful local groups lent their political weight to collaborative institutions, which in turn produced a “positive reform cycle” that deepened collaboration over time. In the less hospitable civic terrain of Los Angeles, this positive reform cycle never got off the ground.¹²

It is also possible to flip the idea of virtuous cycles around and suggest that public sector success is about breaking “vicious cycles.” In my recent work with Martin Bartenberger, we argue that dealing with unruly public problems often requires figuring out ways to disrupt or prevent

¹⁰ C. Ansell and G. Goldstein. Experimentalist Governance in Global Public Health: UNAIDS and Its Place in the Global AIDS Regime. Draft manuscript.

¹¹ Andrews, M., Pritchett, L., & Woolcock, M. (2013). Escaping capability traps through problem driven iterative adaptation (PDIA). *World Development*, 51, 234-244.

¹² Weir, M., Rongerude, J., & Ansell, C. K. (2009). Collaboration is not enough: Virtuous cycles of reform in transportation policy. *Urban Affairs Review*, 44(4), 455-489.

negative feedbacks.¹³ Urban gang violence, for instance, is often a social phenomenon that grows exponentially through “tit for tat” feedback effects. One case that succeeded by disrupting negative feedbacks is the collaborative Boston Gun Project, which successfully deployed a strategy called “Operation Ceasefire” to disrupt a cycle of gang retribution. Successful deployment depended on creating a number of positive feedback loops, including a positive feedback between the police and a coalition of neighborhood organizations. Berrin and Winship describe the shift to a positive feedback loop:

The Ten-Point Coalition, and especially Reverend Rivers, had habitually criticized the Boston Police Department. Increasingly positive interactions with individual officers, however, began to convince the clergy group that the department could change their behavior. The ministers acknowledged the department's progress in an awards ceremony called the "People's Tribunal," initiated in 1992 to publicly honor "good cops." These positive steps eventually led to collaborative efforts like the previously mentioned Operation Cease-Fire. (29).¹⁴

The interesting point here is that the positive feedback loop between the police and the community enabled the police to engage in an innovative tactic (Operation Ceasefire) that disrupted the negative feedback loop of youth homicides. So by extension, we might think of public sector success in terms of interlocking feedback loops.

In sum, my argument is that particularly where power is widely distributed and conditions are turbulent, we need to “think (and act) in loops.”¹⁵ Learning how to facilitate virtuous cycles (or disrupt vicious cycles) is an underappreciated ingredient of governance success.

¹³Ansell C. and M. Bartenberger. 2017. “Tackling Unruly Public Problems,” In Ansell, C. K., Trondal, J., & Øgård, M. (Eds.). (2016). *Governance in Turbulent Times*. Oxford University Press.

¹⁴Berrien, J., & Winship, C. (1999). Lessons Learned from Boston's Police-Community Collaboration. *Fed. Probation*, 63, 25.

¹⁵Farjoun, M., Ansell, C., & Boin, A. (2015). PERSPECTIVE—Pragmatism in Organization Studies: Meeting the Challenges of a Dynamic and Complex World. *Organization Science*, 26(6), 1787-1804.

Thriving against the odds: Individual organisational success in an embattled sector

Memo written for the SPG conference.

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Introduction

A string of scandals rocked the Dutch social housing organisation sector in 2009. The nadir of these was what happened to Vestia in 2011, the largest social housing organisation in the Netherlands owning approximately 90,000 homes. Vestia was ultimately faced with a €2.7 billion loss from dabbling in financial derivatives (Parlementaire enquêtecommissie Woningcorporaties 2014). The whole sector – at that time about 400 organisations – was threatened because of a solidarity mechanism put in place: to facilitate lower interests on loans, all organisations paid into and were covered by a fund that guaranteed their loans to banks and lending institutions. In the event that this fund would not have sufficient financial reserves to repay a loan, the appropriate local councils and the national government would foot the bill. The reasons for this construction are self-evident: providing decent housing for low-income citizens is in the public interest and can therefore not be dependent on fluctuations on the financial markets. Currently, there are 350 social housing organisations (Autoriteit Woningcorporaties 2017) that collectively own 2.4 million homes, housing nearly 4 million people (Aedes 2016).

The question why serious financial malpractice happened in more than a handful of social housing organisations has been handled elsewhere (e.g. reports from the Parliamentary Enquiry 2014). The answer seems to be a mix of overly ambitious leaders, toothless regulators or slow internal checks and balances, unquestioned autonomy because of an excellent reputation and past successes, and complex and changing tasks (Gerrichhauzen et al. 2014). The question I want to ask is, **how did some individual social housing organisations continue to be successful in a sector that lost legitimacy and trust?** How did they manage not just to do well, but to do great?

Within the ERC programme on Successful Public Governance, I focus on successful public organisations. The case of the social housing organisations is good first case, I would argue, for a number of reasons. The most important being that it provides the opportunity to separate the three dimensions the ERC programme suggests construct the notion of ‘success’: **effectiveness, legitimacy, robustness**. The rest of this memo will focus on the motivation behind selecting this case while also suggesting lines of enquiry for the three dimensions.

Effectiveness and shifting goals

The long history of the social housing sector is punctuated with shifting tasks and goals. Based on the 1901 law, ‘Improvement of Housing’, social housing organisations were founded as private organisations performing a public task with state support in the form of guaranteed, cheap loans (Elsinga & Van der Schaar 2014). So, the social housing sector was infused with hybridity from its inception (Priemus 2014). As the needs of housing the Dutch population

fluctuated during the 20th century, so did the tasks assigned to the sector as well as its relationship to (local and national) government. One consequence of this increased complexity and changing mission could be that some social housing organisations are more successful at certain times than others. For instance, before the economic crisis and the subsequent major scandals hit, making money from financial products to reinvest in social housing could have been constructed as effective. Indeed, exploratory interviews with administrators and regulators suggest that those organisations that focused on their core tasks of providing and maintaining homes for low-income citizens *without* pursuing increased revenues in complicated financial products were perceived to be behind the times.

This raises a few issues about measuring effectiveness and, more broadly, success:

- How does the timing of measurement affect research results? Not only do goals shift, which naturally affects the interpretation of effectiveness; an organisation is only successful until it isn't.
- If we assume that political principals will continue to shift the goal posts for social housing as needs change, how should organisations react? Institutionalisation literature suggests an adapt-to-stay-the-same approach, but recent findings contradict this: making preliminary changes to an organisation in anticipation of political moves does not seem to prolong US agencies' lives (Boin et al. 2016). Does this finding on the effects of adaptation hold when the depending variable is not surviving but rather thriving as an organisation?
- What is the effect of how administrators perceive what constitutes 'success' in the organisation they are heading? What are the stories they tell themselves of how to achieve success? These questions relate to competing public management logics (Noordegraaf 2015), although I would argue that structuring the logics as narratives or discourses is appropriate here.

Legitimacy and reputation

Social housing organisations can make an unambiguous claim to be carrying out a valuable mission, namely providing homes for low-income households. The long history of the sector and the clear societal need it responds to delineate its identity and ultimately ensure its survival (although reforms responding to scandals may be far-reaching). What happens then to individual organisations when the whole sector is tainted by the abuse of power and financial mismanagement of some? How do they thrive in this hostile environment?

This case offers the opportunity to tease out the distinction between reputation and legitimacy. Will a successful organisation highlight its own performative and moral reputation (Carpenter 2010) in order to distinguish itself from the bad apples in the sector? Or will it appeal to its stakeholders by emphasising the value of its mission and apply strategies for repairing the legitimacy of the whole sector on which it depends to defend its mission (Suchman 1995)?

Some of the issues related to this dimension of success are well-known: for example, organisations deal with different stakeholders and audiences, which should be acknowledged in the research plan. Another is the effect of choosing either reputation or legitimacy on the findings. More generally, does using this case of the crisis in the Dutch social housing sector for teasing out the two concepts contribute to our knowledge about bureaucratic reputation

and legitimacy? To complicate matters, it is possible these two issues are intertwined, that different concepts used in the literature apply differently to different stakeholders. Take, for instance, the tenants of these social housing organisations. It is not inconceivable that the bond between them and the organisations housing them are better explained by trust literature, something Verhoest et al. (2014) allude to. It is not inconceivable that in times of crisis in the wider sector, when the relation between the (local) political principal and the local housing organisation is strained, this relation with the tenants is used as an asset by the organisation to retain autonomy.

Robustness

The questions raised by the third dimension are best understood in the context of institutionalisation. I plan on studying the effect of preliminary adaption not on survival (Boin et al. 2016) but on survivability: successful social housing organisations should be able to absorb the shock of the crisis and the subsequent changes to their goals and missions.

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Complexification as a paradoxically effective way to satisfactory solutions and better outcomes in public decision-making

Abstract workshop Successful Public Governance, 1-3 March, Utrecht

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Introduction

Governance as well as Success are challenging concepts in public administration. Success has many faces and images. Success has also many fathers, while failures are orphans, lacking any parents. In Governance Systems and Actions the plurality of actors involved, their diverging views, interests, yardsticks and perceptions as well as the interplay between actions, interactions and events in the context create ambiguity about 'what success is' and 'how and by whom it was achieved'.

Actors involved in Governance Systems defines their own relevant world (a subsystem of reality). It is almost impossible to speak about one truth. For failure, the same is true. This complicates the work of Public Administration Scientists. They can act as if they are outside the Governance System able to make objective assessments. They however cannot intervene in the systems, as surgeons can. Assessments only can have impact if the subjects of research reflect and act on it. They are part of the subject system of research and must be able to investigate deep into the system in an attempt to understand how sometimes amazing results, often totally neglected by the media and citizens are achieved and also how rather unsatisfactory results can survive for so long in the public domain. Our assumption is that unsatisfactory results are clearly related with the bureaucratic way of working in governments. In such a system decisions once taken, often based on insufficient knowledge, get a live on their own and will create a strong path dependency: nobody is happy, while simultaneously nobody 'dears' to bring this up for discussion. We assume that what is often needed in these situations is an opening-up of the 'decision-making processes'. This implies an expanding complexity in terms of what the issue is, what the solution is and who has to be involved. Complexity increasing approaches as a method to transform failure into success is the central topic in our research.

In our empirical search, we already found a whole series of policy processes, often defined in terms of clearly bounded projects where the share- and stakeholders involved share a common feeling of uneasiness and dissatisfaction with the achieved joint result. They also belief intuitively that better solutions could and should have been reached. However, to speak up loudly in governance systems, does not seem to be a popular thing.

Despite this pitfall of uneasy silence, we also found policy processes and projects where stakeholders did change course, without any formal order from higher in the bureaucracy and nevertheless achieve to create an outcome of higher value for many of the participating share- and stakeholders. In these cases, we will elaborate our hypothesis that an increase of complexity of the issue makes the difference between 'sticking to failure' and 'evolving into an unforeseen success'. In this abstract, we want to discuss these cases and the value of complexity expanding public management and governance strategies. We assume that increased complexity in terms of content, actors and process are paradoxically effective ways to reach satisfactory solutions and better outcomes. First, we present some findings of cases in the

cities of Utrecht and Rotterdam. Then, we elaborate the theoretical implications and propose some research questions.

Birth of the biggest bicycle storage of the world (Utrecht Central Station, eastern square)

Utrecht Central Station is subject to a huge renovation. The terminal and the surrounding areas and squares are renewed. At the east side of the station, the biggest inner urban shopping center of the Netherlands (Hoog Catharijne) is situated. On this spot, we find the biggest flows in terms of cash and passengers per day in the Netherlands. We will focus on a boundary or transition place where the station and the shopping center meet. For Klepierre, owner of Hoog Catharijne, this transition place generates the highest revenues per square meter. The municipality of Utrecht, however, wanted to give the biggest railway station of the Netherlands his own recognizable entrée at the city center side. In their vision the high revenue area with its well-known chip shop was not an attractive entrance. It also faced safety problems. The municipality stipulated a cut between central station and shopping center in its Masterplan Central Station Area 2003. There are enormous stakes involved of both parties. This situation seems a recipe for long-lasting negotiations whereby actors tend to protect their self-interests and easily will become reactive, considering every idea of change as potentially harmful. An ideal-typical situation of path dependency.

Before 2003, attempts to generate a collaboration governance approach between different stakeholders failed. The Utrecht City Plan was a so-called integrated plan, a well-known desire of governments today. Integrated planning also means that there were no clear boundaries between the different parts and areas. The many cross linkages created feeling of an unmanageable and threatening situation. Actors did not feel comfortable to step in.

In the execution of the Masterplan, the municipality council decided to cut the innovation program of Utrecht Central Station in different projects. For the eastern square, we could distinct five different projects: the square itself, the north building, the New Station Street, Hoog Catharijne and the terminal. Although they are interrelated, they were executed and managed separately. It was assumed that separation created order and enough simplicity to achieve the results defined in the plan.

From 2003 on however, problems raised in the management of the separated projects. New desires came into action. In 2004, the city council decided to broaden the New Station Street, a rational decision in this project, but an irrational one for the neighboring project. Less space was left on the square itself, a separately managed project. However, the municipality and Klepierre did not succeed in finding a solution for the problem of the square, created by a solution for the street, that was both commercially attractive and a progression on livability. From our interviews, we identified a situation of mutual distrust. During the execution of the Masterplan the estimations about the growth of the amount of public transport passengers increased. In reaction on this change, the municipality decided to realize a bicycle flat on the eastern square. By doing so, they created a new project, number six. However, it appeared this 'solution' has big exploitation 'problems' and was low valued in terms of increasing the attractiveness of the area. Furthermore, the municipality board decided to move a tram stop (the Uithoflijn to university campus) from the west side to the east side of central station. This tram became the separately managed project number seven, even though it literally crossed all other projects.

Consequently, this whole of projects became unmanageable. In 2009 and after repeated critiques of a supervisory team of architects, the municipality director of Central Station Area decided to stop the

implementation of the plan of the eastern square. This Remarkable and Daring Decision, created a new crossing and the opportunity to move away from undesirable path dependency.

The actors started a new trajectory, more open for new actors and content. With help of a new architect, a new plan was constituted. It highlighted all problems that separately seem to be unmanageable for the different project leaders. The plan proposed a unique, but also more complex solution, in terms of risks and costs and in terms of more added-value for many share- and stakeholders. This was the unforeseen and unexpected birth of *'the biggest bicycle storage of the world'*, located under the square.

The transformation of the transport of 'target groups' (Rotterdam)

In Rotterdam, every day 25.000 people who are not capable themselves to use private or public transport (like elderly people, disabled people, or students) are transported by a dedicated form of transport. This is a by media and public rather unknown, but important public service. It is publically paid and privately executed. In order to get grip on de private companies executing the service, government has developed a tough contracting regime, in which only prize seems to be decisive.

Recently the services had to be outsourced again. For the first time however, no private companies were motivated to step in. They were not valued for the quality of the service delivery, nor for innovations. They focus was on amount of trips for so-called 'target groups'. These target groups were 'designed' by the municipality, but not recognized by clients and service providers. In reality, they were individuals with unique desires and demands.

So, the execution of the service delivery got stuck. A crisis was there and this become the start of a more innovative and complexity expanding approach, not decided upon high in the bureaucracy, but emerging from actions taken by 'street level professionals' in charge of the service delivery. The new program manager, not limited by much knowledge about 'how we work here' and his team decided to embrace the action rule 'we don't know the outcome, but we know we have to change'. Firstly, they started by investigating the desires and demands of the people that used the special mobility service. This was done quite open and 'unorganized', by sending around pieces of paper where people could write their wishes on. Secondly, they chose an innovative tender ('competitive dialogue') that allows flexibility, learning and creativity during the tender phase. In dialogue with the market, they steered on quality demands rather than detailed descriptions of the outcome. However, this approach has high degrees of uncertainty, flexibility and 'path finding' that encounters resistance and suspicion in the municipality organization. Thirdly, they did not separate this issue from neighboring issues and project teams. During the competitive dialogue, neighboring departments and program teams were invited to observe the dialogue. Until this very moment, many stakeholders are positive about this new approach. The biggest challenge seems to be to get support for this approach within the municipal bureaucracy.

Complexification of decision-making: research questions

The cases show that simple and well-bounded approaches do not guarantee success and easily can lead to path dependency and unsatisfactory public investments and deliveries. It also opens our eyes for the possibility that complexity expansions in decision-making process can result in better output. For the expansion of complexity, we introduce the term complexification. We will embed complexification in the literature on complexity, policy and politics and propose four questions to be answered.

What are the different dimensions of complexification?

In the cases, we identified several dimensions of complexification:

- Complexification of scope: widening the definition of project, problem and solution
- Complexification of interaction: open for new actors and empowerment of existing actors
- Complexification of detail: exploring the issue in more detail generating new solutions
- Complexification of time: embracing unknowns and the changes to fail, 'the outcome is unknown' (Utrecht) and 'it can fail every moment' (Rotterdam)

In literature, different dimensions of complexity are elaborated. Senge (1990) differentiated between detail complexity and dynamic complexity. Detail complexity results from many factors influencing an event. Dynamic complexity results from difference in time and distance between cause and effect, where short-term effects can differ from long-term effects. Ashmos, Duchon and McDaniel (2000) differentiate between goal complexity, strategic complexity, interaction complexity and structural complexity.

Scharmer (2009) point to the thinking from the future instead of the past, and thinking in wholeness instead of parts. The former relates to 'time', the latter to 'scope'. He also speaks about emerging complexity that results from: (1) the ongoing evolution of the problem, (2) the unknown solution and (3) the unknown stakeholders.

Next to complexity in thinking and seeing (scope, time), there is also complexity in positions of actors. It seems that the classical position identified in term of formal power, is less important in our cases. It even tends to advance path dependency. It seems that especially actors able to cross boundaries play an important role in our cases. We therefore tend to refer to a concept like 'betweenness centrality', which means that the steering capacity of government, private parties and NGO's is not located anymore in themselves, but in 'the new mid' between all these actors.

How does complexification result in better outcomes?

Second, we need to explore whether and how complexification results in better outcomes. We also want to take into account that complexification is not desired by all actors in the governance system. We assume that complexification is a punctuated equilibrium in decision making, often preceded and followed-up by periods of bounded and path dependent action. In both cases for instance we have strong indications that the municipal council dismantles complexification and creates fixations in the process, assuming that this gives them a powerful position.

There is ample literature on how the opposite of complexification, the reduction of complexity, might harm an organizations effectiveness and 'fit'. For example, Cilliers (2001) and Uhl-Bien (2007) discuss how the traditional way of organizing (with clear boundaries, locked issues, division in compartments et cetera) does not fit the reality. It is time to see the world as being open and composed of subsystems that dynamically interrelate to each other (Uhl-Bien, 2007; Teisman, 2005). Flood (1999) point to 'the problem with problems', namely that it is almost impossible to separate a problem from its environment. We found confirmation of these notions in our first cases. In Utrecht, the municipality director has the experience that "project managers tried to clearly define their project and exclude tedious influences. The problem is, however, that it didn't work". The 'rail architect' and supervisor reflected: "everywhere projects were entailed with each other, a separated execution tends to failed".

In public administration literature, there is almost nothing written about the value of complexity increasing approaches. Some authors argued that an increase of complexity is an outcome of evolution and thus a positive sign of development (Saunders and Wo, 1976; Heylighen, 1996).

However, arguments about the effectiveness of complexification are lacking (only Ashmos, Duchon and McDaniel (2000) argued that complexity absorption result in better organizational achievements than complexity reduction). In Utrecht, we see how the complexification of scope resulted in a unique and highly valued solution. We also identified a magic moment on which actors gathered and were able to bring together various problems and solutions and work toward a new and more satisfactory solution. Crucial was that the project leader himself expressed his dissatisfaction with the earlier results. This enlarged the variance and thereby the chance for adequate matches between problems and solutions. In Rotterdam, a deep exploration of the problem and allowing flexibility and creativity resulted for the time being in an enormous enrichment of the issue.

How does complexification originate?

Our third question is how complexification originates. It is often argued that people have a tendency to reduce complexity to get grip on reality. They employ heuristics (simple rules for behavior) because the complexity is too big to be captured in their mind (Pierson, 2000; Gerrits, 2012). Therefore, it is not taken for granted that actors will show intentionally attempts to complexification. One reason for complexification, however, may be the dissatisfaction with the result and the inability to deal with the issue otherwise. In Rotterdam as well in Utrecht, we saw that the projects were stuck before the actors chose to increase the complexity. Especially in Utrecht, the project became locked in for many years, in spite of feelings of uneasiness and frustration. In classical path dependence theories, only external pressures (Arthur 1994, David 1985) can unlock a path. However, more recent discussions on path dependence point to the intentionally acts of actors and their attempts for path shaping, path generation and path creation (e.g. Torfing, 2009; Djelic and Quack, 2007; Garud and Karnøe, 2012). We see a challenge to explain how complexification can be a way to unlock paths and to what extent it is a matter of active agency (or a matter of chance, or both).

Balancing issue-driven needs for complexification and governmental desires for 'simplification' Finally yet importantly, we need to discuss the balance between complexification and 'simplification'. The world's complexity is too big to deal with it. Flood (1999) argues that the only thing we can do is 'act local whilst appreciating the impenetrable extent of global complexity'. That means 'considering outcomes that extend over a small number of interrelationships, very few stages of emergence, and only over short periods of time into the future. That is learning within the unknowable'. We need to make boundaries. However, we need to reflect on our 'bounded appreciation' regularly, otherwise we will be captured by our own created world (Flood, 1999).

Here, we want to connect to the literature on exploitation and exploration. Exploitation refers to refinements of the existing situation, competencies and efficiency. Exploration points to innovation, experiments, flexibility and risk taking (March, 1991). For optimal achievements, organizations need to balance both orientations. This is called ambidexterity (Raisch et al., 2009). One-sided exploration harms solidity, one-sided exploitation harms fitness with the rapidly changing environment (Choi and Chandler, 2015). Duit and Galaz (2008) identify a balance between exploration and exploitation as 'adaptive capacity'.

In our cases some actors involved, often new kinds on the block, stressed the challenge to 'do the new thing at the right moment'. They start a new period of exploration. This cannot survive for long. Many others will try to create new path dependency assuming that this creates stability and transparency. We

are going to explore this moving between exploration and exploitation, between diverging and converging, between flexibility and certainty, between complexification and simplification.

Conclusion

We addressed complexification as an effective approach to generate results of and satisfaction in public decision-making. In our first two cases, we found a wonderful enrichment of problems and solutions because of a complexification of the process. In the eyes of the actors involved, it resulted in 'successful' results. We see a challenge to fill the gap in literature about this concept by answering above mentioned questions and would really like to cooperate with colleagues to expand the amount of studied cases.

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On successful governance of transboundary crises

In line with my ongoing research, I will constrain this memo to the governance of transnational, civil security-type crises. Nevertheless, I think parts of the discussion have broader relevance for successful public governance in an interdependent world.

The ‘transboundary crises’ of which I speak are characterized by their ability to cross borders between nation-states as well as policy sectors. They entail the same threat-based urgency and uncertainty of a classic (sub-)national crisis, but their scale and complexity tend to be an order of magnitude higher. For examples, think not just of international financial crises but of the refugee emergency in Europe, the recent Ebola epidemic, the Icelandic ash cloud, climate change, or a future, large-scale cyber-attack.

The problem

The incidence of transboundary crises has risen alongside technological advances and global integration.¹ Some of these complex threats – cyber-attacks and climate change, for example – are novel; to others, including disease outbreaks, financial implosions, and critical infrastructure failures, interdependent countries have simply become more vulnerable.

Moreover, there is no sign of abatement. In fact, when looking ahead, it is increasingly clear that the world is coming up against some long-term challenges with great crisis potential. This list of ‘creeping crises’ includes environmental disasters linked to climate change and associated phenomena but also growing resistance to antibiotics and potential welfare state failures tied to low birth rates. Policymakers will also have to confront structural economic change: the increased precariousness of employment visible in recent years offers but a taste of the work-pattern changes that will be wrought by further technological development and the automatization of many job types.

The puzzle(s)

At least three thought-worthy puzzles emerge from this state of affairs. First, given their increasing incidence and impact, transboundary crises remain surprisingly understudied. This statement holds especially true for research on the acute response phase of crisis management (i.e. actual crisis responses). This underwhelming research intensity constitutes its own puzzle, but it is not the one I want to concentrate on here. Instead, let me introduce two additional dilemmas pertinent to successful transboundary crisis management in the EU.²

¹ This is by no means an original claim; the observation has been repeated across several literatures, including sociology (Ulrich Beck), global challenges / global public goods (e.g. Scott Barrett, Inge Kaul, Todd Sandler, William Nordhaus), and crisis management (e.g. Arjen Boin, Patrick Lagadec, Todd LaPorte, Uriël Rosenthal). International organizations and research institutes, such as the OECD and WEF, have arrived at the same conclusion.

² The EU provides a unique setting for the study of transboundary crises. Its highly interconnected and geographically proximate Member States are particularly vulnerable to such crises, and the Union has developed an unparalleled toolbox of applicable crisis management capacities.

The main mantra that has surfaced from those works which have considered transboundary crises or longer-term global challenges, is that effective management of these interdependence-based governance challenges requires robust inter-state cooperation. Yet, observation of transboundary crisis responses in the EU suggests substantial variation in the extent of that cooperation. The question of which factors produce this variation is, I think, another important puzzle (I may be biased – it is the central theme of my dissertation). Unfortunately, I cannot yet offer solid insights on this issue.

The third puzzle I see, and one that I can delve into in this memo, is divergence between the EU's on-paper crisis management capacities and crisis response practice.³ What unfolds below is a preliminary discussion that builds upon research into the migration crisis. That evidence base probably yields an overly bleak assessment of transboundary crisis governance in the EU (because other transboundary crises have been more effectively managed), but I nonetheless think that the relevance of several of the issues raised below extends beyond the migration crisis.

Crisis management capacities versus actual crisis responses

On paper, the situation looks good: over the last 15 years or so, the EU has developed a plethora of capacities that can facilitate responses to transboundary crises. These capacities range from information-processing tools, to scalable coordination mechanisms and resource mobilization platforms, to the Solidarity Clause (Article 222 of the TFEU), which allows a single Member State to obligate crisis management assistance from the other Member States and the Union itself.

However, looking at actual crisis responses can reveal a different image. A general example of this disparity between on-paper capacities and crisis management practice can be seen in the Crisis Coordination Arrangements (CCA). This mechanism was developed in large part to help coordinate responses to transboundary-type crises, but the CCA were not used and, in 2013, they were replaced by the Integrated Political Crisis Response arrangements (IPCR). The response to the migration crisis reveals several additional instances of non-usage of relevant capacities.

Let us start with the just-mentioned IPCR. Despite being a refined, second-generation information-processing and coordination tool, the IPCR were not activated – even in information-sharing mode – until 30 October 2015, a problematically late date in the development of the Balkans migration route.

Another example is the EU's Temporary Protection Directive. This 2001 directive was deliberately developed as an EU-wide plan to respond to a mass influx of refugees. Moreover, it was forged directly from the experience of mass migration from the Balkans (as a result of the 1990s conflicts in the former Yugoslavia). It thus appeared perfectly tailored to the events of summer and fall 2015. And yet, the Temporary Protection Directive was not activated.

Also not activated during the migration crisis was the Solidarity Clause (in fact, it has never been invoked).⁴ This, despite several Member States possessing plausible claims to their response capabilities having been overwhelmed (e.g. Greece, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, and even Sweden). Non-invocation of

³ The importance of the second and third puzzles is evident not only in the recent series of transboundary crises that has struck the EU, but in the realization that their management, depending on how it is carried out, can have a legitimizing or delegitimizing effect on the EU itself.

⁴ Non-use of the Solidarity Clause is a puzzle in its own right: this binding mechanism of extensive scope was methodically developed over a number of years only for it to go unused in situations well-tailored to its activation.

the Solidarity Clause is particularly important given that some national leaders used claims of being overwhelmed by the influx of refugees to justify border and asylum-request control practices widely deemed illegal under international or EU law. The Solidarity Clause, and the international assistance it would have compelled, offered a direct alternative to those problematic unilateral actions.

The use of the Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM) to distribute resources to Member States located along the migration route provides something of a counterargument to the foregoing examples. While the CPM is undoubtedly a success story in terms of the EU's crisis management capacities, it must be remembered that this mechanism relies on voluntary contributions. Studying the Commission's data on CPM requests reveals some shortcomings in terms of non-, partial, or slow fulfillment of key resources.⁵

These examples strongly hint at a capacities-practice gap, and they thus prompt a question: What factors lead to the non-use of seemingly well-tailored capacities during transboundary crisis responses? Answers remain incomplete and somewhat speculative, but I think a few factors can be identified.

The complicating factors

I would be remiss if I did not mention the general difficulty of designing transboundary crisis management tools. Effective crisis management on the (sub-)national level is difficult enough; transboundary crises are yet more complex *and* entail an international collective action problem. Figuring out which types of capacities Member States are willing to use and which of those will prove effective is thus no small feat. Undoubtedly, successful public governance in this area will require experimentation and revision. Unfortunately, this process is complicated by other factors.

Study of the migration crisis suggests that redistribution remains a major stumbling block for the EU's management of transboundary crises.⁶ The redistribution dilemma is clearly visible in the failed implementation of the refugee relocation quotas agreed to in September 2015. Non-use of the Temporary Protection Directive, which involves a refugee redistribution mechanism, is also suggestive of a strong intent on the part of some Member States to avoid redistribution of the crisis response burden.

In the short-term, the redistribution dilemma may mean that EU crisis management plans which entail redistributive actions but lack automatic triggers (e.g. the Temporary Protection Directive) are unlikely to be used. Longer-term, I think it is clear that the realization of more effective transboundary crisis management in the EU is going to require stepping over this redistribution obstacle. But how does one get national governments to practice diffuse reciprocity⁷ amidst a rise in nationalist and Eurosceptic politics in many Member States?

To be sure, the rise of nationalist parties (often of the right-wing and Eurosceptic variety) appears to be a key complicating factor in transboundary crisis management in the EU. The migration crisis clearly exhibits the responsiveness of national policymakers to electorally successful populist parties, even

⁵ See: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5958_en.htm; and http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/Refugee_Crisis/EUCPM_Support_en.pdf.

⁶ Strong resistance among many EU Member States to even minor debt relief for Greece, despite the IMF's repeated calls for it, provides additional supporting evidence.

⁷ Whereby national governments are willing to make 'uncompensated sacrifices' (to borrow Scharpf's term) to help resolve transboundary crises to which they are unexposed. They would do so with the knowledge that tying off such crises – rather than letting them linger unresolved – carries broad benefits and with the expectation of receiving help in future crises to which they are exposed.

when the latter advocate policies that contravene established EU values. In line with postfunctionalist works in the EU integration literature, the question then becomes: How can the EU actually put into practice and further develop its crisis management capacities in this increasingly constraining political environment? Conversely, if the EU hesitates and fails to demonstrate the added value it can bring to transboundary crisis responses, what does that scenario herald for the future? Is the Commission willing to take a more aggressive approach to proposing activation of applicable EU crisis tools in this political environment? Or, does it see such actions as risking an implosion of the EU and accordingly hesitate?

At least with regard to the Balkans migration route crisis, the answer appears to have been hesitation. The result was heavily constrained cooperation along least-common-denominator lines. This led to violations of established EU values and generally uninspiring results that are unlikely to make future crisis cooperation more appetizing. My impression is that this is a broader trend: least-common-denominator response strategies that are politically palatable in the short-term but run counter to the EU's stated values and/or prove ineffective on a longer time-frame.

Summing up

So, as I see it, the fundamental problem to be extrapolated from this discussion of transboundary crisis governance is the following: National leaders, assuming they want to remain electorally relevant, must show they can help their citizens to cope with contemporary problems, including transboundary crises. The oft-stated logic is that doing so requires international cooperation. What this reasoning misses, or at least underemphasizes, is the remarkable ability of national leaders to muddle their way through such crises, engaging in just enough international cooperation to prevent catastrophe and, if need be, paying sufficient homage to the positions of populist parties along the way.⁸ But this course of action does not constitute successful public governance; often it prompts the aforementioned least-common-denominator policies or even collective races to the bottom (as can be seen now with border control policies in the EU). The key governance question is thus how to avoid this trap and promote more robust cooperation among Member States in the current political climate.

I do not have the solution, but I do have a heretical proposition: While the adoption of transboundary crisis response strategies that are obviously flawed (from an effectiveness and/or value-continuity perspective) but politically palatable may be seen as a necessary evil given the recent sea change in EU politics, it is misguided. That is because, somewhat paradoxically, I think this political environment has resulted in large part from previous failures to successfully govern transnational issues that required robust cooperation. EU Member States have many of the tools needed to escape from this vicious chicken-and-egg circle; unfortunately, my hypothesis is that in the short-term we are likely to witness more 'muddling through'.

⁸ In other words, the robustness and form of cooperation matter more than its basic existence.

Draft Notes on Successful Governance Research: Why We Must Study Institutions

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Uncovering the secrets of success

This ERC project aims to uncover the secrets of successful governance. The underlying premise is that academics have focused too much on governmental and policy failures; they have paid not nearly enough attention to explaining governance successes. By shifting the focus, the proposal asserts, we can learn how to make governance more successful.

In this memo, I offer three sets of comments that may help to move this ambitious project forward. First, I submit an alternative conceptualization of successful governance. Second, I briefly touch upon the state of the art with regard to success and failure theories. Third, I propose to grant institutions a much more prominent place in the research design. I conclude with some – admittedly fragmented and mostly unsubstantiated – ideas for the agenda of this research project.

Conceptualizing success in governance

What is successful governance? When does governance fail? Questions about success and failure are, of course, inherently normative. They relate to shared expectations and perceived performances. One of the enduring questions in political science is why citizens rail against policies that appear to work just fine and vote against politicians that clearly favor policies that will hurt those who vote for them. Why do citizens perceive failure (or fail to recognize success) even when the evidence seems self-evident?

To study success, the project team must adopt a clear position on success and failure. The project team can offer its own definition of success and failure, together with indicators and measurement strategies. Or it can adopt the outcome of the social construction process as the indicator of success: if citizens collectively judge a policy or practice to be a success, that's what you seek to explain. My preference is the former; the project seems to opt for the latter.

The project conceives of success in terms of performance, legitimacy, and endurance. Performance and legitimacy are both defined as the outcomes of social construction processes.¹ Indeed, the project proposal seems most interested in describing and explaining the social construction process that results in a (joint) verdict whether a policy or action should be considered a success or failure. The team does not offer its own definition of success. Governance is successful if the public and the

¹ As a side note, it is not clear how performance is different from success here. How, in turn, is legitimacy different from perceived performance?

political arena deem it so. In other words, Donald Trump's executive orders must be considered successful until they are not.

If this really is the premise underlying the project (it may not be), I would argue that much work has already been done on this particular set of questions (Bovens and 't Hart, 1996; Lipset and Schneider, 1987; Nye, Zelikow and King, 1997; Stimson, 2004). I am not sure what this project might add to these research findings (other than retelling a familiar story in terms of success).

The team also takes "endurance" as an indicator of success. From a social construction process, this does not make sense. After all, one person's enduring success is another person's enduring source of frustration. If you are serious about the "people's will", endurance should not be relevant. And if endurance is so important, why stress the importance of reforms?

I would suggest a slightly different definition of success: Government is successful when it acts legally, effectively, efficiently and legitimately. This definition does two things. It gets rid of "endurance" and it accepts that there is an objective dimension to performance. This objective dimension holds government against its promises to deliver certain goals at certain costs. It also considers whether government stays within legal limits. This definition also recognizes that there is a subjective dimension of success that needs to be taken into account: government performance must be legitimate, and legitimacy must be earned.

Explaining success (and failure)

This project also seeks to *explain* success. In my proposed perspective on governance success, a theory of successful governance would seek to both explain variance in performance (demonstrated capacity to deliver) and variance in public and political support for both the process of delivery and the output of that process (which is more than political salesmanship).

It strikes me that we know quite a bit when it comes to explaining success defined this way. As suggested above, there is lots of research on the social construction processes that lead to joint verdicts. There is even more research on performance variance. If we combine Chris Hood's (1976) model of perfect administration (success) with the long list of failure factors (see f.i. Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973; Lipsky, 1980; Kaufman, 1960; Patashnik, 2008), we come a long way in explaining both success and failure. The formula for successful governance would include smart policy-making, sufficient funds, decisive leadership, a listening ear ("responsive government") and a careful coordination of networks; the absence of these factors then explains governance failure.

In short, I submit that we have cracked the "performativity nut". The standards of living in the Western world – higher than ever before – support the claim that sound governance along these lines produces results. Research on less fortunate countries typically unearths many failure factors noted in the literature and very few of those success factors. The team can spend its time offering further verifications of what almost appears a truism in public administration research, but that seems a waste of resources to me.

A much more interesting question, I think, pertains to the *conditions* under which successful governance can arise. If we agree on the "secrets of successful governance", the question becomes

why some governments are more successful than others. This brings us to the importance of “meta governance” or the role of institutions.

Intriguingly, the ERC proposal starts off with noting that “thriving societies are governed through public institutions”. The project talks about “meta-governance”, which in my mind relates us back to the role of institutions. But somehow this major premise seems to disappear as the project proposal unfolds.

Thinking about institutions

Institutions are among the most critical and yet undervalued human innovations spurring societal development. Societies that have (a certain type of) institutions flourish, societies that don’t – or don’t take care of them – wither.

I would suggest the project team tests the often-heard hypothesis that Institutions create the “meta environment” in which government can deliver on its promises. Academics agree that institutions channel expectations, set limits, capture success formulas, and provide scripts for understanding and assessing political and administrative behavior (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; March and Olsen, 1989; Wilson, 1989). They agree, in other words, that institutions are key to government performance. Well-functioning institutions enable organizational “craftwork” and protect against political opportunism (Selznick, 1957).

While there is widespread agreement on the importance of institutions, we still cannot answer very basic questions about institutions with empirical research findings. I identify three questions that deserve much more attention than they currently beget:

- 1) Are institutions created or the product of evolutionary forces?

Institutions must serve a societal function to grow, persist and bear fruit (Wilson, 2004). It is interesting to consider the balance (if there is one) between “design” and “random” processes shaping institutionalization. My hypothesis is that institutionalization is the resultant of trial and error, norm emergence, embedding and protecting norms, adapting them when necessary (see Boin and Christensen, 2008 for a theoretical model). Leadership plays a key role in guiding these processes, I think. But empirical research is necessary to validate these claims.

- 2) How to maintain and protect institutions against erosion?

The demise of institutions has been identified as a key force of societal decline (Diamond, 2011). But if institutions are so beneficial to a society, why do they erode? This is now perhaps the most urgent question for us to address. As we are witnessing the diminishing legitimacy and even capture of key institutions, we must ask how this is possible. There are many theories addressing this question, but empirical work on the relation between institutional erosion and societal demise remains wanting.

- 3) How to adapt institutions?

The idea that institutions may erode and fall apart is widely accepted. The prescribed antidote is remarkably similar: institutions must adapt, preferably *before* they are forced to do so (Selznick, 1957; Ansell, Boin and Farjoun, 2015). The logic is intuitively appealing: dynamic environments will

disturb the balance between societal expectations and institutional performance (see Boin and 't Hart, 2000 for a model). An institution will have to change if it is to stay 'in tune' with its key audiences. From this notion follows the importance of Institutional adaptation, institutional resilience and institutional crisis management.

But does adaptation really protect institutions from the forces of fragmentation?

There is, in fact, surprisingly little empirical evidence for the assertion that timely adaptation furthers the survival of institutions (Boin et al, 2017). This project could add to that empirical base and put these assertions to the test.

Other ideas for the research agenda

- Study the literature on decline (of organizations, nations and empires) to formulate more precise hypotheses on the relation between types of institutions and governance performance.
- Select cases of institutional erosion and institutional resilience in comparable settings; see how these institutional characteristics affected government performance in policy sectors.
- Select success cases (highly reliable policy performance) and study if and how institutions enabled that success (through process tracing).
- Select "policy theories" that remain resistant to change (successful on your subjective dimension) even if they are obviously non-performing on an objective dimension (the Dutch school system, TBS).
- Select "policy theories" that must be preserved (from a normative perspective on "good governance") but suffer from erosion (quality newspapers, trias politica).
- Study cases where institutions stand in the way of opportunistic political decisions.

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Research note: Reputation and Success in Governance

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**Research note written in preparation to the Successful Public Governance workshop
Utrecht, 1-3 March 2017**

This research note seeks to contribute to the discussions related to the second strand of research identified in the ERC project “Success in Public Governance: Assessing and explaining how public problems are sometimes addressed remarkably effectively”. This strand highlights the **study of high-performing and highly reputed public agencies**. We welcome the attention that is given in the project to the analysis of the role that reputational considerations play in the ‘black box’ of organizational processes (t’Hart 2016). In addition and in particular, we applaud the intention to trace the social construction of performance and legitimacy of organizations in different stakeholders audiences (t’Hart 2016:4), which is a welcoming addition much of the work on bureaucratic reputation in political science studies that take a positivist approach. This attention reflects core gaps in the literature recently identified within the Bureaucratic Reputation framework. Such gaps include research on a wider repertoire of endogenous factors affecting agencies ‘reputation behavior’ (Salomonsen, Frandsen and Johansen 2015), moving beyond understanding such behavior as merely calculations on whether or not to respond to reputational threats based upon their understanding of their distinct reputation (Maor 2015: 25) as well as an audience based approach (Maor 2016:82). In the following paragraphs, we discuss elements that might fuel the discussion on the role of reputation for public organizations. We will also relate to our own project on Comparative Research on Reputation in Government (RepGov) to illustrate potential synergies to the Success in Public Governance.

First, we feel that the distinction between certain concepts that are closely related, though different in important respects, should be kept in mind when addressing the construction of a reputation. For understandable reasons, the ERC proposal does not elaborate on the **conceptual distinction between “reputation” and “legitimacy”** (or other related concepts such as “reliability”). Bureaucratic reputation scholars highlight the unique capacities of public organizations (Carpenter and Krause 2012). In other words, a reputation calls into play a certain organizational trait that differentiates the organization. This is a clear difference with the concept of legitimacy which points at an organization’s fit or similarity with established norms and expectations (rather than its dissimilarities as a political asset). This conceptual distinction is important when trying to make sense of the social construction of reputations. Do public organizations perceive reputation management as an instrument to achieve uniqueness or as recognition for conforming to certain expectations and norms in the environment in order to increase legitimacy? Is reputation seen to contribute to legitimacy or vice versa? Or are other mechanisms at play? As suggested by Gilad and Yogeve agency behavior is not only driven by a strive to reach a unique reputation, but also in some instances driven by avoiding and managing blame (2012:336; cf. also Hood 2011). Whereas the

former has been suggested by Bureaucratic Reputation Theory to ensure agency autonomy, we still need research that investigates how these different agency behaviors are related not only to each other, but as importantly to agency autonomy. Are both types of behaviors equally effective in preventing political sanctions including reductions in autonomy when agencies are facing reputational threats? The Rep Gov project will begin to address this question through process tracing methods in case studies of agencies facing severe reputational threats. Related to this is the question of how to conceptualize reputation management. The political science approach to reputation tends to see reputation management as a rational-strategic act. Yet it could be the case that reputation management is less strategic in practice, for instance when certain communication responses are elaborated in standard operating procedures, when public organizations communicate about their performance without a specific unique trait in mind that should be protected, or that they ‘simply’ adapt and react to a media pressure.

Second, existing conceptualizations of the dimensions of agencies reputation needs further development. Daniel Carpenter distinguishes between different reputational dimensions (performative, technical, procedural and moral) that form different aspects of an organizational reputation. These different dimensions, he argues, will be stressed to different extents according to the stakeholder audience. In the RepGov-project we elaborated on this insight by adapting Carpenter’s categorization (which was very much focused on regulatory agencies) to a broader set of agencies. We distinguish between the technical/input dimension, processual dimension, performative/output dimension, moral dimension, and procedural dimension (Boon, Salomonsen and Verhoest 2016). We expect that public organizations will not only stress different dimensions depending on the stakeholder audience, but also that the primary task and institutional design of organizations will matter in terms of how they manage their reputation. For example, it can be argued that reputation (as an intangible asset) is potentially more important for organizations that perform tasks with less measurable processes and outputs/outcomes, in order to signal their performance to different stakeholders. This in contrast to agencies that perform tasks with measurable outputs and processes, which might have less need to invest in reputation as an intangible asset. On the other hand, performing tasks with tangible processes or outputs might actually help to establish a reputation (particularly a processual or performative reputation). More research is needed to untangle this nexus between reputation management and task environment, a gap which the Rep Gov project is designed to address.

Third, the ERC project proposes a two-dimensional assessment of the instrumental dimension of performance and the affective dimension of legitimacy. This makes an important point that objective performance is different from subjective performance (Andersen Boesen and Pedersen 2016). However, whereas this in relation to the concept of performance relates to the degree of inherent subjectivity assessing the performance requires, in relation to reputation theory this means that stakeholders do not observe ‘the reality’ of the organization, regardless the type of performance assessed, but rather an uncertain image (Carpenter and Krause 2012). As, the ERC project rightfully points out is the relation between objective and subjective performance not straightforward, amongst others because there is **no shared normative (and informational) basis upon which different stakeholders assess organizational performance**. This leaves some leeway for organizations to strategically participate in the construction of their reputation. Further this recognition opens up a discussion that is a crucial yet ill-studied part of bureaucratic reputation

theory: (a) how stakeholders construct organizational reputations differently (Maor 2015); (b) how public organizations prioritize between stakeholders (that vary in their expectations towards the organization) in managing their reputation; (c) the nature of the relationship between reputation and ‘actual’ performance.

In addition, we call attention to one stakeholder group to whom organizations are very likely to invest in good perception of their effectiveness, namely the directly responsible political principals. In the parliamentary setting in which European agencies operate, the Ministers of the parent ministries are highly relevant actors with a direct influence on organizational budgets and tasks. The role of reputation management in politico-administrative relations is potentially highly relevant as an instrument of accountability (the role of politics and accountability is not stressed in the ERC project as is). Again, one can expect the task environment of organizations to play an important role, not only in terms of being able to stress different reputational dimensions to different extents, but also in terms of the clientele and interest groups that might have an additional influence as counterweight to the political principal, whom organizations must take into account in their “reputational calculus”. This audience-based approach has thus far been largely missing in political science studies of reputation management, and will also form an important part of our RepGov project.

Fourth, organizations not only define and prioritize stakeholder audiences, they also take **strategies to manage their reputations**. There are many strategies one could imagine for agencies to manage their reputations. Reputations can be established by superior track records, by shadowing practices from or affiliating with agencies with a strong reputation; and by appointing agency heads who enjoy strong reputations. Several studies have looked at how organizations make sense of, and strategically communicate in, media coverage. The media are rapidly gaining power as informal forums for political accountability (that serve as the most important source of information about government performance. The media are of paramount importance to constructing or defending one’s reputation (Boon, Salomonsen and Verhoest 2017). This renders strategic communication a vital instrument for reputation-conscious agencies (Maor, Gilad and Bloom 2013; Gilad, Maor and Bloom 2015). In the RepGov project we seek to contribute to existing scholarship that operationalizes “reputational threats” and “strategic communication” by looking at negative media coverage and the content of organizational reactions in the media. While previous bureaucratic reputation scholarship has been rich in providing agency-specific examples of agency reactions to reputational threats for reputation sensitive agencies, the field lacks tests of external validity. Examining agency responses to negative media coverage allows for comparisons between agencies that vary in tasks, formal autonomy and so forth. Yet we also select cases for in-depth analyses of the other ways/strategies through which agencies respond to situations in which their reputations are threatened (which, again, is likely to be mediated by the task environment in which agencies operate).

Fifth, we applaud that the ERC project addresses the **societal relevance** of this type of research on the ‘black box’ of government decision-making. We feel that reputation theories in particular have produced an impressive body of research of high intellectual quality, that increased academic understanding of how bureaucracies work. Yet in order to make these projects more performative, legitimate and enduring themselves, we feel that a discussion on the broader societal and

practitioner impact could be interesting. A central aspect in relation to this is the question of whether a good reputation is to be perceived as a success per se, and if so, in the eyes of which audience(s)? Another aspect is whether agency autonomy is to be assessed as a (successful) output per se? The answers to those questions would not only be contingent upon contextual factors including the polity in which agencies are embedded, the nature of their task etc. They would also be contingent upon the role of agencies per se and the degree to which agency autonomy leads to agency drift or agency responsiveness in relation to the goals set and outcomes desired by their political principals. Further reflections upon whether agencies selectively pursue of certain dimensions of their reputation, e.g. the performative dimension potentially neglect their awareness of important values in most democratic societies including equity, transparency, due process etc. which are values reflected in the moral and procedural dimension of their reputation would also be of relevance, when assessing the degree of ‘success’ in relation to reputation in public organizations. This in turn would inform further theorizing on how to conceptualize ‘effective institution-building leadership’ (t’Hart 2016:8), under which conditions such leadership will be effective in terms of creating and/or protecting organizational reputations as well whether this effectiveness leads to success in the sense of ensuring legitimacy – and the degree to which this is contingent upon the delivery of desirable outcomes (t’Hart 2016:4)

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“Decoding” government effectiveness with the Public Impact Fundamentals

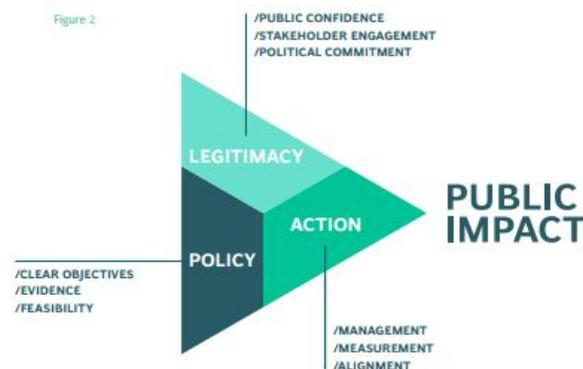
Danny Buerkli, Centre for Public Impact
February 2017

The touchstone for any government should be the results it achieves for its citizens. While there are many explanations for the historic emergence of states, many would agree that effective governments today are defined by their ability to provide safety, prosperity and liberty to the individuals inside their territory.

Despite this consensus, the question of *how* governments produce those results has not received much attention. Policymakers and practitioners do not have many empirically robust, yet parsimonious models through which to understand why some policies achieve their objectives, while others fail.

Over the past year and in close alignment with our academic advisory group¹ we reviewed more than 150 relevant journal articles, analyzed 200 public policy case studies and conducted numerous interviews with practitioners and experts around the world. The result of this research effort are the “Public Impact Fundamentals”, a framework that seeks to explain the constituent components of impact in government.

The Fundamentals model posits that any successful government initiative needs three factors: a well-designed **policy**, sufficient **legitimacy** and an **action** mechanism to translate that policy into real world effect. Each of the Fundamentals defined as the aggregate of three variables. Policy consists of *clear objectives*, *evidence* and *feasibility*. Legitimacy is composed of *public confidence*, *stakeholder engagement* and *political commitment*. Action consists of *management*, *measurement*, and *alignment*.



¹ The members of the academic advisory group are Helmuth Anheier (Hertie School of Governance), Gary Banks (ANZSOG), Gwyn Bevan (LSE), William Eimicke (Columbia), Francis Fukuyama (Stanford), Paul 't Hart (Utrecht University), Kye-Woo Lee (KDI School), Mark Moore (Harvard), Kenneth Tan (Lee Kuan Yew School) and Ngairé Woods (Oxford).

A highly evidence-based policy, for example, coupled with an excellent action mechanism would score well on those two dimensions, but will not achieve its intended objective if it lacks legitimacy. Similarly, a government initiative which does enjoy legitimacy and has a well-developed action mechanism will not deliver its intended outcomes if the policy is ill-conceived.

The framework makes no normative claims and is agnostic about the outcome that a policy seeks to achieve. The model implies that an improvement on any of the nine variables, *ceteris paribus*, improve the odds of a government initiative achieving whichever outcome it sought to achieve. We do not suggest any hierarchy or sequence between the Fundamentals. The pathways to successful government action are complex and we would expect many interaction effects between the variables.

Our aim was to develop a framework which is both empirically valid as well as practically useful. The Fundamentals are meant to provide practitioners in government a robust, yet intuitive heuristic which they may be able to use to guide their own thinking and actions.

Our initial quantitative analysis almost 300 case studies against the Fundamentals framework suggests that the model is indeed able to predict success or failure with a high degree of accuracy. This strengthens the hypothesis that the nine variables are individually necessary and collectively sufficient to create public impact.

We also partnered with a team of researchers from the Hertie School of Governance to empirically test the Public Impact Fundamentals against independently assessed case studies. The test examined the relationship between good performance on each of the elements and the likelihood of public impact. As expected the group's analysis identified positive correlations between better performance in the elements and increased public impact.

We see three principal ways in which practitioners can use this type of framework. In ex-post evaluations the Fundamentals can help explain why a given policy or initiative was successful in achieving its objectives or not. The model can also be used to assess the relative likelihood of success for competing policy options. Finally the Fundamentals provide practitioners a structured way to understand whether a specific policy under examination is likely to succeed in achieving its objectives and what they might be able to do to improve the odds of success.

Practitioners can also draw on the almost 300 case studies which have been used to develop and test the framework and which are all available in the "Public Impact Observatory"², a repository of public policy case studies. The Observatory is freely available online and is searchable by geography, policy area as well as performance on the nine variables of the Fundamentals model.

² <https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/observatory/>

While we believe the framework to be robust, much work of course remains to be done. Our research agenda includes further inquiry into the predictive capabilities of the model, a more robust operationalization of the nine variables, a better understanding of the complex interaction effects between the nine variables and the three Fundamentals and an exploration of the analytical leverage the framework provides when looking at polities rather than single policies.

*This piece is based on the Public Impact Fundamentals report available here:
<https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/fundamentals/>*

The Centre for Public Impact (CPI) is a not-for-profit foundation established by The Boston Consulting Group. We work with governments and their partners around the world to improve their effectiveness.

Madalina Busuioc (University of Exeter), Think piece for ERC Successful Public Governance (SPG), 1-3 March 2017, USBO

It strikes me that there is a lot of potential for synergies between the Successful Public Governance project and my 5-year ERC project 'Reputation Matters in the Regulatory State', which starts in June 2017. My project focuses on the role of reputation in relation to two key themes of regulatory governance: independence and accountability, in the context of the European regulatory state, with a focus on public sector agencies. The aim project is: 1) to empirically study the link between regulatory insulation and credibility – how variations in levels of regulatory independence impact upon audience perceptions of regulatory credibility (a test of and challenge to the 'credibility thesis') with implications for the regulatory state's legitimising credentials; 2) to study and theorise how reputational considerations shape the accountability behaviour of account-givers and account-holders and their interactions. How does the reputational investment of actors *and* forums in accountability (i.e., whether the specific accountability relation is of reputational consequence for the respective actor and forum) impact upon the practice of accountability? The project will study the multi-faceted legitimation profile of agencies and their account-holders and implications thereof for their accountability interactions. There seem to be some potentially very productive parallels between our two projects with respect to exploring the links between accountability (forum judgement) and socio-political legitimation processes of public organisations.

We are further working on a separate project together with Matt Wood (Sheffield) and Sjors Overman (Utrecht) on 'Reputation, expectations and stakeholder engagement in EU agencies', which aims to develop and validate a quantitative measure of reputation for public sector organisations. The broader aim is to study and map the differentiated responses across audiences to agency efforts and implications thereof in terms of legitimation and political authority. I very much look forward to exploring possible synergies during the workshop, in terms of approach but also potentially, specific case studies.

A very careful and well-justified design, a couple specific questions/general points for discussion came to mind upon reading the B2:

- How do we know governance success when we see it? In other words, how will the project identify cases of success— and success from whose perspective? As acknowledged by the project, one can imagine that success would be ‘in the eye of the beholder’ and assessments would vary across different groups i.e., regulatees, public, political actors, professional organisations etc. Whose assessment counts? Can we identify unambiguous cases of governance success? And also, using the project terminology, how can we empirically differentiate ‘farce’ from ‘success’ cases- i.e., the organisation is perceived as legitimate despite a sub-optimal record of performance (perhaps due to astute communication strategies; performance shortcomings not observable/visible to external actors)?
- To what extent is a ‘success’ frame different from/has higher theoretical and analytical purchase compared to a reputation-based (Carpenter 2001; 2010) approach? In other words, what were the perceived benefits of a success framing as opposed of a reputational one for the aims of the project? To what extent would we expect to see different mechanisms at play? The question arises because key elements of a reputation approach pervade the three strands that the project sets out to combine (p.3): e.g. strand 2 is explicitly a reputational approach; strand 1 refers to a performative aspect but also to “forming and maintaining coalitions of actors” and how “success needs to be subjectively experienced and actively communicated” – consistent with Carpenter’s emphasis on “coalitions of esteem” and the key role of audiences and meeting audience expectations as well as actively communicating and attempting to shape these expectations; strand 3 (networks) is also a recurring theme within reputational approaches with their emphasis on the role of audience networks but also explicit work on reputation and public service networks (e.g. Moynihan 2012).

Moreover, the manner in which success is conceptualised in the project is compatible with reputational understandings: a dimension of performance *and* an affective dimension /'logic of appropriateness'- p.4. Reputational approaches would similarly emphasise (unique) capacity/competence *and* which is similarly embedded within audience networks and perceptions thereof, in light of audience expectations.

- The notions of meta-governance (a 'systemic' view of governance) as well as the study of the potential asymmetries/disconnect between the two dimensions of success seem particularly interesting courses of investigation. Similarly, the study of the social construction of legitimacy (drawing on group dynamics and cognitive insights) will fill important gaps in terms of how different audiences or communities 'receive'/respond to/perceive organisational performance (as well as to the actor's active communications to shape perceptions thereof) and the multi-level factors that shape these assessments (ranging from lower level individual factors, audience-specific factors to more meta-level group/network dynamics). This relates closely also to our project (with Sjors and Matt), which focuses on audience response/perceptions of agency reputation and we aim to zoom in on stakeholder- group- level mechanisms i.e., differentiated perceptions of performance across stakeholder groups in light of their specific expectations.
- When assessing legitimacy (e.g. of an agency, network) how will SPG establish which audiences matter for the legitimation of the specific governance actor? In other words, how does one ascertain what relative importance to assign to each of the audiences/stakeholders of an organisation and to their differentiated assessments of organisational performance in terms of impact for overall success? E.g. A low legitimation 'score' with some audiences might be irrelevant because these are not necessarily 'who matters'? Does measuring legitimacy not require a way to assign relative importance to audiences in terms of the extent to which they are pertinent for legitimation processes of specific organisations? E.g. project 4- are the audience/stakeholder survey results aggregated and how; are the

scores weighted and how would one determine the relative salience of different groups? Also, are inter-audiences dynamics studied here?

A Preliminary Public Policy Success Research Agenda

SPG Workshop, Utrecht 1-3 March 2017

Mallory E. Compton

The aim of this research programme is to conceptualize, identify, and explain 'success' in public governance. This involves thick description, theoretical innovation, valid causal inference, and practical recommendations to improve governance success. The importance of the scientific study of success in any of these manifestations of social coordination should be self-evident—they are the basis of democratic civilization. The importance of studying success from a general or universal perspective, however, merits some deliberation. In this memo, I consider this decision to seek a general theory of success and I offer some thoughts on how (my) research design can further this goal.

A fundamental step in this project is to define the boundary conditions for theoretical concepts and the scope conditions for (eventual) empirical inferences. Both conditions require a definition of both public governance and success. Public governance could be conceptualized as any cooperative venture intended to effect societal outcomes. Such initiatives include leadership, collaboration, organizations, networks, public policy, as well as informal institutions of civil society, or the transactions and interactions between these entities (e.g. Fukuyama 2016). Within the PSG research agenda, however, 'public governance' is deconstructed into a trinity of institutional forms: public organizations, networks, and public policies. This boundary has already been set. Our research questions are thus bounded to these units and their interdependencies, requiring that 'success' be conceived of at analogous levels.

Conceptualizing this institutional success is a core component of this research project, which is to say that the term cannot be succinctly defined, yet. Taking previous work (e.g. Bovens et al. 2006) as a starting point, however, it is proposed in the PSG proposal that success of governance institutions is multidimensional in function (incorporating performance and legitimacy), and entails a temporal dimension. The following step will be to articulate a mechanistic causal theory of these outcomes (performance, legitimacy, and endurance) across forms of governance institution.

This is both an opportunity and a challenge. Bridging theory and extant findings from these (three) separate literatures opens the door for a unified theory of (successful) public governance, and the value such casual understanding can provide. The challenge, however, is to generalize a definition and causal explanation of success to this heterogeneous set of institutions without sacrificing the complexity

and contextualization necessary for substantive inference. An academic search for parsimonious general theory of governance success and mechanistic causal explanation should be balanced by a commitment to developing tractable implications for success in the real world.

Keeping this balance in mind, I now offer some preliminary ideas on a public policy research agenda. To be of any value to the actual practice of governance, the findings from my work should be generalizable not only across public policy domains and contexts, but should also speak to the design or choice of policy institution, beyond description and identification of success. To achieve the first aim, theory building (and testing) must be sensitive to specific policy types. 'Policies determine politics' (Lowi 1972) and what works in one policy domain may not function well in another, due to the unique constellations of interested parties and incentive structures. Towards the second aim, theory building and testing must be specific about the causal mechanisms at work. Functional, intentional, probabilistic, or covering law explanations fall short in providing knowledge of *how* causes lead to effects. Identifying empirical regularities between outcomes and their antecedents is important, but validating causal paths is critical.

Further, to ensure that explanation is credible and valid across a diversity of institutional, political, and social contexts, theory of these mechanisms linking causes to effects (success) should be contextually bounded. In other words, 'credible causal explanation can occur if and only if [we] are attentive to the interaction between causal mechanisms and context' (Falleti and Lynch 2009). More concretely, relevant contextual dimensions may include national political structure and culture, sectoral traditions and institutions, situational contingencies and trends, leadership, and/or domain or geographical dependencies (Bovens et al. 2006).

To summarize, a useful theory of *success in public policy* should articulate causal mechanisms leading from cause to outcomes (performance, legitimacy, and endurance), and should specify how these mechanisms are conditional on both policy domain/type and context. Given that an explanation of policy success will have these characteristics, how then do I propose to test the theory? I see this unfolding in four stages. First, I will 'dig into' strategically selected cases to learn about and draw insight from (successful) policy processes. The value of exploratory case study lies in identifying (1) anomalies that current theories struggle to accommodate and (2) plausible causal variables (Geddes 2003). At this stage, I'll be interested in asking what it is that successful public policies processes do. Thus, selecting exploratory case studies on the value of the dependent variable is important. I'll come back to this point in a moment.

The second stage of this design will be to reconsider existing theory of policy success and derive hypotheses informed by extant literature and the first exploratory stage. My goal of mechanistic explanation requires testing of the causal pathways, for

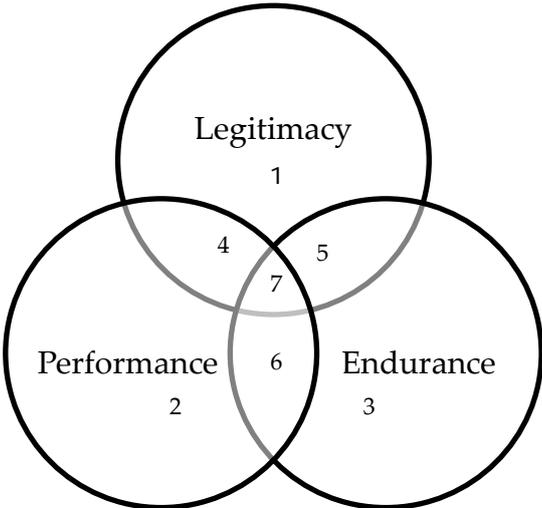
which qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) is well suited. This brings me to the third stage of the design, in which I will test my theory of the causes-of-effects (mechanisms) across a range of contexts. Key to valid inference in this stage is a sample of cases that are distinct from the cases used to inform and develop theory. Assuming all goes well to this stage, and I can confirm my hypothesized mechanisms, the fourth stage of my research will entail a large-N quantitative methodology. Here, I'll be looking for effects-of-causes, and I'll be concerned with estimated the magnitude of effects of different causes on success outcomes. My goal in this final stage is to generalize the findings derived from in-depth qualitative analysis to a broader population.

This process is designed to (1) describe and learn about public policy success, (3) develop a theory of public policy success, (2) test the mechanisms, and then (4) generalize the findings to a broader population of cases. You might reasonably be wondering, after my description of this generic research design, what form my research question might actually take. To this, I will say that I am interested in phenomena such as electoral institutions, trust, reciprocity, representative bureaucratic functions, interactions between and within minority or vulnerable clientele groups, and social capital. These are the concepts I intend to focus on in explaining success, but because the first stage in this design is intended to identify new and unexpected theoretical causes, which I have not or cannot specify at present, I refrain from saying anything more specific than this.

My intent with this approach is to generate theoretical implications that can be leveraged for a theory of *success in public governance* as well as empirical implications with value to policy makers. There are, of course, countless decisions yet to be made in this process, any of which are pivotal in determining the validity and value of my conclusions. These will need to be addressed, eventually, but the concern first and foremost on my mind at present is a complete concept of the dependent variable. As I've indicated, valid theory testing requires a sample not be selected on the value of the dependent variable. In other words, I cannot test the causes of success with a sample of exclusively successful cases. Selecting strategic cases of success, however, *is* important in the first exploratory case studies I propose. How do I choose cases of success? I will briefly lay bare my preliminary thinking on this question.

To select strategic cases of the dependent variable—success—I need to determine the population, or set, of policy successes. If I conceptualize success as the confluence of legitimacy, performance, and endurance, I propose that a typology of (public policy) success could be defined by the simultaneity of these (3) criteria. The diagram below represents this proposition. A policy with limited success could embody one or all, or none, of these characteristics. An informative selection of cases for exploration, then, might be drawn from across this set, labeled 1 through 7. The ideal case of 'success' would be the coexistence of all three outcomes: a legitimate, performing, and enduring public policy (labeled 7).

A few questions immediately arise. If my goal is to generate findings of relevance to the design or practice of public policy, then it is important to examine cases which *could* have been successful but were not, or cases that were successful on one dimension but not others. Herein lays a question and a challenge. Is it important to consider cases of *potential* success, as well as cases of *realized* success? Should I try to learn from cases that might have potential for legitimacy or performance but for some reason were *not* implemented? This broadens the population of potential cases of success to include *policy proposals* as well as *implemented policies*.



Answering these questions (and others) is necessary before I can actually implement this design and begin the process of learning about success in public policy and contributing to a general theory of success in governance institutions. My intent in this memo has been to describe my general approach and justification, and to raise some concerns with which I am occupied at present. As should be apparent by now, much of this proposed agenda remains to be decided and any of it is subject to revision.

About SPLISS

SPLISS (Sports Policy factors Leading to International Sporting Success) is an international network of research cooperation that coordinates, develops and shares expertise in innovative high performance sport policy research in cooperation with policy makers, National Olympic Committees (NOCs), international (sport) organisations, and researchers worldwide. Since 2002, it has developed a widely recognised international network in over 20 countries, involving more than 50 local researchers and over 30 policy makers in every country.

SPLISS deals with the strategic policy planning process that underpins the development of successful national elite sport development systems. Drawing on various international competitiveness studies, it examines how nations develop and implement policies that are based on the critical success factors that may lead to success and to a competitive advantage in elite sport.

Methodological characteristics

This project uses of *mixed methods research* as a potential solution for reducing problems relating to the comparability of international data and the objective evaluation and measurement of policies in general and of elite sport policies in particular. Drawing its influences from economic competitiveness measurements, the SPLISS methods are based on four essential features that attempted to address these issues:

- (1) The development of a theoretical model (see appendix) of success determinants in elite sport with the identification of 9 pillars, 96 critical success factors and 750 sub-factors that are used for international comparison; nine pillars are situated at three levels:
 - Inputs are reflected in Pillar 1, as the financial support for sport and elite sport.
 - Throughputs are the processes (“what” is invested and “how” it is used) in elite sport policies, which may lead to increasing success in international sport competitions.
 - Outputs is the actual performance of nations in elite sport competitions. There are various methods by which the outputs of an elite athlete production system can be measured, such as: the number of medals won during the Olympic Games or other events: top six or eight places; the relative success (e.g., controlling for population, wealth) or even the number of participants qualifying to take part. All of these methods appear to correlate significantly ($r_s > 0.8$) (De Bosscher et al., 2007).
 - Outcomes are not included yet in the SPLISS measurement
- (2) The development of composit indicators (a scoring system) to measure competitiveness of nations in elite sport for each dimension of the theoretical model to express the general assessment of each pillar for each nation by consolidating different criteria into one final percentage score; this is presented as

- a 'traffic light' and radar graph to indicate the relative performance of each nation for each pillar measured.
- (3) The involvement of the main stakeholders in elite sport -the athletes, coaches and performance directors- as the evaluators of policy processes in elite sport; in addition to an overall sport policy inventory.
 - (4) Intensive collaboration with local researchers worldwide

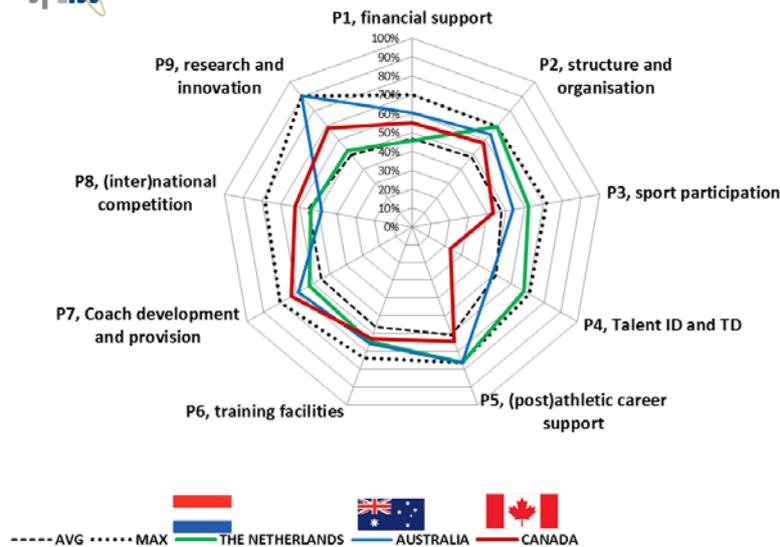
Summary results

The results showed evidence that “success is developable”, meaning that medals can be influenced by policy impact. Most Pillars correlate positively with success, either in summer or winter sports. As such, better performing countries, also tend to have higher scores on the nine Pillars. When we delve deeper into the 96 CSFs that are the building blocks of the nine Pillars we find that 22 factors significantly correlate with success either in summer or in winter sports (at the 0.05 level); many of these are characterised by sufficient financial resources and effective structure, governance and coordination. This finding lends further weight to the hypothesis that there may well be a minimum 'entry level' of investment required for a nation of any size to have an effective system, and that money alone does not guarantee success. Meanwhile, each Pillar score is composed of different configurations of CSFs, for example in relation to (de)centralization of talent and facilities and national coordination of local development.

The results also showed a strong positive relationship between the absolute amount of elite sport funding invested by nations and their success, but some nations use the resources that are invested more efficiently than others. These efficient nations (Australia, Japan, France and the Netherlands for summer sports; Canada, the Netherlands, and Switzerland for winter sports), are also the countries that have the most integrated approach to policy development, with the best scores on the organisation, governance and structure of elite sport.

Another key finding is that good performing countries show strengths in different sets of Pillars. For example, as can be seen from Figures 2 in a sample of relatively comparative nations (in population size), the strengths of Australia in Pillar 9 and Canada in Pillars 7 (coaches), 8 ((inter)national competition) and 9 (research innovation) are almost diametrically opposed to the scores for the Netherlands showing relative strengths in Pillars 2 (organization), 3 (participation), 4 (talent ID and development) and 5 (athletic career support); this shows the importance of the Dutch organizational model that not only enhances sport participation and talent development (mainly in speed skating) but also proves to be effective and efficient in turning this broad base into later elite sporting success with a relatively modest financial investment.

Figure 2: Radar graph of Australia, Canada and the Netherlands compared to the average and maximum scores of 15 nations (De Bosscher et al., 2015)



Discussion

SPLISS 2.0 and the use of composite indicators resulted in a better understanding which (and how) sport policies lead to international sporting success and in obtaining a better insight into the effectiveness and efficiency of elite sport policies of nations at an overall sports level. It showed evidence that “success is developable”, meaning that medals can be influenced by policies.

The SPLISS study gives further evidence that there is no 'one size fits all' approach that is applicable to all nations. Despite the search for a common (or similar) path towards elite sport development, *“the reality seems to be that there is no generic blueprint - no sets of Pillars, Critical Success Factors or recognised best practices that can be simply lifted from one context and placed in another that will guarantee success. There is broad consensus on the ingredients that go into the elite success recipe but countries combine ingredients in their own unique ways. Accordingly, the key challenges for nations remain to “benchlearn”, instead of benchmark against other competitors; and to seek best broad brush principles of efficient and effective elite sport policies rather than looking for simplistic transfer of so-called best practice”* (De Bosscher et al., 2015, p. 361). The challenge remains to find the right blend of system ingredients and processes that will work best for given nations in their own context and culture.

Key discussion question (see also summary brochure)

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using composite indicators (CIs) (a scoring system) to evaluate elite sport policies?
- What are the barriers in developing CIs?

Final note

SPLISS is a project of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (BEL) in collaboration with a consortium group of researchers from Sheffield Hallam University (UK), Victoria University (AUS) and the University of Utrecht (NED). SPLISS projects have been



developed at overall sports level, and in specific sports (tennis, judo, athletics, winter sports); at regional levels (e.g. Brazil) and national levels (e.g. SPLISS 2.0); and at the Paralympics.

More information

Contact: www.SPLISS.net or contact Prof. dr. Veerle De Bosscher at veerle.de.bosscher@vub.ac.be

Appendix - Publications

Model

De Bosscher, V., De Knop, P., van Bottenburg, M., Shibli, S. (2006). A conceptual framework for analysing Sports Policy Factors Leading to international sporting success. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 6 (2), 185-215.

De Bosscher, V., De Knop, P., van Bottenburg, M., Shibli, S., Bingham, J. (2009). Explaining international sporting success. An International comparison of elite sport systems and policies in six nations. *Sport Management Review*, 12, 113-136

De Bosscher, V., Shilbury, D., Van Hoecke, J., Theeboom, M., De Knop, P. (2011). Effectiveness of national elite sport policies: A multidimensional approach applied to the case of Flanders. *European Sport Management Quarterly*. 11 (2), 115-141.

Methods

De Bosscher, V. (2016). A Mixed Methods Approach to Compare Elite Sport Policies of Nations. A Critical Reflection on the Use of Composite Indicators in the SPLISS Study. *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*. Special issue: Research Methodologies and Sports Scholarship, editors James Skinner & Terry Engelberg, Griffith University. doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2016.1179729

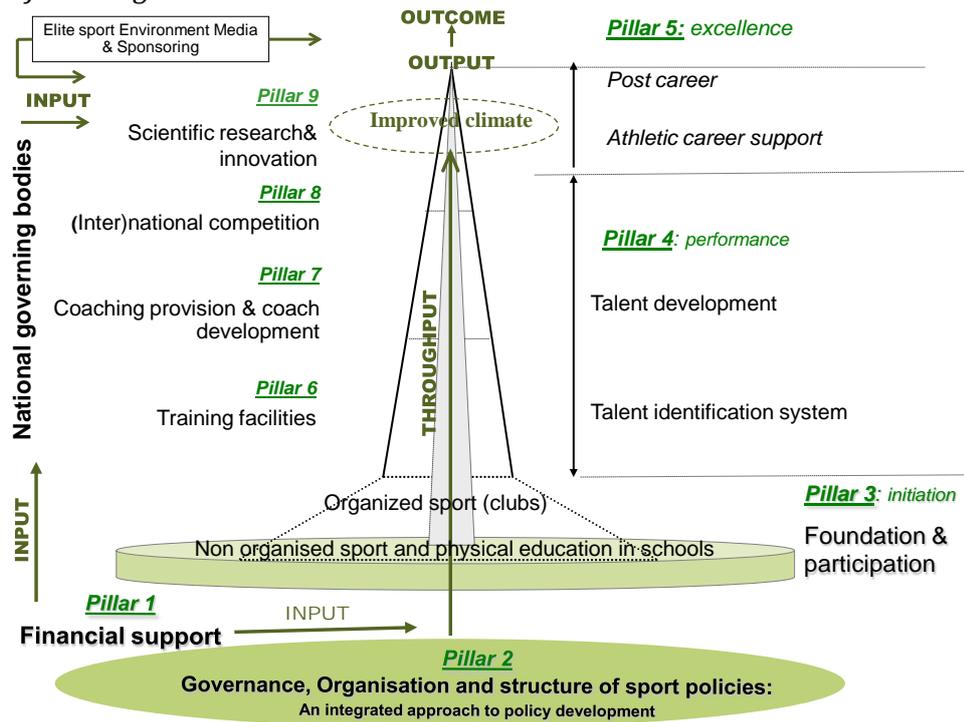
De Bosscher, V., Shibli, S., van Bottenburg, M., De Knop, P., Truyens, J. (2010). Developing a methodology for comparing the elite sport systems and policies of nations: a mixed research methods approach. *Journal of Sport Management*, 24, 567-600

Books (overall)

De Bosscher, V., Shibli, S., Westerbeek, H., van Bottenburg, M. (2015). Successful elite sport policies: an international comparison in 15 nations (SPLISS 2.0). Aachen: Meyer & Meyer. ISBN: 978-1-78255-076-1.

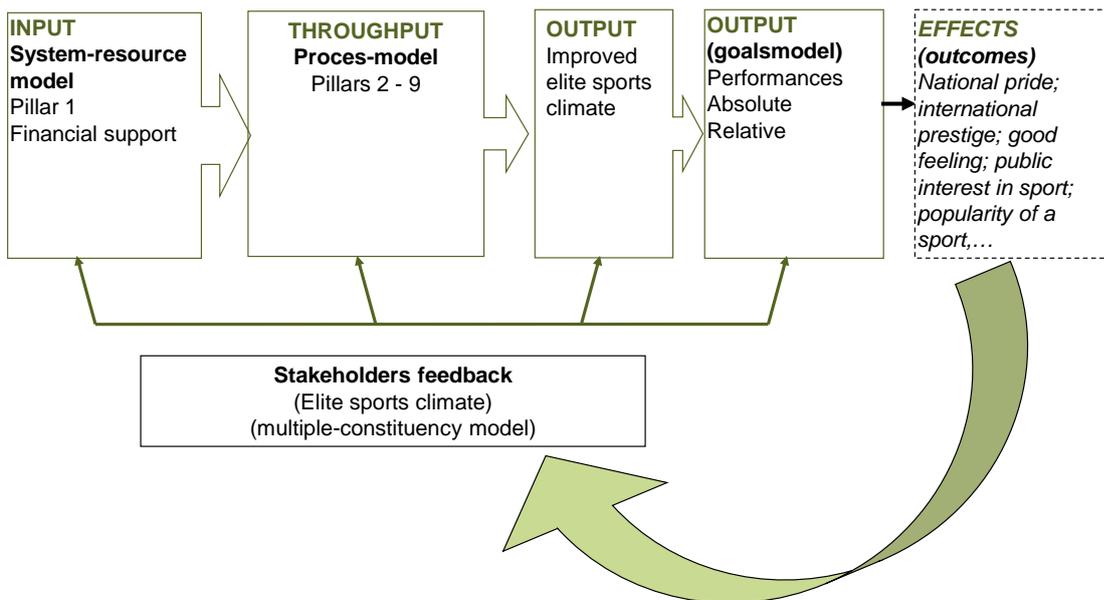
De Bosscher, V., Bingham, J., Shibli, S., Van Bottenburg, M., De Knop, P. (2008). *The global Sporting Arms Race. An international comparative study on sports policy factors leading to international sporting success*. Aachen: Meyer & Meyer. ISBN: 978-1-84126-228-4.

Appendix : the SPLISS model: Theoretical model of 9 pillars of sports policy factors influencing international success



(reprinted with permission from Taylor & Francis Ltd, <http://www.informaworld.com>, and slightly adapted from De Bosscher et al., 2006)

Figure: SPLISS as a multidimensional model to measure effectiveness of elite sport policies (De Bosscher et al., 2001)



**A Subject in search of an Object;
Thinking and talking about small manifestations
of large successes in complex collaborations**

Scott Douglas, Utrecht University, s.c.douglas@uu.nl

From San Francisco to Stockholm, from Singapore to Sydney, diverse forms of collaborative networks have sprung up to fight radicalization. Police forces, schools, mental health providers, faith groups, internet companies, and other partners try to jointly counter extremist narratives, undermine radical networks, and offer alternatives to violent extremism. The attacks of lone wolves and terrorist groups present a clear picture of failure, but what does success look like for these complex collaborations?

This paper argues that the greatest challenge for defining collaborative success lies not in achieving more high-level theoretical clarity, but in identifying derivative middle-range concepts which researchers and practitioners can practically apply (Merton, 1957). Translating grand narratives of societal outcomes to more tangible concepts of success can help researchers to observe patterns across multiple contexts and practitioners to evaluate their performance.

This paper is inspired by the literature on ‘small wins’ in collaborative governance, which encourages learning from the small steps made towards success (Weick, 1984; Ansell & Gash, 2008; Termeer, 2015). This exploration attempts to go even further by defining the small manifestations of actually reaching success. The idea is that such a middle-range concept of success can serve as a useful unit of observation for academics to compare different collaborations and a better unit of conversation for practitioners to discuss and make sense of their collective performance.

Characteristic 1: Representations of success reflect the underlying value system

Weick defines a small win as ‘a concrete, complete, implemented outcome of moderate importance’ (Weick, 1984; 43). The idea is that many small wins add up to success and that collaborative partners should use intermediate victories for their collective learning and trust-building (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Termeer et al, 2015). This paper goes for a slightly different concept; a representation of success is a small and tangible manifestation of actually achieving success. This ambition is inspired by Hood’s catalogue of the synecdoche of administrative approaches, where small parts of an institution are used to represent the whole (Hood, 2000).

The recent decades have enriched our definition of success, but have eroded our concrete grasp of what success looks like. The emphasis on legitimacy by Old Public Administration and effectiveness/efficiency by New Public Management has been enriched with an attention for societal impact and partnerships inspired by Public Value Management and New Public Governance (Stoker, 2006; Bryson et al, 2014). For all their shortcomings, the older paradigms did have more tangible representations of success. The values of Old Public Administration are manifested in ‘clear rules’ and ‘fair procedures.’ New Public Management is embodied in ‘satisfied clients’ and ‘delivered products’ (Hood, 1991).

These middle-range concepts embody the philosophical perspective of the paradigm. They give scholars concrete units of observation to compare across contexts and public managers concrete leads for intervention in their own particular organization. From an Old Public Administration perspective, researchers can compare the success of governments across the world based on their compliance with the procedures of democracy (see the work on the Quality of Government by Bo Rothstein). From a New Public Management perspective, a focus on clients and products allows for easy benchmarking across organizations (see the influential datasets of the OECD). The new paradigms of public value and collaborative governance still need to define such middle-range concepts, which could boost the empirical testability and relevance of their propositions (Hartley et al, 2016)

Characteristic 2: Representations of successes need to be relevant in the lifeworld

The literature on public value, networks, and collaborative governance has of course produced valuable formats for assessing success, such as the network performance framework by Provan & Milward (1999) or the Public Value Account by Moore (2013). These approaches share a focus on the multiple stakeholders involved and the different dimensions of success these parties favour. In the case of deradicalization networks, these tools can provide scholars and managers with a systematic insight in the performance of the collaboration on the whole.

However, these frameworks are not easily applied for the daily learning by partners on the ground or global comparisons by researchers. The success of a network against these frameworks can only be assessed on a large scale and over longer periods of time, missing the immediate relevance and applicability. Alternative representations of success need to be more concrete to facilitate the short-loop learning mechanisms deemed essential for complex collaboration such as the deradicalization networks (Ansell & Gash, 2008). These frameworks need to be translated from a system world to the lifeworld, so that they can be discussed by researchers around the conference table and by community partners around the kitchen table.

Characteristic 3: Representations of successes embrace the complexity of the problem

An obvious candidate for a middle-range concept of success for deradicalization networks would be 'successfully averted attacks.' This concept captures both an intended outcome of the partnership and is very concrete for researchers and practitioners alike. Politicians, security officials, and the media will indeed often judge the success of a collaboration by this standard. However, this conceptualization of success ignores the complexity of the problem. This concept is a simplification, not a representation.

Firstly, a focus on 'successfully averted attacks' discounts the price of security. The disruption of society by counterterrorism measures can be equally costly or harmful to society as terrorism itself (Noordegraaf et al, 2016). Secondly, this notion of success is actually of little practical use to scholars and practitioners. The likelihood of attacks is influenced by many factors beyond the control of the collaboration partners, such as overseas wars and economic cycles.

Given the uncontrollability of the problem, it may be more useful to focus on the capacity of the network to formulate solutions (Sorensen & Torfing, 2009; Page et al, 2015). For deradicalization networks, the

emphasis could shift towards the success of different interventions, such as sharing intelligence, working with parents, withdrawing passports of people suspected of wanting to travel to Syria, etc. Again, this concept of success is quite influential, as public organizations often boast of their ability to deliver certain measures or lobby for more legal instruments. Although this notion of success may be more modest, it is more befitting the complexity of the problem.

Characteristic 4: Representations of successes should be shared focal points for all parties involved

Focusing on the success of interventions does come with two pitfalls. Firstly, due to the interconnected nature of issues such as radicalization, separate interventions have little real and reliable effect.

Withdrawing someone's passport might stop them from travelling to Syria, but could still lead to an attack at home if this intervention is not complemented with another 'soft touch' intervention (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2013).

Secondly, focusing on separate interventions does not help partners to create a shared understanding of success. Most interventions are tied to specific actors – passports to the local government, tapping to the intelligence services, work programs to the social services, etc. Partners often consider an intervention by another party as undesirable or even a failure on their part. Focusing on separate interventions unintentionally emphasizes the fault lines between the different partners and their different outlooks (Noordegraaf et al, 2016).

A more useful conceptualization of success could be 'successful case treatments'. The collected partners would review to what extent they are succeeding in jointly preventing the radicalization of an individual person. In Dutch cities, for example, representatives of the police, local municipality, social work, etc. meet regularly to review all the cases in their remit and assess what impact their combined interventions are having on the behaviour and attitudes of individuals (Noordegraaf et al, 2016).

This notion of success relates to the work of Meynhardt (2009) who translates the concept of public value to the psychological impact made on individual persons. This approach has the advantage of providing practitioners a focal point for all the parties in a local collaboration. Researchers could use this representation of success to design a large-n analysis tracking all cases across networks or a small-n analysis where the effect on 'typical cases' is carefully evaluated.

Characteristic 5: Representations of success should be used encourage constant learning

The use of 'successful case treatments' as a representation of success is potentially valuable, but does have shortcomings. Obviously, the focus on individual value creation needs to be complemented with a societal value creation as well. The costs of expensive deradicalization programs will have to be carried by all taxpayers, necessitating an analysis on both the individual and collection level of collaborative value creation (Provan & Milward, 1999; Meynhardt, 2009).

Moreover, focusing on 'successful case treatments' centres on the cases identified and known by the partners. It does not assess unknown dangers or alternative threats. For example, the many deradicalization networks in the Netherlands unexpectedly had to shift towards also addressing right-wing extremism, which required different knowledge, partners, and interventions. Their self-assurance

based on a track-record of 'successful case treatments' of Islamic extremists may have blinded them from a changing landscape.

Ultimately, the value of representation of success is determined by how it is used. If the small successes are used to only defend current practices and protect current budgets, the success will probably be short-run. However, if the concepts are used as the starting point for careful study and critical conversations about what works and what does not, they could help to make success endure.

Conclusion

This paper argues that the literature could gain from complementing its high-level theoretical work on collaborative success with middle-range concepts. It has tentatively suggested some characteristics of such a synecdoche of collaborative success, but has also emphasized that a search for representation can lead to simplification. In the case of deradicalization networks, 'successfully averted attacks' and 'successful measures' are used by politicians and professionals as representations of success, even when these concepts ignore fundamental aspects of the problem and the solution.

It will take hard work to supplant these faulty representations of success with more appropriate units of observation and communication. Moreover, we will have to remain modest in our application of middle-range concept across geographical settings and policy domains, as some contextual differences defy generalization or certain government activities can simply not be captured in concrete representations.

Still, translating our high-level understanding of success to more concrete and daily concepts could benefit the study and practice of collaborative governance. For scholars, such middle-range concepts can help us to translate grand questions to concrete comparative empirical work. For practitioners, middle-range concepts of success can help network partners to inform their own conversations about success and make advances in the treatment of complex problems.

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Success in Public Governance:

Assessing and explaining how public problems are sometimes addressed remarkably effectively

Memo in preparation of Workshop, March 1st, 2017, Utrecht

Falk Ebinger, Vienna University of Economics and Business

Success in governance? Never heard off!¹

How is 'success' in and of government and (various forms of) public governance understood/conceptualised, assessed/measured, and framed/sold in academic, professional, public and political discourses?

Some polemic prolog, inspired by my personal experience with success and failure in governance of and in public administration:

From a *philosophical* perspective, one could argue that public service provision from the beginning is not destined to be successful. If public undertakings were indeed successful, they would be private.² They came into the world as auxiliary means to bridge collective action problems. They are a loss-making deal as their positive effects will be accrued somewhere else. Suppose we had the capacity to realize what it takes to make societies as smoothly running as ours, no profiteer would brag about his or her profits for not running the risk of having to contribute a bigger (fair) share. Hence, possibly we (as citizens) should change our stance towards success in administration (as in life ;-).

Speaking for the *political debate* in the German and Austrian case, *successful governance* is hardly ever treated as empirical fact, but as hyperreality. It exists (possibly in other countries or universes), it is real enough to criticize the status quo, fuel reform debates and keep the call for change a constant in governance and public service provision. But it is a very, very distant goal, because of the many obstacles and selfish opponents, it is never to be reached in the limited time span we wander upon the earth, much less the short time in charge given to politicians nowadays in western democracies. Alas! Hence, in the political debate, “success” is sold to the public as *economies*. It is pictured as hungry animal out of control – and starving the beast is the only remedy. Saving money, no matter the price. Other performance dimensions are irrelevant, at least till the next “scandal” lurks around the corner. This is rational, as bureaucracy-bashing is cheap and heartily applauded by the public. No wonder, as the constituency has virtually no idea what public services are doing actually. And hardly anybody understands that *governance* (including the burgeoning production of regulations) is the prerogative of parliaments, not bureaucracies. The public follows the focus on economies and on “de-bureaucratization”, except when the own assets are affected. Vetoing such projects via means of “citizen participation” is then considered *successful governance*. Hence, at the same time, governments and parliaments happily “feed the beast”, as nobody gets elected for policy

¹ Please excuse the tiny bits of sarcasm possibly interspersed into this text. I am socialized to deal with failure – of administrations and (foremost) politicians of providing reasonable governance and public services. E.g., I am currently inquiring the implementation of environmental protection policies at the local level. All along the line a (successful) failure for all stakeholders...

² Not to mention that studies prove over and over again, that private task fulfillment is no ways “better” or cheaper than their public peers.

termination and the constant flow of legislation can only be administered (not applied) by more and better trained bureaucrats.

Beyond the public discourse, success in governance can be defined as *control* of administration. Governance or administrative reforms at least to some respect aim at reshuffling competencies to less autonomous (read recalcitrant) and better to control units, to bring a politically loyal leadership in charge, to push through and legitimize budget cuts or to get rid of potentially dangerous issues. This in my experience is considered “successful governance” and I will come back to this issue below.

This explains as well, why administrations and policies are not converging slowly towards the one, best model as we learn from our failures and others success. Instead, governance, policy and administrative models are “swinging” between poles. Only via change the cards are reshuffled and moreover, a moving “target” is much harder to evaluate and hence to attack by opposition and lobby groups.

What you see as pertinent past research (including your own) and the key insights it has yielded,

Success in governance is the favorable pole on a *performance* continuum. Clearly, the definition of performance lies the eye of stakeholders. The literature on performance is galore and must not be cited here. However, comprehensive perspectives on “what makes the elephant gallop” are scarce. Hence, in some of my own work I try to explain the variation in *performance* among public administrations I observed in the German federal context. This work was driven by a perceived lack of consistent scientific guidance for political-decision makers how to design a successful bureaucracy – and plenty of naiveté. Performance I considered here as a multi-dimensional construct consisting not only of the 3Es but other aspects as lawfulness, the employees trust in clientele and employees’ commitment and job satisfaction. Performance is explained via (1) structural dimensions vertical and horizontal (de)centralisation/(de)concentration (derived from the agencification-debate), the width of the portfolio of tasks bundled within agencies and the legitimation of agency heads and (2) the management style (resources, support, goal clarity, decision making autonomy...). The Germany Länder are perfect to test these assumptions in a cross-country analyses of alternative administrative arrangements. As Länder governments are free in designing the respective bureaucracy, a wide spectrum of fundamentally different institutionalisations responsible for same (federally encoded) task can be found. Results were as to be expected: there is not one magic trick to achieve high performance on all dimensions and rising performance on one dimension comes at a price, as the overall performance is always a trade-off. However, there are clear effects of structure and management styles, opening up possibilities for political decision makers to “design” administrations towards the performance dimensions they prefer for the one or another task. Well, naïve.

Asked for consistently successful governance and leaving “scientific” rigor aside, a few examples of truly successful governance come to my mind.

First, some agencies which were not formally “made” but “grew” more independent over time are consistently considered successful – e.g. environmental protection agencies and the like, which developed a public visibility and standing in protecting a public good. However, despite being respected, these units are as well under severe pressure. They are only able to handle it better, as they follow a rather clear guiding star.

Second, auxiliary fire brigades (not joking) as present every village are examples of “agencies” considered without any qualification as successful. What are their characteristics? They are serving a

tangible public good. They are deeply entrenched in their communities. They have a human face. Professionalization, distance to stakeholders, the need to sanction and to weigh conflicting interests could hence be considered the (unavoidable?) causes to be considered less successful.

Third, to bring forward another exotic/excentric example: the *Bavarian* way of governance and administration could be considered as exceptional successful (however far from uncontested). However, in Bavaria, close to everything the “textbook” on successful governance puts forward is contradicted:

- Bavarian administration is not economic – to the contrary – concerning heads and spending, it is a heavy weight
- It is not structurally lean, but boast one of the most differentiated administrative setup among the German Länder and beyond.
- It is little dynamic concerning innovations
- Governance is undogmatic concerning most important decisions, yet dogmatic in anything attributed to the conservative “core beliefs”
- Its example has little to none impact on its peers
- And last but not least: It is thoroughly politicised as the conservative “Christian-Social Union” (CDU) is in government since “ever”.

However, it is throughout all groups of stakeholders within and outside Bavaria considered as highly effective and efficient. Goals are considered to be achieved and resources to be spend reasonably. This perception is fueled in my opinion by the exceptional party political stability, the low political pressure from outside and the resulting enmeshment between politics and administration.

This has the following effects:

- Effective closed shop policy: Administration is never right. It is either bloated or incompetent, or both. Hence, opening the apparatus up for a comparison of governance models appears to be the most stupid thing you can agree to as politician and as a bureaucrat. In Bavaria, little information surface from within the apparatus and hence no critique is possible due to a cover-up mentality. This leads, however, to problems with comparative research designs.
- Sufficient resources to allow for extra capacities
- No need for political charades and high goal clarity
- The rare chance for long-term planning and possibility to readjust, but equally real accountability for the achieved results
- High valuation of the administration and full political backup, as government identifies fully with the administration.

Summing up, the successful governance at least in parts can be attribute to the lower urge of politicians to “perform performance”. Governance is not restricted into one legislative period. Political responsibility and accountability are much more real as the re-election is “safe”. At the same time, high professionalism within the administration and the delegation of delegation is not considered as threatening as other places. The conflict between specialists and generalists/politicians is much less pronounced and can be channeled into more constructive cooperation, as “technocracy is no thread to government, if you “own” the apparatus...

Pivotal knowledge gaps and controversies,

I would consider the construction of the “perception” of success among a wider array of stakeholders as a key concept. Key for a positive perception as being successful is in my view the communication of those in charge. Public governance is presumably the only enterprise, where leaders and principals take pride and legitimation for taking a critical stand or outright bash “their” own apparatus. Why is this the case? What factors make some agencies/policies immune against this attacks or are even left in peace in a kind of sacrosanct status?

In which relation does professionalism stands to success. Are strong professional bindings hindering the necessary “flexibility” to be considered successful?

In certain instances, I had the impression that a stronger stance of administrations as being service providers not for citizens, but to those who govern, could be key to governance perceived as successful. If administrations succeed in winning over politicians by being ahead of their fanciest dreams, they could provide a setting in which they could be publicly considered as successful. To do so, they must actively offer projects with real added value for the government in charge: activism, publicity, tangible achievements, change, continuity in services etc.)

A 'dream scenario' for a research project in this broad domain that you feel someone (perhaps yourself!) should undertake,

Taking subnational comparison to the EU-level: An internationally comparative study on hard and soft “performance” of a certain branch of administration, which implements a rather neatly defined set of tasks. Hence, explanatory factors for the differing success could possibly be identified.

SUCCESSFUL GOVERNANCE AS A PRACTICE (SGAP)

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INTRODUCTION

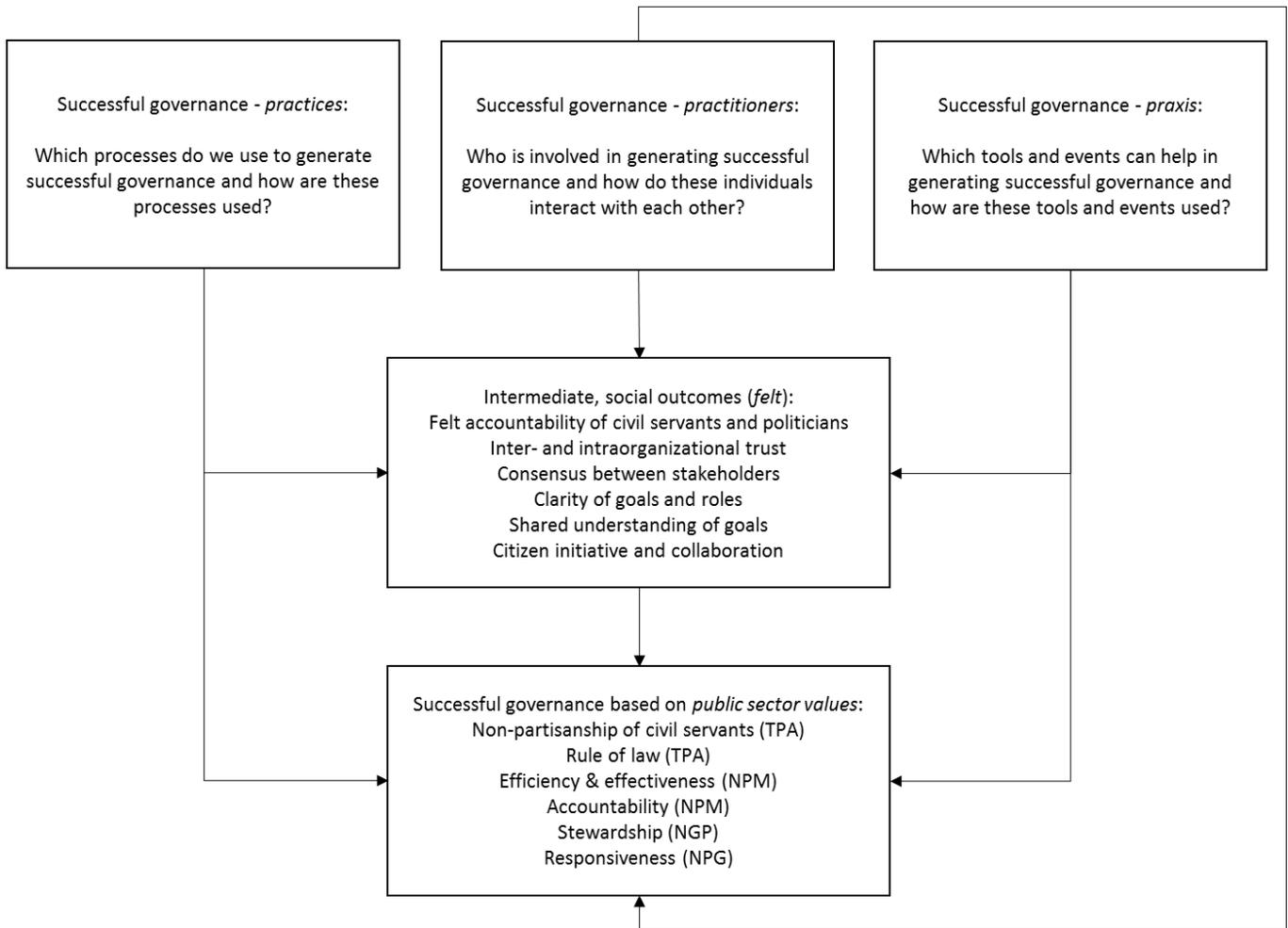
In the strategic management literature, the predominant focal point of study has been at the *macro* or *meso* level: Which management processes do firms have, which strategic choices do firms make compared to their competitors and how do these processes and choices relate to firm performance (Johnson et al., 2007)? One could adopt the same approach to the study of successful governance by investigating the actual content of governance choices compared to other public organizations, the usage of specific management or governance processes and public service performance. Such an approach is valuable and could result in a variety of theoretical insights that might be – to some extent – extrapolated to a broader population of public organizations. Nonetheless, one important lesson learned from the strategic management literature is that a unilateral focus on the macro and meso level might result in a detachment between academic insights and practitioners' relevance (Vaara & Durand, 2012). Practitioners use processes and make strategic choices, not academia, and macro or meso level insights might help argue *why* practitioners could use specific processes and make specific choices but says little about *how* these choices and processes could be made or used (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009).

MAIN ARGUMENT

My argument in this memo is that in order to elucidate how governance can be successful – in a way that actually helps practitioners make it successful – we need to operationalize successful governance as a practice (SGAP). Successful governance is not something public organizations *have*, it is something public organizations *do*. People govern successfully, through the usage of specific tools, through adopting specific processes in a specific way and through their interaction with other people. This micro-level

approach is at the heart of the Strategy-as-Practice (SAP) movement in strategic management (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009). SAP argues that strategic management literature can be disconnected from the practice of strategy in organizations and calls for more attention to the *practices*, *practitioners* and *praxis* of strategy-making (Vaara & Whittington, 2012; Whittington, 2006; Wolf & Floyd, 2013). I argue that SAP can be a useful perspective to study the *micro*-level of successful governance in public organizations. In Figure 1, I conceptualize how such a SGAP perspective might look like.

Figure 1: Successful governance as a practice (SGAP).



SUCCESSFUL GOVERNANCE AS A PRACTICE – 3P's

To achieve successful governance, the governance practices, practitioners and praxis (i.e. the 3P's of successful governance) matter. First, the practices focus on the processes used by public organizations and, particularly, how these are used (Wolf & Floyd, 2013). For instance, an organization might use strategic planning and include a variety of stakeholders during this process (i.e. doing strategic planning in a participatory manner). This perspective ties in with process-centered theories in (public) management literature (e.g. Elbanna, 2006; George et al., 2016). Second, the practitioners focus on the people involved in governing (e.g. politicians, public managers, network partners, citizens...). Through their characteristics and perceptions as well as their interactions within teams, these practitioners can shape successful governance (Wolf & Floyd, 2013). This perspective ties in with behavior-centered theories in (public) management literature (e.g. Carmeli et al., 2012; George et al., 2017). Third, the praxis focuses on the tools and events that shape successful governance (Wolf & Floyd, 2013). For instance, are benchmarking or SWOT-analyses used as tools to analytically derive relevant governance-strategies? Or are retreats and off-sites used to inject a detachment from daily organizational life and a risk-free environment when devising strategies to optimize governance processes? This perspective ties in with sense-making theories in (public) management literature (e.g. Feldman et al., 2004).

SUCCESSFUL GOVERNANCE AS A PRACTICE – INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Although the 3P's of successful governance can be argued to directly correlate with successful governance as an outcome, a SGAP-perspective argues the importance of intermediate, social outcomes (Wolf & Floyd, 2013; George & Desmidt, 2014). SAP as a whole discusses the necessity of strategy-making as a social process – where the outcomes might not directly be geared towards higher performance but towards generating a supporting coalition for strategies – people who believe in and *sell* the strategy throughout and beyond the organization (Eden, 1992). Similarly, the 3P's of successful governance can be

important to generate positive attitudes towards governance strategies. For instance, participation of a variety of stakeholders during the formulation of governance strategies (i.e. practices) can help in generating the necessary support for these strategies from key stakeholders (i.e. intermediate, social outcomes). Similarly, teams within the organization that exhibit agreement-seeking behavior (i.e. practitioners) when making governance-related decisions can have a higher degree of consensus towards these decisions and their implications (i.e. intermediate, social outcomes). Finally, actually visiting citizens during off-sites (i.e. praxis) can help to stimulate citizen engagement and initiative in governance activities (i.e. intermediate, social outcomes).

SUCCESSFUL GOVERNANCE AS A PRACTICE – FINAL OUTCOMES

The final outcome in Figure 1 is successful governance. Of course, the question emerges how exactly successful governance might be measured. My argument is that a measurement of successful governance as an outcome (*notice how I distinguish between successful governance as a practice and as an outcome*) should constitute the essence of public administration research and theory. In other words, successful governance should group those elements of the Weberian bureaucracy, New Public Management and New Public Governance that can be classified as core public values. Research has shown that public organizations typically blend elements of these three paradigms thus implying that each paradigm groups useful elements that, over the years, have become public values (Koppenjan, 2012; Hammerschmid et al, 2016). For instance, having a non-partisan administration as well as the rule of law remain core to public administration. Similarly, to avoid an unsustainable and corrupt government, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability cannot be neglected. Finally, due to the dynamic and ever evolving *clientele* as well as service delivery approaches of public organizations (i.e. make, buy or ally), responsiveness to citizens is crucial and stewardship has become increasingly important.

CONCLUSION

This memo aimed to conceptualize successful governance first and foremost as a practice. By positing the concept of successful governance as a practice (SGAP), I hoped to have illustrated that successful governance is not any one thing. Indeed, one theory and method is insufficient to study the *doing* of successful governance in public organizations. Qualitative, constructivist approaches could help to develop or update theory in order to ensure a quantitative testing of potential relations underlying SGAP. Similarly, theories and methods from psychology and organizational behavior could help to elucidate the role of practitioners in successful governance whereas, for instance, critical discourse analysis could help to unravel the actual language content within specific tools or during off-sites. Conclusively, like its mother field of public administration, successful governance should be investigated through a plethora of theories and methods – and frameworks such as SGAP can help to make practical and theoretical sense of said plethora.

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Government Responsiveness to the Demands of Unpopular Social Groups

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On 31 December 2015 Israel's right-wing government coalition, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, unanimously authorized the launch of a dramatic five-year package (hereafter: the 5-year plan), which prescribes that an enhanced share of national budget, amounting to 15 billion shekels (3.75 billion dollars), will be committed to social programs in the Israeli-Palestinian community. Since the overall size of the budget remained intact, the effect of this decision, which has since reached the implementation stage, involves reallocation of resources to the Israeli-Palestinian minority at the expense of the Jewish majority. Specifically, this decision involves enhanced investment in education, in employment programs, in transportation and in policing. The head of the Israeli-Palestinian Alliance party, MP Aiman Uda, took part in negotiating the program's details and expressed unprecedented support for the government's decision, in this instance. To put his support in perspective, in January 2017, as I was writing this commentary, Uda participated in a demonstration that culminated in lethal confrontation between the protestors and the police, the death of a police officer and a Bedouin civilian, and in Uda, himself, injured.

Israeli-Palestinians, or "Israeli-Arabs" as they are called by the Israeli-Jewish population, are Israeli citizens who live within Israeli territory, and make up over 20% of the population. Unlike Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, Israeli-Palestinians are entitled to equal citizenship rights. Most Israeli-Palestinians vote for distinct "Arab parties," which have recently amalgamated into one party, yet the latter have never been members of ANY government coalition. Thus, political representation of the Israeli-Palestinian community fails to translate into political power.

The Israeli-Jewish population's perception of Israeli-Palestinians is entangled with the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Fear, fury and hate towards Palestinians continuously builds up, activated via security incidents, at Israel's de facto border with Gaza, intermittent expansion of the conflict to the center of Israel, terrorist attacks and deadly clashes between the Israeli Defense Force, Israeli settlers and Palestinians in Jerusalem and the West Bank. In this context, Israeli-Palestinians are the distrusted, threat, from within.

In this charged setting, it would come as no surprise that the Israeli-Palestinian community suffers long-term deprivation, which manifests in lower education achievement among Muslims, low workforce participation across all sub-sections and consequent economic vulnerability. In addition, Israeli-Palestinian cities and villages suffer from low investment in infrastructure and urban development. The abovementioned government plan seeks to alleviate this situation.

Political executives consented to the 5-year plan, yet bureaucrats were the engines behind it. Specifically, the Budget Unit, at the Israeli Finance Ministry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Justice and other supporters across government, led the design of the program. It negotiated its content with a broad coalition of NGOs and political representatives of the Israeli-Palestinian community at the national and local levels.

The employees of the Budget Unit are Jewish, economists, mostly in their late 20s and early 30s, and one can assume that, on average, they hold centrists views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Their pursuit of the 5-year plan is unlikely to have originated from political ideology. Rather, it stem from the Unit's concerns that the long-term deprivation, and low workforce participation, of 20% of the Israeli population undermines the Unit's mission to enhance economic productivity and growth. Thus, in recent years, this Unit sought reforms that would increase the education achievement and workforce participation of two deprived, and unpopular, social outgroups: Israeli-Palestinians and Jewish Ultra-Orthodox.

To be sure, it is too early to evaluate the endurance of the 5-year plan. In the context of persistent Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this policy is unlikely to reach a legitimate, "taken-for-granted," status any time soon, if ever. Yet it is a remarkable case of a bureaucracy's successful yield of rational-professional authority, which balances the unjust outcomes of representative democracy.

The challenge that bureaucracy poses to democracy is an enduring concern of public-administration scholarship. Yet, the above case tentatively suggests that bureaucracies' autonomous pursuit of their missions *may* sometimes serve as a means for introducing responsiveness to unpopular social groups, whose interests are discarded by public majorities

and their representatives. If bureaucracy plays such role beyond this extreme case, then this is a phenomenon worthy of documentation and explanation.

Accordingly, this commentary suggests that Successful Governance may seek to devote attention to understanding the factors that shape governments' responsiveness to the demands and expectations of disadvantaged, unpopular, social groups. Conceptualizing, and delineating such groups is a challenge in itself. Tentatively, I am referring to social groups whom a substantial portion of the population perceives as a threat to significant public interests. In the Israeli case, the perceived threat is to the Jewish character of the country and to national security. In the context of the LGBT community, it is a threat to morality and family values. In other cases, the perceived threat may be to social cohesion or to the legal order.

The significance of this research agenda, for public administration, is that it suggests that bureaucracies *may* play a distinctive democratic role, over and above the functioning of representative democracy. Below I tentatively delineate theoretical avenues from which to explore this research agenda.

Political Losses and Gains

Political scientists, such as Soroka and Wlezien (2010), for example, have demonstrated the responsiveness of government policies to public opinion. These studies would lead us to expect rare, if any, instances of government responsiveness to unpopular social groups. Social movement theory devoted specific attention to government policy responsiveness to vulnerable, underrepresented social groups. Much of that research focuses on the policy consequences of the women and civil rights' social movements in the US (e.g. Andrews, 2001; King et al. 2005, 2007; Luders, 2010; Skrentny, 2006; Soule and King, 2006). The literature's key explanandum, in general agreement with political-science public opinion research, suggests that the electoral incentives of political executives shape their inclination to support and champion social movement demands. Specifically, the more favorable is the general electorate, and/or the media, towards a movement's agenda, and the lower the opposition and electoral costs of responsiveness, the more inclined are politicians to respond to the protest agenda (Luders, 2010). Additionally, elites' left-right ideological position further shapes their inclination to view social movement demands as a prospect for electoral losses or gains. In the context of unpopular social

groups, however, politicians are more likely to consider responsiveness as a source of blame, as opposed to an opportunity for electoral gains.

Ultimately, these studies suggest that *political* impetus for government responsiveness to the demands of unpopular social groups, such as Israeli Palestinians, is likely to be in short supply, which accounts for their long-term deprivation.

Bureaucratic Strategic Pursuit of Mission

Social movement studies have given limited attention to civil servants and bureaucratic organizations, as opposed to political executives. The few studies that have broadened their gaze to non-elected officials (Amenta et al. 2005; Skrentny, 2006) suggested that mission concerns shape bureaucracies' responsiveness to social demands. In other words, as exemplified by my animating example, bureaucracies may respond to unpopular, non-salient, social demands if it is *functionally* pertinent for them to do so.¹ As suggested by Amenta et al. (2005):

“Bureaucrats whose mission is consistent with that of the challenger – assuming that they have initiative, talent and power – may provide administrative rulings, enforce laws, or propose new legislations that aids a challenger’s constituency, even within the context of an otherwise indifferent or opposed [political] state” (*ibid*, 520).

Amenta et al.’s (2005) argument strikes a chord with the assumptions of reputation theory (e.g. Carpenter, 2001, 2002, 2010) and with Goodsell’s (2011) notion of mission mystique. These different perspectives suggest that managers of an agency endowed with a distinct sense of mission, *and* a generally positive reputation, may perceive themselves as professionally bound, and politically capable, of pursuing the agency’s mission, even when doing so conflicts with majoritarian public opinion. Reputation, thus understood, functions as a source of organizational capital or authority that bureaucracies can rely upon to generate political acquiescence for politically contentious policies (cf. Bennister et al. 2015 re leadership capital).

¹ To be sure, bureaucracies’ pursuit of their missions often victimizes unpopular minorities (e.g. subjecting them to legally dubious security measures, racial profiling and so forth).

Suggesting that bureaucrats' mission concerns *may* drive them to respond to the demands of unpopular social groups opens further potential research avenues as to the moderators of bureaucrats' inclination and success in pursuing their mission in the absence of political impetus. Issue salience is one, likely, moderator of successful bureaucratic policy entrepreneurship. The higher the issue salience, the greater is politicians' need to display their control over the policy wheel and to constrain bureaucrats' policy maneuvers (Baekgaard et al. 2015; T'Hart and Wille, 2006). Additionally, senior bureaucrats' role perceptions vis-à-vis politicians (Aberbach et al. 1981), embedded in departmental identities, may also moderate their inclination to pursue their mission concerns in the absence of political stimulus. Finally, bureaucrats' success is likely to be a function of their skillful framing of their policies as committed to the general public interest, as opposed to distinct benefits for unpopular minorities. Crises management and policy framing studies may offer a stringboard from which to theorize the framing strategies that senior bureaucrats may employ to stimulate public and political support for charged policy programs, in line with their missions.

Representative Bureaucracy

Whereas the above approaches stress bureaucracies' *organizational* missions, bureaucrats may be individually committed to the well-being of disadvantaged social groups. Specifically, representative bureaucracy theory suggests that bureaucracies' representativeness of the public, in terms of their workforce demographics, most notably race, ethnicity and gender ("passive representation"), is associated with preferable outcomes for groups with shared demographics ("active representation") (e.g. Bradbury and Kellough 2008; Nicholson-Crotty et al. 2016; Wilkins and Keiser 2006). This theory would suggest that members of underrepresented social groups, as bureaucrats, are inclined to pursue the interests of their group members. To date, the study of representative bureaucracy theory has focused on street-level policy implementation, and yielded conflicting results. Extension of this theory to the context of policymaking, and beyond the US context, to study the effect and strategies of bureaucrats from under-represented social groups, offers yet another research avenue. Still, the low representation of unpopular social groups in governments may render their influence, and thereby the effect of representative bureaucracy, negligent.

Empirical Project

The above commentary calls for a small-*n* comparative analysis of significant government policies that seek to benefit unpopular, underrepresented, social groups. One, possible, project would compare governments,' or, if applicable, local governments,' formal and informal policies towards ethnic minorities that are perceived, by a substantial sections of the population, as a potential threat to security or to social cohesion. Such comparison might focus on police-community relations (e.g. responding to allegations of ethnic/racial profiling and/or excessive use of force and recruitment of minorities), combining interviews with senior police officers, leaders of local communities and systematic archival research of government reports and press releases.

An alternative project, would involve comparative, archival, analysis, supplemented by interviews, of governments' healthcare policies and funding in relation to issues associated with the LGBT community. The latter may include early detection and treatment for AIDS/HIV, gender reassignment surgery, and fertilization treatment for same-sex couples. These different policies are likely to differ in the extent to which government healthcare professionals view them as central to their functional mission, and as beneficial to society as a whole. Country case selection may be based on differences in public opinion vis-à-vis the LGBT community at a similar point in time.

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Why regions succeed: towards a novel theory on governance and institutions connecting the global and the local

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*Research proposal in progress. Please do not cite or circulate!
Very first and still incomplete draft. Comments very welcome!*

Introduction

The (intra-state) region is increasingly recognized as a space where a variety of actors can collaborate to effectively solve transboundary problems. Economic development and growth, for example, but also climate change and the energy transition, congested transportation networks, and transnational organized crime; all may be best tackled at the regional level – connecting the global and the local.

This evokes questions regarding governance and institutions: what can be construed as effective, legitimate arrangements for decision-making, steering and coordination? What is the role of rules, incentives and interdependencies in explaining successful regional governance? Whereas most previous research focuses on traditional government structures and functions, the research project I propose below investigates innovative regional governance arrangements and variation between and within regions in the design of institutions across problem areas.

A (short) tale of two regions: remarkable differences in success

If Charles Dickens were a social scientist, he would be surprised by the remarkable *differences* between two Dutch regions: the Brainport region, surrounding Eindhoven, and the Delta region, in the Southwestern Netherlands.

The Brainport region is an example of a ‘triple helix’ collaboration: involving government, businesses, and universities and knowledge institutes (Schaap & van Ostaaijen 2015). This collaboration has generated high economic performance, sustained even during the recent global financial crisis. Rather than implementing economic development policies top-down, public institutions in the region facilitated emergence of an ‘entrepreneurial ecosystem’, which appears key to the success (Westerink et al., 2016).

In the Delta region, governance is similarly organized in a triple helix, but collaboration has a shorter history, and economic growth in the region is limited. Although businesses have taken the lead, collaboration is often non-committal, with concrete actions lacking. Moreover, local and regional authorities have recently reasserted their traditional role in economic development policy, putting their incipient relationship with businesses at risk (Groenleer et al., 2016; Groenleer, 2017).

This tale, of course, is not unique. Around the world, regions differ in their economic, social, and environmental performance (Glaeser & Gottlieb, 2009; Audretsch, 2015; cf. Saxenian, 1994; Kenney 2000). Indeed, the forces of modernization, globalization, and technological change seem to impact regions differently. Some struggle; while others grasp novel opportunities with apparent ease, becoming engines of prosperity and social transformation (Burdett et al., 2011; Katz & Bradley, 2013).

The Brainport and Delta regions face rather similar economic, social, and environmental challenges. Yet, the regional governance solutions they have developed and applied, and the perceived success of these, differ. *Why?*

The importance of space and place in the network society

The globalized nature of our economy and society masks differences between regional governance solutions and their degrees of success. Financial markets, production networks, and social movements are increasingly international, connected through information technologies. In this 'space of flows' (Castells, 2004), *place* may seem irrelevant. But the role of the region or 'the regional' in governance of global challenges and transboundary issues is not as limited as it appears.

Flows of information and communication are not 'spaceless'. In what has been termed the urban age, space still matters, but differently. A third of the world's population is projected to be living in cities by 2050 (UN, 2014), so many spotlights are now on the (global) city (Glaeser, 2011; Barber, 2013; OECD, 2015; Acuto & Steele, 2013). In this 'space of places' (Castells, 2004), trade and transactions come together, and the political, economic, and cultural elite gathers physically. Here, the actual work of globalization gets 'done' (Sassen, 2000; Pierre, 2013).

Much of this work involves global challenges and transboundary social issues requiring a broader focus. Indeed, the city is intertwined with its surroundings: smaller cities, municipalities, and rural areas, with human activities fashioning connections to the urban core (Tordoir et al., 2015). Traditional systems of government, however, have proven ill-equipped for matching effective solutions to problems at the *amorphous* regional scale (Agnew, 2013; Brenner et al., 2002).

The rediscovery of the region

Initiatives to develop effective and legitimate solutions to contemporary challenges are increasingly coalescing on 'the region'. Practitioners, national governments, the EU, and researchers worldwide suggest, sometimes even hail, the region as a space where actors – public, private, nongovernmental – can come together to seek real solutions to transboundary problems (Groenleer, 2017), taking into account particularities in territory, spatial patterns, and community.

To illustrate: in the Netherlands, government think-tanks have advocated 'upscaling' authority from the local to the regional level in response to functional pressures. There are suggestions to allow more 'room for the region' vis-à-vis central government to accommodate regional (economic) differences (PBL, 2011; RLI, 2015; ROB, 2015; SGOB, 2016). In the UK, the Brexit vote revealed a highly divided country, with all the English regions around London voting to leave, but Scotland voting to remain. This reignited the political debate about devolution of powers to the regions (BBC, 2016).

The EU has long recognised the importance of the region, where the work of European integration gets 'done'. Between 2014 and 2020, the EU spent more than one-third of its budget,

over €350 billion, on urban and regional policy (European Commission, 2014; McCann, 2015). The region could well be the rescue of the EU, e.g., against resurging nationalism, as regions may bypass their national capitals in dealings with Brussels (Bauer & Borzel, 2010; Keating et al., 2015).

Worldwide, researchers note that while the territorial state may be diminishing in importance, the meso-level is on the rise. In Europe, “we are witnessing a rescaling of economic and social life”; not only functional systems, but also community identities and political expression are moving to the regional level (Keating, 2013). This shift, combined with increased regional authority, is part of a transformation from single-level government to *multilevel governance* that is particularly strong in Europe (Hooghe & Marks 2001; Bache & Flinders, 2004; Enderlein, Walti & Zurn, 2010). Unlike in the 1990s, when the region was also in the limelight, it is today emerging as a critical site for addressing economic challenges and social and environmental issues, positioned in between the global and the local (Herrschel, 2014).

The regional governance puzzle

The variability and variety of ‘the region’ are key strengths. They drive experimentation, learning, and innovation around concrete problems. Especially in light of regions’ economic and social heterogeneity. Yet, variability and variety present formidable challenges too. When regions are fluid spaces, a definable part of a country but not an administrative area with fixed boundaries, questions arise regarding governance. What can be construed as effective and legitimate arrangements for decision-making, coordination and steering? Clearly, a uniform national or federal-level governance approach has limitations. But challenge- or issue-specific governance – with a separate arrangement for each problem – is also unworkable in view of the overlaps it creates (cf. Groenleer, 2016a).

Knowledge gaps

Regions have been the focus of countless geographers/planners (looking at place and space), sociologists (studying social networks and capital), historians (focusing on traditions), economists (investigating clusters, agglomeration effects), and political theorists/international relations scholars (looking at territoriality, geopolitics). None of these disciplines, however, has systematically investigated the *governance* of the region.

Political scientists/geographers (Kreukels et al., 2003), public administration scholars (Pierre, 2016), and to some extent legal researchers (Hirsch Ballin, 2014) have studied regional governance. Hitherto, they have adopted only or primarily a rather narrow *formal* institutional perspective, emphasizing political, administrative, or legal structures (Loughlin et al., 2010).

Advances have been made in understanding, e.g., shifts in central–local relations (e.g., devolution, decentralization of powers), changes in relations between local municipalities (e.g., inter-municipal cooperation, mergers), and tensions these evoke (Heinelt & Kubler, 2005; Hendriks et al. 2005; Frankzke et al., 2007; Andersen & Pierre, 2010). Yet, the strong orientation towards (local) government structures has distracted research from (regional) *governance strategies* in light of transboundary problems.

We therefore know little about variation between regions in how they are governed – in the Netherlands, Europe, and worldwide. For instance, why, within one and the same region, does the design of governance arrangements differ across problem areas? In particular, the new balance

between government and society at the regional level, manifest in grassroots initiatives and multi-helix relationships, remains underexplored.

We know that governance and inclusive institutions help explain why nations fail (or succeed) (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013). We lack such knowledge for the regional level. Economists have focused on clustering related firms (Porter, 2000); economic geographers have emphasized attracting creative people to a specific place (Florida, 2002). Yet others suggest a broader set of strategies to boost performance (Glaeser & Gottlieb, 2009; Audretsch, 2015). Still, their attention has been directed to economic prosperity, neglecting social transformation.

Could a focus on governance, and particularly *institutions*, help reveal why some regions are more successful than others in dealing with transboundary problems?

Research aim and questions

The proposed project is aimed at presenting a refined analytical framework to understand regional governance, both as an outcome and as a condition. It asks the following interrelated question-sets:

- How is regional governance organized? What differences exist between regions, and within a region, between various problem areas? And over time?
- Why is there variation in the way regions are governed? How can differences in the design of regional governance be understood?
- What are the effects of regional governance? How can we determine if regional governance is effective and legitimate?
- Why are some regional governance arrangements effective and legitimate and others not?

Blending concepts and theories

The project originally blends concepts and theories from public administration, political science, law, economics, geography/planning, history, and sociology. It also draws on fields relevant to the specific transboundary problems studied. Most explanations for variation in regional governance and its effects concern geographical, cultural/historical, and socio-economic factors (cf. Paasi, 2009; Bijsterveld, 2014). Such explanations, I argue, only tell half the story. They must be complemented by institutional factors. Where institutional factors have been taken into account, however, explanations have emphasized formal-legal rules only (Visser, 2002; Feiock & Carr, 2004), rather than also taking into account incentives and interdependencies.

This project develops the thesis that as an outcome, regional governance is likely to be conditional upon both the functional pressures of *scale* and the social drivers of *community* (cf. Kearns & Forrest 2000; Keating, 2013; Hooghe & Marks, 2016). In other words, the way regional governance manifests depends on the nature and scope of the problems for which governance solutions are developed and implemented (e.g. certain externalities) and the benefits that are expected (e.g. 'economies of scale').

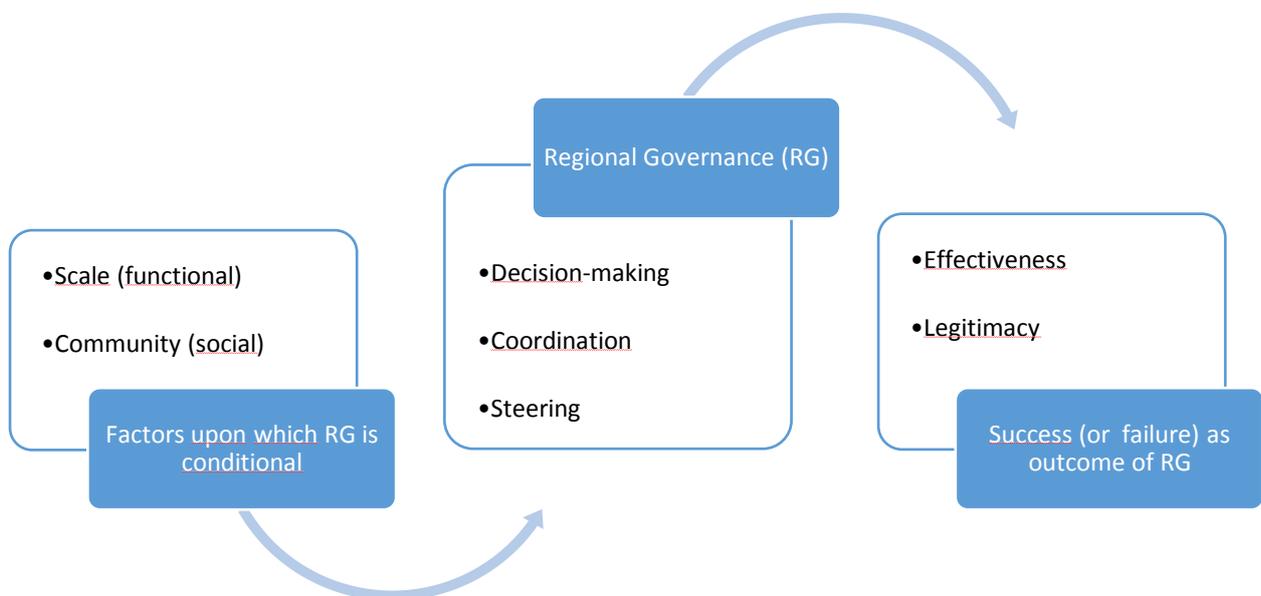
Moreover, differences between regions in governance arrangements can be understood by examining the objectives set. Changes in problem diagnosis and definition and objective-formulation may thus explain variation in governance over time. Problems and objectives, subsequently, influence the organizational and individual capacities employed for decision-making, coordination and steering on a regional scale (Lafortune & Collin, 2011; Nelles, 2012).

Regional governance, of course, is not just about harmonious collaborative processes (cf. Ansell

& Gash, 2008). It brings disagreement, resistance, and conflict. Existing centres of power keep playing a role. Regional governance is also regional politics. Moreover, it would be a mistake to think we know how to govern the region once we have a picture of the ‘daily urban systems’ or ‘functional urban areas’ (OECD, 2013) people move around in; or that an algorithm exists for optimal regional governance. Regional governance, then, relies on social factors beyond the scale argument, such as a sense of community, a level of homogeneity and the strength of social networks in a region.

As a condition, in turn, regional governance is posited to affect performance, or success. Success is gauged by effectiveness and legitimacy: have economic, social, and environmental goals been achieved, and are regional actors satisfied with the collaboration’s functioning? Whether goals are achieved, i.e., *effectiveness* (cf. Provan & Kenis, 2008), also depends on whether politicians and citizens consider problem-solving at a regional scale *legitimate* (Levelt & Metze, 2014).

The framework I propose (see figure below) shifts the focus to an analytical and, simultaneously, strategic perspective for acting at the regional scale across a range of transboundary problems and over time (Foster & Barnes, 2012; Groenleer, 2017; cf. Stone 1993; 2005; Moore, 1995; 2013).



Mixing methods and techniques

Methodologically, the project is both *comparative*, juxtaposing multi-actor and multilevel governance innovations to selected problems in carefully-chosen regions in OECD countries, and *longitudinal*, investigating transformations in such governance over time. It innovatively mixes statistical and empirical, historical and legal analyses.

Unlike much existing work on regional governance, which is rather abstract, the project will empirically examine problems that are concrete and transboundary: 1) spurring economic development and inclusive growth, 2) mitigating climate change and accelerating the energy

transition, and 3) reducing social inequalities and providing social care services. These are not fixed to one and the same location, but cross territorial borders, not fitting into one administrative category, but blurring the distinctions between policy fields.

Responses to all these problems seem to have important regional dimensions. In the region, the actual work is 'done'. In the region, actors come together to effectuate change in a hybrid way, incorporating network, hierarchical, and market elements such as: 1) multi-helix relationships (in a context of global competition), 2) grassroots or bottom-up initiatives (in a context of multi-layered administration), and 3) inter-municipal collaboration (in a context of decentralization).

Data for the project will be collected by studying documents depicting the various governance arrangements studied. Semi-structured interviews will also be held with relevant stakeholders. Document analysis and interviewing will be part of extensive and interactive fieldwork in the selected regions (cf. De Jong et al., 2016; Waardenburg et al., 2016). Close collaboration will be forged with practitioners, enabling a unique combination of real-life problem-solving, on-the-job learning, and cutting-edge research.

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What role for public governance in a globalised world?

Public governance in recent decades has in part been a success story.¹ Our knowledge of the sources of societal problems and the effect of policies – which constitutes a key ingredient of success – has increased considerably. For instance, the effectiveness of policies typically depends on citizens' behavioural responses, and the use of randomised controlled trials in pilot projects has greatly improved our understanding of whether policies actually work in the way intended (see Haynes et al. 2012; John 2017). This is far from the full story though. Effectiveness and efficiency also depend on the availability of resources (for instance, budgets for the appointment of sufficient and qualified personnel), the design of bureaucratic institutions (see, e.g., Miller and Whitford 2016), and the jurisdiction of the relevant authorities. It is the latter dimension – the dimension of territorial and subject-matter jurisdiction – that is posing increasing challenges to public governance; not so much because of changes in the jurisdictions themselves, but because changes in the broader environment have raised questions about the adequacy of the current jurisdictional structure. In this short memo, I have a look at the jurisdictional challenges which public governance faces, and at the implications for the future of public governance.

When discussing public governance, we tend to think of policy activities at the national level. This makes sense given that most public authority still lies at the national level. What is more, even in those policy areas where authority lies at another level – for instance, the local or supranational level –, national governments still play an important role in controlling and co-ordination governance (see, e.g., Jensen et al. 2014). At the same time, many of the problems that most strongly affect the lives of citizens, and that ask for collective action, are problems which national governments cannot tackle on their own. Obvious examples include environmental degradation and problems resulting from mass migration. Yet, the jurisdictional challenges go beyond these 'truly global' issues. The technological change and globalisation that contributed to these global problems have also led governments to face constraints in areas in which they traditionally had full jurisdiction. Fiscal policy has been particularly affected. Though we have not seen a full-fledged 'race to the bottom' (Swank and Steinmo 2002; Brys et al. 2011), today's levels of capital mobility have greatly limited to ability of governments to use taxation as a policy tool. As former UK Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne put it, "[i]n a modern global economy where people can move their investment from one country to another at the touch of a button – and companies can relocate jobs overnight – the economics of high taxation are the economics of the past" (2005). This is by no means unproblematic. As Piketty (2014) points out in his seminal work on the topic, without government intervention, our already high levels of economic

¹ Public governance is broadly defined here as the formulation and implementation of policies aimed at improving the lives of citizens through collective action (cf. Bovens et al. 2001b, p. 3).

inequality will still further increase. Another area which has been strongly affected is industrial policy. Though governments still have some discretion in this policy area (see, e.g., Bovens et al. 2001a; Clift and Woll 2012), their options are now heavily constrained. This may be less straightforwardly problematic than the limited tax options, but it impacts on employment and innovation, and it can have broader negative economic implications (see Rodrik 2008).

Hence, we find ourselves in a situation where the level at which public authority lies is often different from the level at which societal problems can be tackled. One important answer to this misalignment has been the creation of international agreements and organisations; for instance, in the field of trade policy. Yet, there are two types of limits to this option. First, the potential for agreement between states is largely contingent on the alignment of national interests. In practice, national interests often vary widely, and even in areas where there is a shared interest, collective action problems may hinder progress. For instance, even though Piketty considers a global wealth tax the best solution to the problem of growing inequality, he dismisses this proposal as ‘utopian’. In a similar vein, European initiatives for intergovernmental industrial cooperation have been hampered by conflicts of national interests (e.g., Trouille 2007). Second, the potential of international agreements and organisations is limited by the great and increasing public resistance to international and supranational governance, and preferences for policy-making closer to home. The rise of Euroscepticism is a case in point. Though affected by a range of different factors (see De Vries 2017), Euroscepticism has been reinforced by the increase in delegation of competences to the ‘technocratic’ supranational level, particular in areas which are less straightforwardly ‘technical’. Indeed, it seems unlikely that public support will build up for something like international or supranational tax policy.

Against the backdrop of these changes and constraints, what role can public governance play? Importantly, there are still many societal problems which can be dealt with at the national (and sub-national) level. Indeed, studies in comparative politics and public policy continue to find significant policy variation across countries, even when countries seek to tackle the same societal problem. In those areas, success in public governance depends crucially on the availability of resources (which is itself challenged by environmental changes such as aging populations), well-designed bureaucratic institutions, and good use of knowledge. But there may be more to public governance than this, particularly at the global level. That is, national authorities may make use of modes of transnational governance that go beyond international and supranational governance, and are more voluntary in nature, thus less likely to be publicly resisted. Two mechanisms seem particularly fruitful to me.

First, we have recently seen international policy convergence in areas where no international agreements and organisations were established, and where no policies were formally imposed on countries. One such area is competition policy. The past decades have seen a remarkable convergence of competition policy provisions, despite the fact that intergovernmental negotiations on a competition treaty failed. While coercion did not matter much in the process, other processes of policy diffusion – such as learning and emulation (see Simmons et al. 2006) – did play a role. These processes

were triggered by international epistemic communities, including international and regional networks of competition authorities, whose policy ideas subsequently fed back into national policy processes. Interestingly, bilateral trade agreements turned out to also play an important role, including more and more often a set of competition provisions (Laprévôt et al. 2015), which suggests that incremental change via bilateral treaties may form an alternative to an multilateral treaty. Although the exact mechanism behind such ‘voluntary convergence’ needs much more investigation, and may work only under certain conditions, such engagement in such convergence processes may provide national authorities with a way to deal with transboundary problems within the aforementioned constraints.

The area of global non-state policy initiatives provides a second example. Such policy initiatives target multiple countries, but are introduced by other actors than state actors, including collectives of for-profit and non-governmental organisations (and combinations of these types). Nonetheless, national-level authorities may make good use of such initiatives. Non-state policy initiatives have, for instance, emerged in areas such as labour and environmental regulation, where certification schemes such as the one of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) have been successful in promoting sustainability (see, e.g., Bartley 2003). Insofar as national governments support the objectives of such schemes, they can contribute to their success by making certification mandatory for public sector projects, including in tenders for public contracts.² They may also wish to participate in, or contribute to, the establishment of these initiatives. For instance, the Basel Accords are not strictly speaking intergovernmental agreements, but governments helped facilitate the Basel negotiations, and subsequently decided on the adoption of the financial regulatory standards in national policy processes. Again, such policy initiatives may only develop under some conditions, but they allow governments to make use of policy schemes which are, in themselves, non-binding, and thus likely to lead to less public resistance, but which can contribute to solving societal problems, particularly when governments decide to also be on board.

² The viability of such strategies was reinforced in a court ruling in the Dutch province of Groningen in 2008, when the coffee company Douwe Egberts challenged the provincial decision to include provisions on Fairtrade-certified coffee in its procurement policies, but lost the case.

UTRECHT WORKSHOP - SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC GOVERNANCE: 1-3 MARCH 2017

The Dark Side of Enabling Policy and Governance Success

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The writings and aspirations of academics and practitioners who seek ‘successful’ policies and governance systems are focused overwhelmingly on finding the ‘best’ tools, techniques, decision-making processes and organisational designs that will (hopefully) produce the desired results. There is a typical expectation that recommendations are legitimate, in the sense that a credible basis can be articulated for whatever tool/technique/ process/design is proposed, such as being derived from a weight of evidence, or tried-and tested elsewhere, or the product of rigorous academic study.

I do not wish to question any of the above. Rather, I want to supplement it by arguing that in reality, the pursuit of success often involves practices that not only may be in opposition to conventional wisdom, but in the extreme may be considered illegitimate – clashing with the cherished conventions of public policy and administration. Such practices are rarely written about or researched, but in many instances, I would argue that some successes are not possible without them – no matter how uncomfortable we may feel about such a contention. In the spirit of this ground-breaking workshop, therefore, my goal in this memo is to shine some tentative light and open discussion on the ‘dark side’ of factors that may help enable policy/ governance success, and to consider their potential advantages. Needless to say, the ‘dark side’ brings risks, each context is different and further discussion/ research is clearly needed.

Breaching Rules and Procedures

Large public bureaucracies are a mass of complex rules and procedures. They have developed incrementally over long periods of time, they may apply to some or all of the complex vertical and horizontal layers of the bureaucracy. Furthermore, some are developed ‘locally (for example at departmental level) while others are developed ‘centrally’ (for example at cabinet or chief executive level). Often, these complex rules, procedures and protocols either are ambiguous in their relationship with each other at best, or directly conflict with each other at worst. Also, very few individuals – if any – know all the rules and all the fine details of every single rule within their own jurisdiction. Breaching rules and procedures, whether knowingly or unintentionally is not only pragmatic reality in public bureaucracies, but it is often essential for a functioning bureaucracy seeking successful outcomes. Such breaches can produce success because they:

- Prevent vast amounts of time being consumed by all employees to check all the small print every time they act. Whichever we want to analyse the situation – from limits to bounded rationality or decision-makers simply ‘muddling through’- decision-makers simply do not and cannot seek out rules for every activity or decision
- Prevent the unnecessary exposure of rule inconsistencies, ambiguities and conflicts.

- Prevent bureaucracies grinding to a halt. I would go as far as arguing that if individuals sought to be informed and know all rules for every activity and decision, (compounded by the inconsistencies and rule conflicts that would become apparent), bureaucracies would be unable to function and perform their core tasks.

Pursuing Hidden Agendas

I have written in a separate (as yet unpublished) paper on hidden policy agendas. There is a dearth of research on the topic and there are many methodological issues requiring extensive discussion and research. Regardless, hidden agendas bring with them notions of policies being driven by goals that cannot be publically articulated. They also bring with them, impressions of illegitimacy and of misleading stakeholders and manipulating public process for gain which is not in the 'public interest'. Yet we should not think of all hidden agendas as defacto 'bad'. They may be in very many instances but I would argue that hidden agendas have a purpose – varying from the self-serving to institutional. We may like (or not) such purposes and undoubtedly there are some hidden agendas that almost everyone would consider to be illegitimate and unwarranted e.g. a planning minister taking bribes in order to alter decisions around new housing developments. Yet from a policy and governance perspective, if we want to think holistically we need to think about the ways in which hidden agendas can help actors and organisations aim for 'success'. Hidden drivers may include:

- Personal e.g. boosting career, financial benefit, positioning for election
- Party e.g. protecting reputation, dividing opponents
- Policy e.g. building alliances and keeping policy initiatives on track, protecting national security, managing an issue off the agenda, paving the way for bigger reforms
- Organisational e.g. positioning against rival bureaucracy, protecting reputation, positioning for budgetary settlement

I elaborate briefly on two of these. First, hidden agendas may be known and transparent to an inner circle of decision makers but hidden from other stakeholders e.g. citizens, lobby groups, media. To do otherwise would be counterproductive and risk the derailing of the decision or initiative. Second, all policies have varying degree of symbolic value, in the sense that they demonstrate that government is tackling an issue, taking control, demonstrating compassion and so on. Some policies (especially in responses to complex, wicked issues) have a high symbolic value. Often a government simply needs to be seen to be 'doing something', even it struggles to provide a deep, concerted response to a complex problem. At times, a hidden driver for governments is simply that they want to see a troublesome issue managed down or off the policy agenda. Hence, being 'successful' in agenda management and the business of governing may at times require hiding this fact from public discussion.

Doing Nothing

We often tend to concentrate on the active, interventionist aspects of public policy (including those measures which seek to cultivate success). Yet strategic inaction may be an

attempt to build success. Of course there is a debate to be had on deliberate restraint as being 'doing something', but the intent here is simply to conceive of ways on which deliberate inaction (as opposed to the active deployment of policy instruments, resources and so on) can be tactics for success. Some potential benefits include:

- Doing nothing in order to see whether a problem will escalate or wither away
- Doing nothing in order to wait for stronger evidence being available
- Doing nothing in order to wait for better timing e.g. election cycle, budgetary cycle
- Doing nothing in order to avoid antagonising key stakeholders who benefit from the status quo
- Doing nothing because 'doing something' will damage core ideological values and trajectory e.g. free market government not bailing out a declining industry.

Cultivating and Accepting Failure

I cannot think of a single public policy being framed as 'just a good idea', based on everything already working well. Unless there is problem or something isn't working (or at least portrayed as such) then there is no catalyst to do something about it. Therefore, aspiring to be 'successful' in policy and governance terms usually requires the existence of failure in one form or another. Many failures come to governments such as the policy that backfires, or the external conditions (such as financial crisis) which requires a rethink. However, contra to the flow of the policy cycle (and the public rhetoric of politicians and public bureaucracies) where we start with problems and working towards solutions, 'smart' governments and officials know (as per Garbage Can theory) that creating and cultivating a compelling and pressing policy problem can be the catalyst and legitimating factor for policy and organisational reform. Hence aspiring for success may at times, stem from cultivating and accepting failure. Examples include:

- Cutting the budget of a policy/program/unit/department/agency to exacerbate problems and cultivate the conditions (and demands) for reform
- Finding misdemeanours or breaches of procedure in order to build a case for 'constructive dismissal' of key personnel and install replacements more suited to the governance vision/trajectory
- Accepting failure of one or more aspects of policy outcomes, in the knowledge that it is the 'price to pay' in order to achieve successful outcomes elsewhere e.g accepting high levels of public dissatisfaction for compulsory purchase of houses in order to clear the route for building a new motorway.

I would contend that breaching rules/procedures, pursuing hidden agendas, inaction and cultivating/accepting failure is part of the fabric of policy making and public bureaucracies. Without wishing to detract from the 'light side' of public policy where most of our knowledge and understanding rests, there is also a 'dark side' - an often uncomfortable truth - where actors and institutions attempt to achieve success by pursuing the very types of activities and practices that jar with conventional wisdom in public policy and administration. In reality the pursuit and attainment of success often requires ignoring rulebooks, masking true motives, doing nothing while conveying the impression of impartiality, and creating/exploiting failure.

Mark Moore

Letter to participants and memo

Dear Colleagues,

I am very, very sorry not to be with you at this important gathering that Paul has convened. I was looking forward to it very much before I saw the shape that the conference was taking through Paul's expert leadership, and the quality of the scholars he had persuaded to attend. I was even more disappointed to be missing the conference when Paul forwarded me the memos that had been written for the conference. They were very, very interesting and important. I wanted to dig right into the discussion.

Since I could not do that, Paul suggested that I simply write something quickly as a kind of commentary on the memos I read. There is obviously a great danger in doing that. I had to read quickly so there was a great deal of nuance that got lost as I read through the pieces. I was also aware that I might be selectively reading the memos to see whether and how the memos were aligned with views that I had been developing over the years. Both of these facts threatened my capacity to give a completely accurate or faithful representation of the points each of you made in what seemed to me to be quite convincing ways.

Still, I owe a lot to Paul, and like you, am willing to do what he asked. So I quickly jotted down some notes that would have served as the basis for a little commentary on the subject of successful governance, stimulated and improved considerably by the memos you wrote. I don't think there is much new or important in this – mostly things you know and said better than I can. But I wanted to be a good colleague, and do my duty, and I have done so to the best of my ability. If the document has any use to you, I will be very glad. If not, I look forward to seeing how you can all drive this important work forward.

Again, my apologies, and perhaps more importantly, my sincere regrets for not being in Utrecht to discuss "Successful Governance" with such an interesting group of scholars.

Sincerely, Mark Moore"

Thoughts About Successful Governance

MH Moore, February, 2017

- 1) Governance is a term that could refer to many structures and processes. We could talk about the governance (and performance) of commercial enterprises, or political parties, or local charities and private clubs.
- 2) I will assume that the focus of this project is the governance (and performance) of state authorities/governments. A state or a government is by definition an institution that has sovereign authority over a geographic domain, and those individuals live, work, and travel within it. Some within the group are also citizens, and in democratic states, such citizens are granted significant rights to participate in the guidance of government activity voting, rights to assemble and petition the government, rights to be informed and consulted about proposed government action, and rights to complain if the government or others have abridged their individual rights.
- 3) The principal distinguishing feature of the state (and its most important asset) is the authority of the state. That asset can be used directly to require individuals in the jurisdiction to refrain from conduct that is judged to be damaging to the public interest, or to engage in conduct that is thought to be valuable. That authority can also be used to protect the rights of private individuals against action by other private individuals, or by the state itself.
- 4) While authority is the principal asset of the state, that asset can be quickly parleyed into other assets that are important in achieving social goals. Most importantly, it can be used to raise and spend tax dollars on behalf of achieving public purposes. It can also, therefore, provide tax advantages, or subsidize financial risks born by private individuals to accomplish important goals.
- 5) The state also has the latent capacity to convene a public discussion of conditions in the society that might need collective action carried out through state auspices, or other collective associations or unorganized groups present in civil society. in the state's jurisdiction from the actions of other to through the processes of representative government.
- 6) Most states create different tiers of government action, and the lower tiers of government retain the authority of the state. But those lower tiers of state activity often have different kinds of authority to make their own laws, to tax citizens within their domains, and to convene citizens for different public purposes.
- 7) Within states, and at different tiers among subordinate units of government, many different government organizations exist, each with their own mission and resources established through statutes and public policies that describe their main purposes, the means they will have available for pursuing those purposes (regulatory authority and money), and (sometimes) the principal means they will use to accomplish their desired purposes. These organizations are usually managed by executive branch, but called to account by both legislative institutions and courts, as well as the court of public opinion as it acts through the media.
- 8) The governance of government, then, might be said to consist of all the structures and processes in a given polity that nominate particular social conditions to be the focus of public attention, assess the problems to gauge their importance and priority and figure out what could be done, and

then organize social action using not only government agencies, but also other government instruments that can influence the conduct of private agencies to deal effectively with a given problem.

- 9) In evaluating whether existing structures and processes of governance are successful or not, one could look for evidence in three broad domains:

Level of Ambition for Successful Governance: Keep the Peace or Accomplish Social Improvement

- a. Minimum Standards: Preserve Civil Peace, Maintain Some Degree of Cultural Harmony and Civility (enough to maintain peace), Protection of Individual Rights and Provision for Individual Entitlements, Defense of Realm from Foreign Aggression or Domination
- b. More Ambitious Standards: Ability to Improve Social Conditions – to create a society that can both define and collectively pursue a vision of a more prosperous, more civil and sociable, and more just society than now exists

Performance Standards with Respect to Government Action to Improve Social Conditions

- c. State integrity: Reliability, Integrity, Zero Fraud, Minimum Waste, No Corruption
- d. State Capacity to achieve collectively defined desired outcomes using assets of state (and others as they can be mobilized and used)
- e. State capacity to generate steady Productivity Gains in Established Activities (operational process improvements)
- f. State capacity to notice and adapt to changing conditions – social states, political aspiration/will to deal with

Legitimacy Standards With Respect Procedural Rectitude or Citizen's Perceptions of Responsiveness, Fairness, and Effectiveness

- g. Ability to protect procedural rights to consult and complain: rights to associate/petition government, know in advance about what government is thinking of doing, be consulted on important changes, complain about individual treatment, protect rights
- h. Ability to enforce obligations with high compliance and minimal force
- i. Ability to sustain legitimacy in eyes of citizens (understood to be subjective judgments based on both procedural performance and on substantive performance)

- 10) Measurements of Success:

In trying to measure the success of government in dealing with collectively defined social problems, one must keep in mind the distinction between problems/social conditions society has already taken some responsibility to solve, and those that are now arising, or are now attracting public attention for which new public policies and new operational capacities must be built. This means that government, like the private sector, needs two ways of looking at its performance: the record of what it has accomplished in the past, and a record of the investments it is now making to deal more effectively with old and new problems. In "Recognizing Public Value" I developed the concept of a Public Value Account as the functional equivalent of the bottom line of what we have accomplished in the past, and a listing of the effects that would count as increased value in the future; and the concept of a

Public Value Scorecard which could identify the measures being taken to improve government performance in a dynamic world. These are briefly presented below:

a. Bottom Line: Public Value Account

	Individual Level	Aggregate Level
Utilitarian Framework	Client Satisfaction	Achieve Social Outcomes
Deontological Framework	Individual Rights Individual Obligations	Achieve More Just Society

b. Investments/Disinvestments/New Capacities: The Public Value Scorecard

	For Old Problems and Missions	For New Problems and Missions
Build Legitimacy and Support	Maintain/Increase Support	Tap Into Emergent or Build Political Support to Deal with New Problem
Build Operational Capacity	Improve Productivity	Invest in New Processes, and new Products and Services and new Measurement Systems to Allow effective response to new problems.

11) Innovating in Government and Governance

Because governance is concerned about the continuing capacity of set of institutions and processes to perform both against old and new problems, governance has to be particularly concerned with the processes of innovation in the production processes that government agencies, or government supported networks, use to improve the social conditions they have been assigned to improve. And it is here that we might find that we hold quite contradictory ideas of what constitutes good governance.

On one hand, we have an idea of good governance that focuses on bureaucratic integrity, demonstrated primarily through consistent compliance with established policies and procedures. That serves the cause of legitimating action procedurally very well, but not necessarily the cause of responsiveness to individual conditions or sustained productivity gains in improving the efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness and fairness of government operations. The reason is that this kind of accountability – so fundamental to the idea of good governance, and so widely lacking in many areas of the world – creates very little room for adaptation or innovation. We judge that we are performing well when we keep doing the same thing without necessarily being sure it is achieving our goals at all, let alone the best way to achieve the goals.

On the other hand, strong demands for accountability are critically important for successful governance. And, as government authorized and financed activities slip from the direct control of government managers and their elected and appointed overseers in the form of marketization, or privatization, or increased reliance on private/public partnerships or networked government arrangements, a certain amount of clarity about who is supposed to do what in exchange for what particular payments or authorizations is lost. Transparency is a virtue in its own right (since it reflects a “right relationship” between citizens and their government), but it is also instrumentally important insofar as it allows citizens

to call the government to account, and managers in government organizations to call their staffs to account for performance in the assigned tasks.

A large problem in governance, then, may well be the question of how to create the right kind of accountability that can reassure citizens and taxpayers that their liberty and money are being well spent to improve conditions that they have concluded are important enough to regulate and tax themselves to achieve, while at the same time allowing continuous adaptation, innovation and improvement in operations designed to achieve complex public goals. In short, to innovate in government, we will have to innovate in the structures and processes of accountability as an aspect of governance as well.

12) Focusing on the Political and Deliberative Side as Well as the Production Side

One last point: If successful governance is concerned with preserving and ideally improving the individual and collective conditions of a polity (that is both defined by and defines the state), then one of the things that we have to be greatly concerned about is the ability of the polity to identify important conditions existing in society that require some kind of collective/governmental response. The problems can be small or large, old or new, handled well within a particular government organization or require the aggregation of commitment, financing and operational capacity from across organizations distributed across sectors, and so on. The important question is what structures and processes work to nominate conditions as public problems, to decide whether the conditions should or should not be dealt with in the public or governmental sphere, and what would be the best social and governmental response. This is the work that comes before executive action to deal with the problem. But it has to do with government's capacity, aided and abetted by the open systems of liberal democracy, to notice and size up social conditions that are nominated for public attention.

In some sense, the quality of the processes that exist to identify and size up social conditions is analogous to the capacity of the private economy to recognize and respond to consumer demand. One of the things we like about markets is that they do work to allocate resources to wants and needs that consumers actually have (and have the money to pay for). The question is whether we have a sufficiently good capacity on the governance side to make judgments as to what social conditions are most important for us to address using the collectively owned assets of government. That is answered now by a combination of ideology, politics, and powerful but remarkably unexamined idea about what problems are "best, most efficiently handled" by the market and which by the state. (The voluntary sector is rarely considered in this analysis but one could view this sector as critically important in the functions of spotting social problems and beginning the process of building both the social and political will to deal with the problem, and advancing its knowledge about what means might be successful in doing so.)

It seems that everyone now knows that the state should be concerned about altering market outcomes only in cases where there are public goods, externalities, or information asymmetries at stake, and so there is often a somewhat tortured discussion to decide whether these conditions are present or not. But this ignores an important political fact which is that the state, and particularly the democratic state, is an instrument for organizing and advancing collective ideas about the kind of society individuals in the polity would like to occupy. That includes the question not only of efficiency (understood as the satisfaction of individual material desires) but also of sociability, justice and equity (which concerns the relationships among individuals in the wider society).

But the accurate empirical and theoretical answer is that citizens of a state can use the state for many different purposes. And the way in which we decide which purposes is not limited to technical judgments

about public goods (as economists define them), or externalities or information asymmetries, but includes individually and collectively held ideas about what we owe to one another, and what kind of society we would like to create and inhabit.

Thinking though the question of how we deliberate collectively on what each of us individually and all of us together would like to use our government for is as important to effective governance as finding effective and just means for dealing with the problems we have chosen to use government to solve. This is particularly true when our ideas of effective governance extend to both the broad idea of maintaining legitimacy in the hearts and minds of citizens (which is rooted in both proceduralism and effectiveness, I believe), and doing so in a world that wants reliable performance in responding to new threats as well as reliably dealing with old. Getting good at politics – at calling a “we into existence that can understand and act on its own interests” may be the essential capacity to allow the continuous adaptation of governmental policy and operations that can ensure its responsiveness to and its effectiveness in dealing with both old and new problems.

Successful Public Governance: Think Piece Memo

Charles F. Parker, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

SPG workshop in Utrecht in March 2017

Opening Reflections

The topic of success in public governance and how one can assess and explain it is important and intriguing. As someone who has studied policy failures and warning response problems related to complex negative events, such as the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks (Parker & Stern, 2002; 2005) and Hurricane Katrina (Parker et al. 2009), I know that we actually have some pretty good knowledge of the factors that contribute to policy failures. As the SPG project argues, what we need is more systematic knowledge of success, particularly with respect to performance, legitimacy, and endurance.

In various imperfect ways some of my scholarship, past and present, has tried to grapple with the issue of success and effectiveness as well. I have tried to assess the efficacy of international arms control efforts to control weapons of mass destruction in my dissertation, shed light on why the 9/11 Commission was an unusually successful post-crisis inquiry that unlike most such investigations had a meaningful impact (Parker & Dekker 2008), and make sense of the successful learning and reform that took place after the 2010 Icelandic ash cloud event which led to a better performance of managing a similar ash cloud event the following year (Parker 2015). One of the conclusions I can draw from these various studies is the importance of trust, which is key to both legitimacy and effectiveness.

This brings me to my current research project, Persona, with two colleagues at Uppsala University, Sten Widmalm and Thomas Persson, which explores the challenges the EU and its member states face in order to achieve more effective cooperation in the field of civil protection. Our first publication explored The project utilizes a large EU-wide survey among civil protection agencies and provides unique data on the cooperation structures that works well and what factors are associated with effective civil protection and crisis management, nationally and at the EU level. We have just closed our survey and are in the early stages of analysing our data. We think some of our preliminary findings on network organization and trust with relation to effectiveness might be of interest to this group.

The Effectiveness of National and EU-level Civil Protection Systems: Evidence from 15 Member States

A number of high profile crises and disasters have driven the EU to increase cooperation among its member states in the area of civil protection and to enhance its capacity to conduct civil protection operations in Europe and around the world. However, in the light of recent transboundary crises in the EU, manifested by the refugee crisis, terrorist attacks, and natural disasters, it is far from clear how effective such cooperative EU structures can be due to differences in way national civil protection has been organized, and the trust that exists within and between organizations. Using our survey data, with 670 completed surveys from civil protection and crisis management agencies in 15 EU member states, we are trying to shed light on the factors that promotes national and EU-level effectiveness in

civil protection and crisis management. I should note here is we are dealing with self-reported perceptions of effectiveness.

The crisis management literature has identified an array of challenges organizations must be able to address for effective and legitimate performance in times of crisis (Ansell et al 2010, Boin et al 2014, Boin and ‘t Hart 2010), In our survey we have chosen four core “performative dimensions”: **1) distributed sense-making** (the ability to overcome conflicting problem definitions in situations characterized by uncertainty), **2) coordination, cooperation and communication with other relevant actors**, **3) ability to respond appropriately**, and **4) surge capacity, supply logistics and scaling procedures**.

The research question we are exploring in relation to these factors is: What fosters effective civil protection and crisis management, nationally and at the EU level? Our aim here is to explore the relationship between two administrative models for civil protection, namely hierarchy vs. network (IVs), and civil protection effectiveness (DV). We depart from two articles: Boin et al. 2014, and Christensen et al. 2016, who both point at the importance of administrative organization and culture of CP and CM agencies. In addition, we also investigate a number of individual factors (IVs) – such as gender, education, training, experience, etc. that may impact the DV. So far we have put all the results of our performative dimensions together into an index and controlled them against our independent variables to see what, if anything, is correlated with perceived effectiveness. Below are the results for both the national and EU level.

Regressions:

1. Hierarchy + network (trust) vs. Efficiency National, with individual controls

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,511 ^a	,261	,250	,68365

a. Predictors: (Constant), Education:What is your level of education?, To what extent would you say that decision-making in the crisis management and/or civil protection institution where you work follows a strict hierarchy?1 (not at all) to 7 (to a very large extent), For how many years have you been working with crisis management and/or civil protection issues?, In general, people that I work with here, at my workplace, can: 1 (not be trusted at all) to 7 (be completely trusted), We would like to finish the survey with just a few questions about you First, what is your gender?, Have you had any direct experience working with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism or other EU crisis management organizations?, Have you been part of any training exercises or simulations with counterparts from other EU member states?

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta		
1	(Constant)	2,322	,203		11,446	,000
	In general, people that I work with here, at my workplace, can: 1 (not be trusted at all) to 7 (be completely trusted)	,264	,032	,340	8,220	,000
	To what extent would you say that decision-making in the crisis management and/or civil protection institution where you work follows a strict hierarchy?1 (not at all) to 7 (to a very large extent)	,203	,026	,322	7,772	,000
	For how many years have you been working with crisis management and/or civil protection issues?	,004	,004	,042	1,006	,315
	Have you had any direct experience working with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism or other EU crisis management organizations?	-,035	,083	-,022	-,424	,672
	Have you been part of any training exercises or simulations with counterparts from other EU member states?	,011	,087	,007	,131	,896
	We would like to finish the survey with just a few questions about you First, what is your gender?	-,047	,077	-,025	-,603	,547
	Education:What is your level of education?	-,004	,042	-,004	-,089	,929

a. Dependent Variable: DSMNA+CCCNA+ARANA+SSSNA

2. Hierarchy + network (trust) vs. Efficiency EU, with individual controls

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	,375 ^a	,141	,126	,84884

a. Predictors: (Constant), Education:What is your level of education?, To what extent would you say that decision-making in the crisis management and/or civil protection institution where you work follows a strict hierarchy?1 (not at all) to 7 (to a very large extent), For how many years have you been working with crisis management and/or civil protection issues?, In general, people that I work with here, at my workplace, can: 1 (not be trusted at all) to 7 (be completely trusted), Have you had any direct experience working with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism or other EU crisis management organizations?, We would like to finish the survey with just a few questions about you First, what is your gender?, Have you been part of any training exercises or simulations with counterparts from other EU member states?

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2,531	,274		9,242	,000
	In general, people that I work with here, at my workplace, can: 1 (not be trusted at all) to 7 (be completely trusted)	,153	,042	,173	3,661	,000
	To what extent would you say that decision-making in the crisis management and/or civil protection institution where you work follows a strict hierarchy?1 (not at all) to 7 (to a very large extent)	,207	,034	,286	6,007	,000

For how many years have you been working with crisis management and/or civil protection issues?	,000	,005	,001	,029	,977
Have you had any direct experience working with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism or other EU crisis management organizations?	,212	,107	,115	1,978	,049
Have you been part of any training exercises or simulations with counterparts from other EU member states?	-,150	,114	-,078	-1,317	,189
We would like to finish the survey with just a few questions about you First, what is your gender?	,242	,101	,114	2,387	,017
Education:What is your level of education?	-,078	,056	-,066	-1,391	,165

a. Dependent Variable: DSMEU+CCCEU+ARAEU+SSSEU

Preliminary Conclusions

To recap, we have explored the relationship between two administrative models for civil protection, hierarchy vs. network, and civil protection effectiveness, both at national and EU-level (also measured subjectively).

How then should we interpret these results? How much impact does the national organization of civil protection agencies have for how crisis managers value the effectiveness of national, and EU-level civil protection. What role does trust play? What did we learn about the other factors we also investigated?

This is what we find:

- Both the extent to which the national civil protection agency is based on hierarchy and networks, are significantly related to the way crisis managers value national and EU-level civil protection.
- The more hierarchical agency at national level, the more you consider the national civil protection system as effective. The more trust-based agency at the national level, the more you consider the national civil protection system as effective.
- The more hierarchical agency at national level, the more you consider the EU civil protection system as effective. The more trust-based agency at the national level, the more you consider the EU civil protection system as effective.
- The models explaining national civil protection have higher explained variance (explains more) than the EU-level models. Note, however, that the explained variance is lower than before.
- At national level, trust has a somewhat higher effect than hierarchy, whereas at the EU-level hierarchy seems to be somewhat more important.
- The individual factors (experience, education, training, and gender,) have no or little effect; except that having experience with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism has a significant effect on the way crisis managers value the effectiveness of the EU. Interestingly, joint training with counterparts from other EU countries had no effect. Finally, there is a gender difference concerning the EU-level, with women valuing and expressing greater confidence in EU crisis management.

One other interesting preliminary finding, one that relates to our first publication, which explored what role social trust and impartial public administration played with regards to whether or not citizens supported EU-coordinated civil protection (Persson et al. 2017). Our analysis in this article found that in countries where citizens are treated impartially by their own national public administration institutions, people are less likely to support EU-coordinated civil protection efforts. In contrast, in places where citizens perceive their government's treatment of them as partial and unfair, citizens will tend to support EU-coordinated civil protection. Our survey reveals an interesting difference among practitioners. Those that rate their national civil protection institutions as effective are more positive to EU involvement in civil protection, but those who rate their national protection institutions as ineffective are less supportive of EU involvement. Although I have some thoughts on

what explains this result, I will close on this interesting puzzle, which I look forward to discussing with all of you at the workshop.

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**Do we need a new round of social engineering?
Remarks concerning the future of public governance**

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Memo for workshop ‘Successful Public Governance’
Universiteit Utrecht, 1-3 March 2017

As suggested in the invitation for a memo, participants of the workshop ‘Successful Public Governance’ are allowed to make heretical propositions and outlandish claims in relation to success in public governance. Well, I take that liberty. My starting point is my own dissertation research. It involves a philosophical study into the paradigm of social engineering in the practice and study of modern public governing and public administration, and in contrast to that the possibility of modest public governance. In theorizing modest governance I study the ‘moderating potential’ of the recent ‘turn to practice’ in social theory. So, my analysis concerns the level of paradigms and my approach is philosophical. Moreover, I explicitly engage with a normative call for moderation in public governing. These principles also are the characteristics of my following remarks on studying success in public governance. The intention of my remarks are twofold: first I want to address some of my concerns regarding studying and practicing public governance, second I hope that these remarks contribute to sharpening the argumentation of the ambition and urgency of the study into success in public governance.

The content and ambition of the new research program on success aims to provide a new and more systematic and scientific understanding of how and why governing activities and strategies are successful. What does this mean, in a broader perspective? I think, reformulated in other, more meta- or philosophical words, this project and its ambition can be seen as a project that continues the practice of social engineering. A good deal of modern governing and its academic study have been concentrated on social engineering. That means: the ambition to create and sustain a ‘man-made-order’, the ambition to build a manufactured society, in order to protect it from tragedies. Central characteristics of social engineering are orientation on progress, instrumental rationality, effectivity and efficiency, a clear design, machines and mechanisms.¹ Philosophically understood the public and academic discussions on failure are a reaction to the

¹ See for example Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (1958); Alexander & Schmidt, ‘social engineering: genealogy of a concept’ in *Social engineering* (1996); Marin Terpstra, *Maakbaarheid en normativiteit* [social engineering and normativity] (1997).

loss of the possibility of social engineering. In short, a new orientation on success can easily be understood as a new round of social engineering. While this intention is not explicitly formulated as such, key-elements of social engineering can be found in the research proposal. For example, I read a strong orientation towards finding mechanisms that can explain success, which means finding ‘general principles from specific practices in a well-structured analytical manner’; the definition of success concentrates on the ‘instrumental dimension of performance’ (accompanied with legitimacy); purposeful design is crucial for success; one of the projects is about behavioural change/policy, which can be understood as the newest forms of social engineering.

In other words, this new orientation on success suggests that it is time ‘to move on’; after decades of studying failure it is time for a decade on success. For the practice and study of public administration and governance this focus on success is not very controversial. It appeals to the basic idea of our discipline: to contribute to a better understanding of governing and to provide the practice of governing with better tools and insights. I would like to argue, however, that this should be more controversial. I’m questioning whether this is the right way to ‘move on’ beyond the failure-discourse. In my view, a new round of social engineering is not the appropriate response. For this, I have two compelling reasons.

First, I cannot see why a new orientation on success necessarily follows after decades of (studying) failure. Yes, rhetorically it seems clear: as a consequence of years of talking about failure we have forgotten what success in governance means and therefore we have to study it again. From a more substantial perspective, however, I cannot see why it is the appropriate or the logic next step to research success again, to continue social engineering. In my view, it would be more reasonable to ask reflexive questions about the future of (the study of) public administration *beyond* the practice of social engineering (instead of *continuing* this practice). The project of social engineering has become (both empirically and normatively) problematic, so the basic question is: do alternative ways of operating in public governance exist, between on the one hand social engineering and on the other hand fatalism or apathy? How can public administration (and its study) become more moderate or modest?² To me, this seems to be a more appropriate reaction on failure.

I agree, public administration cannot live forever in postmodern irony (and extensive research on failure), but that does not mean that we have to return to social engineering. I also agree with the opening statement of the research proposal: “There is an urgent need for new guidance on governing today’s turbulent network societies: To inspire a next generation of researchers to find out what works under these circumstances and to guide a next generation of public sector innovations to formulate a fitting response to changing times.” But to me that guidance and inspiration is not and should not be (primarily) a new understanding of (socially engineered)

² Some interesting studies on moderation: Harry Clor, *On Moderation* (2008); Aurelian Craiutu, *Virtue for Courageous Minds* (2012)

success. Instead it should be a more reflexive understanding of our governing ambitions as societies and our role as public administration scholars. More inspiring than renewing social engineering is searching for public administrative perspectives that are able to tame our engineering ambitions.

My second reason explains more why I advocate for moderation. As far as I can see, the practice of public governing has not shown much reflexivity on the ambition of social engineering, in spite of the failure-discourse. In The Netherlands, and presumably elsewhere too, we experience an ongoing cultural and political drive for controlling society (e.g. Frissen on ‘interventionism’, the new focus on nudging).³ Our orientation on ‘happiness’ provided by government, as Hannah Arendt formulated it, has not faded away. On the contrary, some cultural philosophers have suggested that we are living in a post-postmodern era, or as they call it a ‘meta-modern’ era. In this meta-modern era, we are leaving irony behind us and are searching for new authenticity and engagement.⁴ I think they are right. In the political discourse this spirit becomes prominent in the rise of a new utopian spirit, in the political debates in The Netherlands as well as in international (public administrative) literature.⁵ This new utopianism is less totalitarian and more ‘partial’; nevertheless it adds to the ambition for social engineering the spirit of utopia. In other words: from the practice of politics and administration and from our *Zeitgeist* we cannot expect much moderation. Studying success in public governance would only stimulate this immoderate culture. As societies we have to learn some moderation towards controlling our fate, and if society cannot provide that herself, perhaps this is a job for scholars in public administration.

Some final remarks. I am aware that this implies a (totally?) different type of the study of public administration. Studying moderation means a more philosophical and critical-theoretical public administration. This could give our discipline a quite interesting future. Perhaps my analysis of the new research program was not correct, maybe it does not (want to) continue social engineering, and maybe my remarks are too heretical. In that case I would reformulate my comments into questions: what than is the ambition of this research program? And to which extent is studying success an appropriate response to the failure-discourse?

³ For example Willem Trommel, *gulzig bestuur* [greedy governance] (2009), Paul Frissen, *De fatale staat* (2013)

⁴ Vermeulen & Van den Akker, ‘notes on metamodernism’, in *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, 2010 vol.2, 1-14

⁵ Hans Achterhuis, *Koning van Utopia* (2016); Willem Schinkel *De nieuwe democratie* (2012); Rutger Bregman *De geschiedenis van de vooruitgang* (2013); Merijn Oudenampsen, ‘In defence of Utopia’, *Krisis. Journal for contemporary philosophy*, 2016 vol.2, 43-59; the Symposium in *Administrative Theory and Praxis* in 2015.

Leadership for success in public organizations: Reflections on leadership behavior, value alignment, visions and performance in the public sector

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The main ambition of this note is to present some theoretical reflections on especially transformational leadership in the public sector and provide some empirical results on how public leaders can achieve performance. The main questions addressed are: *How can we conceptualize successful leadership and performance in the public sector? How can leadership be successful in the sense of increasing performance?* Doing this, we hope to illustrate the potential synergies between the SuccessfulGovernance project and research focused on leadership and performance at the organizational level.

The empirical findings are based on one of the first field experiments on leadership and performance within the public sector (The LEAP project). 672 public and private Danish organizations participated, and 504 (75 %) of these leaders remained in the project until the last survey round. The investigated sectors were childcare, schools, tax and banks. The LEAP project involves extensive leadership training of direct leaders of employees (and for childcare also leaders of leaders). The participating leaders were randomly assigned to be trained in different types of leadership strategies (transactional, transformational, combined transactional and transformational strategies) or to a control group, which did not receive any training. In addition to surveys of the leaders and their employees shortly before (August 2014) and relative shortly after the training (August 2015), the project is able to assess the impact of leadership over time as a third survey was distributed among leaders and employees 15 months after the training intervention (August 2016). The impact of the training interventions has so far been evaluated using subjective measures of performance, but future results will include objective measures as well.

First, we discuss why the LEAP-project is relevant for the research suggested by the SuccessfulGovernance project, including reflections upon how to conceptualize success in relation to performance within a public sector context. Second, we provide our definition of transformational leadership and discuss why this type of leadership is relevant for public sector performance. Third, we present some key empirical results on how transformational leadership is related to employees' values and the alignment of employee and organizational values as well as results relating to how transformational leaders can increase mission valence. Finally, we discuss potential synergies between the two research agenda, also including some thoughts about future research in the LEAP-research group.

Success vis-à-vis performance in a public sector context

The SuccessfulGovernance-project conceptualizes success as requiring a two-dimensional assessment: (a) the instrumental dimension of performance – delivering smart processes and outcomes that dominant coalitions and/or democratic accountability forums regard as desirable and (b) the affective dimension of legitimacy – being seen to deliver desirable outcomes through institutions that are valued and practices that are considered appropriate. The LEAP-project similarly differentiates between processes (output) and outcomes and between instrumental aspects and aspects of the process that are desirable (legitimate, democratic etc.) in themselves as discussed below. A key difference is, however, that while LEAP focuses on the organizational level, SuccessfulGovernance also addresses the desirability of the broader institutional framework.

The conceptual framework for discussing performance in the LEAP project (Andersen, Boesen and Pedersen 2016) is based on six distinctions for classifying different performance criteria, and the

question of who determines the goals upon which leaders should strive to increase performance is the first and most important distinction. This is highly relevant for the Successful Governance project where not only performance per se, but also legitimacy are important parameters for assessing success as suggested by t'Hart (2016, p. 4). However, assessing which performance is considered legitimate by whom is by no means simple in the public sector characterized by multiple stakeholders, multiple goals etc. Hence, leading for success in the sense suggested by t'Hart (2016, p. 4) of ensuring performance and legitimacy involves reflections on who consider which outcomes desirable. The LEAP project departs from the assumption that (in representative democracy) politically decided goals are ultimately more legitimate than other types of goals for public organizations. This means that public managers are seen as able to lead for success when they increase performance for the goals set by the politicians. We do acknowledge that there are multiple accountability forums of relevance in the environments of public organizations, but the argument is that the *main* forum to which public managers are accountable is their political principals.

Positioning this assumption within the conceptual space of performance in the public sector as suggested by Andersen, Boesen and Pedersen (2016) means that albeit public organizations have multiple stakeholders, performing on the goals set by politicians is a crucial indicator of success. However, these political goals are formalized to various degrees. Further, they can be related to different aspects of the process and the product, they may be more or less subjectively conceptualized and measured, and they can target different levels, e.g. the performance of the individuals, the organization, a given policy program etc. (Andersen, Boesen and Pedersen 2016). In a representative democracy, we argue that political goals and hence performance criteria related to these goals should be given priority by public managers, but other important stakeholders and their goals can still be very relevant. Indirectly, citizen's preferences are reflected in the goals of the elected executive. Further, leading for success requires attention and active leadership of the values of the employees within the public organization and ultimately leadership that transforms employees' values in ways that increases alignment with the goals set by the political principals. Otherwise, and maybe particular in public organizations in which strong professional actors reside, public managers will not be able to affect and change employee behaviour. Albeit this argument may be equally valid for external stakeholders, e.g. the users of the organizations, the focus in this note is on leadership in relation to employees.

There may be norms and values within a democratic society which are 'above the politics of the immediate government' in the sense of being of relevance regardless of the ideological preference of any incumbent government, e.g. transparency, equity, due process etc. Leading for success can require that public managers consider this aspect, and the LEAP-project captures this by highlighting that performance criteria can also concern the process of providing public service. We thus acknowledge that achieving such values in production of desirable outcomes may be a goal in itself. This illustrates that leading for success in the sense of performing on criteria related to goals set by politicians is by no means the same as excluding other important internal or external stakeholders. In our understanding, successful leadership involves aligning different stakeholders' goals with political preferences as well as leading with attention to the wider or deeper values and norms characterizing the democratic society in which both the political principal and the public managers and his or hers employees are embedded.

For example, a crucial element in the LEAP-training of the participating leaders (regardless of the type of leadership strategy) was an emphasis on the fact that it is ultimately the politicians who sets the goals to be pursued in public organizations (and the owners in private organizations). In other words, leaders of public organizations are ultimately (most) accountable to the politicians. Below, we explain why we see transformational leadership as one way to ensure high performance in these public organizations.

Defining transformational leadership and its relevance of transformational leadership within the public sector

Transformational leadership has emerged as a central topic in public management research in recent years (e.g., Bellé 2014; Oberfield 2014; Paarlberg and Lavigna 2010; Trottier, van Wart and Wang 2008; Wright, Moynihan, and Pandey 2012). In line with the extant research in generic management literature (e.g., Jung and Avolio 2000), these studies see visionary behaviors as core characteristics of transformational leadership. Managers, it is argued, articulate, share and sustain attention to a vision for their organization. Doing so, it is assumed that managers are able to generate awareness among employees of the organization's core purpose and its significance. As a result, employees are expected to be better able to 'see' how they contribute to the overall objectives of their organization and its prosocial mission, in turn instilling a sense of task significance that drives employees' commitment and effort directed towards job tasks, and ultimately leading to increasing performance. In the research presented in this note, transformational leadership is defined as "...behaviors that seek to develop, share, and sustain a vision ... [with] the intention behind these behaviors as attempts to encourage employees to transcend their own self-interest and achieve organizational goals" (Jensen et al. 2016, p. 9-10). In the LEAP-project, we argue (and find) that this type of leadership is especially relevant for public organizations, because the goals tend to be more vague (thus needing clarification) and more idealistic (it is easier to be motivated to contribute to society than to generate profit for a private owner). In line with Goodsell (2011) and with our own emphasis of elected politicians as the ultimate accountability forum, leadership through visions in public organisation must be aligned and demonstrate responsiveness with the goals of the executives to ensure both performance and legitimacy.

Traditionally, transformational leadership has been conceptualized as multidimensional construct. Bass (1985) originally elicited four different components: Idealized influence, where leaders serve as a role model; intellectual stimulation, where leaders challenge established assumptions by employees, inspirational motivation – the articulation of an inspiring vision, and individualized consideration, where leaders demonstrate genuine concern for their individual employees. Our definition breaks with this perspective for good reasons. By focusing on visionary behaviors, the revised conceptualization accommodate core critiques identified in scholarly work (Yukl 1999; Van Knippenberg and Sitkin 2013). Jensen et al. (2016) discuss these issues in detail and they include, but are not limited to, confounding of cause and effect (e.g., describing transformational leadership behaviors by their proposed effects) and underspecified theorization of the interrelationships and distinctiveness of dimensions.

Focusing on the visionary behaviors, the revised conceptualization offers a more parsimonious construct for research. By clearly separating the transformational leadership construct from its proposed effect, our definition allows for rigorous analysis of transformational leadership and its effects on public service personnel and the performance of public organizations.

Leading for success: some empirical results

The relationship between transformational leadership and performance

Several existing studies indicate that transformational leadership positively affects performance (e.g. Jacobsen and Andersen 2015; Bellé 2014; Dvir et al. 2002). The LEAP project will, as mentioned, primarily contribute to this part of the literature when we get performance data on goal attainment from the official registers. We have already analysed the association for professional quality (a specific performance criterion where the professionals are seen as the relevant stakeholders) in a multilevel

qualitative study of 16 organizations (48 qualitative interviews and observation data from 16 days of following the leaders in their daily tasks). Specifically, this study (Andersen, Bjørnholt, Bro, Holm-Petersen 2015) demonstrates that an important part of transformational leadership is actually to obtain the same understanding of what high performance (here: professional quality) is. Another paper based on the same data (Andersen, Bjørnholt, Bro, Holm-Petersen 2016) shows that the vision content can be important for the association between leadership and employee motivation. This highlights the importance of context when we analyse performance effects of leadership.

Context matters for the effectiveness of leadership and ultimately for the success of public organizations (O'Toole and Meier 2015). This is the case for the governance context (t'Hart 2016, p. 5), e.g. the institutional design of any given polity in which an organization is positioned, but organizational context is also important. In the LEAP-project, we compare different types of service (welfare and financial services) as well as organizations with different ownership structure for the same type of service (e.g. private and public schools).

If we only investigate the average effects of transformational leadership on employee behaviors, we run the risk of 'underestimating' the importance of leadership in general (Wright, Pandey and Moynihan 2012, p. 212) and misinterpreting its role. Furthermore, as noted by Moynihan, Wright and Pandey (2012, p. 330; see also Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2014, p. 99) transformational leadership may reveal itself and its importance for performance and other outcome-orientated aspects of the organizational life in more indirect ways. This implies that 'effective institution-building leadership' (t'Hart 2016, p. 8) involves attention to both formal and informal types of institutions and institutionalised elements within an organization as part of the repertoire of 'levers' managers can 'pull' (Wright, Pandey and Moynihan 2012), in order to reach desirable goals. In this note, we focus on levers such as values and organizational visions.

Using visions to align perceptions of the desirable in organizational contexts

Core to the proposed effect of transformational leaders is the leaders' ability to use visions to transform employees' values in ways that align them with the organizational goals (Jensen et al. 2016). In contrast to standard economic theories, it is assumed that managers can make employees transcend narrow self-interested motives in favor of collective goals because achieving the organizational goals become intrinsically rewarding to individual employees. Visions and values are closely intertwined in this process since transformational leaders use visions to "direct and inspire employee effort by raising their awareness of the importance of organizational values" (Wright, Moynihan, and Pandey 2012, p. 207). Hence, the vision constitutes the lens through which leaders can draw a 'verbal portrait' of the future end states that are deemed desirable (ultimately by the political principals) for the organization. Following this perspective, articulating and sharing a vision does not simply mean that employees internalize the vision but also that they come to adopt the values embedded in the vision and attach personal significance to their achievement, e.g. in the context of public sector organizations as pro-social values that resonates well with public service motivated employees (Jensen 2016, p. 6).

Hence, as described by Jensen, "... one way transformational leaders affect employee performance is by "transforming followers' values to support the collective goals/vision for their organization" (Jung and Avolio 2000, 950). Pandey and colleagues (2015) recently termed this mechanism 'convincing others' but value fit (or value congruence/alignment) has been considered a key mediator since the inception of transformational leadership theory (Shamir, House, and Arthur 1993). Values refer to "conceptions, explicit or implicit,

distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action” (Kluckhohn 1951, 395). In other words, values depict what is considered desirable and transformational leaders seek to align employees’ personal values with those of the organization (value fit) by developing, sharing and sustaining attention to a vision that raise employees’ level of awareness about the importance and value of designated outcomes. ‘Clearing the line of sight’, the vision offers a tool for transformational leaders to draw and keep employees’ attention to the ‘verbal portrait’ which represents the conception of the desirable that the organization aspires to one day achieve and explicate the importance and value of the designated outcomes associated with this future end state.” (2016, p. 6-7). This theoretical argument resonates with the idea of leaders infusing their organizations with values put forward by Selznick (1957). As noted by Goodsell does this involve possession of a clearly defined mission, and an embodiment of the mission’s values...” (2011, p. 8).

Based upon these theoretical arguments, Jensen (2017) finds a positive, but not statistically significant direct relationship between transformational leadership and value fit. However, he further identifies a positive and significant moderating effect of perceived pro-social impact of employees’ work on this relation. Hence, transformational leaders are able to align values and ensure value fit when employees clearly see the pro-social impact of their work (Jensen 2017).

Further research by Jensen demonstrates the importance of value fit for performance. Based upon an argument, that “...if employees hold a conception of the desirable for other people and society that mirrors that of the organization, they are likely to see this future end state as intrinsically important and in turn be willing to invest greater effort in achieving designated outcomes associated with this future end state because its fulfillment bring about personal satisfaction. This resonates well with related research on mission valence and goal setting theory. Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) argue that employees perform well if they are attracted to an agency’s mission and perceive it as salient. Similarly, goal setting theory (Locke and Latham 1990) posits that task performance hinges on the importance that employees attach to organizational goals. Or as Wright notes, “if individuals do not perceive goals to be important, they have little reason to strive for achievement” (2001, 579).” (Jensen 2016, p. 7). Jensen does find a mediating effect from value fit between transformational leadership and performance, although only 19.2 % of the total effect of transformational leadership on employee performance can be accounted for by value fit (Jensen 2016, p. 18).

The art of communicating the vision to increase its attractiveness to employees

Based upon these promising results with respect to transformational leadership’s ability to, under some conditions, affect the values of the employee and align these with the organizational values which in turn seems to mediate some of the effect on transformational leadership on performance through articulating a desirable vision, the relevant question becomes how transformational leaders in the first place can increase employees’ attractiveness to the vision and hence make it desirable for the employees. The next empirical result to be presented in this note addresses this question by investigating the moderating effect of leaders’ communication behavior on the relationship between transformational leadership and employees’ mission valence, that is an “...employee’s perception of the attractiveness or salience of an organization’s purpose.” (Wright and Pandey

2011, p. 24). Although mission valence has been suggested to be a central dependent variable per se in public administration scholarship (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2014; Wright and Pandey 2011; Wright, Moynihan, and Pandey 2012), the relevance of studying mission valence further relates to the importance of visions as a mechanism through which leaders can affect performance.

Departing from an argument that the potential success of transformational leadership rests upon the communication behaviour of the leader as "...transformational leaders are expected to engage in an alchemy of exceptional change through the communication of an idealized portrait of what the organization aspires to achieve" (Carton, Murphy, and Clark 2014). This vision, in turn, increases employees' attraction to their organization's purpose, which ultimately is expected to be important for performance because employees invest greater energy and effort towards goals they perceive as meaningful and significant. But this causal chain of theorized behaviors stops if the leader does not communicate the vision, since "an organization's mission can only inspire those who are aware of its existence, and understand its importance." (Moynihan, Pandey and Wright, 2014, 95)" (Jensen, Moynihan and Salomonsen 2016). Hence, the authors bring communication behavior into the study of how transformational leaders may effectively convey the vision to the employee; an aspect albeit assumed of vital importance, has attracted relative low scholarly attention. Departing from media richness theory and insights from social psychological research, Jensen, Moynihan and Salomonsen (2016) argue, that public managers are particularly successful in conveying organizational values reflected as an attraction to the organizational vision to employees when they combine transformational leadership and *face-to-face dialogue* to communicate this vision.

Three theoretical mechanisms are expected to make face-to-face dialogue more effective than alternative types of communication. First, face-to-face dialogue provides opportunity to translate the organizational vision into goals that are meaningful for the employees. This is due to the fact that this media enables the use of multiple cues for interpreting the message. Second, the use of face-to-face dialogue allows both employees and leader to give feedback on each other's communication, which in turn enables the establishment of a personal focus between the sender and the receiver. This is important when differences in interpretations of the vision and goals arise. In relation to the arguments put forward by Boin and Christensen in relation to public managers ability to affect the process of institutionalization or infusing values into the organization, dialogue may further present an opportunity to monitor and assess the emergent norms and behavior following employees perceptions of the vision and ensure that they are indeed aligned with the vision the leader envisions for the organization (2008: 284).

Furthermore, bringing a personalized element to the communication of the vision enables leaders to close potential authenticity gaps in employees' perception of their leader's leadership. Third and finally, face-to-face dialogue promotes processes of employee self-persuasion as employees reflect on their contribution to the organization and its core purpose.

Using panel data from the LEAP-project, Jensen, Moynihan and Salomonsen (2016) find a direct and positive relationship between transformational leadership and mission valence and – importantly – confirm the expectation that communicating the vision through face-to-face dialogue amplifies the relationship between transformational leadership and mission valence.

Finally, it is relevant to mention that the leadership training actually had the intended effects (Andersen, Bøllingtoft and Jacobsen 2016) in term of changing the employees' perceptions of their leaders behaviour, especially for the participating public leaders (An et al. 2016).

Leading for success: further reflections and future research

Albeit agreeing with t'Hart (2016, p. 8) that "...public agencies are effective tools of government contributing to the public good and are viewed as such by their key stakeholders and the general public alike.", the leadership research presented in this note highlights that the understanding of what "the public good" means can vary between different stakeholders. The criteria of assessing success may be equally diverse. Whereas this may pose challenges to public managers in terms of satisfying and demonstrate accountability to the multiplicity of stakeholders, the leadership research presented demonstrates that this challenge may indeed be overcome with the right leadership strategy. Hence leading for success is not 'merely' demonstrating high goal achievement or ultimately reach any given outcome. It also involves leading for clarifying and aligning multiple values and goals related to perceptions of what is the public good. Further, this should be performed in a way, which maximizes the performance criteria related to politically decided and relevant goals and ultimately realizes the outcomes related to those performance criteria.

The various types of research presented above thus suggest that a promising way forward for public managers is to perform transformational leadership when aligning values, increase attractiveness to organizational visions and ultimately increase performance. And these positive effects can be achieved through leadership training in transformational leadership.

Whether a transformational leadership strategy is the most effective compared to other strategies, whether it can be even more effective when combined with other strategies, whether it also affects more objective performance criteria and whether this strategy are able to provide enduring effectiveness over time on the included output variables are some of the questions which remains to be addressed in the near future. Either way the empirical results presented here are steps forward in the academic endeavour requested by t'Hart (2016, p. 1) of providing evidence-based results of how administrative leadership can achieve successful public organizations in the sense of leading towards goals, which politicians perceive as desirable.

There is, however, still gaps left in the literature on public sector administrative leadership, even when the LEAP-project is finished in approximately one year. First, the link to political leadership is obviously important, and the element of "leadership of leaders" will only be touched upon briefly in the LEAP project. Second, although the LEAP project compares transformational and transactional leadership (and the combination of these strategies) we also need comparisons of non-leader centered, goal-oriented strategies such as delegative leadership, and it is also highly relevant to test the effects of more relational (less goal-oriented) types of leadership behaviour. Third and most importantly, we need comparisons of leadership effects in different national contexts, because especially cultural power distance can be theoretically expected to moderate the effects of leadership on performance. To begin to fill these gaps, we plan a new cross-national leadership field experiment in the future. It will include at least two types of organizations in three countries with varying power distance and focus on employees, direct leaders, top administrative leaders and politicians. The idea is to test the effects on goal attainment for direct and indirect goal-oriented leadership as well as for personality-reflective leadership. Especially for this future research, we see many synergies with the SuccessfulGovernance project, because it uniquely focuses on what actually makes the public sector work. Our organizational leadership focus combined with a broader and more institutional focus on successful governance will, as seen from our perspective at least, be able to generate many synergies.

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Short Memo: How to *govern* rationality and emotions in socially co-constructing successful collaborative *governance*?

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“For societies to work, their public governance needs to work” you stated at the beginning of your research project. With the same idea in our mind, during the last years, we have focused on service-delivery networks in an attempt to understand “how to make public networks really work” (to recall Provan and Milward 1995). More specifically, we tried to understand (1) how to define, operationalize and measure the network success, and (2) how to make public networks to succeed.

The following considerations draw, above all, on our own studies on service delivery-networks, in an attempt to offer food for thought, particularly about “how to assess and to explain successful collaborative governance” (Project 4).

How to define, operationalize and measure the network success: what we did in our studies

Since the Provan and Milward (1995) seminal paper, many authors have proposed various conceptualizations and measures of network success. Some focused on the success of the network from the partner organizations’ point of view (Provan et al. 2005; Kiefer and Montjoy 2006; May and Winter 2007; LeRoux et al. 2010), others took into account the entire network (Mandell et al. 1994; Provan and Milward 1995; Provan and Sebastian 1998; Keast et al. 2004; Van Raaij 2006; Lindecrona et al. 2009; Provan et al. 2009; Herranz 2010) and others still looked at matters from the community’s perspective (Provan and Milward 1995; Provan and Sebastian 1998; Cristofoli et al. 2015; Raab et al. 2015; Cristofoli and Markovic 2016). Some authors evaluated network success by looking at the network structure (Provan

et al. 2005), some considered the network processes (Mandell et al. 1994; Keast et al. 2004; Van Raaij 2006; Ysa et al. 2014), and others focused on the network output and outcome (Provan and Milward 1995; Provan and Sebastian 1998; Ysa et al. 2014).

Given this situation, in our research we attempted to wind a skein into a ball. In particular, by focusing on service-delivery networks, and taking Kenis and Provan's (2009) invitation to concentrate on the whole network, we tried to systematize the existing conceptualizations and measures of network success into a unitary and parsimonious model and to explore its construct validity. For this purpose a survey and a Structural Equation Model analysis were developed (Bentler and Weeks 1980; Gerbin and Anderson 1984; Anderson and Gerbin 1988).

The results of our study pave the way for some considerations about how to conceptualize and measure network success that require further investigation.

Conceptualizing and measuring network success seems indeed to be easier than one might think, we could say in a provocative way. According to the existing studies (Mandell and Keast 2007, 2008), in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of network success, it is necessary to combine the collaboration-related measures with the more traditional measures related to the network stability and output/outcome. However, the results of our study seem to suggest that those participating in networks pay more attention to the stability-related and output/outcome-related constructs of success. These considerations lead us to a conceptualization of network success that combines traditional and innovative measures, but mostly supports a traditional approach to network success: the ability of a network to survive and to achieve its objectives seems to be considered the most important indicator of success by clients (as Provan and Milward argued in 1995 and 2001), by network partners (as Provan et al. said in 2005) and by those participating in the network, as our study seems to suggest (Cristofoli and Maccio', *under review paper*). However, the collaboration-related measures

appear to have an important impact on network success, but they seem to be able to do it indirectly, through their influence over the network's stability and output/outcome.

As we said, our considerations were formulated by focusing on service-delivery networks and taking into account the points of view of those working for the networks as professionals and administrators. The kind of network under consideration naturally seemed to lead those working for it to pay more attention to the results of the network activity. It may be the case that in governance-networks, where the expected final outcome is coordination, decision formulation and/or problem solution, developing good collaboration between partners is considered more important, including by those participating in the network.

Next step: integrating the rational and the emotional in the social co-construction of successful collaborative governance

The title of this paragraph hopefully summarizes what we have in mind to move forward our understanding of successful collaborative governance. Above we have mentioned our studies on network success, where we have – even if using other terms – encompassed in a comprehensive model performance (in our studies the achievement of the expected output/outcome in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and equity), endurance (in our studies the stability of the network structure) and legitimacy (in our studies the availability of internal stakeholders, politicians, citizens and media to positively evaluate the service provision).

However, we are intrigued by the relationship you have purported between performance and legitimacy in Figure 1. It made us reflecting on the fact that legitimacy in our current post-truth, mediatized, agonistic societies is socially co-constructed rather than attributed by metrics or by network participants.

So, we offer two statements, three open issues and one paradox as food for thought to enhance the debate:

1st statement: performance and endurance of successful collaborative governance are concepts situated at a different level than legitimacy. Drawing from your conceptual model in Figure 2, we argue that performance and endurance are preconditions for legitimacy, but legitimacy is socially co-constructed at a later stage through judgements and narratives of actors and stakeholders (step 4 in the conceptual model).

2nd statement: we believe that context and contingencies play a decisive role to have successful collaborative governance. As a consequence, a significant contribution to the understanding of successful collaborative governance can be made by studies which explicitly identify the relevant factors, but combine them with contextual, contingent circumstances on one side and soft and human circumstances on the other side. Different combinations of all these elements may be more suited to enhance successful collaborative governance in different situations/timings. From this perspective, the development of a dynamic configurational theory of successful collaborative governance would be useful (Verweij et al. 2013, Raab et al. 2015, Wang 2015, Cristofoli and Markovic 2016).

Moving from our statements, we identify three main open issues: firstly, one of the emerging issue seems to be represented by the importance of non-formalized, intangible, “soft” factors for collaboration success, such as information sharing (Koliba et al. 2017), language of collaboration (Mandell et al. 2017), network culture (Vangen 2017), network trust (Klijn et al. 2010, Klijn et al. 2016), public branding (Karens et al. 2016), media power (Korthagen and Klijn 2015).

Secondly, an important, but still under-investigated factor is represented by the personal relationships among people working for the organizations involved in networks. In particular, the relationships between politicians and managers/stakeholders in governance networks seem to be worth of further explorations. Here, techniques of social network

analysis may shed a light on other relevant factors, such as for example the role of power amongst actors in networks aimed at collaborative governance.

Thirdly, another emerging issue is represented by the role of deliberate human agency (e.g. institutional design, network management, leadership) into structures of collaborative governance. In this perspective, further studies might be developed to investigate, for example, the importance of different network management activities in different collaborative settings, or whether it is more or less convenient for network managers to focus on different activities depending on the characteristics of their networks. The role of the network leaders and of leadership needs to be also further explored.

We come now to the final paradox. We particularly agreed with your idea to understand the social mechanisms by which governance success is assessed. We would like to add that we need to better understand the social mechanisms by which governance success is co-defined and co-created (or co-destructed), taking care of the wide range of actors, who nowadays might be part of collaborative governance arenas, such as for example citizens, lobbies, media, politicians, businesses, voluntary sector organizations, social enterprises and other relevant actors. In this sense, we see as one of the most interesting paradox that of *democratically governing* successful collaborative *meta-governance* by overseeing its rational and emotional element (the latter refers at the affective dimension of legitimacy through institutions that are valued and practices that are considered appropriate, March and Olsen, 1989). We say democratically “governing” to recall the fact the public institutions need to create new democratic arenas where those two elements (rational + emotional) are integrated in the social co-construction of successful collaborative meta-governance achieved through public policies, public agencies, and collaborative networks.

1476 words – References to follow

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Political robustness as driver of success in public governance

By Eva Sørensen

Success in governance is basically what governance researchers seek to understand and governments aim to achieve but it is notoriously difficult to define and evaluate. The difficulties have to do with two factors: governance is a multi-faceted and complex activity and success is a messy evaluation criterion (McConnell, 2010). The concept of governance is multifaceted in the sense that it refers to a process of collective decision making, as well as to the content of governmental policy programs and politics and administration as two radically different but nevertheless interrelated modes of operandi. Moreover, it signifies both micro-, meso- and macro-level operations, and these operations can both target specified tasks and a wider perception of public value production (Moore, 1995). Moving to success as evaluation criterion, success in the different aspects and levels of governance and modes of operandi and purposes do not necessarily go hand-in-hand, and there can be trade-off between them. To complicate matters further, success and failure tends to be a matter of degree rather than an either-or, and short term success might lead to failure in the long run and vice-versa. On top of all these difficulties related to define, measure and promote success in governance, comes the fact that the evaluation of governance is politically contested and thus in itself an aspect of governance.

In recognition of the difficulties related to conceptualizing and analysing success in governance, I will concentrate my efforts on one small aspect of the larger puzzle and reflect on the possible causality between success in governance and political robustness defined as *a political system's ability to position itself as nodal point in the authoritative distribution of values in society, and to secure the staging, making, implementation and defence of collective political decisions in a context ridden by political contestation between different political elites as well as between political elites and the members of the political community*. I suggest that the level of success in governance is related to the political robustness of the political institutions (polity), the political process (politics) and the content of the political goals and outcomes (policy) (Sørensen, forthcoming).

The political robustness of a set of political institutions hinges on to what extent and how demands in society are channelled into the authoritative political process. If strong social, economic and cultural conflicts, sentiments and demands are not channelled into the political process it affects the

political system's capacity to control and direct events. Although extensive access to raise political demands may in the short term produce input-overload, it also consolidates a polity's long term position as platform for making authoritative decisions and acting on behalf of the political community. Politics, defined as a process of political contestation between influence- and power-seeking political actors can also be more or less robust depending on to what extent the political proceedings are perceived as just and in accordance with well- established rules, habits and norms by those who participate as well as by the members of the political community. Political robustness in politics is also affected by the extent to which different political voices in society experience that their views and ideas have been considered and taken seriously in the political process (Sørensen, 2013). Although procedural restrictions and broad inclusion may slow down the political process, it can potentially reduce resistance and commit more political and social actors to support, or at least accept, the enactment of the decisions made. Finally, some policies are more politically robust than others. A robust policy is adaptable to changing conditions in terms of what is politically feasible in different contexts, and anticipates a wide range of the opinions, reservations, criticisms and contestations that are, or could be, voiced by different political actors, as well as by policy experts, interest groups, and relevant and affected members of the political community (Patashnik, 2009). Although a robust policy can be difficult for political actors to communicate because the sharp confrontational edges have been softened, the risk of implementation failure and resistance is low.

As indicated above, the political robustness of a political system can both reduce and advance success in governance and there are tough dilemmas involved at system-, regime- and actor-level. Although it is a key task for studies of the causality between political robustness and success in governance to scrutinise these dilemmas, I will use the final few sections of this Memo to briefly consider how robust polities, politics and policies can contribute to making governance successful.

Turning first to robust polities they are strong and undisputed authoritative sites for carrying out political battles aiming to define what counts as public value in society. As such, a robust polity grant governments the legitimate capacity to define, pursue and implement governance objectives and to do so with full force. A less politically robust polity such as the EU may find it comparatively more difficult to claim the position as authoritative centre for defining public value, do what is needed to get things done, and defending actions taken. In short, *a robust polity advances success in governance by securing that governments possess the authority and force they need to act efficiently to realize collective goals and solve wicked and unruly policy problems.*

Robust politics, on its side, *can potentially promote success in governance by reducing the sense of exclusion among those political actors who end up not getting things their way in the political battles where multiple political views, ideas and project are transformed into collective political decisions.* A political process that follows widely accepted and broadly understood political procedures, and address, recognize and reflect matters of great concern to different groups in society is one of the ways to alleviate a strong tension in liberal democracy: that a large minority tends to be excluded from political influence. When there are continuous disputes about the fairness and reliability of election procedures and other aspects of the political process and large parts of the population feel excluded from the political process, it reduces the likelihood that members of the minority, as well as those employed in the governance apparatus, will feel obliged and committed to accept, or maybe even take part in, the enactment of decisions made. In USA, the current questioning of the fairness and reliability of the electoral system as well as the turmoil around the balance of power between the president, the congress and the judiciary may end up reducing success in governance.

Finally, a robust policy content, which takes the political climate, a broad variety of cognitive insights and contextual variations into account, stands a fair chance of surviving the political turmoil in the media, and actually produce intended outcomes in different contexts. Extensive political and cognitive input early on in the policy process enhances the ability of political actors to formulate a policy that anticipates what political criticisms to expect, and what barriers to overcome in different contexts. Hence, *a robust policy promotes success in governance by increasing the likelihood that the policy will make it through the political process, survive media scrutiny and gain the intended impact in terms of goal attainment and public value production.* Less robust policies can be hard to defend and risk a quick termination or, maybe even worse, they may produce unintended consequences as in the case of the intervention of the Western alliance in Syria.

In this think piece, I have made some initial reflections on political robustness, and preliminary and sketchy as they are my intention has been to suggest that a comprehensive effort to study factors that affect success in governance could benefit from considering the political robustness of the political system.

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Successful governance of wicked problems?

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Currently, I am working on a paper that addresses the question how the concept of "small wins" could contribute to the debate of measuring progress in wicked problem domains. This note summarizes some findings and puzzles.

Wicked problems

Across the world governance scholars and practitioners are increasingly attracted to the concept of wickedness to characterise and resolve current governance challenges (Head and Alford, 2015; Termeer et al 2016). As originally defined by Churchman (1967) and Rittel & Webber (1973), wicked problems refer to a class of social problems which are ill-defined and continuously changing; where many actors are involved with conflicting values; and where the inseparability and ramifications in the whole system are thoroughly confusing. Due to the inherently incomplete understanding of problems and the high levels of interconnectivity, every policy intervention can have unforeseen consequences, and proposed "solutions" often turn out to be worse than the symptom.

Evaluation paradox

There is a growing body of literature, which suggests alternative responses to wicked problems such as frame reflective policies, collaborative arrangements, adaptive leadership, inclusive processes and network governance (Head and Alford, 2015; Termeer et al 2016). Furthermore, there is the question of evaluating the outcomes of these alternative strategies. After all, wicked problems cannot be solved and have no stopping rules. More realistically, results of efforts could only be expressed as "better or worse" or "satisfying" or "good enough." (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Evaluation thus inevitably involves a paradox of trying to judge solutions for problems that have "no solutions" and whereby "additional efforts might increase the chances of finding a better solution" (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Since Rittel and Webber, many public policy scholars as well as practitioners have struggled with this paradox (Duckett et al 2016). Most of them recall the tensions caused by the varied meanings and values connected to both the problem definitions and the solutions in a pluralistic world, and the feature that preferences are not given but shaped by action (e.g. Guba and Lincoln 1994; Hoppe 2011). Putansu points to complications caused by the fragmented governance context of wicked problems: "since the varied nature of multiple overlapping, and in some cases duplicative, efforts to address these wicked problems, no single agency does have oversight of all interventions" (Putansu 2015). Others (van Twist et al 2015) emphasize the interconnectedness of wicked problems, and the challenge to identify and appraise unanticipated (positive and negative) by-effects and unforeseen achievements of policies. A specific challenge of the feature of interconnectivity is the time lag or temporal disconnect (Head and Alford 2015). In general, rational-scientific evaluation methods are qualified as not suitable to provide balanced judgments for wicked problems, because they only fit the rare unambiguous contexts of tamed problems (van Twist et al 2015).

Tackling wicked problems does not only challenge the design of institutions, policies and responses, but poses challenges for alternative methods of evaluation as well. These findings result in calls for sophisticated and nuanced approaches to performance measurement and program evaluation. With this respect, Head and Alford (2015) suggest three important elements: a) more focus on the results end, because this allows more flexibility concerning the processes by which outcomes are achieved; b) attention for the complex feedback loops permeating these processes, and (c) greater focus on evaluating intermediate and precursor steps. Given the messiness of wicked problems, Ford et al (2013) emphasize that the evaluation challenges are unlikely to be fully resolved, and necessitates the development of diverse methodologies that can provide varied perspectives on progress. Besides some first thoughts, it is fair to conclude that thinking about evaluating strategies to tackle wicked problems is still in its infancy. Given the lack of solutions and causalities in wicked problem areas, we also prefer a focus on analysing progress above evaluating outcomes of strategies.

The concept of small wins

I assume that the concept of “small wins” could contribute to the debate of evaluating progress in wicked problem domains. Small wins are defined as “concrete, completed, implemented outcomes of moderate importance” (Weick, 1984). To date, the concept of small wins lacks conceptual clarity, is not extensively applied to the domain of wicked problems in highly politicized governance contexts, and is not deliberately related to evaluation practices (Ansell and Gash 2007, Jason, 2012; Rog, 2015; Termeer et al, 2017).

The concept of small wins was first coined by Karl Weick (1984) in his seminal paper entitled “Small Wins. Redefining the Scale of Social Problems”. Weick’s concept of small wins is inspired by Lindblom’s incrementalism and his ideas about small steps, changes or adjustments. Although Lindblom emphasizes that it is not easy to define small changes because it depends on the values attached to it, that differ from actor to actor and change over time, he suggests four elements of a definition 1) no sharp line between small and large changes, but a continuum; 2) two forms of small changes: a change in a relatively unimportant variable or a relatively unimportant change in an important variable; 3) a change is only small within a short time period, given the accumulation mechanisms; and 4) repetitive small changes differ from non-repetitive small changes (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963).

Small wins differ from quick wins. Quick wins are first-order changes where people take fast and easy steps to solve simple issues and gain easy victory (Bryson 1988, Weick, 1984). Quick wins are possible when issues can be successfully broken up in small pieces, but risk to cherry-pick the least wicked parts of problems. This is in particular problematic if policymakers subsequently sell or legitimize these quick wins as final solutions (Duckett et al 2016). Although the selection of small wins can be driven by opportunism and thus may resemble quick wins, they differ because in the end they go beyond picking low hanging fruit only and aim at in-depth change at a small scope (Vermaak 2013). Small wins thus target smaller, more manageable problems, but pursue significant changes. The transformation potential is thus the main criterion for admissible small wins (Urberlainen 2013). Another related term is early wins, which occur early in a process and are essential to keep people interested to participate. Warner for example showed that black farmers in South Africa were only willing to participate in new water management fora if they see the gain in participation in terms of food on the table (Warner, 2006). These early wins could belong to small or quick wins (Warner, 2006).

Good enough, clumsy and pragmatist solutions are also associated with small wins in wicked problem (Candel 2016). Good enough solutions are policies that aim to balance various objectives and thus go beyond true solutions for individual stakeholders. An example is a water management program that combines reliable and safe water supply, preservation of the wildlife, recreation, and esthetics of the river (Innes and Booher, 2016). A clumsy solution approach also departs from the need to accommodate plural viewpoints to evaluate outcomes, but in a more abstract way. Clumsy solutions creatively and flexibly combine four ways of organizing social relations distinguished by Mary Douglas’ cultural theory: individualism, hierarchy, egalitarianism and fatalism (Ney and Verweij 2015). Each of these perspectives includes ‘elements of wisdom and experience’ missing in the others, expressing the way some portion of the public thinks policymakers should act. Although in some circumstances, concrete small wins could overlap with good enough or clumsy solutions, the underlying rationale is quite different. In daily language, the concept of pragmatic solutions often refers to practical (not idealistic) or opportunistic solutions. If we consider philosophical pragmatism, with its focus on processes, recursiveness and the idea that organizations can produce significant change through relatively gradual processes, the underlying ideas are very similar with those of small wins (Farjoun et al 2015). However, and as far as I see, pragmatists do not use the concept of pragmatist solutions.

Strategizing, evaluating or both?

By itself, one small win may seem and stay unimportant (Weick 1984). They only become effective as part of a series of small wins, where small wins can amplify and cumulate into large-scale transformative change (Weick and Quinn 1999). An action has an amplifying effect on an initial small change, if it makes the initial small change larger or stronger or if it intensifies the small change or escalates its consequences (Plowman et al, 2007). Lindblom (1979) also refers to this non-linear mechanism of accumulation when he states that “a fast-moving sequence of small changes can more speedily accomplish a drastic alteration of the status quo than can an only infrequent major policy change”. Rittel and Webber were less optimistic about policies of small steps in the hope of contributing systematically

to overall improvement. They mentioned the risks of attacking a problem on too low a level, or on too short term, which both may result in making things worse, because it may become more difficult to deal with the higher problems and the longer term (Rittel and Webber).

Remarkably, Weick (1984) did not present his ideas of small wins as a means to evaluate progress but as an overall strategy to better deal with complex societal issues. He suggests a “strategy of small wins wherein a series of concrete, complete outcomes of moderate importance build a pattern that attracts allies and deters opponents” (Weick 1984). However, this strategy should not be mistaken for orderly implementation, because “small wins do not combine in a neat, linear, serial form, with each step being a demonstrable step closer to some predetermined goal” (Weick, 1984). He conceptualizes series of small wins more as a “post hoc construction” or a “retrospective summary that imputes a consistent line of development” (Weick, 1984). Hence, policymakers can go for a strategy of small wins but cannot plan or control it. This conceptualisation of a strategy of small wins does not distinguish between policy making and policy evaluation. Evaluation in terms of identifying and judging intermediate outcomes is an inherent part of the process of strategizing. This process is highly retrospective, more based on plausibility than causality and more focussed on in-depth understanding than performance measurement (Devaney and Spratt, 2008). The results of recognizing and appreciating small wins feed back into the policy process where they in turn enhance the further acceleration of small wins.

These ideas are coherent with the characterization of policy change as continuous rather than episodic (Rog, 2015; Termeer et al 2016; Weick and Quinn 1999). The conceptualisation of evaluating progress as an inherent component of trajectories of continuous improvements will inevitably conflict with existing evaluation procedures, routines and norms. In particular, tensions will arise if people insist that the way to deal with wicked problems is getting rid of turbulence, by reducing uncertainty, simplifying complexity, and resolving conflict .

It is important that those in charge for commissioning and conducting evaluation programs at least accept the explanation of the situation as a ‘wicked problem’ and the consequences enacted. If not, sophisticated evaluation programs lack a breeding ground. This touches upon the idea to distinguish between program, social science and evaluation theory (Rog 2015). Program theory focuses on the ideas of the evaluand and describes their underlying model or theory of change. Social science theory provides generalizable knowledge about social phenomena, such as behavioural change or wicked problems. Evaluation theory describes and prescribes how evaluators approach their work.

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Co-creation as a key to successful governance

Jacob Torfing

Success in governance is generally ensured by avoiding some of the most obvious problems, barriers and obstacles that far too often leads to governance failure. **This short paper identifies three important obstacles and discussed how they can be overcome in order to promote successful governance.**

Governance can be defined as the complex process through which social and political actors formulate and achieve common goals. Public governance is distinguished from private sector governance by aspiring to produce public value rather than merely increasing market shares and private profits. **Public governance** is challenged by the pervasiveness of wicked problems as well as a high degree of organizational fragmentation in the public sector exacerbated by New Public Management, long-lasting traditions for institutional separation of state, markets and civil society, and an ongoing displacement of political power upwards to supranational and international organizations, downwards to regional and local government and outwards to emerging cross-border regions. As such, **problems are complex and hard to solve and social and political agency distributed across organizations, sectors and levels.**

Public governance involves problem definition, design of solutions and careful implementation. Sources of governance failure can be identified in all three governance phases:

1. Many governance failures stem from the fact that **the problems confronting the public decisionmakers are ill-conceived and therefore cannot be properly addressed.** In our mediatized, high-speed drama-democracy in which elected politicians and their administrative aides are supposed to come up with nice, workable solutions that demonstrate their political capacity for swift action, there is little time to think about the scope and nature of public problems. Public decisionmakers often jump at the first and best problem definition and seldom have time to dig deeper and explore different angles that may help them to gain a deeper knowledge of the problem, its multiple causes and the trade-offs that prevent easy solutions. While efforts to learn more about a problem before attempting to solve it may sometimes result in a paralyzing complexity, it also permits public decisionmakers to put a new handle on the problem by redefining it in a way that makes it easier to solve.
2. In a public sector characterized by 'bounded rationality', 'muddling through' and 'path-dependency' the solutions to urgent societal problems often re-cycle old ideas and well-worn strategies. As a consequence, **we are failing to create the innovative solutions that are needed to solve the wicked and unruly problems at hand.** Indeed, for many years

innovation has been seen as an integral feature of the profit-driven private sector, but as largely irrelevant to the rule-based public sector. The lack of public innovation is a huge problem since wicked and unruly problems can neither be solved by the recourse to standard solution nor by sending more money. Cutting through the complex web of cognitive limitations and political deadlocks often requires the development, test and implementation of new ideas that disrupt common wisdoms and established practices.

3. While the failure to implement even the most well-intended governance solutions may derive from either from an inadequate problem analysis or the lack of innovative governance designs, it may also be **caused by the down-stream actors' lack of understanding, capacity and commitment or local stakeholders and target groups' ignorance, resistance to or attempt to sabotage the governance solution that is offered to them.** Hence, many governance solutions are implemented top-down without taking the needs, wants and knowledge of down-stream actors and local stakeholders into account. This means that the solutions that are provided are ill-equipped to survive the meeting with local actors and the conditions on the ground.

The lack of a proper analysis and definition of the problem or challenge at hand, the failure to think out of the box and design an innovative governance solution, and the inability of the up-stream governors to secure support from the potentially recalcitrant down-stream implementers, stakeholders and target groups do not only constitute major obstacles to successful governance, defined as the ability to solve urgent societal problem in world of distributed and shared powers. They also seem to call for the same response in terms of a **stronger and improved collaboration between relevant and affected actors** along both the horizontal and vertical axes. Rather than equating collaboration with a cumbersome search for unanimous consent that often result in solutions that do not go beyond the least common denominator, collaboration is defined as the search for a common ground that permits public and private actors to engage in a constructive management of difference that enables them to find solutions to common problems.

First, it can be argued that multi-actor collaboration may improve the **understanding of problems** subject to public governance. When actors with different vantage points, experiences and forms of expertise are involved in collaborative efforts to analyze and define problems, the simplified images presented in sensational news media stories will often give way for more well-informed, complex and holistic understandings that stimulate. There might not be a correct or an exhaustive definition of a problem, but there will certainly be definitions that capture more aspects of the problem, deeper understandings of the causalities implied and the dilemmas invoked by different solution strategies. Dialogue-based collaboration may succeed in putting a new handle on problems that opens up new perspectives and opportunities and may also generate a broad ownership over the problem and political commitment to solving it.

Second, it can be shown that collaboration between relevant and affected actors may stimulate the **development and implementation of innovative solutions** to wicked and unruly problems. Collaboration stimulates the development, circulation, revision and integration of ideas about how to govern society and the economy. It also facilitates a multifaceted evaluation of gains and risks that are associated with different solutions, and helps to mobilize resources and enhance pluricentric coordination based on a joint commitment to the realization of new and bold solutions. As but not least, the participation of manifold actors in processes of collaborative innovation may enhance diffusion of innovative solutions because the participants become ambassadors of the new solutions. The participants may also be inclined to contribute to subsequent evaluations and adjustments on the innovative solutions in ways that make them more robust and resilient.

Third, it has been demonstrated that collaboration between the central decision makers and down-stream actors in terms of street-level bureaucrats, local stakeholders and target groups may **enhance implementation** by permitting adjustments to local demands and conditions. Collaborative implementation strategies based on pragmatic experimentation, mutual learning and capacity building will often generate results that are superior to the usual forms of top-down implementation. Hence, the use of 'pathfinders' and the development of 'next practice' often give better results than the use of 'pilots' and 'best practice'.

In sum, collaboration between relevant and affected actors from state, market and civil society seem to offer a promising way of removing some of the key obstacles to successful governance. To put it differently, public governance may benefit from the **co-creation** of solutions to public problems and challenges. While co-production emphasizes the involvement of citizens in the production of pre-defined welfare services, co-creation takes a step further by emphasizing the collaboration between two or more actors in initiating, designing and implementing changes in public service systems and public governance. Hence, co-creation is not merely a method for joint service production, but may be elevated to a mode of governance. As a mode of governance, co-creation aims to transform the public sector from a 'legal authority' as defined by Classical Public Administration, and subsequently a 'service provider' as suggested by New Public Management, to an 'arena of co-creation' as currently envisaged by the advocates of New Public Governance. Analyzing this ongoing transformation of the public sector is the real challenge of public administration research; not least because it carries the potential of promoting successful governance.

Rethinking success and failure in Public Governance; on the importance of fit and skill

Willem Trommel

Intro

Assessing the results of public governance arrangements is an industry in crisis. There are numerous reasons for that –conceptual, normative, methodological, political- all documented in a vast academic literature. However, this short paper will not review that literature, as I believe the framework of ‘success and failure’ is obsolete, indeed.

Instead, I depart from two trends that explain where this crisis comes from. First, the ‘socialization’ of public governance. Governance has become so intensively interwoven with social life itself, that it is no longer meaningful to consider it an ‘external intervention’ that can be evaluated in terms of ‘social outcome’. Second, and partly opposite to the former, political expectations regarding the results of public governance have become so deeply unrealistic, that evaluations become meaningless: the often non-ironical standards that are used make that failure is the rule, rather than an exception.

These two trends are connected in a self-reinforcing yet unproductive way. Moral panic about the current social condition –societies adrift, institutional incapacitation, cultural fragmentation, declining levels of trust - induces highly ambitious modes of ‘greedy governance’, adding novel forms of intervention to social life, including network governance, community governance, self-governance, performance management and what have we more. This explosion of ‘governmentality’ simultaneously feeds the hope for new successes *and* the awareness of not knowing anymore if and how public governance makes a difference.

Hence, we must theorise and do research beyond the traditional ‘success and failure’ framework, to come any further. The paper suggests two lines of research are appropriate. The first one redefines ‘success’ as a problem of fit: which governance ensembles do play a late-modern melody and which ones sound out of tune? The second one perceives ‘success’ as a matter of skill: what makes a good melody sound better, or even thrilling?

Fit

The issue of fit refers to the degree of correspondence between governance and society. Thus, Max Weber coined the ideal-typical traits of ‘rational government’, based on assumptions regarding the social phenomena that shaped modernising societies: growing capitalism, belief in science, disenchantment of tradition, state formation. Rational deliberation on public values, legal-rational leadership and the iron cage of bureaucracy became the famous Weberian catch words for governance in the modern era.

Although modernity has changed dramatically since Weber's time, the idea of rational government appears surprisingly stable. It is true that numerous adaptations have been accomplished in institutions, instruments and processes -and scholarship shifted its focus from government to 'new modes of governance'- , but many of these efforts were not so much the outcome of a declining belief in rational planning and control, rather the opposite. Inspired by a neoliberal spirit, nation states started to consider themselves a 'business' striving for success in an increasingly competitive global/local economy. Hence, during the last decades, not the rethinking of the nation state and its 'misfit' to the changing social environment were on the agenda, but its survival as an socio-economic entity. This is what greedy governance is about: a managerial state, disciplining its citizens and communities into economically efficient ways of life. In Weberian idiom: a state derived from rational debate on values, but still rational, albeit in a highly instrumental way.

This state of *halbierter Rationalismus*, as Habermas once put it, delivers the frameworks that are still used to assess whether contemporary governance systems are successful or failures. As argued in my introduction, though, this has become a useless endeavour, for what is actually the matter is a severe problem of fit. Simple modernity has turned into complex modernity, or late-modernity, or liquid modernity, or post-modernity, or whatever we want to name it. The question that should be central is what public governance must look like in a world that is changing so profoundly.

Here are some telling examples of change:

- Cultural: fragmentation and diversity , return of religion, declining belief in science;
- Economic: the emergence of 'glocalised' interdependencies, growing inequalities, erosion of the fossil world;
- Political: decreasing steering capacities, falling levels of trust, growing 'emocracy' and populism;
- Social: individualisation; virtual interconnectedness; declining reciprocity

This is not the place to give extensive accounts of these trends; what I wish to stress is that we hardly understand their implications for the question of governing society. The renewal of governance as it occurred the last decade in many countries –often in the form of 'localization', decentralization, participatory democracy, performance management- could be considered an effort to introduce post-Weberian mechanisms, but actually we have no idea. It might just as well be fully part of the neoliberal agenda, and even if it was a true search for modernization, we do not know if the right choices have been made. In short, we need more and better research into the issue of fit.

What I propose is to develop projects in which Weber is rethought from the perspective of the 'late-modern condition'. What does 'fit' means nowadays? Once we have a better understanding , comparative empirical studies can be done that aim at identifying cases and conditions in which a promising , post-weberian form of public governance seems to flower.

Skill

Exploring a 'late-modern' conceptual framework for public governance is useful, as this may provide a clue of the direction we have to go. Yet, it will remain highly unclear how the classic Weberian architecture can be transformed into something that better fits contemporary social conditions and challenges. Can we define a 'transitional mode of governance' that brings praxis further, without running the risks of disruption, crisis and armed conflicts?

As argued elsewhere (Trommel 2013), my assumption is that useful transitions are being crafted in a new social sphere consisting of collaborating actors with one foot in the 'old world' (professionals, managers, civil society organisations, politicians, interest organisations, and so further), the other on improvising ground. These crafting communities embody a shared interest in 'building something new' and as such they establish a new 'quasi-political' vehicle that can act locally and internationally, outside the formal domains of policy making. As Adler and Hecksher (2006) have convincingly argued for the private sector, novel forms of (knowledge-oriented) collaboration are currently emerging under conditions of growing global economic complexity and uncertainty. A similar argument is plausible for the public sector. Both in private business and in the public domain, actors experience a growing 'knowledge- interdependency' in matters of innovation. From this awareness, the willingness to share, as well as growing involvements in co-creation, arise.

All this requires improvisation, conceived as team-work in an ensemble, departing from a familiar tune and hopefully growing into something new and beautiful. However, as we know from jazz music, improvisation may fail and/or end up in cacophony. Numerous skills are needed, as indicated by the use of the terms 'crafting' and 'craftmanship'. Richard Sennett (2008) argues that craftsmanship provides a general framework for 'good work'. From this view, 'public craftsmanship' is a normative concept, stipulating both a preferred, artisan way of doing things and a set of crucial beliefs, values and virtues.

Regarding work methods, Sennett emphasizes that the craftsman has no blueprint for action. There is probably a vague plan –an image of something new, something beautiful, something that fits- but often it is not a precise destination that defines the act. The craftsman will trust his trained intuition and profound knowledge of materials and instruments, acquired in many years of exercise, to overcome the problems that continuously pop up underway. By means of careful trial-and-error, novel solutions are invented, a process that can also inspire him to change the initial plan in mind. That is, by constantly shaping and reshaping his materials, the craftsman will experience that problems start 'talking back', opening up new horizons.

The artisan way of doing things also represents certain values and virtues. First, it can be seen as a value in itself to let 'practise speak for itself'. This general idea is neatly related to the work of Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), who argues that 'social practises' reveal an inner logic. Whereas work may be managed by extrinsic goods (financial rewards, bonuses, penalties), it can also be fuelled by the

intrinsic goods that lie hidden in the history of an established practice. From this basic, artisan principle - to do justice to 'practice' - , other virtues follow. For instance, Sennett talks of 'devotion' (take the work seriously) and 'imperfection' (accept the likelihood of failure; erring may be highly instructive and inspiring). Next to that, 'modesty' is important (not all materials can be reshaped, not every problem is manageable). Modesty refers to a practical wisdom that involves the special faculty of 'knowing-when-to stop'. If the sculptor does not stop in time, he might undo his previous efforts and spoil his work after all.

However, we hardly know to what extent ideas like these are relevant to the real-world-problems of reinventing public governance. We need to do much more comparative studies in which the following questions are central a) which types of 'public collaboratives' have emerged in the 'global/local realm thus far? b) which factors explain success and failure in terms of public governance reform and c) which conditions are relevant to the emergence of public craftsmanship skills?

Successful public value creation by municipalities

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Introduction

Within the ERC-project on Successful Governance, this project focuses on Successful Local Governance. The Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG) is partner in this project. The goal of the project is to gain insights in how municipalities can increase their public value creation. The research will be executed with a close link to practice.

The study focuses on three themes, representing the variety of issues municipalities have to deal with:

1. The labor market integration of disabled people
2. Housing
3. The changing role of local councilors because of the current governments' need to involve citizens more in their policies.

A comparative case study will be conducted. For each theme 3-4 municipalities that are relatively successful will be selected as cases. For this study the VNG explicitly wishes to use a public value perspective for defining and studying the successes of Dutch municipalities.

Public value perspective

The public value literature consists of different 'streams' (e.g. Meynhardt et al., 2017; Bryson et al., 2014). An important distinction is between Bozeman's literature on *public values* and Moore's literature on *public value creation*. This study focuses on the literature of Mark Moore as it connects most to the project's aim to provide lessons for municipalities how to improve their public value creation. Characteristic for Moore (e.g. 1995 and 2013) is his focus on *public managers* seeking to create public value. An important statement of Moore is that public managers can increase their public value creation by taking the *strategic triangle* into account. In his book *Recognizing Public Value* Moore made an important step in measuring public value performance by presenting the Public Value Account. In this book he also further developed his 'strategic triangle'.

The public value perspective is increasingly popular among practitioners and scholars (see for example: Bryson et al., 2014; Williams and Shearer, 2011). The fact that the VNG wishes to take a public value approach underlines this. Despite the popularity of the public value perspective there is still too little clarity about the measurement of public value and there is lack of empirical research. Bryson et al. (2014, p. 453) for example state: "In order to make progress [...] scholars should address the challenges to current formulations, in part through further conceptual refinement, the development of suitable typologies and measures, and rigorous empirical testing".

The ambition of my study is to deliver an empirical contribution to this body of literature and to develop a framework to study the public value creation of municipalities. Moreover, the comparative

approach of this study - with local government organizations that share similar challenges in comparable settings – sheds new light on the relation between the components of the strategic triangle. I am currently in the final stage of designing the research. Next week the empirical work for the first pilot case starts, which focuses on labour market integration of disabled people. In April Scott Douglas and I present a theoretical paper at the IRSPM conference titled *Discovering public value in local government: A framework for assessing the value of labour participation programs*. In the following part of this note I will address two key questions in designing my research which are on my mind in this stage.

How to make a *national* comparison of successful *local* public value creation?

In my project I aim at identifying municipalities that are relatively successful in the execution of their tasks. Success can from the public value theory be defined as *creating relatively much public value*. This implies that we should be able to define and measure the public value a municipality creates. However, at this stage I am confronted with two challenges.

First, national benchmarks that compare the performances of municipalities work with only one definition of public value. The available data is mostly concerned with the execution of *national laws*. For example in the Netherlands for the labor market integration of disabled people there are data about how many sheltered workplaces or '*guaranteed jobs*' municipalities have created. But what if the local preferences are not congruent with national norms? Some Dutch municipalities value care for and social inclusion of disabled people more than inclusion in the labour market. And other municipalities have developed alternatives for sheltered workplaces and are therefore relatively unsuccessful in the national benchmark. But on the other hand these alternatives can be highly valued in their own municipality – the authorizing environment. How should that be 'judged'? How to value successfully executing national laws in relation to valuation by the local authorizing environment? And is public value creation about performance or about managing and convincing the authorizing environment?

Second, defining municipalities' success in public value creation asks for in-depth research. Moore states that what public value should be created is highly contextual. Public value theory emphasizes that government organizations should provide public value that is 'authorized' by their environment. In a local context, this implies that there is strong local component in *what* public values should be created. So for determining the extent to which a municipality is successful it is necessary to have insight in the local preferences of a municipality. This requires in-depth research which is very time consuming and already a big research in itself, instead of only a case selection step.

Going beyond the strategic triangle?

This project seeks to understand why some municipalities better succeed in creating public value than others. In this phase of designing my research I wonder which literature/factors I should take into account when studying successful public value creation by local governments. The public value theory of Moore focuses on the role of the public manager and public value management in explaining public value creation. The 'strategic triangle' should help in explaining differences in public value creation between municipalities. But to what extent does the strategic triangle allows for a comparative approach? And is 'testing' the strategic triangle ambitious enough for this study? Or are there other theories that are interesting to take into account? If yes, which?

Conclusion

Both for practitioners and scholars it seems valuable to conduct a comparative case study focusing on the backgrounds of successful public value creation in Dutch municipalities. In this note I briefly described my research plans and identified one of the challenges I'm struggling with: how to use the strategic triangle – with its contextual definition of public value – in a comparative approach. As I am now in the phase of finalizing my research plan I would like to invite all attendees of our seminar to share their suggestions with me.

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Successful legitimacy strategies of regulatory agencies

PhD project plan, part of the

ERC Successful Public Governance program

Participants: *Lauren Fahey (PhD student); Judith van Erp (promotor); Scott Douglas (co-promotor)*

Start date June 1, 2017

This description is a very early draft of the project plan. All comments and suggestions are welcome at j.g.vanerp@uu.nl and s.c.douglas@uu.nl .

The regulatory task

An essential feature of 21st century regulatory agencies is that they have multiple audiences with conflicting interests and values, and ambiguous goals (Yeung 2009), such as protecting citizens and consumers from harmful business activity on the one hand and enabling innovation and economic growth on the other. Agencies have multiple audiences and can never satisfy them all - in fact satisfying one audience often means upsetting another; and they rarely receive the means required to fully fulfill the aims imposed on them (Boin & Christensen 2008). In particular in globalized markets, national regulatory authorities are but one and often minor player, and success is realized in horizontal networks.

Moreover, the legal framework in which regulators operate, often contains open and ambiguous norms that require interpretation in interaction with stakeholders. The law is often more a starting point than a clear basis for enforcement, as regulators operate in layered pluralistic and multilevel legal regimes that may even compete with each other. Massive space exists for societally harmful business behavior in grey areas or legal loopholes. Enforcement, or even 'compliance' therefore is often not sufficient as a societal outcome: regulatory agencies are expected to protect and prevent damage. However, enforcement agencies who interpret the law liberally for precautionary action against businesses risk to be seen as overzealous by market parties.

Ultimately, the ambiguity of risks and harm generates deep insecurity about the outcomes that regulatory agencies should achieve, in particular in markets with open norms in rapidly innovating and technologically complex and globalized environments (financial markets; mining; gambling).

Regulatory activity is therefore always deeply contested. The three main challenges for public agencies are to maintain a broad basis of support in a 'richly textured' political environment with a variety of audiences; to maintain the organization's course despite inevitable criticism and adverse conditions; and

to balance consistency and flexibility (Carpenter & Krause 2011). A strong legitimacy could help agencies to navigate these challenges.

Strategies for legitimacy

Two connected elements of a regulatory strategy seem particularly important in creating success in this complex environment. First, a clear definition of the public value an agency stands for, and the realization of this mission, bolsters the regulator (Moore 1995). Public value is defined in a process of proactive *construction*. Regulatory agencies are more likely to be successful when they produce outcomes that not only work, but also align with values and norms in their environment, evaluating whether these outcomes remain valid in a dynamic environment. In other words, successful agencies are legitimate if their actions are considered desirable, proper and appropriate within the social norms, values, beliefs and definitions (Suchman 1995). We can however still learn more about the ways through which regulatory agencies construct such visions of value and the corresponding legitimacy.

Second, and closely related, regulatory agencies can actively develop their authorizing environment, encompassing more actors than just their political principals or regulated industry. Public value theory posits that public managers should proactively manage the relation with their authorizing environment: 'summon the authorizing environment into existence' (Alford et al 2016), and stretch their influence well beyond their formal authority. The relation with this authorizing environment determines the regulators' license to operate and, thus, its success, both by creating a shared understanding of a regulators mission, and by granting the formal and informal power to realize it. Little is known however on what meaningful relations with stakeholders actually look like and how these relations should be managed.

Research question

*How do regulatory agencies **construct** and **manage** their legitimacy in the face of a variety of stakeholders, conflicting values and external pressures? How does this legitimacy influence their performance?*

This project thus focuses on the question what strategies for 'environment management' successful regulatory agencies employ, what constitutes their success, and how fruitful relations between regulatory agencies and their environment, trickle down in organizations and enable enduring successful performance.

This project will address relations between:

- A. Regulatory agency stakeholder relation management strategies; transparency; media communication; internal organization & staff profile; resources & capacity reputation protection mechanisms; accountability strategies

Please do not circulate

- B. Reputation, autonomy; independence of regulatory agencies; relation with authorizing environment
- C. Performance; (enduring) success; public value
- D. And vice versa

The project will initially focus on regulatory agencies within a single regulatory culture, preferably the Netherlands. Comparative analyses with other countries; other agencies; or other aspects of public sector management, can be initiated in collaboration with international partners.

The research questions will be answered through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. In the first stage, a medium-n set of agencies will be constructed to gain a first quantitative insight in their characteristics and performance. In the second and most elaborate stage, the researcher will conduct extensive in-depth case studies of a small-n selection of agencies to explore their stakeholder strategies and organizational dynamics. In the final stage, these findings will be connected to a wider set of regulatory agencies.

Next to the starting point in Public Value Theory, the project will be informed by various bodies of literature. This includes responsive regulation; bureaucratic reputation theory, accountability theories and stakeholder relation theories; scholarship on regulatory autonomy/independence, capture, transparency, communication strategies and media relations. This scholarship informs the research with the following questions and focus points:

Good stakeholder relations while avoiding capture and maintaining independence

Regulators need support from their stakeholders, but a good working relation with stakeholders brings the risk of capture, cognitive closure and group think, resulting in the realization of easily attainable and satisficing outcomes rather than the sustainable solution of wicked problems. Those regulators that are *seen* as most successful may therefore be best in serving powerful interests. See theories of legal endogeneity: as the law is always ambiguous and requires interpretation, compliance is always constructed, and the adoption of a particular construction may stem from public legal institutions deference to ideas about law and compliance that have been developed in business sectors (Gilad 2014; Edelman and Talesh 2011). Which strategies exist to avoid this?

Formal independence is not a very reliable indicator of actual independence: there may be more political interference than the law allows, or, non-legal determinants of actual independence may play a role, such as an organization's salience or size or the political tradition in a nation (Koop & Hanretty 2012). In line with these studies, we will not focused on formal independence, but on the causal chain connecting formal independence to actual independence.

Multiple accountability relations

Accountability research has often departed from the perspective of a principal – agent relation. This perspective however fails to meet the empirical reality, in the sense that the image of a ‘secretive’ agent who hides information from the principal does by no means justice to the reality in which many regulatory agencies proactively go beyond their mandatory requirements. Formal incentives for accountability are much less deterministic of accountability practices and outcomes than the principal agent perspective assumes (Busuioc and Lodge 2016). In accordance with Busuioc and Lodge (2016) therefore, we depart from the perspective that ‘accountability – in terms of both holding and giving – is about sustaining one’s own reputation vis-a –vis different audiences’. We will ask ‘who can call whom to account for what, according to which normative standards, and why...’ in the context of how political communities develop, accept, and apply normative criteria for assessing behavior and results (Olsen 2013) .

This asks for explicit scholarly attention for stakeholder management and presentational and communication strategies of regulatory agencies, a topic that has been less frequently addressed than other parts of their strategy. Accountability is not a dual relation between agency and citizens or political principal: given the multiple audiences, third parties such as media or NGO’s that use and translate the information become important parties. The subsequent question is how bureaucratic reputations impact actual behavior of regulatees (Capelos, Provost et al (2015).

Transparency, about what and to whom, and through which media?

Transparency can contribute to successful governance when it enables collaboration with stakeholders. Yet regulatory agencies struggle with the question what information to provide, how, how much, how often and with whom to communicate. There is sometimes a tradeoff between transparency and effectiveness: negotiation, informal discussion, consensus building and compromise and deal making are hampered by transparency, which may lead to rigid position taking or invites political meddling (Cain 2016).

The assumption is that successful agencies have developed *meaningful* ways to communicate with their stakeholders, and have managed to find a balance between transparency, confidentiality, and information overload (Douglas & Meijer 2016). Also we ask how regulatory agencies have actively developed and managed stakeholder relations, in particular relations with citizens and/or civil society – interests that usually don’t represent themselves as forcefully as business or industry. We might assume that productive citizen and civil society relations are not a result of an adequate *response*, but of *proactive and interactive design*. They seem actively crafted and developed in frequent interactions that go way beyond mandatory requirements, and we want to study the strategies of those regulatory agencies that have successfully managed to do so. This means that transparent organizations not only have effective legal

arrangements for transparency; procedures; or operational and organizational conditions; but also communicative skills; perceptions and attitudes of those public managers that engage with transparency.

Media and framing

It is important to realize that what counts as success and failure is a discursive construction, and determined in a discursive environment, as success and failure are defined within discourses (Van Assche, Beunen & Duineveld 2012). We should therefore distinguish actual performance from the discursive configurations in which performance is assessed. Agencies have a certain influence on being defined as successful or on success stories to spread, by using rhetoric and narratives. In this discursive construction of performance, the active use of media; framing; and media content produced by regulators and law enforcement authorities becomes a key component (Schillemans 2016). In particular for regulatory agencies, presentational and communicative tools develop from being supportive to regulatory activities to becoming a central aspect of regulatory strategies to enhance the legitimacy and cost-effectiveness of regulation (Yeung 2009; Van Erp 2017). This raises questions about the relation between persuasive communication and the truthfulness and transparency that we expect from government agencies, and how law enforcement agencies interpret the boundary between providing information, influencing and manipulating.

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(Double) research note: Autonomy, Performance and Legitimacy

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**Research note written in preparation to the Successful Public Governance workshop Utrecht,
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1. *Autonomy and control of agencies are crucial levers for meta-governance for agency success, but they are not easy to design due to their relational, dynamic and socially constructed nature (Verhoest 2017)*

Heavily inspired by structural choice theory (Moe 1989) or commitment theory (Majone 1997), a part of the agency literature has been oriented towards understanding the legal or formal autonomy of agencies, in particular regulatory agencies (see for example Gilardi 2008; Yesilkagit and Christensen 2010; Wonka and Rittberger 2010; Christensen and Nielsen 2010). However, many authors have noted that de facto autonomy of agencies does not necessarily fully correspond with its formal autonomy (Verhoest et al. 2004; Maggetti 2007; Van Thiel and Yesilkagit 2008; Hanretty and Koop 2012).

Although much of the abovementioned research considers agency autonomy as more or less static in kind and as a feature of the dyadic result between the agency and its political principals, increasingly there is scholarly attention for the dynamic and relational character of agency autonomy in a multi-actor and multi-level context (Maggetti and Verhoest 2014). It is more and more understood that agency autonomy can change over time, being a result of the institutionalization of an agency, its deliberate strategies as well as of dynamics on the side of the political principals. Wilson (1989) already pointed at the importance of a clear mission and identity in order to build up organizational power and legitimacy. Groenleer and others (Groenleer 2009; 2014; Busuioc, Curtin and Groenleer 2011; Yesilkagit 2004) have shown how agencies gain de facto autonomy through identity-building and institutionalization. In a similar line, building a strong reputation in the eyes of relevant audiences and embedding the agency in a strong network of support, enables agencies to forge more autonomy or to protect their autonomy in times of crisis (Carpenter 2001, Carpenter and Krause 2012). Similarly, the emergence of trust between an agency and its political and administrative principals may result in more de facto autonomy for the agency (Verhoest, Rommel and Boon 2015), while trust is being enhanced by more intense contacts and reporting towards their principal (van Thiel and Yesilkagit 2011). This indeed contradicts the commonly held belief that agencies will be reluctant to have close contacts with their principals in order to safeguard their autonomy, but it is in line with agencies acting as trust-worthy stewards (Schillemans 2013). Korinek and Veit (2015) dig more deeper in how these minister-agency relationships institutionalize over time, while Busuioc, Curtin and Groenleer (2011) shows that tailored accountability arrangements, which are acceptable to the actors involved, reinforce autonomy, whereas an inappropriate and contested accountability system has the opposite effect, stifling autonomous development.

This link between autonomy, reputation and trust connects with the increasingly acknowledged relational notion of autonomy. Agency autonomy is not only the result of the interactions between agency and its political and administrative principal, but also of it operating within supra- and transnational, national, regional and sectoral networks in which they interact with other agencies, stakeholders, the public and the media. For example, Yesilkagit and van Thiel (2012) developed an horizontal conception of autonomy suggesting that agencies interact with many other actors in the politico-administrative system and with societal actors: pressure groups, interest groups, consultants, public opinion, clients, target groups, the media, and so forth. How do these different actors and networks shape bureaucratic autonomy? Drawing upon resource dependency theory and trust theory, Rommel (2012; Rommel and Verhoest 2014) showed that coordination and collaboration between a regulatory agency and other regulatory agencies might have a dual effect: increasing dependencies from other organizations might reduce autonomy, while the same collaboration with other organizations might increase the legitimacy of the regulatory agency towards its minister as well as the trust of the latter in the former, resulting in larger de facto autonomy over time. However, the most substantial contribution concerning the relational nature of autonomy comes from scholars studying the emergence of the EU multi-level administration and the functioning of EU regulatory networks (see Egeberg 2006; Bach et al. 2016; Egeberg and Trondal 2009; Yesilkagit 2011;

Bach, Ruffing and Yesilkagit 2015; Bach and Ruffing 2013; Ruffing 2015) argues that this involvement of national agencies gives them the benefit of information advantage regarding negotiation information aggravating the control problem for ministers and enabling strategic behaviour by agencies. In sum, front-line research on agency autonomy increasingly focuses on the interactive dynamics between organizational autonomy and multi-actor influence (Maggetti and Verhoest 2014), as well as the strategies developed by agencies to accumulate autonomy in such complex environments (Zito 2015; Ossege 2015)

Related to all this, is the increasing recognition that agency autonomy is more a socially constructed phenomenon, arising from perception, interpretation and interactions by actors, rather than an objective reality. That has some consequences. Indeed, work by the COBRA network and others acknowledges the perceptual nature of autonomy, with the underlying assumption that agency managers will act upon the autonomy they perceive to have and the control or influence they perceive to be confronted with, rather than following the formal affiliation of their organization. However, most of the current research uses definitions and operationalization of autonomy and independence which are imposed by the researchers upon reality. However, if one argues that autonomy and/or independence only affects behaviour when it is perceived to be present, we should also know how respondents define and construct this concept in social interactions. This kind of research is only very recently developing with, among others, Jackson (2014) studying how regulatory independence is understood in the eyes of its beholders and with Korinek and Veit (2015) studying how during micro-practices of ministry-agency relations the agency autonomy is gradually constructed.

→ Consequences for research are:

- When studying well-performing and legitimate agencies one should have sufficient attention for the autonomy of the agency and the control by government as defining features of agencification. However, a multi-actor, longitudinal and constructivist research approach is necessary to grasp the relational, dynamic and socially constructed nature of autonomy and control.
- There is an urgent need to conceptually clarify the link between reputation, legitimacy and trust, their mutual relationship as well as their relationship with autonomy, performance and agency endurance.

2. *Autonomy and control of agencies do not have straightforward effects on performance or preconditions for performance*

A further issue regarding organizational autonomy that we have sought to contribute to is the study of the effect of the autonomy and governance of agencies on their organizational capacities, internal management and performance. Recently, there has quite some progress in studying the effects of agencification with rather mixed accounts as result (see for a recent overview, Dan 2014, Overman 2015). However, most studies consider agencification as one single phenomenon, although agencies might differ strongly in their combination of organizational autonomy and the way they are controlled. Hence, we studied the interaction of the variables constituting agencification, being organizational autonomy and control by the minister/government, and their joined impact upon organizational capacities, internal management and accountability¹. In sum our research found that the combination of managerial

¹ Within the framework of an FWO project (2011-2014) and an FWO post-doc (mandate of dr. Jan Wynen for the period 2015 – 2018) and using COBRA survey-data from multiple countries, we studied how de facto agency autonomy and agency control impacted upon change of organizational culture within agencies (Wynen and Verhoest 2015), the innovative culture and behavior of agencies (Wynen, Verhoest van Thiel and Ongaro 2014; Laegreid, Roness and Verhoest 2011; Verhoest, Verschuere and Bouckaert 2007), internal decentralization of decision making authority within agencies (Wynen, Verhoest and Rubecksen 2014), the use of performance management within agencies (Verhoest and Wynen 2016a; Wynen and Verhoest 2016), as well as the

autonomy and result control as propagated by NPM does often not work as predicted. The independent effect of both mechanisms on preconditions for organizational performance seems to be different depending on the precondition under review. Moreover, the joint effects of agency autonomy and control are often substantially different than their independent effects, with sometimes even resulting in negative joint effects.

Moreover, research clearly indicates that the effect of autonomy and control on agency performance is mediated by a range of internal factors within the organization like leadership, clear organizational goals, as well as a developmental and learning culture (among others).

→ Consequences for research are:

- A configurational approach is needed to explain agency performance taking into account contextual features, (perceived) agency autonomy and control as organizational features, and internal features like leadership and mission.
- Sufficient attention should be for unexpected and negative side-effects (as no organization can perform well on all dimensions).

3. *Structural design is an important meta-governance strategy when it comes to agencies. However, too frequent and intensive structural reforms seem to negatively affect perceptions of organizational autonomy and of some preconditions for performance*

For most public organizations, agencification or de-agencification is only one kind of structural reform they can be subjected to in their organizational life. In NPM and post-NPM reform programs, or through other politically imposed structural reforms, public organizations might face secession of organizational parts and tasks or complete splits, respectively absorption of other organizational units and tasks or complete mergers, as well as relocation of their tasks to subnational level (decentralization) or to the private sector (privatization). Due to subsequent administrative reform waves and other reforms several public organizations have a rather turbulent history of structural reforms, varying in strength, pace, severeness and consistency. The effects of an accumulation of structural reforms on the organizations and staff undergoing these reforms has been hardly studied in public administration research. Surely, there is ample research on the consequences of one specific reform on the functioning of public organizations and the stress, job satisfaction and motivation of their staff. But considering that different reform programs due to changing reform doctrines have been implemented in many OECD countries (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011), and that hence many public organizations may have been subjected to subsequent, multiple and partially conflicting reforms in their (recent) organizational history, the question of the effects of such structural volatility over time becomes particularly interesting.

In a recent paper (Kleizen, Verhoest and Wynen, under review) we found that organizations with high levels of structural turbulence over time will perceive their actual organizational autonomy towards their political principals to be more limited, compared to organizations with a more stable organizational history, even when they have similar tasks, legal status, age and size. We therefore state that intense

use of vertical versus horizontal accountability arrangements in these agencies (Verhoest and Wynen 2016b). In a separate trajectory Boon and Verhoest (2016) studied the impact of autonomy and control of agencies on their overhead.

structural reforms may inadvertently reduce public organizations' strategic policy autonomy through two mechanisms. First, intense sequences of structural reforms may lead to perceptions of a relatively controlling political principal (Zito, 2015; Busuioc, 2009). Second, they may reduce an organization's ability to accrue resources beneficial to autonomy, such as a strong internal culture, network embeddedness and expertise (Oliver, 1991; Carpenter & Krause, 2012; Barnett & Coleman, 2005). To increase de facto autonomy, agencies must build up reputations for themselves, and ground these in carefully constructed coalitions of political support, preferably from rather diverse networks. In line with Carpenter & Krause (2012) and Bach & Ruffing (2013) one could argue that organizations which have a highly turbulent history of structural changes have less capabilities to engage in networks. We examine this relationship in a sample of 44 public sector organizations, with results indicating that perceptions of strategic policy autonomy will indeed be detrimentally affected for organizations that undergo intense sequences of structural reform.

Another paper published recently in PMR (Wynen, Verhoest and Kleizen 2016) advances that a history of repeated and frequent structural reforms, irrespective of the underlying drivers of these reforms, has a negative effect on the innovation-orientedness of the organizational culture. In that paper we explored the link between an organization's history of structural reforms and the degree to which the culture within these organizations is innovation-oriented. Results indicate that organizational turmoil generated by repeated structural reforms reduces innovativeness, and suggest that too many structural reforms imposed in a too short time-span will have detrimental side-effects. More specifically, we state that as heightened levels of stress and uncertainty persist within organizations that undergo such sequences of structural reforms, they may move towards a more rigid, risk-averse and centralized state (Staw, Sandelands & Dutton, 1981; Dutton, 1986; Olson & Sexton, 2009). In turn, the stress and uncertainty caused by frequent structural reform may detrimentally affect the innovative behavior of the organization as risk taking, autonomy and support for innovative action become reduced (Borins, 2001; Mintzberg, 1983; Damanpour, 1991; Voorberg, Bekkers & Tummers, 2015). Although the side-effects of single-event structural reforms should gradually dissipate over time (Seo & Hill, 2005; Moore, Grunberg & Greenberg, 2004; Grunberg, Moore & Greenberg, 2008), we argue that organizations in highly volatile environments may not have the time to recuperate from past structural reforms before a new set of reforms is introduced (Pollitt, 2007; De Vries, 2013). In these instances, the positive effects of a single structural reform on innovativeness (see on this topic e.g. Wynen et al., 2014; Dan & Pollitt, 2015) may be outweighed by the continued stress generated by a sequence of multiple structural reforms within the organization. Thus, although a turbulent environment requires a high level of innovation and adaptation, the stress and uncertainty produced by frequent and severe structural reform may paradoxically be expected to reduce the level of innovation-orientedness of a public organization.

→ Consequences for research are:

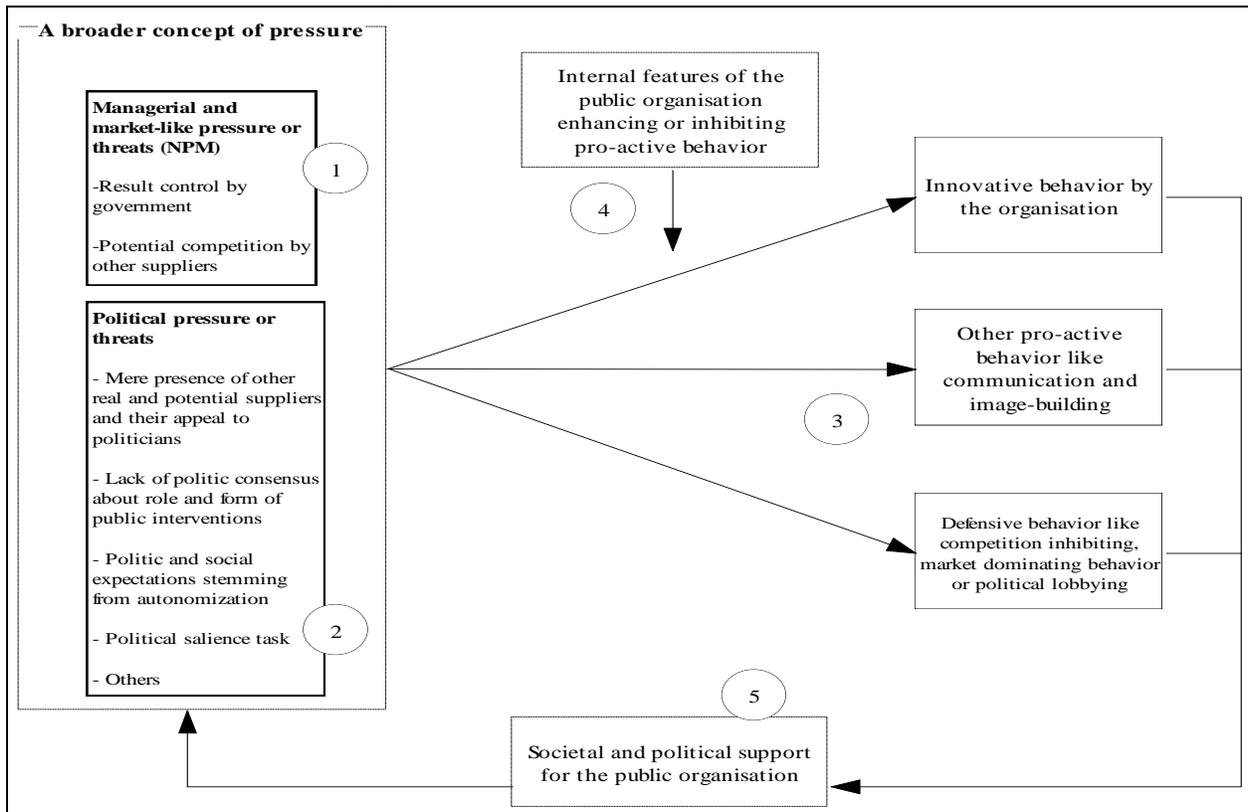
- Studies of agency performance should take a historical perspective, studying the history of (structural) reforms that the involved agencies have gone through, as previous intense sequences of such reforms might have long-lasting effects on organizational culture and resources.

4. *Legitimacy threats, challenging agency survival, might be the crucial driver for performance in the public sector, but such threats also may also induce undesirable behavioral strategies*

In one of our early attempts to test some elements of NPM-doctrines, we analysed (Verhoest 2002; Verhoest 2005; Verhoest, Verschuere and Bouckaert 2007) the effect of managerial autonomy, result control (including financial incentives) and competition as NPM-like pressures on performance and innovation by agencies. The case study research was on four public law agencies, which are constituted by parliamentary decree. They have a governing board which consists of a mixture of government and societal actors' representatives. The powers of the Portfolio minister and the minister of Finance to intervene within the decision-making of these public organizations are strictly regulated by the statutes of the organizations and corresponding legislation. Traditionally, the control system relied heavily on ex ante and input control, limiting to some extent the managerial autonomy and flexibility of the agencies. In the period from 1992 to 1999 the Flemish government changed its policy concerning the control of the public law agencies from an ex ante input orientation to an ex post result and market orientation. This was also the time scope of the four case studies.

The findings of the four case studies suggest a model with a broader framework of pressures or motivations of public organizations to innovate and perform well (see figure 1).

FIGURE 1 A political/administrative pressure-response model based on four case studies (Verhoest, Verschuere and Bouckaert 2007)



The numbers in figure 1 refer to the relevant conclusions (see Verhoest, Verschuere and Bouckaert 2007):

- (1) The managerial and market-like pressures as advocated by the NPM, i.e. result control and competition, seem to motivate public organizations *to perform well and/or innovate but only under very specific conditions*. However, these pressures might easily turn out to have unexpected negative consequences (e.g. cream-skimming, see a multitude of research on negative effects of performance management and competition).
- (2) More importantly in the context of this research note, there are also other pressures of a more political nature, stemming from *threats to the legitimacy of the public organization*. Such pressures may be raised by a multitude of factors which are not taken into account in the NPM-logic. 'Political pressure' comes from the (threat of a) decline in societal or political support for the public organization, which may be caused by factors like the mere presence of other potential suppliers (and their appeal to politicians), the lack of political consensus about the role and form of the involved agency, or the perceived political and societal expectations stemming from an autonomous agency status. As to the latter factor, autonomy in itself may be a cause for political pressure to perform and innovate. *The public managers of the public agencies under scrutiny did fear that a loss of legitimacy and support of society and political principals could result in a reduction of tasks, cut backs of resources, restructuration or ultimately, abolishment of the public organization*.
- (3) Moreover, innovative and well-performing behaviour is only one way public organizations may develop to both kinds of pressure. Elements of *other legitimization strategies are for example communication and image-building, competition-inhibiting behaviour, (sometimes symbolic) responsive behaviour towards the political principals, political coalition-building and lobbying, and goal stretching*. So, also less desirable responses (from the viewpoint of the political principal and society) are possible.

Suchman (574, in Cashore 515) defines legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the action of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions". In his work on for profit firms he points out that organizations seek legitimacy through "achievement strategies" that conform to the external audience, manipulate the external audience or inform unaware audience members of the organization's activities. Cashore adapts these concepts and strategies to a broader setting and gives examples. So, like Osborne (1998) points out,

"(...) Innovative activity is not the only way in which to gain legitimacy. Providing a specialist service, being a campaigning organization, or providing a key mainstream service could be equally valid. Indeed, some of the traditional organizations eschewed innovation quite purposefully, in exchange for one of these other sources of legitimacy" (Osborne, 160).

Our case studies showed that public organizations, in order to strengthen their legitimacy, can also choose for *defensive and reactive behavioural strategies*. Moreover, as is acknowledged by Osborne (1998), they even tried to *influence the environment in order to reduce the factors that cause*

legitimacy threats or to influence the criteria and frameworks of reference used by important stakeholders to evaluate the public organization.

This emphasis on legitimacy as a drive for organizations is not that new, and has been discussed thoroughly in the literature on sociological institutionalism (Peters; Scott). In particular, the work of DiMaggio and Powell on organizational isomorphism² and subsequent applications to non profit sectors are of importance here. Isomorphism of an organization to its institutional environment enhances legitimacy and by consequence, results in “greater access to resources, which reduces mortality rates” (Singh and Lumsden, 184 as quoted in Osborne, 46). In the DiMaggio and Powell perspective, isomorphism induces pressures to structural uniformity within an organizational field in coercive, mimetic or normative ways. Osborne (187) states that in order to explain innovation in non profit sector there is another pressure at work – “*a pressure to congruence with the prevailing expectations within the institutional field*”, what he calls instrumental isomorphism. In our case studies, there is evidence that the public law agencies oriented themselves quite strongly towards what they perceived as the expectations of their customers, interest groups and, sometimes quite indirectly, their political principals (or some factions of these principals)³.

- (4) Some internal features of the public organization, like e.g. the strategic vision and leadership capacities of governing board and top management, the internal control system and the organizational culture, may enhance or inhibit the capacity to react to these pressures.
- (5) The extent to which the public organization succeeds in restoring or enlarging societal and/or political support may result in an decrease of NPM-like or political pressure, or in a increase or at least a preservation of resources, tasks and autonomy.

→ Consequences for research and practice are:

- A thrilling research question is what basically motivates agencies to perform well. More than externally imposed control mechanisms, it might be that securing the legitimacy and support for agency resources over time is the most important motivating factor.
- Building a good organizational reputation through good performance as well as technical, moral and procedural capacities is only one strategy to secure long-lasting legitimacy and support. Some other behavioral strategies are not that desirable from a societal point of view, like defensive and influence/manipulative strategies (like window-dressing, political lobbying, market dominating strategies). When studying agencies with a strong legitimacy one should

² Meyer and Rowan with their theory of rationalized myths suggests that innovations with respect to organizational structures may be of a symbolic nature, with little effect on operations of the organization (1977).

³ However, it is interesting to analyze to what extent the prevalence of the innovation type that we have studied, could be explained by coercive, mimetic or normative isomorphism. If that is the case, one would expect that, for instance, the development of new products and services as a innovation type is relatively much more present within the groups of organizations residing under some ministerial departments, than within the groups under another departments. The minister and his department may play a major role in advocating such innovations for the organizations for which they are responsible. However, comparisons based on the departmental affiliation, showed no clear links between innovation and the mother departments. Also, the prevalence of the innovation type showed no clear link with the formal-legal types of organizations, indicating a low level of uniformity within these types as to innovation.

study all the strategies they deployed to build that legitimacy, including the less desirable strategies.

5. *Agency endurance might be the result of a well-balanced mix of legitimization strategies, of which performance-enhancing behavior is only one.*

Building on the same four case studies as referred to under point 4 (Verhoest 2002; Verhoest 2005), we found that service delivery agencies deployed basically two types of strategies to each of their two main audiences/stakeholders (political principals on the one hand and users/target groups/markets on the other hand) which each have their own performance criteria to evaluate the agencies.

- First, agencies could develop responsive strategies trying to fulfill the demands of that stakeholder, either
 - in a *moderate* way (responding to selectively to stakeholders' demands as long as they fit with the general mission and vision set by the organizational leadership through performance-increasing measures) or
 - in an *extreme* way (responding 'asap' to all demands of stakeholders irrespective of the agencies' mission, vision or values).
- Secondly, agencies could develop defensive/influencing/dominating strategies trying to influence stakeholders with respect to the performance criteria the stakeholders use to evaluate the agencies.
 - Deploying these strategy in a *moderate* way included proactive communication and reputation/image-building towards users and politicians and strategies to perform better than potential competitors like innovations which set new norms for service delivery
 - Deploying these strategies in an *extreme* way included outright political lobbying, chantage or undesirable market dominating strategies like predatory pricing, competition-limiting alliance-building.

This resulted in a four basic strategies, each with a moderate or extreme variant:

- A responsive strategy directed to political principals
- A influencing strategy directed to political principals
- A responsive strategy directed to users, target groups and markets
- A influencing strategy directed to users, target groups and markets

The case study research seemed to indicate that the agencies which combined all four strategies in a moderate variant succeeded best in securing their legitimacy, support and resources over time, while agencies deploying one or two of these strategies in an extreme variant succeeded much less in this.

Although until now we did not seek to find further support for this tentative finding, it does resonate with some in-depth longitudinal case studies (see the work of e.g. Carpenter 2001, Wilson 1989) which emphasize the need for a strong organizational leadership which can set a clear mission and vision, sufficiently adaptable to changing context and with clear strategies to strengthen reputation and coalitions of supporting stakeholders.

→ Consequences for research and practice are:

- Is there indeed an optimal generic set of behavioral strategies for agencies to secure their legitimacy over time in the long run? And what is the role of performance-enhancing strategies and reputation-building strategies in this? Can an agency survive deploying extreme responsive or influential behavioral strategies?
- If this holds, one could *devise a new way of controlling agencies with a minimum cost, building on this basic motivation to secure long-term legitimacy with core audiences/stakeholders*. If one assumes that agency heads seek ways to build long-lasting legitimacy both with political principals and with users/target groups, one could think of a periodic system of evaluation of the support for this agency with these core stakeholders. In such a controlling system, the agency would not get predefined concrete performance targets beyond a generally formulated legal task. The idea is that the agency itself will organize the interactions with both stakeholders in such a way that itself in consultation with these stakeholders will define clear performance goals and performance-enhancing strategies, which reconcile the demands of the different stakeholders with a clear long-term mission and vision of the agency. No monitoring costs would be incurred by government, except for this periodic evaluation system which basically captures the perception of both stakeholder groups whether the agency deserves the stakeholders' support. This could be a recipe for an agile way of organizing agencies, which could avoid the trap of too rigid performance goals/contracts stifling innovation and change over time. However, challenges are paramount as one needs to devise such a periodic evaluation system in such a way that the way and degree to which the different stakeholders are represented give the desired signals and incentives to agencies. This resonates to some extent to the debate on horizontal accountability of agencies and how vertical accountability relates to that (see work of Mark Bovens and Thomas Schillemans).

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Public governance success – Suggestions and thoughts from a research process perspective

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The discussion about the conditions for successful public governance undoubtedly is foremost linked to the debate about the reasonable assessment of the dependent variable – success of public governance. Obviously, this is not a debate purely taking place under a public-policy-scholar-perspective, but represents the core of politics.¹ This ‘debate-dichotomy’ for defining the concept of success of public governance underlines the reasonably often mentioned requirement of a strong connection between research and practice, becoming specifically obvious in a field where actual governance of different aspects of society and scientific accompaniment go hand in hand.

Relevance for both, research and practice

The following considerations of course are dominated by the perspective of personal research agendas. Therefore, the focus is mainly on success definitions of governance that takes place within or between different *public* bodies, in contrast to the governance of non-public societal actors. However, this does not pre-exclude taking a broader perspective of societal actors into account which – as will be outlined below – can play a crucial role in the way one has to think about adequate concept specifications or the mechanisms that lead to desired outcomes.

Dominant (personal) perspective on governance success

A considerably large part of research about successful governance within and between public bodies deals with at first glance rather distinct forms of success definitions that often mirror dominant practical interests of public policies and programs. One example – a never outdated issue for scholars and practitioners – is the success of consolidation processes; a definition of success that usually comes along with a rather ‘hard’ idea of success expressed by budgetary indicators. Other processes, like for example emerging administrative reforms, ask for complementary definitions of success like enhancing efficiency in general, administrative effectiveness, and public accessibility/transparency; an example which in contrast to consolidation processes offers some more interpretative room. However, both examples represent cases in which some form of success definition has to be delivered because public actors like governments are in need or at least expected to gather information about the attainment regarding intended outcomes.

When one assumes that these practical requirements produce a direct feedback to questions of public governance success from a scholarly perspective, I would like to illustrate some – admittedly inductive generated – ideas about research agendas that can be considered when thinking

Focus and proceeding: Basic ideas about research processes

¹ Whether this holds true would be worth another paper when for example the discussion on symbolic policy is considered.

about addressing successful public governance from a personal perspective. It should be noted that the following ideas are neither exhaustive nor do they apply to one specific policy area – however, the above outlined personal focus of governance within the public sphere is clearly visible, especially regarding the exemplifications –, but rather should be understood as general remarks based on typical steps of a research process, ordered from general to more specific aspects.

The first and very basic necessary clarification concerns the concept specification of public governance success. Defining success from the beginning in the sense of narrowing the concept makes it accessible to theory selection/building and empirical steps. The possibilities of framing the concept appear extremely numerous, from the perspective of performance indicators, over the legitimacy of politics to societal consequences, each with strongly diverging effects on the subsequent process. A practical example, without going into detail: The evidence of administrative reforms on the state level in Germany is mixed. One of the main driver of reforms has been the striving for efficiency gains in terms of savings, a promise that could not be kept in any case. On the other hand, administrative reforms in the German case more often have led to an increased quality of public service delivery. So, the initial selection of a criterion for success might have severe impacts for both program design and evaluation. This can be understood as a case for narrowing concepts, especially relevant for an extraordinary broad concept like governance success that can incorporate almost all forms of potential outputs and outcomes.

Having broken down the concept, it is necessary to make explicit theoretical mechanisms that lead to governance success. Obviously, depending on the selected concept there are innumerable theoretical mechanisms conceivable that cannot be outlined here. However, to illustrate the need for care in thinking about mechanisms, I want to emphasize one distinct theoretical tie regarding the role of citizens as determinants of governance success in circumstances in which their role is not always evident. Defining government success in terms of rather ‘soft’ factors like for example legitimacy or participation the citizens’ role is obvious, however, especially even when government success is defined in terms of hard factors it is worth taking public opinion serious. The literature concurs that the shaping of public institutions by the public opinion plays a crucial role via several channels. Therefore, it can be fruitful to expand institutional explanations by public institutional support in order to get a better understanding of what causes and effects of successful governance are. This can be exemplified by the discussion about suitable tools for public consolidation strategies – a discussion that is often dominated by institutional (e.g. legal, structural) considerations and that is subjected to a hard measure of success. Every institutional or instrumental consolidation strategy will – especially in the long run – be subject to popular support which is just a consequence of the people’s role as voters. So, for a long-term strategic aim like consolidation it is important to take the role of public opinion into account. Accordingly, other *strategic* aims, which most conceptualizations of governance success I would include in, are potentially demanding in terms of taking public opinion seriously.

This example leads directly to the third challenging aspect for studying governance success: the role of data. The just mentioned popular support

Concepts and specifications

Mechanism: Public support

Role of data

of political solutions for societal problems still constitutes a lacuna of empirical material. Of course, preferences for some policies are a stable part of many surveys, but there is still surprisingly little information about public policy preferences in many fields which in practice cover a wide range of 'typical' definitions of governance success, like for example (again) consolidation policies or administrative reforms. This is another aspect, I argue, that can be kept in mind in the stage of designing data collection, irrespectively of quantitative or qualitative nature.

Finally, a crucial step for evaluating governance success is the openness for and the selection of an innovative toolkit. It is worth mentioning some general methodological developments within the social sciences which are influential for any form of evaluation which is an important part of finding routines that can foster successful governance in practice. First, due to technological progress it can be promising to make use of the possibility to collect and process big amounts of data, especially in terms of a meaningful connection of macro and micro data structures. This allows to combine the often postulated claim of comparative research with the analysis of micro level mechanisms in one step. This is what for example the many facets of multi-level analysis offer. Additionally, the – what some authors call – 'design revolution' within the social sciences has modified the methodological toolkit in terms of making causality more explicit and has developed and/or promoted methods that can make causal statements more reliable. Being sure (or at least more confident) about the causality of potentially influential factors – in contrast to a pure association or correlation – is especially relevant for a research area with great implications and effects for the practice. Particularly the methods with a quasi-experimental character or with an explicit approximation to experiments are useful tools for the evaluation in settings that are mainly ex post observational in nature. Finally, there is on the one hand great value and on the other hand it is inevitable – especially for rather global and comprehensive research projects – to combine quantitative and qualitative research designs. Not only by applying the one or the other approach for different sub-question but by directly combining them, which is for example realized in the Synthetic Control Approach or in regression-based case selection.

Within this short think piece I have been mainly intending to introduce my personal point of departure regarding successful public governance. The last two thirds of the paper might seem like presenting common sense considerations of a research process. Even if this is true my concern is to (1) emphasize the respective meaning for the present research focus and (2), make a (personal) case for *explicitly* thinking about these issues in the research process.

**Methodological
toolkit**

**Personal comments
and conclusion**