

Pathways to Positive Public Administration

SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC GOVERNANCE

Series Editors: Paul 't Hart, *Professor, Utrecht School of Governance, Utrecht University, the Netherlands* and Tina Nabatchi, *Professor, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, USA*

Societies have the best shot at thriving when they are governed through public institutions that are trustworthy, reliable, impartial, and competent. Yet in the first decades of the 21st century, governments and public institutions world-wide have been challenged by deep and fast changes in their operating environments. Thus, there is an urgent need for concepts, designs, and practices for successful public governance, which this groundbreaking new book series will seek to present.

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Pathways to Positive Public Administration

An International Perspective

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*To all who continue to believe in and work towards good
government, wherever they are in the world.*

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For all the challenges surrounding us, the extraordinary range of accomplishments in the world is breathtaking, and surely they're not just to be celebrated but to be learned from.

Sir Michael Barber
<https://sirmichaelbarber.co.uk/>

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1. An optimistic state? Pathways to positive public administration

**Patrick Lucas, Tina Nabatchi, Janine O’Flynn
and Paul ’t Hart**

TAKE A WALK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

As a group of 15 scholars from different sub-fields, countries, and generations, we argue that public administration would benefit from launching a self-conscious and cohesive strand of ‘positive’ scholarship [...] The core questions driving positive public administration should be: Why is it that in a universe of like cases, specific public policies, programs, organizations, networks, or partnerships manage to do much better than others to produce widely valued societal outcomes? And how can scholars analyze and understand exemplars of excellence in the public sphere in order to support and inform broader policy agendas while also contributing to the public understanding of government and politics? (Douglas et al., 2021: 442)

This was the clarion call of a group of established public administration scholars – including three editors of this volume – who argued the case for ‘positive public administration’ (PPA). Like the authors of the manifesto-style essay, we, the editors of this volume, situate our call in a zeitgeist in which public trust in government is fickle at best – and in many jurisdictions – disturbingly low. We observe a pervasive ‘negativity bias’ in the way in which media, scholars, and politicians tend to depict the performance of the public sector. We do not deny that studying the dark sides of public administration – maladministration, mismanagement, abuse of administrative power, institutional exclusion – is critically important. Doing so can teach us what to confront and repudiate in how governance institutions are set up and how they operate. Indeed, many of the manifesto authors have spent careers doing just this. Yet, while there is a perennial need for social learning on ‘what to avoid’ and ‘what does not work’ in government, there is an equally important need for evidence-informed learning about ‘what to aspire to’ and ‘what works.’ Thus, like the PPA manifesto authors, we make a case for paying more attention to the ‘bright side’ of what government does, how, and to what effect.

But what does this call – this invitation to ‘walk on the bright side’ – really mean? What are the implications of PPA for the study and practice of public administration? What are the merits and demerits of a ‘positive’ approach to the field, and where can we find guidance on navigating its opportunities and obstacles? How can we ensure that ‘positive’ research is truly scholarly and amounts to more than simply being optimistic about the state? In the remainder of this chapter, we begin to address these and other questions. We first situate the PPA project in the study and practice of public administration, exploring what it means for both the academic and practical mindset. We then examine other ‘positive’ projects within the social sciences and identify some lessons for PPA. Finally, we foreshadow the volume’s design and contents, and invite you to ‘take a walk on the bright side.’

PPA AS AN ACADEMIC MINDSET

Within the academic enterprise of public administration, PPA refers to a scholarly mindset, role conception, and research program centered on what works in government and governance (see the overview in Douglas et al., 2021). It springs from one essential question: why is it that particular public policies, programs, organizations, networks, or partnerships manage to do much better than others to produce widely valued societal outcomes, and how might knowledge of this be used to advance institutional learning? More specifically, Douglas and colleagues (2021: 442) “call for a program of research devoted to uncovering the factors and mechanisms that enable high performing public problem-solving and public service delivery; procedurally and distributively fair processes of tackling societal conflicts; and robust and resilient ways of coping with threat and risks.”

In answering this call, PPA scholars eschew a Pollyannaish stance: they see the need to pursue research that casts light on positives yet remains realistic about what that pursuit requires. Governing always shall be an activity steeped in endemic conflicts of values and interests, manifold claims and finite resources, evident inequalities of access to and representation in decision making, and unavoidable clashes between ‘now’ and ‘later,’ ‘here’ and ‘there,’ and ‘us’ and ‘them.’ Indeed, the activities of governing are performed by imperfect people working in imperfect organizations under imperfect conditions. They operate within institutional settings and traditions that have been shaped by historical forces and are not necessarily optimally suited for present-day conditions. Moreover, people think, observe, and talk about governing (successfully and otherwise) in terms of schemata and standards that themselves are socially constructed – products of positionalities, cultural

milieus, and commitments. As Bovens and 't Hart (1996: 22) observe in their study on policy fiascos,

the assessment of the outcomes of a certain policy episode presupposes many value judgments. The very decision of what effects to register, when to register them, and by what means reflects the analyst's implicit or explicit biases and strongly predisposes his or her final evaluation of these policies [...] The problem is not merely one of research methodology; it is predominantly a problem of conceptualization and value selection. Standards of evaluation insensitive to, for example, time, institutional context, and local culture are not likely to come to be regarded as authoritative yardsticks by all stakeholders in the debate.

Thus, PPA scholars should not sidestep the question of what they take to be 'positive.' PPA scholars must

develop conceptualizations of 'good governance' that are not just couched in procedural and process terms but also encompass its substantive, material, and psychological impacts. Notice the plural – conceptualisations. Robust debate about 'good', 'successful', or otherwise putatively 'positive' governance is not just inevitable but also constitutive of its legitimacy. (Douglas et al., 2021: 443)

But, even when they practice transparency and self-reflexivity about the normative standards they adopt, PPA scholars cannot escape the fact that there is something profoundly counter-cultural about calling for a 'positive' perspective in any field that studies human behavior – but especially in the study of politics, governance, and public administration. Is it not the academic's role to be fundamentally agnostic, or even skeptical and critical, about an object of study that wields enormous power and often has been known to wield that power badly, with profoundly appalling consequences for countless people, not to mention flora, fauna, and natural systems? PPA scholars take a nuanced position on this question of scholarly role and positionality:

The default criticality of scholars should never be lost or dulled. The new funding regimes, which increasingly require academics to demonstrate their non-academic impact, should not lead to what one of us has previously called a tyranny of relevance, in which academics trade an element of their independence for the chance to join generously funded and potentially high-impact projects. But that is not an argument for eschewing the analysis of success. Walking on the bright side has nothing to do with co-option, selling out or sidelining criticality. It simply seeks to explore what works, *alongside* what has failed. This is the only way to provide a sophisticated and balanced account of how society might better address the complex challenges on the horizon. (Flinders and 't Hart, 2021)

Despite this rationale, it remains a fact that the call for PPA triggers controversy in the academic community, with proponents regarding it as urgent in the

current fraught context of politics and governance, and critics asserting it runs counter to the scholar's (and the public servant's) duty to speak truth about, to, and if needed, against power. For these very reasons, PPA as an academic endeavor requires more than simply being bold and casting light on what we believe are fundamentally benevolent institutions and practices. It also means employing our scientific toolkits (of whatever theoretical and methodological variety) to study them rigorously, and in doing so, both informing and inspiring the world of practice. In Chapter 2 of this volume, Matthew Flinders further elaborates on how PPA can be at once 'looking for positivity' and a rigorous scholarly enterprise.

PPA AS A PRACTICAL MINDSET

Within the professional practice of public administration, PPA may be used as a badge to identify ambitions, language, experiments, institutions, and rituals that embed and enact what could be referred to as a 'positive mindset' to the work of all those people and organizations that are involved in 'managing the public's business,' as Lawrence Lynn (1981) once described it. The essence of such a positive mindset might be summed up as the belief that it is both desirable and possible to strive for institutions and practices of governing that bring decency, fairness, efficiency, empowerment, and other positive qualities to the fore. Thus, this positive mindset has both normative and pragmatic features.

At a normative level, the positive mindset rests on an ingrained belief that when intelligently organized, executed, and held in check, government and its agents can be a force of good in society. Critics might view this normative stance as problematic, naive, or even (self-)deceptive. They might say it lacks awareness or purposefully denies the inherently conflicted work of deciding who gets what, when, and how in a society, whether done by politicians in legislatures or street level bureaucrats in public agencies. At worst, critics may claim we turn a blind eye to the harms that governments have produced, and will continue to produce, whether through purposeful action such as 'administrative evil' (Adams and Balfour, 2015), authoritarian hubris (Scott, 1995), or a chronic inability to 'deliver.' Problematic though some might consider it to be, people in or near governments have – for thousands of years (see Duncan, this volume) – embraced a version of the positive mindset and have taken that belief to work every day.

At a pragmatic level, a positive mindset centers on a 'modernist-empiricist' belief (Bevir and Rhodes, 2010): it is possible to gain systematic cause and effect knowledge about how public administration operates, and thus to apply 'evidence-based' formulas to how it can better achieve its aims. In other words, it is possible to achieve 'good government' wherever public officials set about to consistently 'learn what works' in how they do their business, and

consistently apply those learnings to their specific jobs, as well as to the structures, cultures, and practices of their organization. In some eras, and in some places, such beliefs are espoused from the top down across the administrative system. Think, for example, of the ‘New Labour’ era in British government, when a high modernity technocracy of ‘what works’ initiatives, managerial inducements, and control systems descended upon Whitehall. Tellingly, one of its chief architects, the consultant Michael Barber (2016), wrote up the program in a book called *How to Run a Government*. Public administration as practice does not get more presumptuously modernist-empiricist than that.

Given the normative and pragmatic dimensions of PPA as practice, two sets of questions need to be asked continuously about it. First, the normative questions: is PPA appropriate and defensible as a public service project? If so, where and how? What does framing the fundamental ambition of public administration in positive terms draw our attention to, and what does it obscure? Implicit in this question are issues concerning the broader social contract and regime values in which public administration (roughly, the executive branch of government and its devolved and arms-length agents) is embedded.

John Keane (2019) wrote a disturbing book about what is happening to the social contract between governments and citizens today. In one camp are the old power-sharing democracies, whose messiness, compromises, follies, and imperfections are the devil we know and are forever trying to ameliorate. But a much larger portion of the world’s population, Keane argues, lives in “phantom democracies” that go through the motions of having elections, parties, parliaments, courts, and constitutions, but that are in fact governed by suave operators wielding velvet fists. They concentrate enormous economic and executive power in the hands of their inner circles of submissive plutocrats and loyal technocrats and blanket the whole operation in appeals to the will of “the people” – often defined narrowly along religious, cultural, or regional lines – that are sophisticated and shameless in equal measure. These regimes offer their subjects a social contract that many of them are willing to sign. They provide a degree of material comfort, stable though impenetrable government, and some opportunities for citizens to inform or respond to its policies. In such regime contexts (never mind in more blatantly authoritarian regimes), pursuing and espousing PPA as a philosophy of running the public service amounts to legitimizing a political arrangement that should be scrutinized rather than enhanced.

Second, there are the strategic questions: when, where, and how is the PPA mindset performative? Imagine that PPA beliefs actually shape the ways in which government institutions are designed, government officials and agents are motivated, public programs are set up and rolled out, and encounters between citizens and public authorities are envisaged and managed. Imagine they inspire, enable, and empower movement in pursuit of commendable

visions of ‘goodness’ in how public administration operates. On the surface, few would be against that. But it is not that simple. It raises the question of what particular visions of ‘positivity’ are being pursued in that manner, and how this pursuit has been discussed and decided upon. Is it essentially imposed – as has been the case in jurisdictions such as Singapore – or is it a product of democratic deliberation? Also, it raises the question to what extent such PPA-inspired institutional design principles and process management practices are evidence-informed. Thirdly, it is important to probe into the extent to which they and their application are, or ought to be, contingent upon socio-cultural contexts. These questions should be responded to in a robust manner before PPA can evolve from an intuitive enthusiasm into a responsible guide to action.

Clearly, PPA is still in its nascent stages. Scholars and practitioners only recently have begun to explore the landscape, let alone map the terrain. As we begin to chart a course for PPA, it is useful to look to other ‘positive’ academic approaches for counsel and caution.

LEARNING FROM OTHER ‘POSITIVE’ APPROACHES IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

PPA is not the first among such ‘positive’ turns to emerge across the social sciences. It makes sense, therefore, to wonder what we might learn from the trajectory and impact of previous like-minded enterprises. We focus on three such movements: positive psychology, positive organizational scholarship, and appreciative inquiry. We identify factors that lead to their sustained relevance. These include ideational factors, such as how the movement frames and uses ‘positivity’ and where it sits in the broader research discipline or field; material factors, such as who does the research and what resources are available; and the mechanisms by which these movements manage to have impact on their larger field’s research agendas as well as on professional practices. At the same time, it is also important to examine the recurrent criticisms that have been made of these positive movements, to assess their relevance to PPA and to reflect on how to avoid these pitfalls.

Positive Psychology

The positive psychology movement, a relatively recent development in psychology, emphasizes studying and promoting positive emotions, traits, and behaviors (van Zyl and Rothmann, 2022). Questioning the dominance of traditional psychology’s focus on pathology, dysfunction, mental illness, and other negative aspects of human experience (Seligman, 2019), positive psychology encourages the field to also explore and understand the occurrence and impacts

of positive emotions (e.g., happiness, joy, gratitude), positive traits (e.g., resilience, optimism, compassion), and positive behaviors (e.g., mindfulness, altruism, forgiveness). It also emphasizes the importance of subjective well-being and personal growth as fundamental aspects of psychological health.

The foundations of positive psychology were constructed during the first week of 1998 in the Grateful Dead house in the Yucatán Peninsula (Seligman, 2019). While there was agreement on many elements of this new, “secular, science-based endeavor,” the idea of calling it ‘positive’ was not straightforward:

Positive sounded too *amerikanisch* to Mike’s [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi] coffee-house European ear. Psychology sounded too narrow for a field that might eventually supplement the dismal, remedial concerns of all modern social science. But we couldn’t think of a better name. (Seligman, 2019: 3)

Positive psychology has contributed to a growing body of research on topics such as the benefits of positive emotions, the role of positive relationships and social connections, and the importance of finding meaning and purpose in life. It also has led to the development of interventions and techniques for promoting positive mental health, such as mindfulness-based stress reduction, positive self-talk, and gratitude exercises, and has been the focus of large-scale experiments with implementation in the US Army and schools across the world (Seligman, 2019). In its grandest ambitions, positive psychology seeks to reorient institutions from a focus on reducing misery, to encouraging well-being, especially through PERMA (positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, accomplishment) (Seligman, 2019).

While the positive psychology movement has achieved sustained relevance and success in both research and practice, it also has received several sustained critiques, including its lack of attention to cultural, social, and individual diversity. More specifically, some critics argue that positive psychology over-emphasizes positive thinking and optimism, focuses on a narrow range of experiences that may not be relevant or accessible to all people (van Zyl et al., 2023), and may lead to unrealistic or superficial approaches to life’s challenges (Lazarus, 2003). Others suggest that the movement should acknowledge the value of negative emotions and experiences and help people develop healthy coping strategies to deal with them (Ehrenreich, 2010). Still others suggest that its emphasis on individualism and personal responsibility overlooks the role of social and cultural factors in shaping human experience, uncritically accepts the assumptions and values of mainstream society (Held, 2004), and may lead to blaming individuals for their problems rather than addressing systemic issues (Wong and Roy, 2017). Finally, critics like Ehrenreich (2010) express concern about the commercialization of positive psychology and its

integration into the self-help industry, which can lead to oversimplification, superficiality, and exploitation of vulnerable individuals seeking quick fixes for complex problems.

Positive Organizational Scholarship

Positive organizational scholarship (POS) aims to shift the focus of organizational studies from a deficit-based approach to a strengths-based approach, with the goal of promoting positive outcomes for individuals, organizations, and society as a whole (Dutton, Glynn, and Spreitzer, 2008). It specifically aims to understand the conditions and practices that enable the achievement of positive outcomes, such as flourishing employees, engaged customers, and thriving communities (Cameron, 2021). POS originated in the early 2000s as a response to the discipline's self-limiting focus on organizational failure and dysfunction. POS emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and encompasses a wide range of topics, including leadership, organizational culture, employee engagement, and corporate social responsibility. One key feature of POS is the concept of "positive deviance," which refers to organizations (or individuals and teams within them) that achieve exceptional outcomes despite facing the same challenges as their peers. POS scholars study positive deviance to identify the practices and behaviors that contribute to success, with the goal of spreading these practices to other organizations.

Since its birth, POS had garnered considerable momentum, even generating a 1,000-plus page Oxford Handbook (Spreitzer and Cameron, 2011). But it also has faced headwinds. Critics argue that POS must not reject outright the examination of negative and problematic features of organizational life (Fineman, 2006). They argue that a rose-tinted view of organizational life is not only incomplete, but also can be misleading, leaving its adherents oblivious to the role of power structures, cultural biases, inequalities, conflicts, and pathologies that permeate many organizations (Fineman, 2006; cf., Cameron and Caza, 2004). Moreover, they assert that an exclusive focus on positives can be as limited in coverage and limiting in perspective as the pessimistic position POS critiques.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry (AI) represents a shift away from traditional problem-solving and change management approaches that focus on weaknesses and difficulties, toward more positive, strengths-based approaches (Bushe, 2011; Cooperrider, Whitney, and Yaeger, 2000). By focusing on an organization's positive qualities and experiences, AI aims to create and inspire

action toward a more optimistic and energized vision for the future, which ultimately can lead to better outcomes.

One key principle of AI is the idea of ‘positive framing’: reframing problems or challenges as opportunities for growth and improvement, helping to shift the focus from a problem-oriented mindset to a solutions-oriented mindset. AI processes typically use a series of structured interviews or dialogues with key stakeholders in the organization who are asked to reflect on positive experiences and qualities that the organization possesses, such as successful projects, strong teams, and effective leadership. Based on these conversations, the organization develops a shared vision for the future and identifies strategies for achieving it.

AI is used often in organizational development, strategic planning, and team-building initiatives. It has been applied in a variety of organizational contexts, including healthcare, education, and business. It also has underpinned strengths-based approaches in community development, and has been adopted in policy and administration studies, for example, in arguments advocating for strength-based approaches to Indigenous policy (Blackman, Buick and O’Flynn, 2016). Despite its uptake, AI is not without critics and critiques. For example, some suggest that the focus on positive experiences and qualities can be manipulated by those in positions of power to further their own interests, without addressing broader organizational issues (e.g., Bushe, 2011). Others suggest that AI neglects important power dynamics within organizations, such as hierarchy, privilege, inequities, and power (e.g., Bushe, 2011).

Lessons on Building a Positive Movement

To varying extents, these three positive movements have established an enduring presence within their respective academic fields, perhaps most so for positive psychology and least so for appreciative inquiry. Moreover, positive psychology and AI have had considerable spillover into popular culture and professional practices, while POS is not yet well known beyond academia. Still, each movement has a clear home, adherents (and critics), and have become seen as legitimate endeavors in their respective fields, raising the question: what can we learn from these other positive movements and how do they inform efforts to advance PPA? A brief review of their histories suggests a combination of three mechanisms help drive meaningful impact: (1) framing and situating *ideas* within the broader field or discipline; (2) building *momentum* through investment in the research agenda; and (3) influencing change in professional *practice*.

First, ideas frame both research and how we see the world. So, what do ‘positive’ ideas and frames focus on? Obviously, attention to positive actions and/or positive outcomes is a distinctive feature of positive scholarship.

For instance, Elinor Ostrom's (1990, 1999) Nobel-prize winning work on common pool resource arrangements identified a large number of cases where generally sustainable resource-sharing arrangements were achieved. From these cases, she developed theoretical explanations of successful commons governance that challenged the prevailing wisdom holding that the tragedy of the commons was inevitable if private property rights were not enacted. But not all positive research starts with a case of success – some grapples with and examines failures, reflecting the idea that a positive lens can be applied to any situation, regardless of whether it is 'good' or 'bad.' For example, some POS studies examine tragedies, such as the US airline industry's response to the September 11 attacks, and use them as a learning tool to understand resilience and recovery (e.g., Gittel et al., 2006). In both instances, scholars applied positive frames to social challenges and revealed examples of success that were hitherto ignored or devalued. In doing so, these scholars upended long-held assumptions on how to respond to social challenges.

Ideas also matter in terms of how they are situated within a field – whether they are syphoned off into an independent, isolated area of research or are integrated – or at least positioned adjacent to – other research concepts and themes. Here, we can learn from the Pockets of Effectiveness (POE) research stream in development studies (Kjaer, 2021; Roll, 2014). POEs are government agencies or arrangements that work reasonably effectively and are dedicated to an aspect of the collective good, despite operating within a broader governance system mired in inefficacy and corruption (Kjaer, 2021). The logic behind POE research is that 'success' will be extremely limited if the goal is to transform whole bureaucracies, but, the identification of smaller successes – POEs – within a broader system may help inform incremental changes and improvements.

Second, the exploration of new perspectives needs momentum. The social capital of lead proponents and the availability of resources to sustain the initial 'lift-off' are crucial to providing such momentum. Some might assert that the forging of new terrain in a field of study is best left to well-established and well-recognized scholars who can give the topic an air of legitimacy. But this is unlikely to generate momentum and drive new and innovative ways of thinking. Experienced academics often are overinvested in their way of doing things and fresh ideas may need to come from emerging academics (Seligman, 2019). Thus, in their effort to take positive psychology from an idea to legitimate movement, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi focused on involving young and talented researchers as "the fulcrum" of the field (Seligman, 2019).

Another way to build momentum for a new movement (positive or otherwise) is to draw on cases from across a range of countries and contexts around the world. This creates a rich cache of positive examples in different parts of the world and increases the ability to learn from and draw on the insights of

researchers from a range of backgrounds and experiences. Doing so not only would have concrete benefits for PPA, but also would have more general benefits for public administration as a field, which is centered on WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) jurisdictions (O’Flynn, 2022). In other words, a more global – indeed, inclusive – approach to scholars and contexts would help PPA, and public administration more broadly, learn from success in all parts of the world and learn about broader systemic ways of ‘doing’ government (Drechsler, 2015).

Third, positive movements that have garnered praise, relevance, and broad support within and beyond their academic fields have generally achieved practical impact. Indeed, it appears that positive movements in academia thrive when their research agendas and findings aim to improve practice for individuals, groups, organizations, and sometimes even society. Positive psychology has achieved this within specific domains, such as individual psychology (Rashid and Seligman, 2018) and practices within secondary education (Cameron, 2021). Appreciative inquiry also has generated various practices aimed at unleashing positive improvements in the organization (Cooperrider, Whitney, and Yaeger, 2000; Bushe and Avital, 2009). Both these movements have made demonstrable professional inroads, improving how people perceive and make sense of themselves and their organizations in the service of creating more meaningful and effective people and organizations (Carter et al., 2007; Hsieh et al., 2019; Johnson, 2014).

Surprisingly, it is less clear whether the positive movements discussed here have engaged effectively with the criticisms they have elicited. Have they learned how to avoid being typecast as naive and starry-eyed? Have they figured out how to present research in ways that do not seem narrow, unrealistic, or superficial? Have they found ways of engaging in good faith on questions of power, conflict, and bias? We are prone to believe that these issues are never resolved, but rather are continuously evolving. After all, living and organizing – like governing – are fundamentally precarious activities where the waves of evidence-inspired ambitions frequently crash on the rocks of larger social forces, contending idea(l)s, political realities, knowledge limitations, resource constraints, institutional rigidities, and organized resistance.

When we set out to produce this volume, we had one broad and general goal: to advance the research on several important questions and themes from the manifesto (Douglas et al., 2021). But, both by design and happenstance, we drew on the lessons from other positive movements and worked hard to proactively address potential critiques. As we explain in the next section, we were open to a wide variety of *ideas* about PPA. Thus, some entries focus on governance successes and others grapple with disappointments and challenges, but all of the entries cover issues central to public administration, which helps frame PPA not as a niche within the field, but rather as an approach that can

span the field. We built *momentum* by engaging both emerging and established scholars from all parts of the world, and we sought to continue that momentum by making the volume open access, thereby ensuring widespread accessibility. We worked actively to ensure that the entries would speak to the world of professional *practice*, by looking at when, where, why, and how PPA was enacted as well as the degree to which its enactment influenced positive change. Finally, we sought to engage directly with potential critics and criticisms, urging our authors to address potentially problematic or negative features of public affairs, including for example, hierarchy, power structures, cultural biases, privileges, inequalities, and conflicts, among others.

WHAT'S IN THE VOLUME?

An edited volume does not magically appear, it results from a long – sometimes tantalizing, sometimes tedious – process that involves smart, dedicated, and thought-provoking authors. We purposefully set out to manage that process in an inclusive, participatory, and engaging manner. Through personal requests and widespread open calls, we invited colleagues from around the world to contribute to this volume, asking them to consider some of the big ideas of PPA and to offer empirical studies of it. In the commissioning process, we ensured that contributors to the volume represented the broadest possible group of authors, geographically and generationally. We wanted to hear new ideas, from people all over the world, so as to advance the PPA agenda in a progressive and inclusive way.

Our authors submitted an initial pitch setting out how they would contribute to moving the PPA agenda forward. Everyone developed extended abstracts that were shared among us. We worked together, through a series of online discussions, sharing ideas, encouraging the development of themes, and exploring what we meant by PPA. In June 2023, a subset of authors came together in Utrecht to meet in person, present and debate key ideas, and showcase contributions to a broader audience at the Public Management Research event. This allowed us to hear from colleagues outside the PPA ‘bubble,’ and to take on board their feedback, critiques, and encouragement. We purposefully took a longer time horizon to develop the ideas and the results of that work, which is now captured in 27 contributions presented in this volume, produced by 57 authors from across every continent (except Antarctica).

The volume is composed of three Parts: one that centers on PPA’s *foundations*, a second that presents empirical accounts of positive *practices*, and a final that examines more specific *tools* policymakers and public managers may employ to achieve positive outcomes. In addition to chapters that explore issues in depth, the volume also includes a series of insights, short pieces meant to provoke and inspire.

Foundations

In Part I of the volume, we elaborate on the *foundations of positive public administration*. The entries in this section lay the groundwork for PPA, exploring its historical roots, examining its politics, and offering frameworks for moving beyond success and failure, through to analytical and methodological means of identifying conditions and antecedents, or ‘pathways’ for PPA.

In Chapter 2, Grant Duncan explains why ‘PPA is as old as the hills’ and takes us on a journey through the enduring human project to improve the well-being of people and communities. In this sweeping and provocative account, Duncan demonstrates that while the PPA moniker may be new, its historical antecedents are not. The question of how to achieve collective aspirations, or the common good, has occupied us for millennia – antedating the rise of the West – and has produced a range of administrative traditions.

Expanding the foundations of PPA, Matt Flinders explores its politics in Chapter 3. He takes us for a walk on the ‘bright side’ and on the ‘dark side’ of government, pointing to potential blackspots and risks for those advancing the PPA agenda. He sets out some of the emerging critiques of the movement, drawing out some warnings for PPA. Emphasizing the need to not lock ourselves into a binary view of bright and dark, success and failure, good and bad, positive and negative, Flinders develops a framework for the multi-level interplay of critical factors. The framework enables a much more nuanced and sophisticated analytical stance and repertoire. The nesting and success-within-failure elements are important in this approach, showing how one can still be critical in pursuing positivity and success.

In Chapter 4, Fernando Nieto-Morales and Liesbet Heyse sketch a methodological and analytical approach for the multidimensional nature of positivity. Through adopting a configurational approach and embracing equifinality, they show how focusing attention on the ‘causes of effects’ can illuminate potential paths toward positivity. In doing so, they remind us that context always matters and that various configurations of factors may yield very different effects in different settings. Moreover, they take us beyond the binary, showing how ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ are different paths, not mirrors of each other.

Practices

Part II of the volume offers a large selection of studies that document *practices of positive public administration*. Here we essentially ‘zoom out’ and take a more expansive look at PPA examples in a variety of specific contexts. Traversing Burkina Faso, Canada, Puerto Rico, Germany, Kenya, Latin America, Aotearoa New Zealand, Pakistan, Bhutan, and a subset of Western democracies, our authors provide insights into how various combinations, con-

figurations, and clusters of contextual, institutional, political, organizational, and leadership factors underpin and drive PPA in practice.

In Chapter 5, Susan Ostermann and Josephine Wouango show how a more facilitative approach to administration can overcome the limitations of seemingly weak states to deliver positive outcomes. Their study specifically focuses on approaches to reducing female genital mutilation and cutting, comparing villages in Burkina Faso and Mali. Ostermann and Wouango provide a compelling argument for developing approaches that match the attitudes of the population and the socio-cultural context and show how building on untapped strengths can open avenues for tackling complex social challenges.

In Chapter 6, Mason Ducharme, Susanne Thiessen, and Evert Lindquist showcase successful self-governance strategies of Indigenous Nations in Canada. They show how after many decades of colonial rule and oppression, Indigenous Nations have developed distinctive administrative approaches that reflect ‘wise practice,’ a notion that complements key aspects of PPA and expands them beyond the Euro-Western mindset. Through an exploration of wise practice, the authors draw out important aspects of Indigenous cultures and contexts that shape the way positivity is enacted, such as intergenerational leadership, thinking and decision making, and an ethos of community well-being. In doing so, the authors offer great insight into how public administration itself can benefit from listening to and learning from a fuller range of administrative traditions.

Chapter 7, by Omar Pérez Figueroa and Nicola Ulibarri, showcases independent community aqueducts in Puerto Rico and demonstrates how micro-level community approaches can deliver positive outcomes and how perspectives on what success is profoundly differ among stakeholders. They bring to the fore questions of colonialism, marginalization, and power. Zooming in on local community-led water providers, the authors identify success-enabling and success-constraining mechanisms, all the while reminding us that power dynamics shape our very notions of positivity.

In Chapter 8, Jonas J. Schoenefeld, Friederike Edel, Iris Behr, Birte Frommer, Michèle Bernhard, and Britta Stein explore how municipal governments can work with other societal actors to address wicked problems. Focusing on sustainable development initiatives in Germany, they draw out programmatic, process, and political factors of success, and also identify negative aspects. In doing so, they provide insights into the durability of these arrangements over time, and how the dynamics of relationships can change, as success continually develops and unfolds.

Participatory forms of decision making and collaborative governance are the focus of Chapter 9 by Nicholas Jager and Jens Newig. Here, the authors draw on a dataset of some 300 cases across 20-plus Western democracies. In analyzing these diverse cases, Jager and Newig highlight the trade-offs

between ecological, social, and economic goals, and identify distinctive pathways to success. Cutting across these pathways, however, is a thread of consensus-oriented collaboration, characterized by meaningful interaction and consensual decision modes. The findings from this study show that committed public actors are central to PPA.

In Chapter 10, Gedion Onyango provides an overview of positivity in African public administration, drawing together decades of work traversing the transition from ‘Afro-pessimism’ to ‘Afro-optimism.’ While the positivity movement in Africa goes by other names – pockets of effectiveness and positive deviance – it has been a long-term project consistently centered on identifying and building on what works. In the case of the Kenyan Revenue Authority, Onyango shines a light on how robust, contextually informed policy solutions can be developed. From his perspective, the future of reform (and the future of PPA) hinges on how we build on success, rather than dwell on failure.

Eric Otenyo highlights important aspects of PPA through an exploration of Kenya’s Department of Immigration Services in Chapter 11. By “looking for positivity in an unlikely place,” Otenyo shows how reforms have produced a high performing government organization that is driving wide-ranging positive outcomes for society, including substantial unexpected benefits that have come from the broader issuing of passports for citizens. Drawing on the notion of pockets of effectiveness, Otenyo positions the case as an example of better than to be expected agency performance, and one which holds its own with those in nations around the world.

In Chapter 12, Pablo Sanabria-Pulido and Cristian Plischoff stress that the experiences of underrepresented regions of the world often are subject to a negativity bias, with the global North positioned as having ‘better-performing’ administrative approaches. The authors argue against this view, asserting that far too much attention has been paid to dysfunctions and failures and more attention should be given to understanding of success in Latin American public administration. The authors then explore participatory budgeting and a novel poverty reduction program to demonstrate that PPA is alive and well in Latin America.

The next three contributions explore positive perspectives on government responses to crises, specifically to the COVID-19 global pandemic. In Chapter 13, Verna Smith, Lesley Middleton, Jocelyn Cranefield, and Lina Guo explore Aotearoa New Zealand’s pandemic response, which was considered one of the leading nations in the COVID-19 crisis. The authors explain how able and empathetic leadership enabled the government to develop and nurture a range of partnerships that undergirded the positive outcomes during the pandemic.

Chapter 14 offers insights from the COVID-19 crisis in Pakistan. Specifically, Usman Chohan challenges the PPA agenda to speak to the developing world as well as the developed, and to look to situations of adversity

for lessons. Chohan demonstrates how Pakistan out-performed nearby nations during the pandemic, despite seemingly having more limited baseline capacity to respond. Drawing out unique factors, he shines a light on the factors that shaped the Pakistani success story. By combining *virtu* (policy effectiveness) and *fortuna* (existing advantages), Pakistan demonstrated how developing nations can provide strong examples of PPA.

Sigay Dem explores the factors that contributed to Bhutanese success with rolling out the COVID-19 vaccine in Chapter 15. Specifically, Bhutan was heralded worldwide for its rapid deployment of the vaccine and its rate of coverage: the nation vaccinated 94 percent of its eligible population in just two weeks. By integrating cultural and religious practices into the vaccination campaign, and drawing on the reverence for the Bhutanese King, the response was able to achieve extraordinary outcomes. Dem explains how these factors combined to produce a story of PPA that sets Bhutan apart.

Tools

Part III of the volume delves into some of the *tools of positive public administration*. Here, we ‘zoom in’ to understand how specific tools, mechanisms, aspects, conditions, or characteristics, can enable more positivity in public administration. In these contributions, authors cover a variety of tools, including co-production, participation, partnerships, sensemaking, procurement, collaboration, parliamentary settlements, and cultural competency, among others. While not an exhaustive list, our authors help shed light on how various tools can animate PPA in practice.

Chapter 16, by Alex Ingrams, Suzanne Piotrowski, and Daniel Berliner, examines successful multi-stakeholder partnerships and the importance of participation. Specifically, the authors show how participation in the Open Government Partnership has catalyzed patterns of positivity that may not be so obvious. They explore how direct and indirect pathways interact, providing insight into the multi-level governance aspects of PPA. With the scale of their study, the authors uncover patterns of positivity in a way that single country or single policy examples may not. Their chapter demonstrates that what might look random and unrelated at the micro or meso level, can look quite different at the macro level, with positive outcomes developing over time from participatory learning and sharing, rather than from formal policy levers.

In Chapter 17, Scott Douglas delves into the local-level collaborations that have been deployed to tackle the increasingly complex global challenge of radicalization. Douglas zooms in on the Aarhus Model, widely viewed as a leading approach to identify and address radicalization, showing how the approach works. From the emphasis on multidisciplinary expertise and collaboration, through to persistence and iteration over time, Douglas shows

how this success story is the product of long-term experimentation, short-term detours and dead ends, and adaptation. Local experts working together, over time, focused on an incredibly complex problem, are addressing a globally significant wicked problem from a micro stance. Despite the successes of the model, Douglas warns against the idea that this can be transplanted elsewhere, as history and context are critical to the pursuit of positivity.

Ambitious policy agendas and divergent interests collide in Chapter 18, Matt Wilder's exploration of the power of co-production in navigating complex policy settings. In pursuing an ambitious green energy agenda, political actors in the province of Ontario in Canada took several missteps. Following hasty policy announcements by political actors, bureaucratic actors were able to broker agreements during the policy implementation phase, using coproduction as a powerful tool to address a range of problems, thus avoiding a potential policy disaster. Wilder's contribution addresses the call for integrating micro, meso, and macro conditions, alongside the interplay of agents and their context. In doing so, he moves beyond the binary of success and failure, demonstrating how aspects such as foresight, proactivity, and consensus-building can position governments and communities for more positive outcomes.

Sensemaking techniques take center stage in Chapter 19 by Emamdeem Fohim, Adeela Kodabux, and Amar Kumar Seeam. In their study, the authors explain how public servants developed a unique 'cultural chameleonizing' strategy to manage stakeholders in the multicultural setting of Mauritius. Their contribution explains cultural chameleonizing as being receptive, adaptive, and unifying, and shows how it enabled a successful policy outcome: the creation of the Mauritius' light rail transit system. Going further, the authors make a compelling case seeing cultural chameleonizing not only as a management strategy, but also as a foundation for public service, where empathy, adaptability, and unity are core values.

In Chapter 20, Cynthia Barboza-Wilkes and Thai V. Le explore the topic of cultural competency in crafting effective public services. They extend the theme of engaging with diverse populations, focusing in on local government in Los Angeles, California in the United States. Their study highlights how attention at the micro level, the frontline of engagement, is essential to building positive societal outcomes. For Barboza-Wilkes and Le, cultural competency is a mechanism for fostering positivity through more inclusive decision making and nurturing interpersonal relationships and through exploring opportunities for new ways of thinking that abound in increasingly diverse settings.

While much of this volume focuses on the role of public organizations and public servants, Chapter 21 examines how politics shapes PPA. Specifically, Jostein Askim, Bjørn Mo Forum, and Bent Sofus Tranøy examine parliamentary settlements in Norway, demonstrating how political compromise provides

a foundation for enduring commitment to common good policies. Despite contested social issues and the passing of time, these political settlements have largely held strong, providing certainty to the population and producing widely valued societal outcomes. Providing a tool for overcoming the short-term competition of politics, political settlements have proven to be an important tool of positivity in the Norwegian context.

In Chapter 22, Anna-Maria Dimand and Milena Neshkova explore the movement toward green purchasing and ask whether public procurement can be transformed from the “poster child of negativity bias” into a powerful tool for pursuing societal outcomes. They examine the activity of local governments in the United States and show how the tools used to do the work of government can be repurposed in pursuit of other goals. In doing so, they demonstrate the importance of trade-offs and time – what might not look like such a great idea in the short term, can have longer term positive payoffs.

Alejandra Medina and José Sánchez explore how cross-boundary collaboration can shape effective implementation in Chapter 23. The authors examine a solid waste management arrangement between multiple municipalities at the border of two states in Mexico. They demonstrate how shared definitions, collective action, and a commitment to providing services that contribute to a sustainable future, helped overcome social dilemmas and institutional barriers and advance implementation. Moreover, the development of shared rules and values, alongside an iterative and adaptable approach, emerged as central aspects of producing positive outcomes.

Insights

Throughout the volume we have also included short *insights* that offer provocations, applications, and inspiration for positive public administration. In the first insight, Susan Keim asks us to consider the role of benevolence, love, and citizen engagement in undergirding a more positive governance perspective and providing an “antidote to poor public administration.”

Pamela Herd and Donald Moynihan, authors of the second insight, use the case of student loan forgiveness in the United States to illustrate how reducing administrative burdens can generate positivity. For them, the case offers a “proof of concept for a better approach to public service delivery,” even if, in the final moment, it was killed off by the fractious nature of the US political system.

In the third insight, Richard Callahan and John Kirlin explain the dynamics of disruption and iteration in producing positive outcomes. Drawing on cases from the United States, they demonstrate success-enhancing strategies that span levels of government. They note that generating successful strategies

requires the astute combination of craft, political work, and nested patterns of components, or what others might call pathways or configurations.

Finally, Ndangwa Noyoo and Minenhle Matela offer the fourth insight, which explores public-private partnerships (PPPs) and shows how these arrangements can be vehicles for PPA. They set out success stories of PPPs in South Africa and provide insights into how they have been used to raise the standard of living and well-being for communities. While Noyoo and Matela warn against positioning PPPs as a panacea, they make the case that in the South African context, PPPs have delivered positive outcomes in the past, and can be an important tool for doing so in the future.

By both design and content, the editors of this volume set out to advance the emerging study and practice of positive public administration. We hope the reader will feel we have done so in a helpful manner. At the very least, the 27 entries of this volume show that there are many pathways to positive public administration. Indeed, PPA does not require scholars to become cheerleaders for their objects of study, to be bound by any particular theoretical perspective, epistemological commitment, or methodological toolkit, or to be limited to 'WEIRD' contexts. Likewise, it does not require practitioners to be blind followers, ideologues, or adherents. Rather, PPA research and practice can be intellectually rigorous, diverse in context, scope, theory, and methods, and impactful for individuals, communities, and nations. We invite you to take a walk on the bright side and see how positive public administration is more than just an optimistic state.

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PART I

Foundations

2. Positive public administration's long history

Grant Duncan

INTRODUCTION: HISTORY MATTERS

The basic premises of positive public administration are not entirely modern, nor are they always Western in origin. Today's multi-polar world order will demand of officials that they accommodate and tolerate 'greater diversity in national institutional arrangements and practices' (Rodrick and Walt, 2022). A fuller appreciation of the historical contributions made in the past by the world's civilizations will aid us in avoiding ethnocentrism, encourage us to learn from diverse communities, and lend the kind of humility that informs prudent decision making. Understanding the long historical struggle to establish principles and practices of good government and positive public administration will aid us, then, in establishing and defending them in the future across diverse countries.

Histories of public administration often commence with Woodrow Wilson's famous essay (Wilson, 1887) or earlier with the American and French revolutions (Peters, 2021), but there's been a much longer and wider interest in governing for the common good (Duncan, 2022; Finer, 1999). Looking to past eras, and across all civilizations, lends greater depth and strength to the case for positive public administration today, as a critical history of statecraft puts contemporary public administration into perspective as an enduring human project. This dislodges academic assumptions that Wilson was the seminal author in public administration and that Western models have set the leading examples. It shows us that the basic problems of government and administration are experienced by all societies and are historically recurrent.

By exploring the past, we learn about long traditions of thought and effort, many enduring ideas and concerns, and some gradual, though uneven, improvements in administering government. Along the way, some practices such as slavery and the sale of public offices have been firmly rejected, and public administration has been secularized. History shows, however, that the quest for positive public administration is an ancient one, and this deepens

our understanding of its significance today, as positive public administration derives from human endeavors and experiments over millennia.

This chapter argues that some of the basic premises of what we now call positive public administration were understood long ago: notably, the impartial and equitable application of law, the need for trustworthy leaders, and governing for the well-being of the community. Practical difficulties and disagreements arose around how best to achieve those aims. Societies and their leaders grappled with these critical issues and explored different approaches to trustworthy and effective administration. Indeed, we can observe cross-cultural transmission of ideas about government and administration, and the historical persistence of some basic practices and concepts, often surviving dramatic changes in political regimes.

EARLY STATES

Archaeological and historical records show that, for thousands of years, monarchs, priests and magistrates were seeking to establish administrative systems and legal constraints that aimed to secure the welfare of the people. These records suggest that not all early rulers were despots and they aimed for several goals which broadly align with positive public administration.

The best known (though not oldest) ancient laws were inscribed on the stele of Hammurabi who reigned in Babylon, Mesopotamia, circa 1792–50 BCE. Although referred to as a ‘law code’, it was a public expression of key principles or reforms of Hammurabi’s reign, reinforcing his legitimacy. It announced a divine mandate for just rulership and provided a ‘written and public account of what constituted those just ways’ (Slanski, 2012: 109). It ranged from criminal to civil and family law, generally in terms such as: ‘if a person does that, then this is the consequence.’ It espoused broad principles of justice, truth and well-being. While women were treated differently from men, they did have rights and protections, including property and inheritance. In general, there was ‘an emerging idea of a rule of law in the legal thought of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt [including] separation of powers between assembly and king, fairness of legal process [and] the use of written law’ (May, 2019: 23). There’s evidence of assemblies or juries, and principles of equity. Protection of the weak, especially widows and orphans, was expected of the rich and powerful (Mirakhor and Askari, 2019). One may ask, though, whether the poor and weak were actually protected and cared for very well in practice. Going by surviving correspondence between King and officials, Hammurabi ‘seems to have cared a great deal about the welfare of his subjects, and, in many instances, he protected them against the loss of their land or livelihood’ (Podany, 2022: 282).

These obligations for public figures to apply common principles of justice to their subjects extended beyond Babylon to other city states in Mesopotamia. These early city states of Mesopotamia were monarchies and they had formalized administration, citizens' assemblies, and due process of law. The authority of governors was constrained by service to the gods and to the people (Podany, 2022). 'The relationship between state rulers and their subjects [in the Sumerian world] always was one of negotiation, where each side had to adjust to internal and external realities' (Van De Mieroop, 2013: 287). What Van De Mieroop means is that there were pressures from within, such as for the just distribution of land, and pressures to defend those lands.

A practical distinction between a sovereign *will*, often expressed in written legal principles backed by the gods, and its mundane judicial and administrative *execution* had taken various forms in these early states. It was logical, then, for people to speculate rationally about how to do this better. What kind of constitution and administration would get the best results? And what kind of results were they looking for? These became crucial and persistent questions for public administration down through the centuries. They are questions that still plague public administrations today.

Looking back on how these early city states navigated this tension between sovereign will and administrative execution, two overlapping literary traditions of advice are evident. One concerns the education and conduct of the virtuous ruler (known as mirrors of princes). Mirrors of princes became an important type of text under the influence of the monotheistic religions, as efforts were made to ensure that rulers would be righteous, benevolent, and competent. Precursors can be found, however, as early as Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, which is a (not very accurate) biography of Cyrus the Great of Persia (d. 530 BCE) seen as an exemplary ruler who inspired obedience, written about 370 BCE (Perret and Péquignot, 2023). A relatively late mirror of princes is Erasmus's *The Education of a Christian Prince*, dedicated to the future Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and published in 1516, which urges a high standard of piety and benevolence (Erasmus, 1997). There's now a voluminous literature on leadership, rather than moralistic mirrors of princes, but the need to develop trustworthiness and competence in those who rule and govern has been written about since ancient times and is as vital as ever.

The second tradition focused on addressing the pragmatics of government and statecraft. An example of the pragmatic, sometimes amoral, manuals of statecraft, is *The Book of Lord Shang*, written in the mid to late fourth century BCE during the Warring States period in China. It advises strict and punitive measures to discipline agricultural labour and armed forces. It aims to maximize the power and wealth of the state and its ruler. This general model, known as legalism, had a significant lasting influence on Chinese political thought,

especially on the kings of Qin and the Qin Empire (221–207 BCE) (Shang Yang, 2019).

Another key text focusing, in part, on the pragmatics of government and statecraft comes from South Asia, the *Arthashastra*. It is attributed to an author named Kautilya and associated with the Mauryan empire (third century BCE). Such texts were revised over time, however, and Olivelle (2013) dates the extant manuscript to between 50 and 125 CE. It describes an ideal-typical monarchy, and not necessarily the actual statecraft of its times. The ruler should first rule himself, or master his own passions, it says. If he lacks control of the senses, he will perish. His key adviser is the counsellor-chaplain, who should be ‘a man who comes from a very distinguished family and has an equally distinguished character, who is thoroughly trained in the Veda’ (in Olivelle, 2013: 74). Good policy, it advises, leads to success in the exertion of labour and the secure enjoyment of the fruits of one’s labour. But good policy means the appropriate application of punishment (i.e., the rod). Punishment that is too severe terrifies people, while lenience breeds contempt. Failure to punish leads to ‘the law of the fish’, as the strong devour the weak. Appropriate punishment, however, is based on training and facts, rather than passions, and creates respect.

The many practical concerns of the *Arthashastra* include the geographical and administrative organization of the state, supervision of officials, collection of taxes, adjudication of disputes, waging war, forging alliances, and the management of informants and secret agents. The *Arthashastra* gives advice on recruiting disaffected people, foiling plots, and detecting crime and tax evasion. Underpinning the *Arthashastra* is the assumption that righteousness is only affordable once the state is functioning securely and successfully. Stability is key for success.

Clearly, the pragmatic advice of ancient Chinese legalism and of the *Arthashastra* to ensure stability is too punitive for present-day positive public administration. Nonetheless, they are early examples of systematic efforts to encourage meritocracy in the appointment of officials and to apply a consistent and effective system of law and administration – and hence to temper or control the arbitrary will of monarchs. These ancient policy advisers are not presented here as ideal examples for a positive public administration in today’s complex globalized world. We should not assume that past models are inherently good, as if by virtue of antiquity or longevity; but we find in them some enduring problematics and propositions about good government that still resonate today and that show us the distant antecedents of our present efforts. We can see how people grappled with questions that we would now frame in terms such as: trustworthy leadership, effective and efficient administration, multi-level governance, due process of law, and equity. We may not find their ideas directly applicable today, but we can reflect on the long civilizational

process of learning and adaptation that preceded modern public administration. The remainder of this chapter examines some enduring themes that contemporary positive public administration can consider. To do so, insights from key traditions in public administration are discussed, such as the early Greek, Islamic, and Chinese public administrations.

THE GREEK TRADITION

Aristotle and other ancient thinkers were, in effect, interested in positive public administration, even though they lacked that precise terminology. Contemporary ideas that happiness or well-being can be a definite policy goal, and that research on the social and political factors that affect it can guide policy development and delivery (Lee, 2022) is an elaboration on ancient political thought, though we are much better informed now by advances in scientific knowledge and by historical experience.

The ancient Greeks often had to design constitutions and reform laws for their many city states and colonies, so they were used to debating (if not fighting over) whose was best. Plato's dialogue *The Laws* sets out a plan for an ideal state, including its structures and administration, though it is doubtful that readers would choose to live in the conservative *polis* he portrayed (Plato, 1975). The advice about how to treat one's slaves, for example, is now universally unacceptable, even though Plato was against treating them harshly. His aim was to establish a harmonious system, but it would be an insular society resistant to change or reform. Both Plato and Aristotle understood, however, that a good life lived well (or *eudaimonia*) is not a blessing bestowed by the gods; rather, there are things we can do, personally, politically, and administratively to improve the quality of life.

The Greek word *eudaimonia* may be translated as happiness, well-being, flourishing, or good fortune – and hence it's more than a mood or feeling. Aristotle's description of *eudaimonia* involved a stimulating intellectual life and genuine friendships, which would not look out of place in a contemporary self-help book. One of his enduring insights was that the accumulation of wealth for its own sake is unnatural and hence unnecessary for, if not contrary to, *eudaimonia*. He regarded our propensity to live together in an organized community or state (*polis*) as the foundation for achieving our ultimate purpose: the greatest possible degree of *eudaimonia* or well-being. The positive aims of individuals for a higher quality of life cannot be separated from the customs and aims of the formally constituted community in which they live. In

The Politics, Aristotle (1998: 135) defined ‘constitution’ (*politeia*) in terms of offices, structures, supreme powers, and positive aims:

A constitution is an organization of offices in a city [*polis*], by which the method of their distribution is fixed, the sovereign authority is determined, and the nature of the end to be pursued by the association and all its members is prescribed.

In a ‘correct’ constitution, those aims are the good of the whole community, not only of those who wield power. Aristotle asked what kind of constitution would maximize the opportunities for more people to enjoy a good life, to govern well, and to be governed well as citizens. The aims of the state were understood in terms of the natural desire of its members to live the best possible life in their community. This meant being ruled by law, and hence those who passed law and enforced it should be servants of the law and not its masters. Such ideas have persisted and been transmitted around the world.

THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Aristotelean principles that linked human and social well-being with the constitution and the quality of governance influenced political thought and administrative practices in Eastern and Western civilizations. In short, these ideas spread and were adapted by different cultures and governments. Aristotle lived in a pagan world, but these ideas were later combined with monotheistic doctrines of benevolence and divine will. For example, Islamic law commands the Muslim community to be charitable to the poor and tolerant of other faiths. Modern public administration has since become secular, but the aim of maximizing the well-being of the whole community has been consistently upheld, at least as an ideal. We are indebted to Islamic philosophers of the Middle Ages for the preservation and elaboration of ancient Greek rational philosophy, including ideas about administering a community. Plato and Aristotle never described themselves as ‘Western’ philosophers. The eastward transmission of Aristotelean thought shows the vital role of cross-cultural policy learning, based on the well-established principle that government should aim for the common good.

Following Arabic conquests in the seventh century CE, Arabic caliphs made good use of Persian officials and their pre-existing palace-based administration to expand and administer a new empire. This combined an inherited monarchy alongside a permanent first minister (*vizier*) and a secretariat. Part of this adaptation process involved the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad sponsoring translations from Greek into Arabic, so that Plato and Aristotle could be translated, and lessons incorporated into Islamic political philosophy.¹

For example, Abū Nasr al-Fārābī (circa 870–950 CE), who hailed from eastern Persia, was one of the great thinkers of those times. He noted that rational philosophy had emerged well before the Prophet, implying a natural precedence or innateness of reason over revelation. As very few people (in those times) possessed the literacy and education of a philosopher, however, an applied philosophy inculcated through religious symbolism could serve to educate communities. All religions, al-Fārābī argued, aim for the people's ultimate happiness by instructing and guiding them. And, in the absence of the ideal spiritual and political leader, rational law and government could promote religious observance, social cohesion, and well-being. He compared the city to a human body, with each household acting like an organ that contributes to the health of the whole, and hence he compared the art of rulership to the work of a physician who understands how the body's organs and limbs work together to keep a person healthy. People can only attain their highest state of development by living in well-organized associations as cities and as nations, he observed (al-Fārābī, in Bailey et al., 2008).

This Aristotelean–Fārābīan tradition was reworked, for example, in the thirteenth century by Nasir ad-Din Tusi, or al-Tusi (1201–74). His *Nasirean Ethics* (1235) distinguishes three branches of practical philosophy: personal ethics, economy (or regulation of the household), and civic administration. Government is necessary, he said, to ensure that people get what is owing to them, that no one can infringe others' rights, and that cooperation is possible. To live well, people must cooperate, and their transactions should accord with the principle of equity. Leaders must have regard for the whole of their communities and promote the general well-being through equitable and impartial administration (Tusi, 2011).

Islamic notions of good governance spread beyond the Middle East too. For example, texts by al-Tusi and other Persian authors then circulated in the vast multi-cultural Mughal Empire of South Asia in the sixteenth century. Their general principles of administration helped to prevent any ethnoreligious faction from dominating, and this encouraged 'a cohesive and socially inclusive service corps' (Eaton, 2020: 227). In addition, coming from North Africa, Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406) stands out as a dialectical theorist, well before Hegel and Marx. His *Muqaddimah (Introduction)* includes an account of what we would now call public administration. It covers the roles of chief minister (wazir or 'help'), doorkeeper (more important than it sounds!), the ministries of finance and taxation, and numerous other official posts and functions; it also refers to 'books on administration' that dealt with matters of law in more

detail. Khaldun (2005: 189–190) made traditional distinctions between the caliph and the ‘governmental positions’, and between the sword and the pen:

‘The pen’ has such subdivisions, for instance, as ‘the pen of letters and correspondence’, ‘the pen of diplomas and fiefs’, and ‘the pen of bookkeeping’, which means the offices of tax collections and allowances and of minister of the army. ‘The sword’ includes such subdivisions, for instance, as the offices of chief of military operations, chief of police, chief of the postal service, and administration of the border regions.

Taxation was central to Ibn Khaldun’s theory of the rise and fall of dynasties. He understood that fiscal policy affects the economy and the stability of government. His theory resembled the Laffer curve by positing that rising taxation may discourage production and trade, and hence reduce, rather than augment, the treasury’s revenues.

The cross-cultural learning of governance is crucial to seeing principles of public administration evolve. Aristotelean principles have had a lasting impact on political thought and administration, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries in both Eastern and Western civilizations. These principles fused with monotheistic doctrines in the Islamic world, underscoring a persistent commitment to maximizing community well-being. Through the contributions of Islamic philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Nasir ad-Din Tusi, this Aristotelean tradition found practical application in governance and societal organization. Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun’s insights on public administration, especially regarding taxation and its role in the rise and fall of dynasties, contribute to this rich intellectual heritage.

CHINA

Chinese history reveals a long tradition of public administration that survived and adapted to changes of imperial dynasties. The outstanding feature that I focus on here is the rigorous system of education and examination of civil servants. Meritocratic selection and appointment of governors and civil servants has been a feature of the Chinese system since the first emperor. Today, as mainland China combines an authoritarian one-party state with a revival of Confucianism, it is essential that we understand its long civilizational history.

Guidance for principled and benevolent rulership in China is generally focused on Confucius (circa 551–479 BCE), but he was citing and learning from older traditions. For Mencius, humane government meant lower taxes, lighter punishments, and distribution of basic goods (Confucius, 1979; Mencius, 1984). Confucian ideas were integrated with the gentle, intuitive Daoist and the much stricter, meritocratic legalist models in a text known as *The Art of Rulership* produced for the Former Han dynasty in the late second century

BCE. This manual offered a checks-and-balances justification for altruistic civil administration:

The purpose of setting up a bureaucracy in antiquity was to prevent people from doing just as they pleased. That they set up a ruler was to check the bureaucracy and prevent it from being dictatorial. Law, records, social norms, and a code of moral conduct are to prevent the ruler from making decisions based on his own whims. (in Ames, 1994: 191)

Armed with this political philosophy, for centuries thereafter, the Chinese imperial administration was staffed by graduates of schools that taught these classical texts, especially Confucian philosophy. It reached a height under the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE). For two millennia or more, the Chinese civil service refined and adapted its public administration, to what has often been considered the world's best educated and most disciplined non-military workforce. There were strict courses of nationwide examinations for entry into a graded system of employment with transparent salaries (paid in cash and in kind) and performance evaluations. The civil servants formed a tiny elite (only one qualified official per 7,500 people in the early thirteenth century), but talented young men from relatively modest backgrounds could aspire to join by undertaking long and arduous studies and passing invigilated examinations. This civilian cadre maintained control over the military and over the Daoist and Buddhist priesthoods.

Song China was neither despotic nor totalitarian. 'Administrative and economic efficiency was achieved ... through an atmosphere of reliability, responsibility, and above all pragmatism' (Kuhn, 2009: 276). To illustrate its high degree of pragmatism, innovation, and trust, the Song government issued the world's first sovereign-backed nationwide printed paper money for private transactions and tax payments.

Although dynasties rose and fell, China's system of civil administration persisted. It accommodated and served the Mongol and Manchu conquerors in the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, respectively. Its ultimate downfall can be attributed to an inability to adapt to competition from aggressive foreign powers from 1840 until 1945. Traditional public administration in China was open to internal debate and reform, and, thanks to its Confucian and Daoist principles, was intended for selfless service to both the emperor and the people at large.

FROM RELIGION TO SCIENCE

One important historical feature of government and administration that differs from what we use today is the frequent overlapping of religious and

civic roles. This was as true of pagan Greece and Rome as it was of the Byzantine and Islamic empires. Roman emperors, for example, were styled as *pontifex maximus* (chief high priest) and the Islamic caliph was considered to be God's deputy. The modern separation of Church and state, religious toleration, and secularization of public administration (or in France *laïcité*) have been outcomes of long and often violent struggles. But institutions such as orphanages and hospitals, and policies of social protection and welfare nonetheless owe a lot historically to religious doctrine and organization. Religion brought positive or benevolent aims and large-scale capability into the administration of communities. Religious leaders and institutions, for example the papacy, sometimes had to step in when civil government collapsed.

After the fall of the western Roman Empire in the late fifth century and until the Reformation, western Europeans were subject to personal rule by competing warlords and kings and often by popes and bishops. It had been left up to the early popes to defend the city of Rome, and they were eventually recognized as princes of the Papal States by the Frankish King Pepin in 756 CE. Then in 800 CE, after Christmas Mass in Rome, Pope Leo III took it upon himself to lay an imperial crown on the head of Pepin's successor Charles (Charlemagne), much to the surprise – and alarm – of the imperial administration in Constantinople. So, who reigned supreme, Priest or King?

Political rivalry between popes and kings reached a peak in 1076 when Pope Gregory VII and Henry IV fought over which of them could select and invest (or bestow authority upon) bishops. Given the size of the lands and communities administered by bishops and abbots, this had huge economic, political, and religious implications. Pope and king tried to depose one another, but Gregory held a trump card: excommunication. This threatened Henry with the loss of his government, as his bishops and most of his princes distanced themselves from him, or even revolted, thus forcing him to plead for absolution from the Pope. This investiture controversy helped consolidate papal authority over an independent Roman Catholic Church. Although Gregory failed to realize his far more ambitious dream of supremacy over all other princes and emperors, it's been argued that this crisis laid a historical foundation for separation of Church and state, and hence, in the longer term, secularization of public administration (Holland, 2010).

It was not until the thirteenth century that, in another important example of cross-cultural learning, Aristotelian literature was transmitted (via Muslim scholars) into western Europe. *The Politics* was (at last) translated into Latin and this inspired the theologian St Thomas Aquinas (1225–74). Contrary to St Augustine's pessimistic view that government was a necessary evil and that tyrants were God's punishment for sinners, Aquinas said that government was established for our common welfare and should be conducted in accordance with natural law. Hence the human-made civil law 'must attend to the order-

ing of individual things in such a way as to secure the common happiness' (Aquinas, 2002: 70). Monotheism preferred monarchy, as one ruler in heaven was represented by one on Earth. But Aquinas insisted that princes should preside 'according to virtue', as should their ministers and administrators, because the government 'belongs to all' (Aquinas, 2002: 54).

Feudalism was then the dominant model of government in western Europe, but soon after Aquinas's time we see the rise of representative assemblies, notably England's, and of free republics such as Venice, Florence, and Siena. Many textbooks of political thought are graced with the fourteenth-century fresco by Ambrogio Lorenzetti (in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico) depicting the effects of good government on the city. During the Renaissance, a common debate among Italian intellectuals, including a deposed public servant called Niccolò Machiavelli, concerned the contrasting merits of monarchies and republics. Monarchies were thought to be more in accord with Nature and more agile in decision making; republics were seen as freer and not subject to the passions of one person. An example of such a debate is found in book four of Baldesar Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier* first published in 1528 (Castiglione, 1976). The relationship between Church and state has been a recurring theme throughout history. As we navigate the challenges of contemporary public administration, there is much to be gained from studying how past civilizations managed the balance between religious and political authority. By delving into historical instances where this equilibrium was achieved or disrupted, we can glean valuable lessons for promoting effective governance, safeguarding individual rights, and fostering social harmony.

CAMERAL SCIENCE

After the Renaissance, we begin to see a more utilitarian or scientific approach – noting that the Latin *scientia* could include any systematic body of knowledge, rather than today's stricter meaning of 'science'. The Reformation and Counter-Reformation weakened the political influence of the Western churches and opened the space for secular models of public administration. Contentious religious doctrines could be removed from the aims of civil government; public administration could be guided by worldly economic and social goals and legitimized by the concept of popular consent.

One important example of this scientific approach was cameralism, which flourished under Europe's absolute monarchs and was a precursor of the administrative science of the twentieth century. It addressed whole populations as well as the individual, with the aim of maximizing productive potential and minimizing losses. Public administration was thus moving beyond allocation of rewards and penalties and observance of obligations and rights. Augmenting

the strength of the state would go hand in hand with improving the welfare of its populace and managing its natural resources.

In Prussia, the seventeenth century saw the development of a political advisory literature that supported the interests of rulers by first paying close attention to the welfare of subjects. Under Frederick William I in 1727, university studies in ‘cameral and police sciences’ (in effect, public policy and administration) were established. ‘Cameral’ comes from the German *Kammer*, the chamber or room in which fiscal affairs of state were discussed and administered. *Kameralwissenschaften* are cameral sciences, and many governmental practices in seventeenth-century Germany, Austria, and further afield were generically cameralist. The wealth and security of these states depended on their own population, territory, natural resources, and industries, and less on exploitation of distant colonies. Cameral science and practice dealt with the crown’s management of its domestic domains, such as finances and industries including agriculture, mining, forestry, and fisheries. The Greek tradition of *oekonomy* (household or estate management and regulation) came down from Xenophon and Aristotle, and it expanded to encompass princely households and hence the early modern state. The ruler was a householder with large estates; good government attended to livestock, farms, and forests. Its aims were population growth, the happiness or prosperity of the subjects, and the growth of the Treasury’s revenues and reserves. This included mercantilist policies forbidding the export of raw materials considered essential for the state and reducing importation of manufactured goods that competed with domestic industries (Tribe, 1995). Cameral science meant ‘the rationalisation of state and society’ based on impartial expertise and careful organization, including public health, schooling, internal security, and welfare (Seppel, 2017: 16). However, many cameralist ideas were utopian, impractical, or unpopular. Those that were put into formal law or regulation may not have been uniformly enforced or observed. Some cameralist writings, such as in forestry, on the other hand, document well-established practices and administrative norms.

Whereas the Chinese trained their officials in moral virtue, scholarly excellence, and traditional rites in the interests of harmony, cameralism identified problems, resources, and potential within the population and the territory, and aimed, in a calculated manner, for a wealthier, more secure state. Cameralists understood that good fiscal policy could stimulate economic activity; they aimed for orderliness through effective ‘police’ (*Polizei*). Police meant more than the authority that enforces law: it referred to systematic social regulation. Rather than let events take their natural course, the science of police sought public happiness through normalization of everyday life, including public hygiene, flood and fire prevention, care of the poor, and order in the streets. It imagined an ever-watchful eye and an ever-ready helping hand. So, while cameralism proposed and investigated the objects of government, the science

of police put them all in order at the level of villages, pastures, markets, and the like (Tribe, 1995).

If one assumes a clear distinction between politics and administration, then it became possible to imagine that administrative techniques may be applied systematically or 'scientifically' under different kinds of state regimes. Lessons about public administration could thus be taken from absolute monarchies and applied to republics, or vice versa, so long as the security and welfare of the people are basic goals. The German cameralist tradition of public administration was overwhelmed, however, by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, and it was undermined intellectually by political economy, especially the liberal tradition exemplified by Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) (Smith, 1999). Smith pointedly criticized the mercantilism and interventionism of the Prussian state. For him, well-being was a private concern, not a public one. Prussian absolute monarchy had led to rigidity and military incompetence, contributing to defeat by Napoleon in 1806. While the Prussian civil service was small, royal dictatorship and micro-management meant that officials were 'routine-ridden, fearful of taking initiatives, and not very imaginative' (Finer, 1999: 1367). We can see, however, that a discipline and a practice of public administration, based on positive social and economic goals, were established in the eighteenth century. Cameralism had fundamental flaws, but its focus on economic management and fiscal stability, and its practical and hands-on approach to problem-solving offer valuable insights for contemporary public administration.

CONCLUSION

A *positive* public administration that addresses (in theory and practice) 'what governments can do and how they can do this to the benefit of citizens and communities' (Douglas et al., 2021: 446) is as old as the hills. In terms of world historical influence, the discipline begins, I argue, with Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* – although the Chinese would point instead to the *Analects* of Confucius. For modern societies with representative government, however, their distinctive organized systems of public administration have roots in sixteenth-century continental Europe. Through to the end of the eighteenth century, the Europeans underwent violent struggles that ultimately ended absolutism and established representative government with religious pluralism. The last of the ruling imperial dynasties fell after the First World War and surviving monarchs were constrained to symbolic and constitutional roles. The universal franchise became a norm, and those who govern became accountable to the people affected by their decisions. We count that as progress. But the general idea of lawful administration for the common good is an ancient one.

A long historical account reveals important enduring themes that still concern our present project. The purpose of positive public administration – the prosperity or well-being of the whole community – has been recognized since Confucius and Plato, if not before. Not many of us today would want to live in the kinds of societies that they thought ideal, but the basic aim of a common good was understood back then and has been ever since. The question posed by Aristotle, then, is about the type of constitution and form of government that will most readily achieve that overall goal.

Positive public administration requires a sound constitution with a system of written rules and routines. The need for an impartial rule of law, rather than arbitrary personal will, was clearly stated by Aristotle, although he knew that we can never remove the unpredictable human element. One of the long historical struggles, then, has been to establish public administration on well-regulated legal, technical, and evidence-based grounds. It takes people, however, to write laws, design administrative systems, implement policies, and deliver services. The need for trustworthy conduct in those who govern and administer has also been recognized all along, with the traditional mirror of princes being replaced by a vast contemporary literature on leadership. A struggle to establish meritocracy (above the inheritance or sale of offices) can be traced back to China's first emperor and to the Han dynasty's establishment of a permanent civil service with an examination system. In Europe, the modern rule of bureaucracy that separates private interests from public offices emerges as a prominent issue from the sixteenth century. Public office-holding for life, or by virtue of family pedigree, political patronage, or purchase, only gradually disappeared, however. A dedicated professional cohort of civil servants, appointed and promoted on merit, is recognized now as essential for positive public administration.

One of the more urgent tasks of public administration today is the elimination of corruption, which is partly a matter of professional ethics and of organizational culture. Strict laws are necessary but not sufficient. In recent times, however, the neoliberal 'rational utility maximizer' and the populist 'strongman' have undermined the altruistic spirit of public service, so we should not assume that ethical debates about leadership are somehow settled.

Furthermore, as machine-learning AI takes on and redevelops many of the administrative and regulatory routines that have been human tasks, we will need – more than ever – to fully understand the human significance of *public* administration, if we are to make it truly *positive*. We need a government of AI, and not to be governed by AI. A recollection of the history of humanity's many efforts to find and develop the finest administrators helps us to appreciate that positive public administration is not a 'state of things' that could be achieved once and for all. It is instead a never-ending obligation, the norms of

which may change across time and place and as new technologies transform our capabilities.

Religious and secular administration were often indistinguishable but were gradually separated, although in countries such as Iran this separation is far from complete. Today, all countries must accommodate the needs and customs of people of diverse faiths – although this is nothing new. Ancient empires were highly diverse and often very tolerant. Ideas of divine law were eventually replaced, however, by ‘scientific’ models, as is evident in cameralism which emerged under the aegis of absolute monarchs. Over the last century there has been a lively debate about whether public administration is an art or a science – or both. Positive public administration today undoubtedly benefits from empirical evidence about what works, as supplied by the natural, medical, and social sciences. However, the application of that evidence still requires ethical judgement and prudence.

In earlier times, a science (*scientia*) could be any systematic field of knowledge, and hence a moral or a political science was not an unfamiliar idea. And one major long-term trend is the secularization of public administration, making it quite distinct from ecclesiastical administration. A systematic ‘science’ of public administration first became conceivable alongside profound social and political changes that made how one worships a matter of conscience, not law. Advanced social and medical scientific findings now support a positive public administration, grounded in evidence and in sound ethics, as the next historical step forward.

This chapter has emphasized continuities and enduring themes in the arts of government, and the cross-cultural transfer of knowledge, and hence may be criticized for underestimating cultural and religious differences across time and space – some of which may be irreconcilable. But every society has ways and means of governing its everyday life, distributing its goods, settling its differences, punishing offences, and conducting relations with other communities. States and empires are characterized by formal institutions of government, and hence specific groups are tasked with the administration or execution of laws and orders. Broadly defined, then, public administration is a feature of all states, although it is achieved through widely varying methods, principles, and culturally specific precepts or codes. The qualifier ‘public’ (shared by or open to all, as opposed to private or secret) varies considerably too in its normative practical applications. Nonetheless, all states conduct public administration. In most times and places, people involved in public administration would at least claim that what they do is for a greater or common good – and hence ‘positive’. We may argue that there are better ways – but disagreement and debate, and hence historical improvement, are characteristics of the politics of justice.

Across time and space, translation movements and trade routes that transmitted ideas about good government reveal how dynamic and diverse older

civilizations were. Lawmakers and administrators today need to appreciate the histories and values of the communities with whom they work, and to appreciate the profound historical contributions made by all civilizations to our present understandings of positive public administration. We now operate in diverse societies, with borderless policy problems and through multi-lateral collaboration. To succeed in that world, the public officials of one country need to work with and learn from others of culturally very different countries. Understanding the historical contributions and achievements made by all civilizations will help us to overcome ethnocentrism and to work together more harmoniously. Viewing positive public administration as a long historical and human endeavor lends depth and wisdom to these present-day efforts.

NOTE

1. Aristotle's *Politics* itself was not translated at that time (Abbès, 2023).

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3. Beyond the binary: understanding success and failure

Matthew Flinders

INTRODUCTION

Public administration has traditionally evolved around the analysis of problems. It has therefore been imbued with a negativity bias that was for a long time simply assumed to reflect the main role of scholarship (i.e., the analysis and understanding of failure). As this collection serves to demonstrate, in recent years a self-conscious, confident, and increasingly cohesive strand of ‘positive’ scholarship has emerged within the discipline. This does not argue against the analysis of failure but simply seeks to promote the intellectual and societal benefits of *studying success* through a focus on (inter alia) public value, public service, and notably effective policy initiatives. Key reference points within this body of work include Compton and ‘t Hart’s (2019) *Great Policy Successes*, Luetjens, Mintrom, and ‘t Hart’s (2019) *Successful Public Policy: Lessons from Australia and New Zealand*, de la Portes and colleague’s (2022) *Successful Public Policy in Nordic Countries*, and Lindquist and colleague’s (2022) *Policy Success in Canada*. The nascent positive public administration (PPA) approach (Douglas et al., 2021; see also Compton et al., 2022; Douglas, 2022) captures the need to challenge the ‘self-evident truth’ that public policies always fail and to promote a brighter focus on *why*, *when*, and *how* policies achieve at least some element of their ambitions.¹

The analysis of success does, however, raise questions about the role, independence, and criticality of scholars. In a generally low-trust high-blame socio-political context the allocation of credit by ‘independent’ academics for successful policy interventions is by definition at some level a political act. These questions take on added emphasis in a context that increasingly promotes ‘incentives for impact’ and forms of co-production and co-design whereby academics must work with potential research-users in the design and delivery of research projects (see Bandola-Gill et al., 2021). For scholars of public administration this generally means that the need to cultivate close relationships with politicians and policy-makers – as the discipline’s core potential

research-users – is becoming an implicit and sometimes explicit requirement for securing research funding. The traditional ‘arm’ in the arm’s-length relationship between academe and policy has therefore been reduced in many countries and, as such, the co-option or politicization of scholarship is therefore a risk – as Eisfeld and Flinders (2021) have illustrated – that must be acknowledged when making the case for PPA. And yet the central argument of this chapter is that *the identification and analysis of policy success does not necessarily reflect co-option or a lack of criticality, but these are risks that the field needs to engage with in a more conscious and explicit manner than has occurred to date.*

Exposing, interrogating, and understanding what this chapter refers to as ‘the politics of PPA’ is therefore the main ambition of this chapter. In order to achieve this it makes three main contributions: (i) it counters PPA’s focus on ‘the bright side’ through a novel emphasis on the ‘dark side’; (ii) it then moves beyond that binary conceptualization through the development of a multi-levelled framework that demonstrates the potential compatibility of a focus on failure and success; and (iii) it provides brief case studies that populate the framework and demonstrate nested thinking about success and failure. Taken together, what these contributions combine to offer is a fresh way of not only acknowledging the inevitable politics of PPA, but also of understanding the multi-levelled interplay of different variables in a policy context.

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first offers a very brief account of PPA and ‘walking on the bright side’. The second section focuses on ‘the dark side’ of approaches to administrative analysis but not in the traditional sense of focusing on the existence of a clear ‘negativity bias’ (i.e. the imbalance that has stimulated a more *positive* approach), but on a different dimension that revolves around the criticality and independence of academics.

Having set out two very different and competing perspectives, the third and most substantive section seeks to move ‘beyond the binary’ by offering a multi-levelled analytical framework that demonstrates the potential complementarity of interpretations of success and failure (notably of ‘success-*within*-failure’). This third section also moves from theory to practice by providing a brief case study vignette of each of the four options generated by this framework. The fourth and final section reflects on the broader implications of this focus on criticality and co-option for those seeking to make the case for PPA.

WALKING ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

The opening chapter has provided an extensive account of PPA, and it is sufficient for the purposes of this section to simply note that an invitation to ‘walk on the bright side of public governance’ is normatively entwined with a commitment to acknowledging, examining, and learning from examples

of *successful* policy (see Douglas et al., 2020). Intellectually, PPA is forged on a ‘double-dynamic’ (Flinders, 2023b) that blends *internal/academic* and *external/societal* dimensions. The *internal/academic* dimension is forged upon a critique of the way in which traditional public administration has, to a large extent, itself become imbued with an extreme ‘negativity bias’. Studies of catastrophes and chaos, flops and fiascos, disasters and dysfunctions, blunders, and blame games have predominated – ‘an obsession with critiquing and cataloguing failure’ (Smith, 2019: xvii) – and explains why PPA seeks to shift the balance towards a more rigorous analytical understanding of policy success. ‘[W]e must more systematically pursue theoretical explanations’, Douglas and his co-authors argue (2021: 442), ‘that explain instances of solid or even exceptional accomplishments in public governance, to better learn what to embrace, support and emulate.’ The aim of collecting data, evidence and insight is to explore how and whether *certain elements of success* might usefully be acknowledged in the design and delivery of other initiatives. This flows into a second and related – but at the same time very different – *external/societal dimension* of the PPA agenda: to inform public debate and discussion.

Longstanding narratives concerning the ‘crisis’, ‘death’, or ‘suicide’ of democracy and the emergence of ‘disaffected democrats’ have in recent years been augmented with global concerns regarding ‘democratic backsliding’ and the ‘authoritarian advantage’ in times of crisis (for a review, see Foa et al., 2020; IDEA, 2021). The ‘self-evident truth’ from the available data would seem to be that when it comes to the public’s perception of democratic governance it is generally viewed as *highly inefficient, often corrupt, and generally failing*. However, ‘[T]he danger of self-evident truths’ as Ostrom (2000: 33) argued is that ‘the fact that something is widely believed does not make it correct’. Advocates of PPA therefore approach what Foa and Wilmot (2019) have labelled ‘the resentment epidemic’ and ask whether it is ‘a reflection of underlying realities of declining performance and viability of our public institutions and our system of government’ or may to some extent be the outcome of a ‘culturally entrenched negativity bias in the way we look at, judge, and speak about our political and administrative institutions’ (Douglas et al., 2021: 442).

The key implication is that by possibly *over-emphasizing* notions of failure, inefficiency, and incompetence (and under-emphasizing or ignoring examples of success or ‘what worked’) the discipline of public administration may itself have played some role in forging and perpetuating this ‘culturally entrenched negativity bias’. The ambitions of PPA are therefore clear: it seeks to study success to contribute ‘to the quality of democratic government and effective public governance’ (Douglas et al., 2021: 446). In doing so it frames itself as ‘walking in the footsteps’ of classic and longstanding Wilsonian (1887)

arguments about the study of public administration supporting the practice of public administration.

In summary, the PPA agenda is concerned with (i) identifying, investigating, and learning from examples of successful public policy (the *internal dynamic*); and (ii) utilizing those insights to inform, reframe and provide an evidence-base for public debates and discussion about democratic performance (the *external dynamic*). It accepts that interpretations of ‘success’ and ‘failure’ are themselves as contestable (i.e. ‘multi-dimensional and multi-perspectivist’) as they are likely to be partial, but it also starts from the basic position that focusing on failure is likely to produce a fairly pessimistic and potentially unrepresentative analysis, irrespective of the focus of inquiry. From this perspective ‘walking on the dark side’ might be viewed as simply synonymous with public administration’s traditional emphasis on failure. While related, ‘walking on the dark side’ is for the purposes of this chapter, and the debate it seeks to spark, very different: it relates to the risk that in their focus on success, and by definition the allocation of some element of credit or praise rather than criticism and blame, proponents of PPA will be co-opted into the services of those politicians and policymakers whose support they are increasingly required to possess in order to secure research funding and/or demonstrate clear societal ‘impact’ or ‘relevance’. This alternative vision of ‘the dark side’ forms the focus of the next section.

WALKING ON THE DARK SIDE

This volume seeks to promote PPA and aims to chart new directions for PA theory and practice. Set against these ambitions the main position of this chapter is that promoting PPA will be difficult until the existence of concerns regarding risks, rigour, and possible ‘rebound effects’ (i.e. accusations of politically influenced interpretations of policy success) are openly addressed, and this needs to form a central component of any new directions for theory and practice. The main aim of this section is to explore exactly why issues relating to control, co-option, and criticality demand discussion. Mark van Oostaijen and Shivan Jhagroe’s (2022) [hereafter O&J] strident critique of PPA provides the main reference point for this section’s review of what is termed ‘the dark side of PPA’.

O&J argue that PPA represents a form of politicization. ‘PPA will not create a way out [of longstanding concerns about the relevance of the discipline]’ they suggest ‘but only a new way into traditional and intellectual problems that have haunted PA as a discipline’ (2022: 263). Their analysis claims to reveal the paradoxes that are emblematic of what PPA really is about: a conservative plea and ‘inherent political act [...] toward more traditional, affirmative, and instrumental [public administration] knowledge production. We consider this

as a rather romantic, nostalgic, and regressive turn to the past and the inability to actually innovate public administration as a field' (2022: 268–269). Stripped down to its core components, O&J provide a story, a form of sensemaking and a polemic that attempts to position PPA normatively, intellectually, and politically. This begins with a focus on Douglas et al.'s (2020: 640) claim that PPA is not 'a new disciplinary ambition but a reformulation of the classic ambition of the field' and flows into a process of 'historicizing PPA' (see Duncan, Chapter 2 in this volume). In presenting this story O&J begin by offering a fairly conventional but still contested (see Lynn, 2001: 265) narrative of the history of public administration which leads them to a focus on 'the *position and function* of disciplinary knowledge in relation to PPA' [italics in original].

It is at this point that O&J introduce Horkheimer and Adorno's (1972) arguments concerning rationality, reason, and criticality. 'The Frankfurt scholars' they note (p. 265) 'observed a spread of *instrumental reason* rooted in material forms of production and administration as the main problem of modernity'. Instrumental knowledge – designed to make state structures more efficient – led to 'the instrumentalization of man' (Marcuse, 1991: 159). 'Positivist social science' is, from this ideological perspective, simply part of a conservative ambition in which instrumental knowledge contributes to 'traditional theory': 'which, for all intents and purposes, remains an essentially a-critical and politically affirmative intellectual enterprise' (Thompson, 2017: 232). The 'dark side' when viewed from O&J's perspective is that PPA will promote an emphasis on instrumental ends (use-value) rather than reflexive ends (critical value) and therefore that its proponents might willingly or unwittingly play a role in the 'discursive legitimization of policy success' (p. 266).

There is a very clear and obvious link between O&J's specific critique of PPA and Noam Chomsky's (1967) celebrated essay in the *New York Review of Books* on the changing role of intellectuals in society. Put simply, Chomsky identified two types of intellectual: 'technocratic and policy-orientated intellectuals' and 'value-orientated intellectuals'. The former were 'the good guys' in the eyes of the establishment, who served the needs of the system through the provision of technocratic information that improved the performance of the machinery of governance, while also generally praising its achievements; while the latter were 'the bad guys' from an establishment perspective, who dared to speak 'truth to power', exposed lies and engaged in critical analysis. O&J seem to assume that PPA will lead to the creation of legions of 'technocratic and policy-orientated intellectuals' who blindly focus on producing instrumental knowledge in a system-affirming manner. '[T]he position and function of PPA knowledge are explicitly understood as part of a performative and "inherent" political act of telling and validating "successful" stories of governmental action', O&J note (p. 267). And also that, 'Metrics for policy success, as instrumental discursive objects, play a crucial role in foregrounding

what governments do “properly”. Therefore, PPA claims about policy success can be understood as a *political act*.’

The main weakness of O&J’s position is that PPA goes to great lengths to underline the complexity and contestability of interpretations of success and failure (see Douglas et al., 2020; Compton, Luetjens, and ’t Hart, 2019). But the deeper politics that O&J seeks to lay at the door of PPA has less to do with analytical definitions of success and more to do with the co-option of scholarship into the service of the state, and the evisceration of intellectual criticality. This is an important point. At the heart of O&J’s position are a set of assumptions about state–society relationships and the role of the intellectual which impose a crude reductive logic based around assumptions of either ‘criticality’ or ‘co-option’. Criticality, in the sense of highlighting failure, remaining antagonistic, and ‘speaking truth to power’; co-option, in the sense of being effectively assimilated into the ruling class or political elite. PPA’s willingness to ‘[swim] against the currents of skepticism, negativism, and disillusionment with politics and government that beset many nations today’ (Luetjens, Mintrom, and ’t Hart, 2019: vii) is therefore *automatically assumed* by O&J to reflect both a rejection of ‘anti-system thinking’ and a shift towards the mechanistic production of ‘traditional, affirmative, and instrumental PA knowledge production’ (2022: 268–269). If this was a true characterization of PPA then O&J’s critique of a ‘regressive turn’ that reflected ‘the inability to actually innovate public administration as a field’ (2022: 268–269) may well have some substance. But this is not a true characterization of PPA, nor is it intellectually able to adequately reflect the ‘grey areas’ that inevitably exist between and within interpretations of *policy success and policy failure* (see McConnell, 2010b).

While O&J are correct to raise issues concerning co-option and criticality in relation to PPA (i.e. the existence of a potential ‘dark side’), they are wrong to see the analysis of policy success as somehow synonymous with conservative, instrumental, system-affirming thinking. In some ways O&J do the PPA agenda a huge service by providing an analysis which is itself imbued with the ‘negativity bias’ that PPA seeks to acknowledge and address. As a result, O&J find themselves promoting an overly reductionist trap of their own making that seems to suggest that students of public administration can *only study failure* and other forms of ‘darkness’ in the institutions and practices of government. While they claim to ‘propose an engaged form of academic and democratic knowledge production that moves beyond simplified negativity/positivity schemes’ (2021: 270), their critique of PPA is based on the polarizing assumption that the study of policy success is by definition incompatible with reflexive critical scholarship. The analytical weak spot that O&J’s critique serves to highlight is one of demonstrating the need to move beyond the binary by

Table 3.1 *Beyond the binary: nested thinking about success and failure*

Level of change	Political level	Focus	Option #1	Option #2	Option #3	Option #4
First order	Micro	Instruments, settings, and tools	Failure	Success	Success	Success
Second order	Meso	Policies, procedures, and governance	Failure	Failure	Success	Success
Third order	Macro	Goals, values, and ideas	Failure	Failure	Failure	Success

Source: Author.

demonstrating that the analysis of success need not be *uncritical*. This forms the focus of the next section.

BEYOND THE BINARY

‘[P]ositive public administration’, Trommel (2019: 60) argues, ‘remains trapped in a one-dimensional, quasi-neutral and instrumentalist spectrum with two extremes: success and failure.’ Leong and Howlett (2022: 1381) provide a more measured but nevertheless related argument when they suggest that too much of the policy learning literature overlooks the ‘dark side’ of policymaking and ‘that policymakers are often driven by malicious or venal motivations rather than socially beneficial or disinterested ones’. O&J’s position is more extreme. The identification and analysis of successful policy is assumed to be incompatible with the maintenance of criticality. It is this core assumed tension between credit and criticality that this chapter seeks to challenge on the basis that it is this critique – and not PPA – that is simply far too reductive, simplistic, and one-dimensional. It is for exactly this reason that this section seeks to go ‘beyond the binary’ and offer an analytical and empirical demonstration of why the identification of success *can* retain a clear criticality.

It achieves this through the adoption of a multi-levelled approach that takes inspiration from Douglas and coauthors (2021: 443) and their emphasis on the need to ‘identify micro, meso, and macro conditions, and the interplay between agent and institutional context at these levels’ in order to create both the intellectual and political space to accommodate both credit and criticality. Peter Hall’s (1993) influential dissection of levels of policy change provides a useful framework for exposing and exploring this ‘space’ (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 attempts to demonstrate that students of *positive* public administration or policy ‘success’ do not necessarily have to undertake their analysis in an instrumental or uncritical manner in the way that is assumed

and critiqued by O&J. Although the risk of undue influence may exist – a temptation to ‘move to the dark side’ where intellectual independence is, in essence, traded for other benefits – there is no foundational need for scholars of PPA to become depoliticized versions of Chomsky’s ‘technocratic and policy-orientated intellectuals’. Critical capacity, to put the same point slightly differently, *is* congruent with the distribution of credit. Whereas analyses of ‘success’ and ‘failure’ have often been framed through criteria that are mutually exclusive and zero-sum (for a discussion, see, for example, McConnell, 2010a) a multi-levelled approach facilitates more sophisticated and possibly even positive-sum analyses. The remainder of this section provides an exemplary case vignette of each of the options outlined in Table 3.1.

Option 1: British Fiscal Policy Under Liz Truss

Hall’s (1993) seminal analysis of policy paradigms, social learning, and the state was empirically focused on macro-economic policymaking in Britain. It therefore seems fitting that this section’s first attempt to demonstrate how Hall’s multi-levelled framework is of relevance to debates concerning PPA should focus on British fiscal policy at the time of the brief premiership of Liz Truss in 2022 which itself was an abject example of policy failure that is unlikely to be contested (see Flinders, 2022). Her core macro-political ideas were incorporated in a ‘bold economic plan’, based on supply-side and trickle-down economics, that lacked a firm evidence base (see Hope and Limberg, 2020), shocked the markets, and damaged the Conservative Party’s reputation for fiscal competence. The (mid-level) policies of cutting business rates and removing the cap on bankers’ bonuses proved disastrous pledges to make in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis; and at a more micro-political level the way in which the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer initially attempted to avoid the scrutiny of the Office for Budget Responsibility simply added to a sense of governing incompetence.

What’s interesting about this example is that in ‘revisiting the study of policy failures’ Bovens and ’t Hart (2016) are undoubtedly correct to emphasize the subjective dimensions and normative characteristics of policy analysis; there are examples where looking ‘on the bright side’ is incredibly difficult. It is hard to find ‘shades of grey’ (McConnell, 2010b) within this specific example which is, in turn, problematic in terms of this section’s ambition to move ‘beyond the binary’. But acknowledging that some episodes or instances of public governance can only be regarded as at the ‘failure’ end of any evaluative continuum is in itself a useful act for PPA scholarship seeking to deploy ‘most different case designs’, allowing them to compare by contrasting nearly ideal typical failures with other examples of catastrophic governance, or counterposing them with examples of success (McConnell, 2010b).

Option 2: Freshwater Ecology and Citizen Science

Let's now consider an example of what might be termed *vertical nesting* in the sense that it identifies elements of micro-political policy success while *at the same time* being critical of mid-level policy frameworks and dominant macro-political ideas. An environmental intervention, for example, that installed large wood and sediment berms across threatened chalk stream rivers could through geological mapping, water samples, fish life, and other quality indicators be interpreted as a localized policy success (see England, 2019). The comparative analyses of similar rivers might underline a positive causal relationship between intervention and non-intervention, and innovations in participatory methods might also be used to enable 'citizen scientists' to monitor and record water quality, river levels, species diversity, and so on (see Kelly-Quinn et al., 2022). The simple point being made is that the identification of some element of success – 'to reveal [what] may not be perfect but still good' (Douglas et al., 2019: 10) – could have positive policy relevant insights that might be scaled-up, -out, or -down to achieve broader public benefits.

The key point, however, is that to recognize some element of success at a local level does not in any way restrict a researcher's capacity for adopting a highly critical stance on broader national river policies (mid-level) or more fundamental questions relating to economic growth and environmental sustainability. Contrary to O&J's core assumptions, the allocation of credit at the micro-political level is fully compatible with intense criticality. The identification of 'micro-level policy 'wins' may in fact be used to inform, sustain, and reframe wider (bottom-up) criticisms of dominant policy paradigms; success in this sense is viewed as 'acts of resistance' and contributions to anti-system thinking.

Option 3: Riots, Reform and Penal Policy

The aim of this next example is simply to illustrate the space that exists for interpretations of success at both the micro- and mid-range level while still being highly critical of third-level paradigmatic considerations. Resodihardjo's (2006) analysis of crisis and change in British and Dutch prisons presents a case in point. What Resodihardjo identifies in the case of the United Kingdom is less a form of positive public administration and more a case of positive public scrutiny in the sense that lessons were learned from failure and led to significant first- and second-order policy change.

In 1990, major riots broke out in more than 20 prisons. This created operational challenges for governors and staff, and policy challenges for ministers and an independent public inquiry was subsequently established, chaired by Lord Woolf, to assess what had caused the riots and how the threat they repre-

sented had been handled. What's interesting and of great relevance to the focus of this chapter is that, like O&J's dismissal of PPA, public inquiries are also very often dismissed on the basis that they produce technocratic and instrumental knowledge which usually serves to distance politicians and policymakers from direct blame (see Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2006, 2007; for a discussion, see Stark, 2018). But what Resodihardjo (2006; see also 2009, 2020) reveals is how and why the Woolf inquiry became, contrary to the dominant expectations and 'self-evident truths' surrounding inquiry processes, a 'catalytic' intervention that led to far-reaching policy and operational reforms. What this analysis reveals is exactly the 'interplay between agent and institutional context' (Douglas et al., 2021: 443) that PPA focuses attention on but more importantly it highlights how the identification of successful policies or positive reforms need not reduce the space for broader criticality. Player and Jenkins' (1994) *Prisons After Woolf* therefore contains a subtle combination of specific praise *within* a continuing critique of neo-liberal assumptions about crime and criminal justice. This in itself stimulates a question as to whether an example of 'successful policy' can be identified that might arguably stretch across all three levels of change. This is the topic of the next and final sub-section.

Option 4: Progressive Politics and the Upswing

Compared to the all-negative Option 1, the final option presented in Table 3.1 is positioned at the other extreme of the framework and therefore risks promoting a false sense of purity which PPA goes to great lengths to reject. However, as a thought experiment that theoretically pushes PPA to its limits, the identification of a three-level interpretation of success is as challenging as it is potentially valuable. In this context, Robert Putnam and Shaylin Romney Garrett's analysis of *The Upswing* (2020) can arguably be located within the parameters of the PPA movement on the basis that: (i) it adopts a historical and evidence-based series of successful interventions and policies, (ii) that were operationalized within an explicitly positive set of values, ideas and goals, and (iii) the core hypothesis is that the existence of policy success in the past provides insights for achieving policy success today. 'How America came together a century ago and how it can do it again' – the sub-title of the book – could itself be seen as something of a manifesto for positive public administration (and a constructive political climate as a *sine qua non* for it).

The book reveals the existence of a clear historical arc – the eponymous 'upswing' – that starts from a very low level at the beginning of the twentieth century when individualism and social fragmentation was high and concern for community cohesion or collective endeavour was low. The ark slowly climbs through the first half of the century due to the achievements of the Progressive Era, peaking in the 1960s; and then falls back into the trough at the end of the

century as a combination of factors shift the balance back away from the ‘we’ to the ‘me’. In the hands of the authors, the ‘arc of the twentieth century’ tells a story not of disenchantment and decline but of recovery, revival, and resurgence. And: ‘the single most important lesson we can hope to gain from this analysis is that in the past America has experienced a storm of unbridled individualism [...] a national situation that few Americans found appealing. But we successfully weathered that storm once, and we can do it again.’ It would be interesting to know if O&J would dismiss this solution-orientated and design-led approach as archetypal of their critique of ‘traditional, affirmative, and instrumental PA knowledge production’ (2022: 268). The Putnam and Garrett book is – as Flinders (2021) has argued – possibly over-optimistic; with the emphasis on positive social achievements (in relation to health, education, etc.) too often overlooking the continuation of deep-seated structural inequalities in American society. This in itself demonstrates the historical specificity of interpretations of failure and success or credit and blame, with Putnam and Romney Garrett essentially adopting ‘the long view’ in order to counter the dominance of short-term interpretations of failure with a longer-term view that emphasizes successful public policy.

WHERE NEXT FOR POSITIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?

The central argument of this chapter has been that the identification and analysis of policy success does not necessarily reflect co-option or a lack of criticality, but these are risks that the field needs to engage with in a more conscious and explicit manner than has occurred to date. There is a potential ‘dark side’ to PPA that cannot be denied or ignored. As such, what might be termed ‘*the politics of PPA*’ must form a central and explicit element of any new directions for theory or practice; and part of this must be an increasing emphasis not on ‘success’ or ‘failure’ (in the sense of Options 1 and 4, Table 3.1) but on the existence of ‘success-within-failure’ at various levels and in a variety of forms (see also Sitkin, 1992; Seibel, 1996). Charles Tilly’s (2008) book *Credit and Blame* provides an important reference point for understanding the core ‘beyond the binary’ argument of the chapter due to the manner in which it focuses on relational conditions and emphasizes that in an increasingly polarized world the emergence of ever-sharper ‘Us/Them’ boundaries is likely to politicize interpretations of success and failure. ‘When a sharp us-them boundary separates blamer and blamed,’ Tilly (2008: 29) noted, ‘the very actions for which A blames B are often actions for which B’s supporters give B credit.’ With this in mind, the aim of this final section is to reflect upon the value of this framework, and how the focus on criticality and co-option

within this chapter fits with a number of broader debates and controversies, challenges, and opportunities facing public administration.

The main arguments of this section can be summarized as follows. First and foremost, the three-level framework presented in this chapter provides a very basic way of arguing that the analysis of success can be combined with continued criticality. There are numerous ways in which this skeletal intellectual scaffolding could be refined and developed as part of the emphasis on the politics of PPA promoted in this chapter. Following on from this, a new approach to understanding *the politics of PPA* with implications for theory and practice is provided by connecting it to far wider debates concerning a ‘post-enlightenment’ sphere of contestation, which has been defined by similar accusations of intellectual co-option and control. Third and finally, if there is a ‘big question’ facing public administration that raises concerns about criticality, co-option and the ‘shadow of the state’ (see Eisfeld and Flinders, 2021) then it is one that should be focused more on the rapid emergence of ‘incentives for impact’ within academe, than about PPA as a specific sub-field.

The framework presented in Table 3.1 is very much a prototype, an early heuristic or basic organizing perspective. It exists to support the broad and simple argument that the identification of success (at some level) need not close-down the space for criticality (at another level). While resonating with many existing studies and approaches, the three-level framing provides a skeletal form of intellectual scaffolding that would benefit from further adaptation, refinement, and substantive empirical analysis. The current emphasis on governing levels, for example, might in some way seek to incorporate a temporal dimension that reflects how interpretations of policy success and failure very often change over time. The saga of the Sydney Opera House provides a well-known example of early interpretations of dramatic and complete failure evolving over time towards a world-wide recognition as an astounding success, reflecting the fact that what criteria evaluators and other audiences apply to assess public policies, programs and projects tends to be time- and context-dependent (Bovens and ’t Hart, 1996).

A more recent example that would complement the multi-levelled approach adopted in Table 3.1 might focus on governmental responses to managing the Covid-19 crisis around the world. Several analyses reveal how interpretations of success and failure in different countries evolved over time throughout the pandemic and in relation to specific macro-, meso-, and micro-level interpretations (of the policy challenge) and interventions (in terms of how to respond). This would include – to mention just a handful of relevant studies – Lee, Hwang, and Moon’s (2020) work on South Korea and ‘quadruple loop learning’, Capano and colleague’s (2020) analysis of mobilizing policy (in)capacity, Maor and Howlett’s (2020) study of state variation in policy responses, and Toshkov and colleagues’ (2022) study of contextual dimensions of

policy success. More broadly, a research programme that sought to explicitly draw upon the insights of PPA in order to identify ‘what worked’ during the Covid-19 pandemic would appear to be an obvious direction for the sub-field, especially given the risk that a focus on post-crisis blame-attribution will crowd-out the space for more future-focused lesson-learning (see Flinders, 2020; see also Smith et al., Chohan, and Dem, Chapters 13, 14, and 15, respectively, in this volume).

Yuen and colleague’s (2021) ‘tale of two cities’ provides a direct example of the previous argument about temporality; their argument being that a state-led success in Singapore vis-à-vis Covid-19 control delivered early successes but then failed to stem an outbreak among its segregated migrant population. But as their analysis also illustrates, not learning from success and failure in post-pandemic contexts has obvious consequences in terms of maximizing future resilience to similar threats. Following on from this, the interesting consequence of Covid-19 is that it has focused attention not only on the tools and policies (i.e. first and second order, Table 3.1) utilized in various response regimes but also on the relevance of macro-political goals, values, and ideas (i.e. third order). This is reflected in the post-Covid-19 debate concerning the governing capacity of authoritarian states as opposed to democratic regimes (for a review, see Alon, Farrell, and Li, 2020). The relevance of this debate to the PPA agenda is that it facilitates the positioning of O&J’s critique within a far broader ‘post-enlightenment’ sphere of contestation, which again highlights the political dimensions of assessments of policy success as opposed to failure.

In recent years, a thin seam of scholarship has emerged that combines economic, psychological, demographic, and historical perspectives to highlight and argue against the existence of a dominant ‘negativity bias’. Although the work of the ‘new optimists movement’ works across a far wider intellectual canvas it has many direct similarities with the core thesis of PPA (i.e. some policies have been successful, and we need to acknowledge that and learn from it). But what’s also interesting and which brings the discussion back to this chapter’s rejection of O&J’s simplistic thesis, is how the main proponents of this *push against automatic pessimism* – Stephen Pinker (2018), Hans Rösling (2019), for example – have similarly been dismissed as little more than noisy and ham-fisted defenders of the status quo who serve the system by promoting liberal triumphalism (see Gray, 2018). Pankaj Mishra (2021) even dismissed those who seek to acknowledge any dimension of social progress as members of ‘an intellectual service class’ which is a line of argumentation that clearly resonates with O&J’s critique of PPA (and Chomsky’s argument about technocratic intellectuals).

Stripping this vast and complex debate down to its core, while Pinker and others focus on ‘the bright side of human history’ their opponents look beyond

what is statistically observable and instead focus on a perceived lack of moral progress. John Gray (2015) even suggests that Pinker defines ‘the dark side of the Enlightenment out of existence’. The reason for highlighting this debate is that it contextualizes PPA within a far broader socio-political context than has generally been recognized (see Harpham, 2018). The problem with highlighting this debate, however, is that it creates a risk that proponents of PPA may be interpreted as little more than administrative versions of Pinker and Rosling. But, as I hope to have demonstrated, positive public administration does not define the ‘dark side out of existence’ – to paraphrase Gray; nor does it seek to promote a ‘Panglossian policy science’ of the type that Howlett (2022) quite rightly warns against. For that very reason, an emphasis on proportionality, balance, and contestation is explicit in the conceptual starting points presented in the PPA ‘manifesto’ (Douglas et al., 2019, 2021).

This brings the discussion to a third and final point and to a focus on what Kirlin (2001) has labelled the ‘big questions for a significant public administration’. The definition of a ‘big question’ from this perspective is that it reaches beyond academia and raises fundamental concerns about the position, role, and relevance of the discipline in society. Interestingly, Kirlin’s emphasis on the ‘big questions’ does resonate with O&J’s position in the sense that it is also critical of the discipline for focusing too closely on instrumental issues of the day to the detriment of a focus on the value of those policies for the larger society within which public administration is embedded.

A ‘big question’ facing public administration today, particularly in a context defined by the emergence of ‘incentives for impact’ and an emphasis on ‘relevance’ (Bandola Gill et al., 2021) is navigating the nexus between knowledge-creation and knowledge-mobilization. As an increasing proportion of research funding is tied not only to politically selected societal challenges but also to evidence of working with potential research-users through forms of co-production, then so too does the risk of ‘impotence through relevance’ (see Flinders, 2023a) become a real threat to all disciplines, and especially those like public administration where political sensitivities are often acute.

The risk being highlighted is that shifts within the research landscape may well incentivize a form of Faustian bargain whereby scholars trade-down their traditional criticality and independence as the price they pay for access to large funding streams and the promise of being able to deliver demonstrable impact. This does raise exactly the issues that O&J focus on in term of co-option and control; not least the appointment and promotion by universities of those more ‘technocratic and policy-orientated intellectuals’ who are positioned to access research funding and deliver demonstrable ‘impact’ to the detriment of those more critical ‘value-orientated intellectuals’. But where O&J were wrong was to assume this danger of ‘impotence through relevance’ was for some reason a particular pathology for PPA. It is not, for the simple reason that, as this

chapter has argued, the identification and analysis of policy success at some level can be combined with ongoing and strident criticality. But in terms of the ‘big questions’ facing PPA and new directions for theory and practice, the analysis of how an emphasis on policy success retains a clear and explicit sense of criticality, independence and control represents a major challenge and opportunity for the field.

NOTE

1. This chapter is informed by my earlier article (Flinders, 2023b). It is extensively revised and updated here.

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4. A configurational approach to positivity: analyzing pathways to success and achievement in public administration

Fernando Nieto-Morales and Liesbet Heyse

INTRODUCTION

While there is no shortage of analyses of failures, breakdowns, fiascos, crises, and similar phenomena in the public administration and public policy literature, research on positive outcomes, successes, or simply things-going-as-planned often falls short of generating similar interest. However, as pointed out by different scholars (e.g., Douglas et al., 2021; Compton et al., 2022), focusing mainly on failure tends to reinforce a “negativity bias” (Vis, 2011: 335–336) that effectively hinders our knowledge. Considering instances of success as well as favorable conditions and outcomes in public administration fosters a more nuanced and complete view of the challenges and opportunities for government and policymaking. Looking into why policies succeed and why public services perform adequately can tell us much about what exactly worked well, which processes and policies were effective, and how contextual, institutional, organizational, and individual conditions relate to superior outcomes (Moynihan, 2022). This knowledge can then inspire and inform policymakers and public administrators in different areas or contexts, potentially leading to further positive outcomes and achievements.

The main message of this chapter is that the advancement of positive public administration may benefit from an analytical and methodological approach that seeks to study the multiplex mechanisms that underlie instances of success, achievement, flourishing, or good performance through a logic that accounts for the “configurational” nature of causation. This echoes similar pleas in other “positive turns” in neighboring disciplines (e.g., Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn, 2003; see also Chapter 1 in this volume). Further, while the idea directly relates to Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) and similar techniques, it can also be applied through other methods, such as

multilevel modeling. In any case, we argue that understanding the underlying mechanisms of positivity in a configurational sense requires a framework that allows for complex causality (Elster, 1989). Such an approach acknowledges that administrative and policy phenomena result from causal mechanisms that are usually context-sensitive and compounded (cf., Ragin, 2000). Generally speaking, a configurational approach suggests that positive outcomes are seldom the result of a single independent factor but rather result from the interaction of different conditions that may include institutions, path dependencies, social and administrative structures, human actions, decisions, processes, contingencies, and so on. Further, different combinations (or configurations) of these conditions may be relevant to explain similar instances of positivity, which implies that there might be different “pathways to success” in public administration (for an example of pathways to success, see Jager and Newig, Chapter 9 in this volume).

Some of these ideas have become more common in public administration due to the rising popularity of set-theoretic methods (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012; Rihoux et al., 2011) and mixed-effects statistical methods (Snijders and Bosker, 2011). The present chapter makes the broader epistemological point that *a configurational approach to positivity can help public administration scholars to understand better the complex preconditions and explanatory mechanisms of positive outcomes; and it can provide valuable insight into the potential (and limits) of replicating success in contexts characterized by different institutional, social, cultural, administrative, and political conditions.*

The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. We first discuss the core elements of a configurational approach that emphasizes complex causal mechanisms in public administration. We then discuss the value of configurational approaches to positivity in public administration and illustrate this with examples from the literature. Finally, the last section concludes with an overview, general remarks, and a critical note on the limitations of configurational logic.

A CONFIGURATIONAL APPROACH TO POSITIVITY

While explaining instances of positivity – which may alternatively be defined in terms of policy success, good performance, good governance, achievement, institution-building, and so on (see, e.g., Douglas et al., 2021; Compton et al., 2022) – public administration scholars often recognize the inherent causal complexity involved in these phenomena. “Complexity” in this context indicates that it is unlikely that a single factor, relationship between factors, or a particular sequence of factors guarantees positive outcomes in every possible situation. Instead, public policy and administrative phenomena are often compounded, context-dependent, and recursive in nature (Moynihan

and Soss, 2014). On the one hand, this means that, as with any set of policy or organizational outcomes, positivity is often the result of a blend of multiple factors, which interact in different levels of analysis. On the other, a cookie-cutter solution is not feasible or even desirable in most cases (Marsh and Sharman, 2009). Thus, instances of positivity can be conceptualized as the result of a combination and interaction of different causes, which together form a *causal configuration*.

The concept of “configuration” captures the idea that multiple interacting factors lead to favorable public policy or positive organizational outcomes. Such factors may include political, societal, economic, policy, or organizational conditions that interact with each other in meaningful ways, depending on the specific context, level of analysis (micro, meso, or macro), government agency, policy arena, targeted outcomes, relevant populations, and so on. For instance, the same endowment of resources may be related to different results depending on its relation to other factors. Suppose a government invests heavily in providing public schools with new digital technology to improve the quality of education. However, the resources may not be used effectively if this investment is not coupled with adequate training and support. Alternatively, suppose the investment is combined with these conditions. In that case, schools are more likely to effectively incorporate the new resources into their routines, possibly leading to better outcomes. In this case, the availability of resources interacts with training and support in a configuration that produces a more favorable outcome. More generally, causal configurations are combinations of causal conditions that, as the saying goes, are “more than the mere sum of parts” because the way these combine and interact with each other adds a different quality than when they are in isolation.

Philosopher John Mackie (1974) famously elaborated on the difference and interplay between sufficient and necessary causal conditions. A necessary condition is a prerequisite for the event to happen. However, it does not follow that its mere presence will ensure the event’s occurrence. On the other hand, a sufficient condition is one that, if present, will cause the event’s occurrence. The first configurational approaches to explanation leveraged the difference (and relationship) between necessary and sufficient causes to elucidate the roles of individual factors within a causal configuration (e.g., Ragin, 2000). The underlying premise was that an event might result from various causes in different combinations. Each contributing element may be necessary but insufficient to account for a particular outcome. Instead, the specific combination (or combinations, as explained below) of factors may be sufficient to bring about the result.

Mackie (1974) called this INUS causality, which stands for Insufficient but Necessary part of an Unnecessary but Sufficient cause. Going back to the example above on positive changes in educational outcomes, investment in

resources could be considered a necessary yet insufficient part of an unnecessary but sufficient condition made up by the combination of resources, training, and support. Identifying this type of combination lies at the heart of set-theoretic methods (such as QCA) and could be illuminating indeed in the context of positive public policy and public administration, as it allows for pinpointing multiple causal factors that contribute to a given outcome. More generally, however, the idea of a causal configuration, either formulated in a deterministic (as in INUS theory or the counterfactual model) or a probabilistic fashion (cf., Hulswit, 2004; Sikorski, 2022), is advantageous because it can aid public administration scholars to identify relevant patterns of interaction and co-occurrence that are empirically related to positive outcomes.

Mahoney and Goertz (2006) called the previous approach to explanation the “causes-of-effects” model, in contrast to the “effects-of-causes” approach. The latter zooms in on a particular condition and asks what the specific effect of it would be for the outcome; that is, it looks for the net effect or contribution of a given cause. This way of explanation implies some form of “mono-causality” (Compton et al., 2019), and it is common in randomized control trials and studies that model positive outcomes as the result of singularities or variations in specific variables. It also underpins “policy experiments” or “sandboxes” that governments often set up to test regulations, services, or policy prototypes before deploying them in the real world (Armstrong, Bárd, and Engström, 2020).

Alternatively, the “causes-of-effects” model posits that an event or phenomenon, such as policy success, should follow from several causes that combine to lead to the outcome (i.e., the effect). Using the hypothetical example above, a scholar based on the “effects-of-causes” approach could ask what the marginal effect is of investing one extra dollar in digital tech on positive student outcomes (e.g., a ten-point increase in mathematics scores). From the alternative perspective of “causes-of-effects,” the scholar might look into how some students achieved significant increases in mathematics scores because their schools made investments of a certain magnitude *in combination with* training and support.

The latter way of thinking about positivity offers a compound and contextualized understanding of instances of success and the processes that explain them – in the sense of gaining insight into the underlying “causal tendencies” (Hitchcock, 2001). This is important because considering research problems in configurational terms requires explanations and research designs that specify the different conditional causal links underpinning concrete positive outcomes. The idea of a “configuration” is premised on the assumption that particular combinations of causally relevant factors can be linked meaningfully to the outcome of interest. This is consistent with the general approach to social mechanisms put forward by various scholars, which states that good explana-

tions are related to identifying frequently occurring and easily recognizable causal patterns that generate and explain observed associations between causes and outcomes (Elster, 1989).

Since, in a configurational approach, the explanation of positive outcomes depends on the interaction (or combination) of factors, a given element or condition may have a different effect on the outcome of interest depending on its relationship with neighboring conditions (Ragin, 2008). In other words, a configurational approach recognizes that positive outcomes often are not simply the result of isolated factors but rather the consequence of combinations of factors that interact in various ways to produce the outcome of interest.

Further, a configurational approach to positivity also allows for the possibility that different configurations can be “causal equivalents.” Although causal equivalence has been primarily used in philosophy and mathematics (e.g., Beckers, 2021), it embodies a common notion in the social sciences: distinct explanations or mechanisms can be leveraged or considered to account for the same phenomenon or part of it. In other words, different causal configurations can serve as valid explanations for the same outcome. This condition, also called “equifinality,” suggests that positive developments in the public sector can be achieved through multiple pathways. For instance, a causal configuration in one country leading to policy success might include solid political leadership, well-funded bureaucracies, a robust economy, and an engaged civil society. In contrast, another country might achieve similar success with a different configuration of factors, such as effective international partnerships, innovative policy solutions, and efficient use of scarce resources. Equifinality thus refers to instances where other factors can substitute the presence of a particular element or combination thereof without altering the outcome. When applied to the explanation of positivity, it implies that there might not be a single explanation for success and that different sets of conditions or configurations may play a role in determining the most compelling explanation.

A final note. The notions above emphasize the intricate nature of causation in the public sector, specifically regarding the conditional and compound aspects of causal pathways that culminate in positive outcomes. They also imply that achieving success in various domains – including public organizations, policies, policy networks, projects, and public services – may be influenced by a combination of contextual factors and particular conditions unique to a given context or level of analysis. For example, in the hypothetical causal configuration mentioned before, the potential to explain positive outcomes based on the combination of investment in resources, training, and adequate support might be contingent on favorable contextual conditions (e.g., particular professional norms, institutional trust, or accountability regimes). Therefore, a specific combination of causal factors leading to success in one context might not directly apply to others. This suggests that we should recognize the

existence of different possible combinations of causal factors and evaluate their significance based on theory-based mechanisms and the specific circumstances in which they are expected to occur. In other words, what works well in one situation might not necessarily work in another, underscoring the need for context-sensitive understanding and application of causal configurations.

ILLUSTRATIONS OF CONFIGURATIONAL APPROACHES IN POSITIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION STUDIES

We argue that configurational approaches are particularly suited to answer research questions in the fields of public policy and public administration because, among other reasons, they allow for “naturally limited samples” (Rihoux et al., 2011: 16), and especially in these fields such limited samples are crucial objects of study, such as sectors, countries, or policies. Furthermore, the approach fits the “goal-orientedness” in policy analysis and public administration particularly well (Rihoux et al., 2011: 17) since it generates quite specific insights into what combinations of conditions lead to certain policy-relevant outcomes. Since the 1980s, the approach has been increasingly applied to analyze various outcomes in policy processes, such as agenda-setting, policy design, policy implementation, and policy evaluation (Rihoux et al., 2011; see also Rihoux et al., 2013, Emmenegger et al., 2013).

In this section, we discuss a selection of studies from public administration and public policy that explicitly or implicitly use a configurational approach toward positivity with the aim of illustrating how configurational approaches can facilitate the generation of insights into positivity in public administration. We have grouped these studies according to the categorization of policy success by Compton et al. (2019: 122), that is, in terms of *programmatic assessment* (“the degree to which a policy achieves impact”), *process assessment* (“how policy design and decision-making are organized and managed and whether these processes contribute to problem-solving”), *political assessment* (stakeholder and public legitimacy), and *temporal/endurance assessment* (robustness of the policy). The selected studies reflect various conceptualizations and operationalizations of positivity, such as successful government actions or projects, regulatory best practices, policy accomplishments, and effective governance. Furthermore, the studies not only focus on policies but also on projects within public organizations as well as partnerships and inter-organizational collaborations in the public sector and across sectors. In addition, we distinguish various levels of analysis in public administration research in which these various categories of success are studied: at the level of one or more organizations (or projects therein), at the level of networks, partnerships, or inter-organizational collaboration, or in the public sector as a whole in one or multiple countries.

The studies selected mainly pertain to programmatic and process success. The temporal dimension of success is not touched upon because the studies mostly focus on success at a particular point in time. In Table 4.1, we provide summaries of the studies by addressing the following dimensions: (1) domain of application, number of cases, (2) success outcome studied, (3) outcome antecedents studies, (4) type of data used, and (5) method of data analysis applied.

The studies give insight into the value of configurational approaches to positivity in public administration. First, we illustrate how configurational approaches can be applied with the help of different types of data and methods. Second, we discuss how such an approach can generate insights into different pathways to positivity (equifinality), and what the role of context is in these pathways. Third, we show how configurational approaches can also provide meaningful insights into the multidimensional nature of positivity in public administration.

Different Types of Data and Methods

A valuable asset of a configurational approach is that both quantitative and qualitative data can be used for the analysis, separately or combined. In the sample of studies we selected, we see a wide range of types of data used, such as data generated from interviews, observation, documents, surveys, and administrative data/records. Moreover, such data cannot only provide input for QCA but also for other types of configurational analysis, including qualitative analysis and formal statistical modeling.

For example, Jacobson and Ok Choi (2008) studied the construction success of a public works project and a public–private partnership in the City of Manhattan Beach (United States) in relation to a set of project characteristics potentially contributing to construction success: a unifying vision, commitment, open communication, trust, willingness to cooperate/compromise, respect, community outreach, political support, expert advice, risk awareness, and clear responsibilities. The authors gathered information on these aspects by means of qualitative interviews, observations, and archival records. Through a qualitative comparative analysis of the two cases and the associated qualitative data, the researchers concluded that for the success of both projects, high degrees of commitment, a shared vision, open communication, trust, and high levels of compromise or collaboration were important.

Lapuenta and Suzuki (2020) present a quantitative study that focuses on the question to what extent politicization and bureaucratic legalism of the public sector at the national level constrain civil servants from adopting pro-innovation attitudes. The authors apply the statistical method of multi-level analysis. This method allows disentangling the influence of factors at various

Table 4.1 *Summary of selected studies that apply configurational approaches to positive public administration*

Success category	Organizations and/or projects	Partnerships, inter-organizational collaborations, cross-sector collaboration	Public sector as a whole
<i>Programmatic</i>	<i>Heyse et al. (2021)</i>	<i>Jacobson & Ok Choi (2008)</i>	<i>Van der Wal (2017)</i>
1. Domain of application, number of cases	1. 2 international aid NGOs, 11 evaluation reports	1. 2 US public work partnerships	1. Public sectors of 14 Western countries
2. Success outcome studied	2. Positive and negative evaluator perceptions of project performance (donor demands and beneficiary needs)	2. Construction success	2. High vs low(er) national performance (economically and governance-related; examples: GDP, human development index)
3. Outcome antecedents studied	3. Relation to HRM, information systems, fin management, external coordination/ accountability	3. Unifying vision, commitment, open communication, trust, willingness to cooperate/ compromise, respect, community outreach, political support, expert advice, risk awareness, clear responsibilities	3. Relation to HRM policies (recruitment, performance appraisal, training, compensation)
4. Type of data used collection	4. Text analysis of evaluation reports	4. Qualitative interviews	4. Global rankings (quantitative data), reports OECD, UNPAN, UNDP, WB, ADB, Websites
5. Method of data analysis applied	5. QCA	5. Comparative analysis	5. Comparative case study
		<i>Cristofoli & Markovic (2016)</i>	
		1. 12 Swiss home and social care service networks analysis	
		2. No of patients served, no of services, cost	
		3. Relation to resource munificence, centralization, formalization, network management	
		4. Documents, questionnaire	
		5. QCA	

Success category	Organizations and/or projects	Partnerships, inter-organizational collaborations, cross-sector collaboration	Public sector as a whole
<i>Process</i>	<i>Nieto Morales et al. (2013)</i>	<i>Sedgwick (2017)</i>	<i>Lapuenta & Suzuki (2020)</i>
1. Domain of application, number of cases	1. 51 Mexican federal government agencies	1. US preschools in 5 regions	1. Public sectors in 19 European countries
2. Success outcome Studied	2. Reform compliance	2. Degree of inter-organizational activity	2. Pro-innovation attitudes of civil servants
3. Outcome antecedents studied	3. Relation to resources, central control, trust, implementer commitment, oppositional norm (corruption), external demands	3. Governance, administration, autonomy, norms, mutuality	3. Politicization of the public sector and bureaucratic legalism.
4. Type of data used	4. Survey, secondary data from official records	4. Interviews, thematic	4. Combination of two surveys (one about attitudes of civil servants + one about expert opinions about the nature of the public sector
5. Method of data analysis applied	5. QCA	5. QCA	5. Multilevel analysis
	<i>Li et al. (2016)</i>	<i>Sager (2010)</i>	
	1. 10 environmental conflict cases in Chinese local governments	2. Collective capacity to act: adaptation (coordination), voluntary and multilateral coordination, ethics of responsibility (formal rationality), broadly shared solution (substantial rationality), solution is implemented (implementation)	
	2. Change in local government decisions (project relocation, project cancellation, project continuation)	3. Degree of centralization, consolidation, professionalization, political autonomy	
	3. Relation to scale of protests (reported no of participants), form of protest (occurrence of violence, reported yes or no), stage of protest (planning, early construction, final construction, formal operation), position of the national government (silence, support, contradiction, opposition)	4. Meta-analysis of existing studies	
	4. Mass media, formal government documents	5. QCA	
	5. QCA		

Success category	Organizations and/or projects	Partnerships, inter-organizational collaborations, cross-sector collaboration	Public sector as a whole
	<i>Andrews et al. (2016)</i>	<i>Mosley & Wong (2021)</i>	
	1. UK departments (N=18) 2. Organizational capability, measured as leadership (set direction; ignite passion, pace, drive; taking responsibility for leading delivery and change; build capability); strategy (focus on outcomes; base choices on evidence; build common purpose); and delivery (plan, resource, and prioritize; develop clear roles, responsibilities, and delivery models; manage performance) 3. Resource-based and contingency theories: department size; structural complexity; agentification; instability in personnel; use of temporary employees =>; results: Low capability departments have personnel instability, structural complexity and agentification. High-capability departments have low structural complexity and personnel stability 4. Capability review reports and personnel data 5. QCA	1. 18 'Mandated Continuums of Care' of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development 2. Collaborative governance networks => differences in participants' experiences of input legitimacy (degree of openness and access in giving voice) and throughput legitimacy (transparency, quality of deliberation, perception of adequate representation) and the relation between the two 3. Structure (size and stability of network); network management roles (facilitator, co-producer, commissioner); process (reliance on in-person instead of remote participation => Results: challenging factors to legitimacy are size of network and commissioner style of network management, contributing factor is in-person engagement 4. Interviews with network participants (N=145) and scoring networks on level of two types of legitimacy (high, mixed, low) 5. Thematic analysis and QCA	

Source: Author.

levels: for example, individual causes of pro-innovation attitudes (personality, age), organizational causes (organization size, organization type), and national characteristics of influence (degree of politicization and legalism). They use survey data consisting of information about pro-innovation attitudes of civil servants in 19 European countries and combine this with survey data with expert opinions on characteristics of the public sector in 19 European countries. Their expectations are partially confirmed: civil servants in public sectors that are politicized and civil servants with a low degree have less pro-innovation attitudes, especially with regard to having a change orientation. However, their analysis also shows that individual level and organizational factors matter as well. For example, civil servants who have worked for more than 20 years in the public sector have less of a change orientation, and certain types of government organizations – such as agencies and public bodies at the central or sublevel of government – are less open to change than ministries at the central level. This is another way of gaining insight into the configuration of factors that may contribute to a particularly positive outcome in the public sector (i.e., a combination of national-, organizational-, and individual-level characteristics).

Equifinality, Pathways and the Role of Context

Configurational approaches can generate insights into different pathways to positivity (equifinality). Conversely, the approach may be useful to identify pathways to “negativity” in public administration. Comparing pathways to positivity with pathways to negativity may provide interesting additional information, for example, about the importance of contextual differences in the cases that are compared. The study by Andrews and colleagues (2016) serves as a good illustration. It is a process assessment that investigates determinants of high and low organizational capability of 18 central government departments in the UK. Organizational capability is measured on the basis of so-called capability reviews (reports). These were peer-based reviews in which departments assessed each other on three dimensions, that is, leadership, strategy, and delivery (see Table 4.1 for the more precise operationalizations).

Departing from resource-based theory and contingency theory, the researchers applied fuzzy-set QCA (fsQCA) to identify configurations of organizational characteristics that coincide with low and high organizational capability in the departments studied:¹ department size, structural complexity, agencification (the process of creating semi-autonomous agencies within a department), instability in personnel, and use of temporary employees.

The analysis revealed that departments with high organizational capability often have simpler structures and more stable personnel. However, these characteristics were identified in two distinct organizational contexts, namely

in departments that were (a) larger in size, with a lower proportion of temporary employees, or (b) smaller in size and a higher degree of temporary employment and agencification. Hence, the successful configuration of large, high-capability departments differs from that of smaller departments. For instance, agencification appears to be beneficial in smaller departments, but it does not contribute to the success of larger departments.

Three configurations were identified for departments with low organizational capability, namely departments with (a) small size, personnel instability, low structural complexity, agencification, and few temporary employees, (b) small size, personnel instability, structural complexity, low agencification, and few temporal staff, and (c) an absence of personnel instability with structural complexity and agencification. These causal configurations reveal that the same factor can have different implications based on its interaction with other elements. For example, in pathway (c) low structural complexity is part of the low capability configuration whereas in pathways (a) and (b) low structural complexity contributes to high capability. This exemplifies the merit of a configurational approach, as it shows that there is no single solution that universally guarantees positive or negative outcomes (such as structural complexity).

Furthermore, the previous shows that a specific factor may play out differently in different contexts, and thus sometimes can contribute to negative outcomes but in other contexts to positive outcomes. A factor like agencification coincided with high capability in one context but also with low capability in another. This implies that configurations or pathways to positive outcomes are not necessarily the exact mirror image of configurations or pathways to negative outcomes.

This and other examples (e.g., Li, Koppenjan, and Verweij, 2016) underscore the complex interplay of factors influencing outcomes and caution against oversimplified and decontextualized interpretations. However, deriving practical policy implications from such analyses is a challenge that will be addressed in a subsequent section.

Analyzing the Multidimensional Character of Positivity

In the previous sections, we discussed studies that departed from quite specific operationalizations of positivity, for example, in terms of construction success, high positions in global rankings, or reform compliance. Whereas it can already be challenging to pinpoint positivity in this respect, it is one step further to include a multidimensional interpretation of positivity in configurational studies. Compton and colleagues (2019) took up the challenge and studied the simultaneous occurrence of programmatic, political, process, and endurance success in policy. They applied a configurational method to identify the importance of inclusive policy processes, the degree of innovation in policy change,

and the pace of policy change for positivity on these four success dimensions. They included 33 cases of multi-dimensional policy success in 13 countries in their analysis. Inclusive processes were shown to be of crucial importance for multi-dimensional policy success in two different pathways: first, inclusive processes that combined low innovation policy change and a relatively fast process, and second inclusive processes in combination with high innovation policy changes and a slow pace of change.

The authors conclude that there can also be cases that are successful in one or two dimensions but not or less so in other dimensions. Also, in such cases, a configurational approach can be insightful since it can help to understand the interplay between various dimensions of more or less positivity. This can especially be interesting if one would expect that positivity in one dimension could be difficult to reconcile with positivity in another dimension.

In our own work, we explicitly aimed to study this with respect to the project performance of international humanitarian organizations in disasters (Heyse, Nieto Morales, and Wittek, 2021). In the humanitarian sector, it is often argued that it is nearly impossible to meet the demands of donors while at the same time meeting the demands of beneficiaries. The argument is that one can only meet beneficiaries' demands if organizations can be flexible in their operations, whereas donors demand these organizations to be in control and comply with predefined rules and procedures to assure accountability. However, there are also theoretical arguments and empirical evidence that organizations can in fact combine flexibility with control, for example, through "ambidextrous" or paradoxical organizing (Smith and Lewis, 2011; Papachroni and Heracleous, 2020).

We studied what organizational characteristics in terms of flexibility and control contribute to meeting donor and beneficiary demands (and not) separately and combined. We coded evaluation reports of humanitarian aid projects of two international humanitarian organizations on positive and negative evaluator statements on both performance and organizational characteristics. Fuzzy-set QCA was applied to study what organizational characteristics coincided with positive performance statements on meeting donor demands and beneficiary demands and what characteristics coincided with negative performance statements on meeting these two demands.

The analyses showed that positive performance statements about meeting beneficiary demands coincided with positive statements on the external flexibility of the organization, as expected. The analysis of negative performance statements provided the exact mirror image since negative statements about external flexibility were related to negative statements on meeting beneficiary demands. Unexpectedly, the analysis showed that positive statements on meeting donor demands went together with positive statements on the internal flexibility of the organization instead of internal control, as we hypothe-

sized. The analysis of negative performance statements about meeting donor demands was not a mirror image of this pattern. Two pathways were identified, one combining the presence of negative statements on internal control and the absence of such statements on external control, as expected, and another pathway consisting of negative statements on the external flexibility of the organization.

Hence, the configurational approach helped to uncover pathways to different dimensions of positivity and simultaneously provided insight into pathways to more and less positivity. We furthermore demonstrated that configurations of positivity were not necessarily a mirror image of negativity, since the pathways to positive statements on donor demands did not consist simply of the opposite factors that were part of the pathway to negative statements, but rather exhibited their own particular structure.

CONFIGURATIONAL APPROACHES IN PPA RESEARCH: CHALLENGES AND CRITICAL POINTS

Throughout this chapter, we have argued that a configurational approach is particularly useful for studying conditions and antecedents of positivity in public administration. This perspective allows for a comprehensive understanding of how various factors interact and combine to create successful outcomes. The studies we have reviewed illustrate the diverse ways in which a configurational approach can yield insightful findings at multiple levels of analysis and across a variety of domains, including projects, organizations, partnerships, and the public sector in its entirety. However, as with any approach chosen, a configurational outlook has its limitations and challenges. We delve into some of the most significant of these in the remainder of this section.

Theory-driven Configurational Analysis

One critical challenge is effectively utilizing a configurational approach to yield meaningful results in the context of administrative or public policy problems. Some proponents of configurational methods argue against the necessity for overarching guidelines, advocating for a more formalistic application of the approach and its techniques (mainly Boolean methods such as QCA; see, for example, Thiem, 2017). On the other hand, other scholars have argued that a genuinely informative configurational approach must be driven by theoretical underpinnings (Schneider, 2018) and should avoid following a “push-button” logic (Ragin, 2000; De Meur et al., 2009). We align with the latter group. We believe a configurational approach is less suitable for a purely inductive research strategy, where the researcher analyzes the available data without any prior theoretical foundation. Instead, we advocate for robust

theoretical reasoning when applying configurational approaches. More specifically, the theorizing should ideally focus on what *combination of components* in a configuration contribute to a specific outcome and provide explicit reasoning of why and how. This is crucial for two reasons. First, it prompts the researcher to identify concrete and justified causal configurations that should influence the outcome. Second, it encourages the researcher to clarify how the configuration might work in a given context to generate a positive outcome; that is, it compels a researcher to explicate the underlying causal mechanism.

An example of the above is the study by Sager (2010) who first theoretically derives two configurations that promote collective capacity to act in urban areas. One configuration is labelled the “neoprogressive model” consisting of the combination of centralization, consolidation, and a professionally and politically independent administration. The second configuration is the “public choice model,” which consists of a combination of decentralization, fragmentation, and a non-professional and politically dependent administration. In the empirical analysis, he then explores to what extent these theoretically derived models can be identified in reality. His analysis includes 17 cases on urban transport and land-use policies in Western European urban areas. He concludes that in this sample only the neoprogressive model finds empirical backing.

This is markedly different from configurational studies that focus on exploring the impact of *different individual factors* on a specific outcome rather than a configuration that have been derived from theory prior to the empirical analysis. As a result, the configuration often emerges inductively, demonstrating which factors tend to co-occur. Sedgwick’s (2017) study is an example of this. The author studies five conditions for strong interorganizational activity in American preschool programs: governance, administration, autonomy, norms, and mutuality. These conditions are discussed separately from each other, and no attempt is made to theorize about the configuration of factors and related mechanisms. This risks leaving the reader without a clear understanding of how to interpret the configurational results that were inductively derived.

To maximize the utility and impact of a configurational approach, it is thus crucial that studies not only identify interconnected factors in one or more causal configurations but also provide a theoretical explanation of how and why these factors interact to produce a given outcome. We attempted to do this in our work on organizational pathways to compliant reform implementation in Mexico’s civil service (see Table 4.1). Based on three strands of implementation theory, we expected three corresponding pathways to compliant reform implementation: (1) a configuration of strong formal central controls that allow for profiting from ample resources, (2) a configuration of high trust that enables implementation given weak oppositional norms, and (3) a configuration of weak oppositional norms, high trust, strong leadership commitment, and a triggering external demand. We compared these theory-based path-

ways to the configurations resulting from an fsQCA analysis. This showed, for instance, that compliant implementation had occurred in organizations with ample resources that also exhibited strong central control practices, as expected, but also that in smaller and less resourceful organizations, compliant implementation had also happened because of strong trust relations and the absence of oppositional norms. The comparison of theorized and identified configurations serves as a test of research expectations, but it also offers nuance and insight into the mechanisms at play that can be valuable for policymakers.

Reflexive Analysis

Most configurational techniques are designed to be used iteratively and reflexively (Skaaning, 2011). This emphasizes the importance of revisiting empirical evidence to interpret and contextualize the findings accurately. In practical terms, researchers should not accept the results of a configurational analysis at face value. Instead, it is strongly recommended to loop back to the actual cases and validate whether the findings are theoretically sound and rooted in the evidence (Mahoney, 2010). By continuously cross-checking results with the actual cases as well as with theoretical expectations, researchers can mitigate potential distortions in the data and maintain a stronger link between their findings and the positive outcomes they aim to understand.

Compton and colleagues (2019) did this in their QCA analysis of 33 cases of multi-dimensional policy success in 13 countries in which they explored the importance of inclusive policy processes, the degree of innovation in policy change, and the pace of policy change for positivity on four success dimensions. The authors discuss two cases to illustrate the two dominant pathways to success: one in which policies have little innovation, a fast pace, and an inclusive process, and one in which innovation is high and a longer process for inclusive policy development is followed. The Dutch Delta Reforms is an example of the former, and Brazil's Bolsa Família is an example of the latter. Illustrating the results is a way to show how the causal configurations identified actually "worked out" empirically and make sense from a theoretical point of view.

Avoiding Analytical Artifacts

As previously noted, a particularly challenging aspect of some configurational methods, such as set-theoretic tools, is their sensitivity to calibration and coding issues. Every theoretical and methodological decision should be clearly explained and justified. However, for those using a configurational approach,

it is equally important to assess the robustness of their findings to ensure they are not an artifact of the analysis.

Skaaning (2011) reviews several strategies for robustness checks of configurational analyses. These include method triangulation, which involves using different methods to investigate the same research question to confirm the consistency of the findings. Other strategies involve modifications in the selection of cases, changes in how the outcome and causal conditions under study are operationalized, and, in the context of QCA, experimenting with alternative calibrations and thresholds for consistency and coverage indicators. Wagemann (2017) further suggests that configurational methods can benefit from complementing or placing in dialogue with other techniques. This might include traditional statistical analyses for larger data sets or qualitative and “small-N” methods such as case studies. Such a multi-faceted approach can help to strengthen the rigor and reliability of the research findings and offer a more comprehensive understanding of positive outcomes.

Meaningful Configurational Analysis for Policymakers

The theory-driven use of configurational approaches holds significant value for policymakers, aligning with concepts and models also found in public sector policy literature such as “realist evaluation” (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) and “theories of change.”

Realist evaluation is a strategy that encourages policymakers to answer a key question when designing or evaluating policies: “what works, for whom, under what circumstances, and why?” This question embodies the core tenets of the realist evaluation approach. First, it acknowledges the crucial role of context, much like configurational approaches do. It recognizes that a policy that is successful for one target group or in one setting may not have the same results for another group or in a different context, necessitating context-aware policy design. Secondly, realist evaluation advises policymakers to articulate why they believe a particular policy will generate the desired outcomes, thus creating a “theory of change.” This outlines the assumed causal chain from the policy to its outcomes. By making these theories explicit, proposed policies can be scrutinized for their likelihood of achieving the desired results through critical discussion and comparison with scientific evidence.

This is where configurational approaches can prove instrumental, as they ideally outline theory-driven reasoning for certain configurations, including information on target groups and context, while also providing empirical evidence of these hypothesized configurations. In essence, configurational approaches in public administration can supply the “theories of change” needed for policymaking while also offering evidence that, in certain contexts

and for certain groups, a policy is likely to be successful. By employing these methods, we can further optimize policy design and implementation.

In sum, this chapter delved into the significance of configurational approaches within positive public administration. We outlined the nuances of configurational thinking, providing illustrative examples of its potential in unveiling insights about positivity in public administration and public policy. While addressing key challenges, we also outlined some strategies for effectively navigating them. Ultimately, we aimed to demonstrate that by recognizing and addressing these challenges, a configurational approach stands as a powerful instrument for uncovering the causes of success in the public sector, from both scholarly and policy-oriented viewpoints.

NOTE

1. Fuzzy-set QCA is a particular type of QCA. In crisp-set QCA the variables that are studied will get a zero (0) or a one (1), meaning that a condition is conceptualized as present or absent (e.g., centralized provision, versus non-centralized provision). In fuzzy-set QCA one can use variables that are continuous (such as a budget) or based on a scale (e.g., degree of centralization). This allows for a more fine-grained analysis. See Ragin (2000).

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Insight 1. Positivity in public administration: what's love got to do with it?

Susan Keim

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF LOVE IN TODAY'S PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CONTEXT?

In a world of polarization, seeing that question might be startling. Not so for Frederickson (1991, 1997) who provides the framework for a general theory of the public in public administration. Within this context are the requisites of the Virtuous Citizen, who is engaged and morally responsible for our fundamental rights, and Benevolence and Love, which require public administrators to deliver public service toward the greater good. These requisites – Citizenship, Benevolence, and Love – also undergird positive public administration. Indeed, positivity can be conceptualized in the examination of *citizen engagement* (Nabatchi, 2010; Nabatchi and Amsler, 2014; Nalbandian, 1999; Svava, 2010), which connects citizens through community, *leadership* (Heifetz, Linsky, and Grashow, 2009), which shapes how we view our environments, and *public values* (Nabatchi, 2018), which guides decision making and action. Together, these elements provide a palette of love that can help us paint a better future.

We need love more than ever. Major events of our modern era, such as the collapse of the Soviet Empire and related geopolitical shifts (Sakwa, 2013), entry of the People's Republic of China into the World Trade Organization (Kang, 2013), the rise of terrorism worldwide, and increased capacities brought by the Internet, among others, have changed public administration significantly (Kruglanski et al., 2020; Nabatchi, Goerdel, and Pfeffer, 2011). Add the challenge of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, and roles of public administrators have become even more strained, requiring additional skills and motivations (Marcone, 2021).

Along with these events, we are seeing the quickening spread of wicked problems. As opposed to technical problems that are easy to solve with existing knowledge, wicked problems have no quick fixes. They are complex and

require new knowledge, adaptive leadership, and citizen engagement (Heifetz et al., 2009). Adaptive leadership must bring new and different voices to the table and truly listen and respond with respect, curiosity, and yes, love (Wheatley, 1998). Our modern environment demands the combination of love and power to bring issues and problems into focus. The remainder of this chapter considers the role of love in today's public administration context, illustrated by the European Union response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The entire globe was affected by the tragedy and devastation of the COVID-19 virus. At the beginning of the pandemic, the United Nations (UN) Secretary General called for unity (Guterres, 2020), and at its height, Sur (2020) called for the explicit inclusion of love in COVID-19 public policy formation. Discussions and listening to others at the UN brought forth love as a form of humanitarian care, "encompassing compassion, altruism, empathy, comfort, encouragement, affection, and understanding" within policy formation to address COVID-19 (Sur, 2020: 636). Incorporating love into the machinations of policy formation does not preclude rationality within the process. Rather, it adds the magic ingredient of our humanity. Let's start with love to find this magic and logic in positive public administration.

Viruses have no regard for boundaries, and seep through national and international boundaries seamlessly (Ahn et al., 2021). In consequence, the European Union (EU) found itself supporting member states and countries beyond its borders. Pooled resources developed and delivered vaccines, shared medical equipment and supplies, sent medical teams to crisis areas, funded unemployment loans, and mobilized support for other areas of the world (Council of the European Union, 2021). Assistance went beyond the practical public policy to humanitarian care, as teams of medical workers travelled to areas overwhelmed with COVID-19 outbreaks. This was policy with compassion, comfort, and love.

Beyond well-intentioned promises, the co-creation of love and power within social change provides the needed twist to the toughest challenges within social change (Kahane, 2010). Love is unity of the separated through respect and connection. Power is collective and creates new social realities within communities, states, and nations. Holistically, love and power can transcend the political and cultural infighting we find around the world. "If we want to create new and better realities – at home, at work, in our communities, in the world – we need to learn how to integrate our love and power" (Kahane, 2010: 17). The task is not easy, as Kahane experienced in his work throughout the world. It is time-consuming, frustrating, and seemingly impossible at times. The competing values embedded in love, power, and policy will not bring answers into perspective, but rather will highlight challenges and the importance of working together for success (Kahane, 2010). Love without power and power without love dooms policy to failure. Success involves identifying

the love and power structures – to create cohesiveness and unity for problem solving.

The EU's pandemic approach exemplifies the co-creation of love and power within policy formation. The EU had power and funding available to support activities, while citizens were engaged in love and compassion for their neighbours. Through this humanitarian crisis, a policy driven by love and supported by power helped pave the road for survival. While it wasn't perfect, it worked.

"Visions of positive, or good, public administration, public sector performance, and ideals of professional practice" must be internalized individually and collectively in the profession (Douglas et al., 2021: 444). As the EU case shows us and Frederickson (1997) suggests, individual and institutional adoption in public administration of love, benevolence, and citizen engagement can increase positivity. Practitioners can move toward love – and positivity – by identifying and addressing challenges within a community through adaptive leadership, rather than with simple technical fixes that do not address the root of the problem. And, by working in partnership – guided by love and patience – we can better seek and create the common good. And in doing so, public administration will become more productive, prosperous, and positive, bringing about enhanced and authentic improvements in public service.¹

NOTE

1. This chapter is dedicated to Laurie DiPadova-Stocks who spent her career focused on students, citizen engagement, and compassionate service to others. Beloved by students, staff, and faculty at Park University, she held positions from Professor to Dean of the Hauptmann School of Public Affairs. Laurie was a strong, supportive, and caring leader. She encouraged faculty to act with kindness and respect in their instruction and promoted that same compassion in student service within a loving and supportive public administration. This was her gift. We honour her by sharing that love through this contribution.

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PART II

Practices

Insight 2. Reducing administrative burdens: the case of the US student loan forgiveness website

Pamela Herd and Donald Moynihan

Student loan debt has become a pressing issue in the United States, reflecting a marketized approach to higher education and a decline of public support. Even public institutions charge significant fees. For most students, this makes student loans inevitable. The size of the debt is extraordinary. An estimated 45 million people collectively owe \$1.6 trillion (Koeze and Russell, 2022). More than 90 percent of that debt is owed to the federal government which offers subsidized loans to students.

After years of debate and promises, the Biden administration unveiled its student loan forgiveness online application in October of 2022 (US Federal Student Aid, 2022). Social media lit up with joyful posts about debt relief, but also about the surprisingly easy process. “Incredible. Took about 120 seconds,” said one user on social media. “Super easy and painless. I feel so hopeful,” said another. The process offered a moment of hope amidst the policy crisis of ballooning student debt, with the Biden administration using emergency Covid-19 pandemic powers to forgive between \$10,000 and \$20,000 in debt per borrower. For many, this would have wiped away the majority or all of their debt.

The policy of debt forgiveness itself was contentious. President Biden’s Republican opponents criticized the program as a giveaway, and an overreach of executive authority. They were unable to block the action through legislation, and so turned to the courts.

Setting aside disagreements about the wisdom of the policy, its implementation was incredibly well-designed. Other student loan forgiveness programs, such as the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, which discharges loans for those who engage in professions like teaching, struggled because of the paperwork involved. By one estimate, \$100 billion dollars in relief is outstanding to more 3.5 million borrowers (Briones et al., 2023). Even the minority who successfully navigated the system spent enormous amounts of time and emotional energy doing so (Olya, 2023).

By contrast, the Biden student loan forgiveness policy was simple to navigate. Eight million people submitted applications during the weekend beta launch (Cowley and Rappeport, 2022), a startling contrast to the six people who successfully negotiated the Obamacare website on the first day of its launch in 2013 (Pear, 2014).

The streamlined student loan relief application shows what is possible when government prioritizes the public in the delivery of public services. The form could be completed in just a couple of minutes. It worked both on a computer and a smartphone and was available in Spanish and English. It was three simple pages: a welcome page, a form and a confirmation page on which applicants attest that they are eligible. Applicants did not have to create an account with a password, a seemingly small step that actually discourages people from starting. They needed five pieces of information: name, social security number, date of birth, phone number, and email. That's it.

The simplicity of the process was no accident. It represented a series of choices informed by human-centered design principles that focus on how applicants experience the process (US General Services Administration, 2023). It's a sharp contrast from how we normally think about government: confusing forms, hours spent tracking down documents to provide information that the government often already has, all accompanied with the feeling that the people on the other side of the screen are making it hard on purpose.

The choices reflected in the Biden administration's student loan forgiveness process illustrate both why application processes are complicated, and how to simplify them.

Eligibility criteria are a key source of administrative burden, the onerous experiences we have when trying to access government benefits and services (Herd and Moynihan, 2018). In the case of student loan relief, President Biden put an income cap of \$125,000 for an individual or \$250,000 for a household.

For other programs like Medicaid and SNAP, better known as food stamps, the individual applying has to gather and document income to prove eligibility. An individual applying for student loan relief had a different experience. Borrowers did not have to submit income documentation. They simply attested that they're eligible. The Department of Education chose the principle of trust but verify. They planned to confirm eligibility with their administrative data, and reserved the right to ask applicants for more documentation in cases where income claims looked suspicious (Sheffey, 2023). Since the government was not sending any money out – they were adjusting the debt level of verified borrowers – the risk that ineligible people would receive government benefits was minor.

The process, however, could have been even simpler. If the Department of Education had access to Internal Revenue Service tax data to verify income, it could have automatically forgiven debt for all eligible borrowers. But federal

law discourages such data sharing, even when it can help people. This meant that between 10 and 25 percent of eligible individuals were predicted never to receive the relief, likely due to being unaware or confused about this one-off benefit (Swagel, 2022; US Office of Management and Budget, 2022).

Privatization of public services is another invisible source of burdens. While the federal government owns most of the debt, it contracts out with private loan servicers to manage the servicing of the debt (Goldstein et al., 2023). In the case of the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, private servicers have made it confusing and onerous, which helps explain why many borrowers had terrible experiences (Green and Cowley, 2019). While clearer legislation and more aggressive oversight by the Department of Education could have helped, ceding responsibility to a labyrinth of private actors, with little incentive to enroll individuals, is a recipe for failure. By cutting private lenders out of the process, the federal government radically simplified the new student relief program.

After all of this careful design, the quality of the application process never resulted in an actual policy outcome. Shortly before the Biden administration was set to start processing the loan forgiveness, the US Supreme Court intervened, blocking the program. On June 30, 2023, the conservative majority on the court ruled the action unconstitutional, judging that Biden had overstepped his executive authority. The outcome mirrored the ideological divisions in the court, government, and broader society about the policy.

If there is a lesson for positive public administration, it is that it is difficult to design and implement a program to be free of burdens in a governmental system as divided as the USA. The separation of powers at the federal level and between multiple levels of government creates veto points, ones which are exacerbated via intense polarization.

Even though it was ultimately blocked, the case did offer some hopeful lessons. Across political divides, we hold a shared interest in replacing long, confusing, and baffling procedures with simple, intuitive experiences built to serve the needs of the public. While the administrative burden framework centers on a negative concept – burdens might be necessary in some cases, but learning, compliance and psychological costs are not pleasant – they have encouraged action-oriented research to better identify and reduce burdens. In this respect, the framework reflects the ethos of positive public administration. As a result, the administrative burden agenda has offered a chance for public administration to demonstrate the practical relevance of its theory, and to build bridges with policymakers.

The contrast with the failed rollout of President Obama's website to expand access to healthcare also pointed to some lessons learned. The US Digital Service, created after that failure, worked hand-in-hand with Department of Education officials to design the loan forgiveness website. New investments in

capacity, and collaboration across agencies, were both factors at play. Another crucial factor was leadership. Senior White House officials made the design of the website a high-level priority.

Even after the Supreme Court decision stopping student loan forgiveness, the Biden administration continued to look for ways to reduce student loan debt, which again centered on reducing administrative burdens. It made existing loan forgiveness programs easier to access, and automatically forgave borrowers with disabilities, and for students who experienced fraud by for-profit schools, or errors by private loan providers. In all, \$127 billion in student loan debt was ordered to be forgiven by autumn of 2023 (US Department of Education, 2023).

The Biden administration also invited 30 million borrowers into income-driven repayment plans. Such plans are cost savers for most students, reducing their monthly repayments. But they are underutilized, partly because of requirements like forcing the borrower to verify they still qualify for the benefit every year by demonstrating income eligibility, a step that many fail to complete. The Biden administration will use tools like automatically enrolling eligible individuals in the program and automatically renewing their status every year using tax data to expand the reach of income-driven repayment plans (Moynihan, 2023).

The student loan website offered a proof of concept for a better approach to public service delivery, reflected in a Biden administration customer experience executive order, which puts the public rather than bureaucracy at the center. For the approach to work across all government programs, however, it requires real investments in user experience, from digital to in-person encounters (US Digital Service, 2023). But it also requires policymakers to think about how to minimize burdens in policy design. This includes eliminating the complexity and confusion created by privatization and enabling the use of administrative data to simplify processes.

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5. Burkina Faso's surprisingly successful effort to abandon female genital mutilation and cutting

Susan L. Ostermann and Josephine Wouango

INTRODUCTION

Public administration scholarship has largely focused on institutional and other failures. This is particularly acute when the scholarly lens happens to be focused on bureaucracies in the developing world. As a result, we know quite a bit about how governance can and does go awry. But, as Douglas and colleagues (2021) point out, we know surprisingly little about how to get things right. Despite this, development professionals and consultants prescribe various policies and approaches and oftentimes loans and grants are predicated on adoption of same. Some academics have taken this even further and use policy experimentation as an opportunity for data collection; this approach has been so impactful that Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo were awarded the 2019 Nobel prize in Economics for their work on randomized controlled trials. There is another approach, however; one that focuses on the ingenuity of bureaucrats and examines what exactly they did when they got it right. In this chapter, we do just this, focusing on a “least likely case”: Burkina Faso's surprising success in bringing about large-scale female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) abandonment.

Arguably the most common policy response to social problems is to attempt to use law to change behavior. With respect to FGM/C, many governments have done exactly this, enacting criminal prohibitions of the practice. They do so despite the fact that: (1) the implementation of such prohibitions requires significant state capacity, which is often associated with coercion, and (2) in the places where FGM/C is still common, state capacity is often limited.

Drawing on extensive fieldwork – both qualitative and quantitative – we explore compliance with anti-FGM/C law in Burkina Faso and neighboring Mali. Our data allow us to test whether a change in FGM/C practice is associated with legal prohibition. The practice of FGM/C has historically been wide-

spread in both countries, and neither is associated with significant coercive state capacity. Burkina Faso has chosen to try to reduce the practice of FGM/C using law, enacting, and implementing an anti-FGM/C law, while Mali has not. Given the above facts, including the limited coercive capacity of the state in Burkina Faso and the presence of significant political instability, we would not, in theory, expect Burkina to meet with much success in terms of fostering FGM/C abandonment. Burkina is simply not where one would typically expect to find an example of good public administration. Empirics sometimes defy theory, however, and we can learn from these cases.

Below, we briefly examine the literature on state capacity and compliance before turning to the methods we used in order to examine effective public administration in Burkina Faso. We then describe the state's efforts to reduce FGM/C incidence in Burkina Faso and which strategies appear to have been most effective.

STATE CAPACITY AND COMPLIANCE

Effective public administration is thought to flow from state capacity. To date, however, the literature has struggled to define the latter. The assumption in the political science literature – both explicit and implicit – is that state capacity is rooted in violence or, at the very least, in coercion. The origin of this assumption is embedded in Max Weber's definition of the state as “a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (Weber, 2009). It follows that states with significant capacity use violence as a means to secure their ends. Put differently, from this view, effective public administration is a matter of using force, or fear of same, to bring about compliance with law (Gibbs, 1968; Jensen, 1969; Tittle, 1969, 1977; Friedman, 1975).

This understanding suggests that states with more limited coercive capacity cannot secure compliance, as they simply cannot produce and then marshal the force necessary to do so. Effective public administration, then, hinges on violence. It follows that any actor wishing to promote effective public administration must actually first promote violence and the coercive capacity that flows from same. The law and society literature, however, suggests that there is another path.

Force and the resulting fear of legal sanction (Gibbs, 1968; Jensen, 1969; Tittle, 1977; Friedman, 1975), is only one way to motivate the compliance of target populations. In addition, there is evidence that a felt sense of duty to obey the law (Braithwaite and Makkai, 1994; Sholz and Pinney, 1995; May, 2005) and social license pressures (Kagan, Thornton, and Gunningham, 2003) motivate compliance with law. A whole host of different conditions then

impact when fear, duty, and social license pressures are likely to successfully impact compliance.

It bears mentioning here that effective public administration, which secures compliance with state-propounded laws, is much easier when the laws on the books merely reflect social practices. For example, nearly everyone agrees that murder is *wrong* and should be illegal, and nearly everyone complies. When a widely practiced behavior is prohibited, public administration is much more difficult. The widespread nature of the practice means that it is accepted and that most people do not consider it to be “wrong.” They justify their behavior by pointing to the behavior of others. This is case with FGM/C, which is considered to be acceptable behavior among large swaths of the populations in places where it is practiced. So strong is the relationship between social practice and law that William Graham Sumner (1907) stated that law must always reflect social practice. And few are surprised that anti-FGM/C law has met with resistance.

Yet, some laws seemingly have changed widespread social practices. Prothro and Matthews (1963) found that, in the USA, laws that removed poll taxes and literacy tests had a positive influence on black voter registration in districts in which whites had taken action to limit same. Similarly, Orfield et al. (1987) found that the exclusionary rule, which bans improperly collected evidence from a trial record, effectively deterred narcotics officers in Chicago from this particular type of misconduct. Kagan and Skolnick (1993), examining no-smoking ordinances in restaurants and workplaces in some US cities in the late 1980s and early 1990s, found that compliance, even without enforcement, was common. Later, Kagan, Gunningham, and Thornton (2003) examined corporate performance vis-à-vis costly-to-comply-with environmental regulations in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States, and found that polluting pulp and paper mills did ameliorate their behavior, particularly when civil society actors also applied compliance pressure.

There are limits, however, to law’s reach. Pager, Western, and Bonikowski (2009) examined patterns of discrimination in the low-wage labor market in New York City and found that compliance with civil rights and antidiscrimination laws is poor when infractions are not readily detectable, and enforcement is difficult and limited. In such situations, Winter and May’s (2001) work on the compliance of Danish farmers with agricultural/environmental regulations suggests that peer pressure against a legal backdrop may also foster compliance. Complicating matters further is Ellickson’s (1991) finding that social norms may supplement or even preempt legal rules imposed by the state. Thus, the socio-legal compliance literature suggests that law can generate compliance, even when compliant behavior deviates from social practice, but its powers are somewhat proscribed.

In light of this, what should we expect to find in the developing world where, for many types of regulations, effective and predictable enforcement, so prized by those who ascribe to a Weberian vision of the state, is not a realistic option and social norms are often strong?

Research on public administration and compliance with law in developing world contexts suggests that it is possible, but even more complex than in the so-called developed world. Gezelius and Hauck (2011), looking at fishery regulations in Norway, Canada, and South Africa, explain that the source of a compliance motivation can vary from context to context and a state's strategy for ensuring compliance must change accordingly. Ostermann (2016) finds that poverty-driven non-compliance sometimes explains why those who are otherwise motivated to obey the law still break it. In her study of sex workers in China, Boittin (2013) reveals that many individuals who break laws prohibiting prostitution often do so out of necessity, but poverty-driven noncompliance in one area does not inhibit compliance in others. Meanwhile, Scott (1987) and Villegas (2012) find that attitudes toward the law and state are often different in the developing world and that responses to same reflect this fact. Shivji (1995) suggests this may be because rule of law and the rights struggle require careful transplantation in many developing-world contexts. Relatedly, An-Na'im (2002) suggests that human rights laws and norms will not generate widespread compliance until they are internalized by communities and this internalization process leads to a cultural transformation.

We ask whether public administration that is facilitative in nature can help overcome barriers to compliance in places where coercive capacity is limited and actually lead cultural transformation. In particular, we use this chapter to explore how public administration can be used to change social practices, like FGM/C, that are difficult to observe.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Burkina Faso is an ideal place to explore the limits of state capacity and public administration. State coercive capacity is extremely limited, making it a "least likely case" where we would not expect to see policy success. To examine the efficacy of anti-FGM law in Burkina Faso, we employ qualitative and quantitative approaches and a border design. We collected survey data in three sets of pair villages that have the same majority ethnic group but are located on opposite sides of the Burkina Faso–Mali border (the Bobo in Faramana-BF/Koury-Mali; the Senoufo in Koloko-BF/Finkolo-Mali, and the Bwaba in

Tansila-BF/Boura-Mali). To assess the impact of the design and legal implementation on the choice to obey the law, we:

1. Carried out a large-N survey to investigate the moral-, social-, religious-, and fear-based motivations people have for obeying the law. Embedded in our survey was a list experiment that allowed us to elicit accurate responses regarding the current state of FGM/C practice.
2. Conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with community gatekeepers, government workers (such as health officials, social workers, and teachers), and law enforcement officials (such as magistrates and prefects). Interviewees were identified with an eye toward diversity of role within the community.
3. Ran focus group discussions (FGDs) with adult men and women from selected communities (paired villages) to assess their reasons for continuing or abandoning FGM/C. Given the sensitivity of the subject, we used hypothetical scenarios and vignettes in the KII and FGD guides. For each study site, we worked with research assistants from the targeted community to tailor vignettes for local relevance. We further tailored them after pre-testing.

Our quantitative survey participants included over-18 men and women, with a total sample of 1,209 individuals (605 men and 604 women). Our focus group discussion participants fell into four groups: 18–34-year-old men, 35 plus-year-old men, 18–34-year-old women, and 35 plus-year-old women. Four FGDs, with six to seven participants each, were conducted in each of the three villages. Finally, we recruited participants through community facilitators to ensure diversity and inclusion, completing 60 KIIs and 24 FGDs, in total.

Informed consent for the interviews and survey was obtained from all participants who signed (or fingerprinted) the form when they agreed to participate, indicating that they understood the aim of the research and willingly agreed to participate. All participants also received a copy of the consent form for their records. The research proceeded with ethical approval from the Population Council Institutional Review Board, the Burkina Faso Ministry of Health's Research Ethics Committee, and the Mali Ministry of Health's Research Ethics Committee.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ANTI-FGM/C LAW

Laws that forbid FGM/C and similar practices have been standard policy responses to what is largely perceived as a human rights challenge. However, as Matt Andrews' (2013) work suggests, many states agree to reforms merely for the purpose of signaling assent to external actors. Indeed, very few of the

countries where FGM/C is common are associated with significant coercive capacity or strongly institutionalized regulatory environments. Thus, it is an open question whether effective public administration can foster and facilitate FGM/C abandonment or whether it will merely result in superficial reforms of the type Andrews (2013) reports.

This chapter covers government responsibility for protecting girls and women from the harmful traditional practice of FGM/C, so that they enjoy health, rights, and well-being. It explores how government enforcement of FGM/C law and other strategies designed to prevent and respond to the practice have contributed to its reduction in Burkina Faso. In order to investigate whether public administration is effective in implementing the abandonment of practices that violate human rights like FGM/C, we consider the case of Burkina Faso, where the government has responded to the UN's commitment to end FGM/C by adopting legal instruments that prohibit both practices. In addition, Burkina Faso has followed a nationwide, multi-pronged facilitative approach: a coordinated effort to address the main driving forces behind practice.

The Legal Framework for the Prohibition of FGM/C in Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso's anti-FGM/C legal framework is informed by international and regional human rights provisions. Burkina Faso's constitution requires that all signed and ratified international human rights treaties be automatically incorporated into the domestic legal system (28TooMany, 2018).

Prior to adoption of a specific anti-FGM/C law, existing national laws related to equal rights, child protection, health and physical integrity were used to combat FGM/C. Burkina Faso's 1991 Constitution provides for "equal rights of all citizens" (Article 1), the "protection of physical integrity" (Article 2), the promotion of "the rights of the child" (Article 24), and "the right to health" (Article 26).¹ The Family Code (1989) states the purpose of parental authority as being "to ensure the child's safety, health, full development and morality" (Article 510).² On November 13, 1996, Burkina Faso passed anti-FGM/C Law No. 043/96/ADP as an amendment to the Penal Code (Assemblée Nationale, 1996). Section 2, which includes Articles 380–382, is specifically entitled "des mutilations génitales féminines" ("female genital mutilations"). This amendment, now the principal legislation governing FGM/C, made the practice illegal among children, adolescents, and women throughout the country. Section 2 provides a clear definition of FGM/C, prohibits all varieties of the practice, and criminalizes anyone who "harms or attempts to harm the integrity of the female genital organ by performing FGM/C." The law also states that anyone who knows about such activity and fails to report it may also be punished.

BOX 5.1 RELEVANT SECTIONS OF BURKINA FASO'S PENAL CODE

Article 380

“Every person who violates or attempts to violate the physical integrity of the female genital organ by total ablation, excision, infibulation, desensitization, or any other means shall be punished by imprisonment for a term of *six months to three years* or a fine ranging from *150,000 to 900,000 francs CFA*, or both. Should the offence result in death, the punishment shall be imprisonment for a term of five to ten years.”

Article 381

“The *maximum punishment* shall be imposed if the guilty person is a member of the *medical or paramedical profession*. The competent authority may also prohibit the guilty person from practising his profession for a period of not more than *five years*.”

Article 382

“Every person *who has knowledge* of the acts described in Article 380 and who *fails to notify* the competent authorities shall be punished by a fine of not less than 50,000 francs CFA and not more than 100,000 francs CFA.”

Source: Author.

The 1996 law stood until 2018, when Burkina Faso revised it and embedded it in the new penal Code (Assemblée Nationale, 2018). Articles 513–7 to 513–9 of Section 2 address FGM/C and provide prison sentences ranging from one to ten years and fines range from 500,000 to 3,000,000 francs CFA (845–5,060 USD). If a girl dies after cutting, the penal code provides for prison terms ranging from 11 to 21 years and for fines of 1 million to 5 million francs CFA (1,687–8,432 USD). Article 513–9 was added to discourage public support for FGM/C: “the penalty shall be imprisonment for a term of one to five years and a fine of two hundred fifty thousand (250,000) to one million (1,000,000) CFA francs [422–1,687 USD], anyone through his public speech, comment or writing, encourages female genital mutilation” (Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Civil Promotion, 2018).

Since the 1996 law and its 2018 revision, the state in Burkina Faso has made FGM/C elimination a national priority (CNLPE, 2016b). Unlike Kenya, however, the implementation strategy used by the state and its partners is not “law & courts”-focused. A *Comite National de Lutte Contre la Pratique de l’Excision* (“CNLPE”) report evaluating the impact of Burkina Faso’s anti-FGM/C law explained that, despite some challenges due to underground FGM/C, the successful implementation of the law has been sustained by

a strong political will combined with many other strategies, including the engagement of various stakeholders at the national and community levels (CNLPE, 2016a: 12–13).

Burkina Faso's multi-pronged, facilitative implementation strategy involves: (1) awareness-raising; (2) training; (3) research; (4) repair of after-effects; (5) gendarmerie/police patrols; (6) repression through imprisonment and fines for cutters and accomplices; (7) the involvement of multiple-actors; and (8) close partnership with the media. We go into detail about these programmatic efforts below.

FINDINGS: SIX STRATEGIES THAT ADD UP

The data we collected are both surprising and revealing. The results, which are summarized in Table 5.1, indicate that ~14 percent and ~44 percent of the respondents in Burkina Faso and Mali, respectively, intend future FGM/C practice. The difference between the mean number of activities reported by groups randomized into the treatment arms of the list experiment in Burkina Faso and Mali was significant at the <0.01 significance level. Compliance in surveyed villages in Burkina Faso is more widespread than in Mali, suggesting that compliance is not driven by “culture” and that the law and its implementation, rather than something else, are driving behavior changes.

While it is important to remember that list experiment data does not allow us to control for potentially confounding variables, because list experiment data is not individually specific and subject to multivariate analysis, these findings are striking and stand in contrast to our expectations, which were for similar behavior in pair villages, given their history of FGM/C practice and ethnic make-up. The data, however, reveal progressive attitudes and behaviors in Burkina Faso, motivated by fear of FGM/C health consequences, and supported by participants' strong knowledge of and willingness to respect the law. We explain these surprising findings by taking a deep dive on Burkina's chosen implementation strategy, which relies more on facilitation than coercion, and relies on resources and approaches that were well-matched to the attitudes of the population and the country socio-cultural contexts. Rather than having a “law and courts”-focused approach, Burkina Faso utilized a multi-pronged, facilitative implementation strategy of its anti-FGM/C laws. Implementation has been sustained by strong political will and the engagement of stakeholders, both of which play a vital role in public administration at the national and community levels.

The state's efforts have included enforcement and implementation of the law through a variety of different approaches: mobile courts that held prosecutions and sentencing publicly within communities, public abandonment declarations, FGM cases reported anonymously through an SOS Excision

Table 5.1 *Estimated proportion of respondents intending to practice FGM/C using the list experiment*

Treatment group (T)		Control group (C)		p-value	Estimated proportion [§] (%) (T _t - C _t)/N _t
Burkina Faso & Mali combined	Mean (95% CI)	Total (T _t)	Mean (95% CI)	Total (T _t)	
Burkina Faso (BF)	3.1 (3.0, 3.2)	1,774	2.9 (2.8, 2.9)	1,817	<0.01 28.4
Mali (M)	2.8 (2.7, 3.0)	856	2.7 (2.6, 2.8)	815	0.21 13.5
	3.4 (3.2, 3.5)	1,026	3.0 (2.9, 3.1)	894	<0.01 43.6
Burkina Faso		Mali		p-value	
Means comparison for treatment groups	2.8 (2.7, 3.0)	3.4 (3.2, 3.5)		<0.01	

Notes: § Proportion of those intending to practice FGM/C in future was estimated as the difference between the total number of activities by the treatment group and the control group expressed as a fraction of the total number of respondents in the treatment group; N_t = total number of respondents in the treatment group; control group received only five items and treatment group received the five items plus an extra sensitive item.

Source: Author.

Hotline, a political will from the government, effective communication, awareness-raising in local languages, a strong engagement and collaboration of multiple stakeholders including health workers, high-level traditional and religious leaders, civil society organizations, and security forces. In addition, capacity-building interventions were delivered for judges, security forces, and health workers. Community patrols have been used to raise awareness about Burkina Faso’s FGM/C ban and related sanctions, which involve province-level police and gendarmerie visit to a village for an awareness raising meeting. A secondary goal is to create closeness/proximity and trust between security forces and communities so that anti-FGM/C efforts are accepted by local communities.

Community members responded positively to this multifaceted approach and Burkina Faso is now regarded as an “exemplar case” in the region. UNFPA (2018) was right to recognize that Burkina’s systematic and effective

implementation of FGM/C law using a mix of programs, policies, and political will offers lessons for other countries. The president of Burkina Faso was made “champion” of the fight against FGM/C by his counterparts from the African Union (CNLPE, 2019). This multifaceted approach has been made possible through the leadership role of the CNLPE (National Committee to Fight the practice of Excision). Burkina Faso has undertaken an “approach through community leaders” which consists of engaging respected community and religious leaders to adhere to and convey the abandonment messaging. These messages have been shared via radio, TV, in newspapers, and on CNLPE social media webpages. For example, the Moro Naaba in Ouagadougou, who is the supreme king of the Mossi people in Burkina Faso, is a champion for abandoning FGM/C. Below, the authors elaborate on six of these strategies implemented by the government to achieve positive policy outcomes: (1) mobile community courts, (2) the leading role of the CNLPE, (3) capacity-building of key actors, (4) increased outreach, (5) engagement of community leaders and civil society organizations, and (6) the role of health workers as influencers at grassroots level.

#1: Mobile Community Courts

The approach of the law enforcement is viewed as unique. The government has implemented this innovative approach to legal proceedings through mobile community courts (*audiences foraines* in French). These judicial hearings are not held in the capital but rather conducted by mobile tribunals near the community where the case originates. The judges travel into practicing communities to punish cutters and their accomplices. The prosecution and sentencing are public. The goal of these mobile courts is to (1) raise awareness of the consequences of FGM/C, including those found guilty; (2) explain why the practice is banned; and to (3) sanction those who contravene the law. There is media coverage of all the public hearings, which raises awareness of the process, even in remote areas and hence deterrence. The approach has led to some defendants becoming agents of change (CNLPE, 2016b).

The mobile court approach is consistent with the ideas of restorative justice which is a recent approach to penal theory and ethics not frequently encountered in discussions of the criminalization of FGM/C. Restorative justice seeks to build partnerships to re-establish mutual responsibility for constructive responses to wrongdoing within our communities. Restorative programs seek a balanced approach to the needs of the victim, wrongdoer, and community through processes that preserve the safety and dignity of all. This increases the number of cases reported and police are trained to take cases reported by the SOS Excision Hotline directly to health services for treatment. Therefore,

Burkina Faso sometimes enforces its FGM/C law in a way reminiscent of the restorative justice model.

#2: The Leading Role of the Anti-FGM/C Board

Before it had a specific anti-FGM/C law, Burkina Faso established in May 1990 a National Committee to Fight against the Practice of Excision. The CNLPE has the mandate to prepare, implement, coordinate, and evaluate all strategies aimed at the abandonment of FGM/C at the regional, provincial, and communal levels. The board is inclusive of 37 members from 15 ministerial departments, as well as representatives of various civil society organizations, religious leaders, and traditional leaders. In 1997, the CNLPE was assigned a Permanent Secretariat and a budget, and the abolition of FGM/C was made a national priority (CNLPE, 2016a).

Since its formation, the National Committee has organized a wide variety of activities and programs. Among them, starting in 1990, and unique in the world, an SOS Excision Hotline, that is free and anonymous, allows individuals to report FGM/C, or intended practice 24hrs a day. The Hotline is operated by security forces who can activate relevant actors based on the case. This communication fosters trust between local communities and government actors, which then increases their willingness to report cases. The SP/CNLPE has been actively supported by former First Lady, Chantal Compaoré, who was its honorary chair and by the current first lady. It also strategically engages influential traditional and religious leaders who comply with anti-FGM/C law to convey abandonment messaging and to reject traditional and/or religious FGM/C justifications. One such figure is Moro Naaba, who is supreme king of the Mossi people and is respected and listened to by village chiefs in remote areas as well as some imams from the Muslim community. Records of messaging by influential figures are broadcast on the radio and TV, printed in newspapers, and published on the CNLPE's social media webpages.

#3: Capacity-building for Judicial Actors, Security Forces, and Health Workers

Judges and police are, in addition to their formal role, members of the community. As such, their perceptions of the harmfulness of FGM/C, which were not obvious when the law was adopted, can affect implementation. In addition, some judges face pressure from local leaders and political officials (CNLPE, 2016a) to refrain from prosecution. To remedy this situation, the CNLPE has invested significant time and effort into training front-line law enforcement personnel: judges, lawyers, the police, gendarmes, and other security officers. In total, 374 police officers and gendarmes were trained between 2009 and

2015, including 110 in 2009, 94 in 2011, and 100 in 2015. In the health sector, 600 health workers were trained during the same period (CNLPE data, 2016b). The CNLPE has also distributed a documentary in which these key actors support FGM/C abandonment in a variety of local languages.

#4: Increased Outreach

Along with other programs, Burkina Faso has also employed an awareness-raising method called Information Education Communication/Behavior Change Communication (IEC/BCC). This method is particularly important because it faced no backlash and was seen as effective in facilitating the implementation of anti-FGM/C laws. Initially, the SP/CNLPE focused messaging on the health consequences of FGM/C (cf., National action plan 1997–1999; 1999–2003; and Impact Evaluation 2016). Since 2009, however, communication has shifted toward human rights issues: “the practice is a violation of human rights with enormous health consequences for girls and women” (CNLPE, 2016b).

Moreover, Burkina Faso's anti-FGM/C law was translated into the four main local languages and distributed in relevant communities by local organizations. The CNLPE has also made extensive use of national and local media (radio, television, and newspaper) to distribute information about the law and its penalties. To compensate for remoteness and widespread illiteracy, theatre and information sessions have been used to raise awareness. This strategy seems to be working to date and to our knowledge there are no data suggesting protests have occurred in response to Burkina Faso's awareness-raising efforts. This is likely due to the strong involvement of diverse community leaders and stakeholders since the adoption of the law.

#5: Engagement of Community Leaders and Civil Society Organizations

A creative method used in Burkina Faso, that involves key stakeholders in public administration, is engagement with community leaders, women, leaders of associations or groups, customary and religious leaders, administrative officials, and former cutters in anti-FGM/C programming. These leaders play a crucial role in communicating anti-FGM/C policies to their followers in a variety of local languages. The Network of Customary and Religious Leaders for the Promotion of the Elimination of FGM and the Burkina Faso Network of Islamic Organizations in Population and Development have both worked closely with the CNLPE to increase the efficacy of anti-FGM/C messaging. Community leaders, in turn, benefit from capacity-building activities funded by the CNLPE and its financial partners. In an interview (December 2020), the

head of the CNLPE stated that are many reasons why it has worked well with religious and traditional leaders:

1. Representatives of religious leaders have been involved as CNLPE members since its establishment in 1990 and participate in decision making at high levels. These representatives provide community-level credibility to the CNLPE.
2. Burkina Faso has adopted an approach (*l'approche par les processus* in French), which consists of taking time to learn context and identify the best ways to approach leaders in each context. The CNLPE's team will travel to the field and work with local facilitators who know local customs and approach religious/traditional leaders to explain their reasons for seeking engagement. Building the respect and trust necessary to convince religious/traditional leaders to join the anti-FGM campaign takes time, but it works.
3. The Ministry of Family and Women, unlike other ministries, has local offices in remote parts of the country. This local presence helps to continuously build connections with religious/traditional leaders. Civil servants act as representatives of the CNLPE in remote areas.

The CNLPE evaluation report (2016a) states that there are still some religious/traditional leaders who support FGM/C due to religious motives, but influential religious leaders are engaged and reject this argument as irrelevant.

Apart from community leaders, the CNLPE works in close collaboration with a variety of different civil society organizations (NGOs, networks of journalists, etc.). Consecutively, these organizations support the CNLPE in social mobilization, in the design and dissemination of behavioral change messaging and in referring patients to medical centers for after-effects treatment. The legitimacy and influence of both community leaders, and civil society organizations encourage compliance with anti-FGM/C laws amongst local communities.

#6: Proactive Health Workers

The fear of the health consequences was one of the reasons people said motivated the abandonment of the practice. These health and death risks were recurrent themes in the FGD discussions with men and women regardless of their age. They believe that this fear led some parents to abandon the practice and that others will do so in the future. Hence, they strongly oppose FGM/C. Participants cited cases where the practice went wrong, causing unbearable

suffering to the girls that were cut: a cutting may cause a death of the girl or hemorrhage. Here is one example:

I witnessed a case, and had it not been for my intervention, the girl would have died. They could not take her to the hospital because people were asked not to practice cutting anymore. So, after having cut the girl in question, at night her parents came to wake me up because the girl was constantly bleeding. I washed the wound with saltwater and the blood stopped flowing. Around 3 a.m., the bleeding started again, and the parents came to call me again; I did the same thing, i.e., I washed the wound with saltwater. The night was also the same scenario, and the child was at the end of her strength, yet she kept bleeding. I had to go to the Catholic mission to ask the priest for help. He gave me cotton, compress and Betadine because he thought someone had hurt himself. This allowed the blood flow to stop. We continued this way until the wound healed. Then I went back to give the rest to the priest, and he asked me what had happened, but I didn't tell him the truth. I figured the most important thing was that he had just saved a life. If I had told him the truth that day, he wasn't going to give me the medicine and the child would die because we didn't have time to hang out anymore. (Female FGD, 35+ Koloko)

Messaging has also focused on the health consequences of the practice, and many have received information on the health consequences of FGM/C through the radio, TV, and mostly from local health workers. Health workers are a respected source of knowledge regarding FGM/C prohibition and health consequences. They are well informed about the local practice of FGM/C in the communities where they work. They understand the community dynamics and observe factors that help and hinder FGM/C abandonment. Health workers take advantage of many of their interactions with the population during medical visits to talk to and educate parents about the consequences of FGM/C:

[...] we take advantage of the vaccination sessions that we do every Thursday and where many women come with their husbands to make them aware of the benefits of not cutting. During the talks, they are receptive, but this does not prevent the persistence of the practice in some communities. (Health worker)

FGD participants also suggested the community health workers were important conduits for information. Women and men of all ages talked about health workers providing information about FGM/C law while also telling them not to cut their daughters anymore because of the health consequences associated with the practice. When asked about the source of their FGM/C legal knowledge, for example, a female FGD participant from Koloko explained:

I have heard about it at the health center. The health workers often talk about it to us. They tell us that girls should no longer be cut and that the law bans it. They say that for a person who practices excision, the law condemns that person. Often time the police also come into the town, they investigate, and they even give a telephone

number so that you can call them in case you are aware of someone performing the cutting (or planning to).

Another from Faramana, explained:

I learned with the health workers who told us not to do it anymore because the law bans cutting the girls.

Male FGD participants echoed these sentiments. For example, a male participant from Tansila said:

Nowadays if you want to get information about this law, you will have to go to the hospital. Very often there are posters on the wall and if you can read, you will know the law. For those who can't read if they go to the hospital, there are health workers who can tell them about the law because it is the health officers who say that it is not good and if the law supports them, they raise awareness.

Another from Koloko explained:

We always take advice from the social welfare services and health workers to learn about this law.

Meanwhile, a female FGD participant from Tansila gave some insight into why information from community health workers is trusted:

The health workers sensitize us to abandon the practice; it's because they know the consequences and also, they see and understand things that we can't see or understand.

Respondents also frequently mentioned health workers as a source of their knowledge of anti-FGM/C law (in Burkina Faso), as well as of the many negative health consequences of the practice (in both countries). For example, participants said:

The health workers told us that cutting girls is not a good thing and to stop it. They even arrest people for that. Nowadays, some people do it secretly, for others the husband agrees, for others the husband doesn't agree. (Female, FGD 18–34, Tansila, Burkina Faso)

We do not do it anymore because the doctors told us not to. (Male, KII, Faramana, Burkina Faso)

I learned with the health workers who told us not to do it anymore because the law bans cutting the girls. (Female, FGD 35+, Faramana, Burkina Faso)

The doctors [health workers] said on the radio and on the TV that we should not cut the girls anymore. (Male, FGD 35+, Koury, Burkina Faso)

Community health workers are in a position to know whether a woman or girl is cut and could, potentially, relay this observational data to key stakeholders. Indeed, our qualitative data reveal that health workers in all three villages in Burkina Faso reported that younger women and girls remain, for the most part, uncut. When asked whether they believed that people have stopped practicing FGM in Burkina Faso, one health worker from Tansila said:

Yes! When I say yes, it is because I receive many women in my health center, and I can say that people have stopped the practice of FGM a lot. Because most of the cases we see are really women who may already have more than six children, and if we take their ages and go back in time, we will find that the practice has already been done a long time ago. But with the younger girls we meet today, we really feel that there are many who have not been cut. So, I can say that with this comparison already, the practice has really decreased.

Another from Koloko stated:

Yes, yes, well, as I was telling you, there are some women we receive for childbirth where everything [i.e. clitoris] is intact. If everything is intact and they are married, it means that they are accepted within the community and that being an uncut woman is not a problem.

Given the trust that seems to exist between health workers and the communities they serve, it should not be surprising, then, that health workers appear to have significant influence on abandonment decisions. For some they simply provide inspiration, for others they convincingly convey the fear that those continuing the practice should feel about potential health consequences. In particular, parents are scared to have to take a girl that has hemorrhaged following a cutting to the health center and being reported to the authorities. In addition, the enforcement of the law within the communities leads to deterrence. Statements made by FGD participants from Tansila and Koloko, respectively, bear this out:

It is the fear of getting in trouble with the authorities. Because if you do it [the cutting] and it goes wrong, you are obliged to take the girl to the hospital. The health workers will question you in order to understand and, in turn, they will go and denounce you.

If there are complications, they'll take her to the hospital and there the doctors will ask them what happened and denounce them.

Even those involved in the practice seem to be reachable by community health worker influence. As a female key informant from Faramana explained:

We followed what the health workers told us. I learned with the health workers who told us not to cut the girls anymore.

The qualitative evidence on influence over abandonment decisions suggests that community health workers may explain, in conjunction with the other strategies, why Burkina Faso has achieved the success it has in terms of FGM/C abandonment despite being at a disadvantage position: a weak state capacity and recurrent instability. Burkina Faso's experience with community health workers as information providers and influencers suggests, more broadly, that we should take more seriously the role that a wide variety of state representatives – not just the police, the courts, the bureaucracy, and so on – have to play when it comes to thinking about state capacity.

These data suggest one path by which Burkina Faso has achieved a relatively high degree of FGM/C legal knowledge, an important compliance pre-requisite, despite fairly limited state capacity. Health workers are well placed, at the local level, to distribute information about FGM/C law and, because they are generally trusted by the communities in which they work, the information they provide seems to be taken seriously. The success of anti-FGM/C law suggests that multi-faceted implementation approaches that are well-matched to the within-country context are critical to compliance.

While Burkina Faso's strategy relies on some coercive capacity, it could be termed as "facilitation before sanction." Sanctions are used to explain that FGM/C is harmful only when cutting continues despite the attempt to implement facilitative strategies. Mobile Community Courts, despite being courts, are an illustrative example of this "facilitation before sanction" approach. Their purpose is to explain, sensitize, convince, and then to punish in order to deter future cutting. Still, the strength of Burkina Faso's strategy lies in having a variety of key stakeholders who represent diverse aspects of the country's population spread anti-FGM/C messages.

A CONTRASTING CASE: THE MALI EXPERIENCE

In Mali, civil society organizations and government ministries have proposed laws, but the National Assembly has declined to enact them due to the pressure of influential Muslim leaders. However, Penal Code Act No. 01–079, on 20 August 2001, contains certain provisions applicable to violence against persons in general and could apply to cases of FGM/C.

However, in our study, 80 percent of the quantitative respondents in Mali villages think that FGM/C is illegal in this country (87 percent of all respondents in Burkina Faso). At the village level, the Mali results on legal knowledge showed Koury (73 percent), Finkolo (81 percent), and Boura (83 percent) believing that FGM/C is illegal. The Mali results were surprising, in that Mali does not have a specific law that criminalizes and punishes FGM/C practice. Radio was cited as the main source of information about the law in both coun-

tries for the majority of the study participants. Even some local government representatives in Mali think that FGM/C is illegal in their own country.

This law states that any person who is caught in the process of carrying out this practice will be punished, and this sanction may result in the payment of a fine in the sense that the practice leads to unfortunate complications on the girl's body. (Female, FGD 35+, Finnkolo, Mali)

As I said, in Mali, it seems that the law is not enforced; many people are afraid to do it officially [the cutting], they really do it underground. They don't do it openly. (Male, KII, Finnkolo, Mali)

[Now I would like to know if there is a law against FGM/C in Mali?]

Yes, there is a law prohibiting FGM/C in Mali, as I said, there was a decision.

[Is it the same as in Burkina Faso?]

Well, I cannot say because I haven't read the content of the laws of two countries; I don't know their details, but I think that these countries have about the same views on decision-making against FGM/C, the content of the laws can vary slightly but the main goal of these laws is for women to thrive. (Male, KII, Koury, Mali)

We have no data to explain why respondents in Mali are so wrong (in a good way) about FGM/C law in their own country. We can hypothesize a possible cross-border effect of the FGM/C campaigns that have taken place in Burkina Faso, a cross-border diffusion of ideas and knowledge may explain the surprising Mali results. It is also possible that sensitization campaigns undertaken by anti-FGM/C NGOs in Mali may have affected legal knowledge. Also, some participants in Mali said that they do not know whether or not an FGM/C law exists in Mali.

When it comes to attitudes and behaviors toward abandonment of FGM/C, the reality is different. People openly say they do not respect the sensitization messages they hear on the radio. For example, when the interviewer said, "You heard on the radio that FGM/C is not an almost a general practice good, but do people here respect that?", respondents justified FGM/C with many arguments:

No, people don't respect it.

We listen to the radio, but we do not respect it because those who even say not to do it, hide to cut their own daughters.

No but deciding not to cut a girl is bad in the sense that boys will consider her as "blakolo" [a pejorative expression in Dioula which means an impure person] and will laugh while saying that she will have difficulty finding a husband; this is why it is difficult for us to respect the law. (Females, FGD 18–34, Koury, Mali)

[...] and these girls are really angry of the way they are treated, and they end up doing it. I've witnessed a case in another village [...] One day the girl got angry and took a blade and cut herself. [...] She had a hemorrhage which made people know and immediately she was evacuated and cut her. (Female, KII, NGO, Finnkolo)

They say that an uncut girl is exposed to any germs and dirt [...] So, the woman has to be circumcised in order to be healthy. (Male, KII, Health Worker, Boura)

The Mali qualitative data reveal that the drivers for FGM include social pressure, the perception that links FGM and purity, “cleanliness” for women, and religion. There is a religious perception that, if a girl or a woman had not undergone FGM, their prayers would not reach God and therefore they were not real Muslims. This perception could prove to be challenging in a community with strong religious elements and where no specific law condemns the practice and hence few social protection mechanisms exist to protect the uncut.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The above findings have important implications. Formal law was complemented by other facilitative approaches: ones that were locally grounded and involved cultural/traditional gatekeepers. Those looking to encourage FGM/C abandonment should consider experimenting with aspects of Burkina Faso’s multi-pronged and persuasive FGM/C strategy. Burkina Faso’s experience with community health workers as information providers, as well as other stakeholders within public administration, more broadly suggests that the role when it comes to state capacity, taken by a wide variety of state representatives – not just the police, the courts, the bureaucracy and so on – should be taken more seriously.

They also lend credence to the Douglas et al. (2021) project of examining positive public administration cases. The paired Burkina Faso–Mali comparison suggests that coercively weak states may still be able to secure compliance with their laws and that good public administration can sometimes be found in the most unlikely places. In particular, we point to a mechanism, community health workers as trusted information conduits, that is relevant to public health work throughout the developing world. In the case of Burkina Faso, the use of formal law to regulate a cultural practice was seen as more effective to local attitudes, when complemented with facilitative approaches. The research also suggests that there is much to learn from such cases and that academics and policymakers alike should consider the numerous other capacities states possess beyond simple coercion. Coercively weak states may have hidden, untapped strengths and our findings point to the fact that these states can still successfully tackle complex social challenges.

NOTES

1. French version: <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/fr/bf/bf017fr.pdf> (consulted 10/04/2020).
2. French version: http://jafbase.fr/docAfrique/Burkina/Le_code_des_personnes_et_de_la_famille.pdf (consulted 10/04/2020).

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6. Making Indigenous self-government happen in Canada

Mason Ducharme, Susanne Thiessen and Evert Lindquist

INTRODUCTION

Canada has long been known internationally for its quality of public administration at the federal, provincial, and local levels of government, peaceful government transitions after elections, low levels of corruption in its public institutions, and high levels of immigration and commitment to multiculturalism. For these and other reasons, Canada has been seen as having a steady commitment to good government (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017). However, countering this image of “good government” is Canada’s historical treatment of Indigenous Peoples. This includes land seized for settler exploitation, treaties not honored, the decimation of Indigenous communities through disease and forced starvation, the removal of Indigenous children from their communities and placement in residential schools or non-Indigenous foster homes, the regulation and control of Indigenous Peoples on reserves under the 1876 *Indian Act*, and other concerted efforts to erase culture and language and coerce assimilation into the dominant culture. All of this has resulted in huge disparities in socio-economic and health outcomes for Indigenous Peoples compared to non-Indigenous peoples in Canada (Sniderman and Sanderson, 2022) and, ironically, a view among non-Indigenous peoples of poorly governed Indigenous communities (Brock and Migone, 2018).

For decades, Indigenous leaders have called on Canadian governments to honor or seriously negotiate new treaties (Tennant, 1990; Raunet, 1996), and used the courts to recognize inherent rights, treaty obligations, and the use of traditional lands (Satsan et al., 2022). However belated, progress is slowly being made: the government of Canada has recognized the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, issued formal apologies, sponsored commissions on missing and murdered Indigenous women and residential schools, and on truth and reconciliation, and restructured the old Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development with a view to facilitating the transfer

of authorities and promoting Indigenous self-government.¹ With over 600 distinct Indigenous Nations in Canada, a new order of government is rapidly emerging: one where Indigenous Peoples are asserting rights, demanding seats at governance tables, negotiating transfers of services and funding, and re-building capacity for self-government.² Given the challenges Indigenous Peoples have been subjected to in Canada, this raises the question of what constitutes success for Indigenous communities that are regaining control over their affairs and governing themselves in a colonial context.

By means of four short case studies from British Columbia (which contains over 200 or about one-third of Canada's 600 Indigenous Nations), this chapter shows that Indigenous communities can opt for distinctive pathways towards self-governance, and that the frameworks typically used to gauge policy and governance success need to be elaborated to analyze these experiences. It suggests that positive public administration will benefit from adopting a "wise practices" approach to better capture the broad challenge Indigenous communities are seeking to surmount and how unique cultural and geographical circumstances lead to different strategies. But first, this chapter provides some background on Canada's treatment of Indigenous Peoples.

BACKGROUND: FROM THE ROYAL PROCLAMATION TO THE *INDIAN ACT* TO RECONCILIATION

Canada's treatment of Indigenous Peoples by settlers beyond first contact is distressing to recount. Early on, the British Crown explicitly recognized the existence, governance, and territories of "Indian" peoples, as they were then referred to. The relationship between the United Kingdom and the Nations and tribes of Indians in British North America was governed by the Royal Proclamation of 1763 which recognized and endeavored to protect Indian tribal lands and reserves, established a fiduciary Crown–Indigenous Nations relationship, forbade the direct purchase of Indian lands and interference in tribal governance (Milloy, 2008: 2–4), recognized Indigenous title, and was the basis on which treaties were negotiated (Land Claims Coalition, 2013). The Royal Proclamation predated the creation of Canada in 1867 and was recognized in the *1982 Constitution Act* (Russell, 2021). However, the seeds of "settler sovereignty" were planted early during the late 1800s, as they were granted or took lands previously occupied by Indigenous Peoples, and grew deep roots as immigration to Canada proceeded, all justified by the paternalistic idea that Indigenous Peoples were unable and unprepared to govern themselves.

In 1839, prior to establishing the Dominion of Canada, the *Crown Lands Protection Act* classified Indian lands as Crown lands. In 1857, the United Province of Canada – the precursor to the nation of Canada – passed the *Act*

to *Encourage Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes* which encouraged, relatively unsuccessfully, individuals to give up Indian status in exchange for land. When Canada was established, the 1867 *British North America Act* transferred the responsibility for “Indians and lands reserved for Indians” to the new federal government (Milloy, 2008: 1; Russell, 2021: 74–76). Soon after, the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869* required the establishment of band councils to replace traditional Indigenous governance structures (Poucette, 2017, 2018), and assigned various responsibilities for public order, public health, buildings, and infrastructure. The earliest seven “numbered” treaties with Indigenous Peoples were negotiated between 1871 and 1877 as settlers moved west from central Canada in what became the Prairie Provinces. These treaties granted First Nations small parcels of land, annuity payments, and fishing rights, which had been the responsibility of the Department of Indian Affairs, along with social assistance, education, social housing, and infrastructure, but also confined Indigenous Peoples to those reserves (Brunet-Jailly, 2008). Fourteen treaties, known as the Douglas Treaties, were negotiated in British Columbia during the early 1850s (Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, n.d.).

In 1876, the Canadian government passed the *Indian Act*, amended several times over the years. Under this Act, the Canadian government introduced a succession of policies aiming to eliminate First Nations cultures and coerce assimilation into settler society. It required the authorization of expenditures by an Indian agent appointed by the government for each reserve and by higher officials in the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (Stevenson, 2019; Brunet-Jailly, 2008). Later, Indigenous children were removed from communities and put into residential schools or foster homes with the goal of cultural assimilation. Alongside this there was grossly underfunded housing and education on Indian reserves, and the establishment of a “pass” system restricting the movement of Indigenous Peoples off reserves (Olsen, 2016; Sniderman and Sanderson, 2022).

In short, Canadian governments supplanted and colonized Indigenous governance systems across the country. These systems were not monolithic but did contain many common elements of “good governance,” such as the centrality of land, individual autonomy, rule of law, roles for women and elders, responsibilities carried by families and clan leadership, and consensus decision making (Poucette, 2018). These elements contrasted with Canadian approaches to governance, which sprang from hierarchical legal systems placing a premium on property and individual rights, reflected patriarchal values, and top-down decision making. In turn, Canadian subnational governments resisted acknowledging Indigenous People’s prior status and inherent rights. When British Columbia (BC) joined Canada in 1871, its government did not recognize Aboriginal title and refused to negotiate additional treaties

until 1990; even though many First Nations wanted to (Kajlich, 2002). For many BC First Nations, the tensions between two governance systems and world views were not the main problem; rather, it was the unwillingness of settler governments and communities to recognize them and commit to sharing power.

A WISE PRACTICES PERSPECTIVE ON POSITIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Indigenous self-governance successes typically have long gestation periods, involving decades of enduring dislocation, protesting, and seeking recognition, demonstrating rights and traditional use of territories, and negotiating treaties and other agreements. This has required incredible determination and persistence, extraordinary leadership, agreement, and concertation from within communities, court challenges, and patience. Even with agreements in hand, there follows the development of new governance regimes, identifying priorities, building capacity, developing new policy frameworks, and implementation. The PPPE (program, process, politics, and endurance) framework was not developed to look at such broader governance challenges, and here we suggest a “wise practice” approach adds value when appraising governance and progress for Indigenous communities in several ways.

First, the wise practice approach calls on scholars to recognize the diversity of practices within and across communities, animated by their relationship to land and tribal laws and customs. These practices reflect the culture, history, and unique complexities of each community, and often are dedicated to furthering comprehensive community well-being (as opposed to individual wealth and profit). Wise practices should capture and reflect Indigenous Peoples’ world views and ways of creating knowledge, grounded in local knowledge and teachings (Voyageur, 2014; Cailliou, 2021). We should seek out and anticipate adaptations and variability across communities as they apply locally appropriate actions, tools, principles, or decisions to further self-governance (Wesley-Esquimaux and Cailliou, 2010: 19).

Second, a wise practice approach suggests that Indigenous Peoples likely have a longer timeframe for achieving “success.” We must account for the impacts of historic structures and decision making and recognize that progress toward full self-governance will take many generations. Moreover, many Indigenous communities use a longer time-horizon for governance decisions, captured by “seventh generation” thinking as they make choices that will affect their community for decades, if not hundreds of years.³

Third, Indigenous people from many different cultures see the land as an important part of their lives and communities, as a living organism supporting all life, and a fundamental value that informs governance decisions. In their

view, land is not “property” – the idea that land could be divided and monetized arrived with the Europeans (UN, 2010). Accordingly, the self-governance and policy deliberations of First Nations necessarily go beyond decisions about “managing property” to embrace how they use and protect land to create sustainable arrangements, increase independence, and develop governance models suited to their communities.

Finally, First Nations can move toward self-governance and acquire greater authorities in several ways. Indigenous governance reform can proceed on a continuum that ranges from exploiting circumscribed authorities under the *Indian Act*, to delegated authority through sectoral initiatives, and to self-governance arrangements with decisive control (Wilson-Raybould and Raybould, 2014). Our cases show that Nations have different preferences about pathways for self-governance, which influence what constitutes success for those communities.

FOUR CASES OF INDIGENOUS SELF-GOVERNMENT

This section provides cases of four successful Indigenous communities in British Columbia: the Osoyoos Indian Band, the Williams Lake First Nation, the Nisga’a Lisims Nation, and the Tsawwassen Nation. Each case has different scales, governance arrangements, and geographical settings along with different scopes for economic development and degrees of self-sufficiency and capacity. The cases also vary in terms of whether the community has negotiated treaties and modern governance structures, has benefited from charismatic or collective leadership, and has relied on court challenges to secure or protect rights, titles, and other benefits.

Osoyoos Indian Band: Asserting Self-governance with Charismatic Leadership

The Osoyoos Indian Band (Osoyoos or OIB) is one of the few self-sufficient First Nations communities in Canada (Thom, 2017; National Centre for First Nations Governance, n.d.). Located in South Okanagan, the band has 589 registered members and over 13,073.8 hectares (32,306 acres) of reserve land, much of it fertile and accessible (Government of Canada, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; OIB, 2018a). It relies on the *Indian Act* election system, which requires electing a Chief and five Council members every two years (Government of Canada, 2021b). The Osoyoos are widely recognized for responsible fiscal governance and economic development successes, often attributed to the dynamic leadership of Clarence Louie, elected Chief in 1984 at the age of 24. Its resistance to settler incursions goes back to the early 1900s (Chiefs of the Shuswap, 1910). It has also asserted its rights as part of the broader Okanagan Tribal Council, Okanagan

Nation Alliance Society, and Sylix Okanagan Nation (Sylix Okanagan Nation, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c).

Examples of the Osoyoos' entrepreneurial approach abound. In the 1990s, OIB purchased a golf course, secured a multi-million-dollar land claim to purchase land in their traditional territory, and negotiated a multi-million-dollar right-of-way deal for a pipeline expansion to invest the funds into businesses. In 2005, another multimillion-dollar settlement funded community infrastructure improvements (Nk'Mip Canyon Desert Golf Course, 2021; Louie, 2021). When an ancient Indigenous grave was discovered in Haynes Point Provincial Park in 2014, Chief Louie persuaded the BC government to rename and shift management of the park to OIB (BC Parks, n.d.; Province of BC, 2015). OIB owns more than ten businesses including tourism, industry, services, and land leases, and has an unemployment rate of less than 3 percent (OIB, 2018b; Louie, 2021).

The OIB has made incremental governance reforms using room in the *Indian Act* to create bylaws. For example, OIB adopted a Financial Administration Law, which enabled property assessment and taxation, generating property and accommodation tax revenues of over \$4.4 million in 2022 (OIB, 2011, 2018c, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b). Those revenues funded a variety of infrastructure, administrative, and other services. OIB has entered into third-party service agreements with nearby municipalities for fire protection, recreation, the library, and recycling (OIB, 2022b). Over five years, its businesses generated over \$120 million in revenues which support community and social services, and infrastructure (OIB, 2018b; Louie, 2021).

Despite its economic and financial success, the Osoyoos must overcome one big challenge: leadership succession. In his autobiography, Louie (2021: 251) observes: "after thirty-five years as a chief, I know I don't have thirty years on council left in me. I know I don't have another ten years left in me, and neither should I." How the community overcomes this leadership change will be interesting. Although many herald his leadership style, some people inside and outside the community have criticized Chief Louie as being too macho, too critical of his own people, and too focused on economic development outcomes (Macdonald, 2014).

Williams Lake First Nation: Increasing Independence with the *Indian Act*

The Williams Lake First Nation (WLFN) is in the Cariboo Regional District, with 1,983.1 hectares (4,900.3 acres) of reserve land, and 967 registered members. The WLFN, previously known as the Williams Lake Indian Band (WLIB), adopted a new governance system in April 2018: elections for the Chief and five Council members occur for staggered four-year terms (Government of Canada, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e; WLFN, 2018a, n.d.a). WLFN is known for recently negotiating a historic \$135 million Village Land Claim settlement

(WLFN, 2022b; Louie, 2021; CBC, 2022) and receiving a \$2.9 million award from the government of Canada to investigate potential burial sites at former Indian residential schools (Schmunk & Dickson, 2022; WLFN, n.d.b). The WLFN website publicly showcases most of its policies and laws (WLFN, n.d.c, n.d.d).

WLFN has taken small steps toward self-government under the *Indian Act* by adopting an election code that provides greater stability, mentorship opportunities for new council members (WLFN, 2018a), and customized membership rules (WLFN, n.d.f). It initiated sectoral initiatives such as a land code (WLFN, 2014) and financial administration law (WLFN, 2018b), which allowed for collecting annual property taxes (WLFN, 2022a), which defrayed general government expenditures, protection services, and contingencies. By adapting the land code, the WLFN was able to remove itself from approximately 25 percent of the *Indian Act* administered by the federal government (Wilson-Raybould and Raybould, 2014). It also has implemented a matrimonial real property law, a fire protection law, an animal control law, a cannabis law, and a trespass and nuisance law (WLFN, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2019a, 2019b). The WLFN owns businesses such as a golf course, cannabis stores, real estate houses, logging company, gas station, campsites, heritage park, and an archaeology company (WLFN, n.d.e). With robust financial proceeds from these endeavors, WLFN is striving toward self-sufficiency (WLFN, n.d.e).

The WLFN has become a role model in First Nations communities with their incremental governance reforms and strong financial performance. Two key roles helped the First Nations move forward: the Chief and the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). A key elected leader has been Willie Sellars, a councilor from 2008 to 2018 and Chief since 2018 (WLFN, n.d.a). Most recently, Sellars was a recipient of the 2023 BC Reconciliation Awards by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of BC (Lieutenant Governor of BC, n.d.). Chief Sellars has been an advocate for reconciliation by negotiating income benefit agreements, and WLFN's Chief negotiator with the private and public sector (Lieutenant Governor of BC, n.d.). The band's CAO is also important. When its non-Indigenous CAO recently resigned after three years, worry emerged about succession and how momentum toward self-government would be affected, especially since WLFN has been pursuing a modern-day treaty as part of the Northern Shuswap Tribal Council (NStQ) group of First Nations (BC Treaty Commission, n.d.; Hoffman, 2022; WLFN, n.d.g; Northern Secwepemc te Qelmucw, n.d.; Government of British Columbia, n.d.). In early 2023, WLFN appointed a new CAO, an Indigenous woman from Tse'Khene Nation with experience in the private and public sectors.

Nisga'a Lisims Nation: the First Modern Treaty in British Columbia

The core lands of the Nisga'a Nation comprise almost 2,000 square kilometers, along with treaty rights and co-management arrangements for another 27,000 square kilometers, in the Nass River Valley region of northwestern BC, with over 7,000 members. After over 100 years of contesting the loss of land taken by the Canadian government, the Nisga'a Tribal Council negotiated a comprehensive land claim agreement which took effect on May 11, 2000. It established the Nisga'a Lisims Government (NLG), its Wilp Si'yuukhl Nisga'a (its legislature), the Executive and its directorates and departments, four village governments (Gitlaxt'aamiks, Ginglox, Gitwinksihlkw, and Laxgalts'ap), and three urban local governments (Terrace, Prince Rupert/Port Edward, and Vancouver), all guided by a Council of Elders. The Nisga'a's treaty attracted international attention (Nisga'a Nation, n.d.; NCFGN, n.d.; Malloy and Ward, 2006), in part because the Nisga'a "were not negotiating for independence; they were negotiating to reclaim control of the lands and resources for their Nation" (Scott, 2012; Blackburn, 2021).

In the 1890s, as settlers and the BC and federal governments continued making incursions onto their lands, Nisga'a hereditary chiefs and matriarchs formed the Nisga'a Land Committee and persistently pursued full recognition of title to their lands and self-government over many decades. Their cause was furthered by the early leadership of Frank Calder, the son of Nisga'a chiefs, who went to residential schools and was elected to the BC Legislature in 1949, becoming the first Indigenous representative in a Canadian legislature. He later became General Secretary of the Indian Brotherhood of BC and a founding president of the Nisga'a Tribal Council which brought together the four Nisga'a Nations (Harper, 2013). In 1973, the Nisga'a launched a case in the Supreme Court of Canada (Calder) and won recognition of their Aboriginal title. This emboldened the Nisga'a to enter treaty negotiations, first with the government of Canada in 1976 and later with the BC government in 1990 (Nisga'a Lisims Government, 2023). This led to the first modern treaty under the leadership of Joseph Gosnell (Rose, 2000, 2020) and paved the way for other Indigenous communities in BC to negotiate agreements, though not all believed such agreements were the best strategy (Raynard, 2000).

After overcoming political and court challenges to the new arrangements, the NLG moved forward on several fronts: adopting its own governance structure, developing its administrative capacity, announcing policies and laws for its territories; entering into partnerships in education, health, forest, fisheries, and lands management with the provincial government; building an income, sales, and property tax regime; ensuring an endowment revenue stream from the Nisga'a Settlement Trust; investing in education and cultural development; developing infrastructure linking all of its communities; and reaching

agreements with the BC and Canadian governments on public services, job opportunities, and shared monitoring and enforcement on its traditional lands (Nisga'a Final Agreement, n.d., 2011, 2019, 2021, 2022). Under the leadership of President Eva Clayton since 2016, NLG has developed tourism and business capabilities, and a new economic development strategy (Mainprize et al., 2019), including pursuing ownership and development opportunities, not without controversy, from a natural gas pipeline project (Jang, 2022).

Tsawwassen First Nation: Securing BC's First Urban Treaty

The Tsawwassen First Nation (TFN) is a Coast Salish community recognized for implementing the first urban treaty under the BC treaty process in 2009 (TFN, 2023a). Located in the Greater Vancouver area near the US border with 724 hectares of land, it has 500 members with nearly half living on TFN lands and many nearby (TFN, 2023a). TFN is known for having a comprehensive tripartite agreement with Canada and BC which took 14 years of intense negotiations. It removed the TFN from the *Indian Act*, provided for constitutionally protected self-governance, and jurisdiction over their land base (Baird, 2011).

With the agreement, TFN adopted its constitution and a "Declaration of Tsawwassen Identity and Nationhood," outlining the work undertaken before and after the treaty (TFN, 2023a). Its new governance model includes: a chief, legislature, executive council, and an advisory council. The new jurisdictional capacity led to the enactment of 29 laws for governance, natural resources and land management, social programming, healthcare, education, social assistance, child and family services, and others (TFN, 2023a). TFN members are involved in governance processes and actively review, update, and integrate traditional laws, illuminating the restoration of title and rights. The elements of good governance – a constitution, laws, clear jurisdiction, the reliable and comprehensive structure of government, and engagement of TFN members – animate its operations and reflect TFN's unique world view and cultural strengths.

TFN's governance thrives on engaging its members, with many filling critical leadership roles. For example, the Legislature is the highest body of the government, with 13 members plus the Chief through elections, for a total of 14, the majority of which have been younger women. The Executive Council and Advisory Council have similar representation. The 2018–2023 TFN Strategic Plan outlines a succession plan so members can assume higher roles in the government (TFN, 2023b). The strategic plan supports collaboration and inclusion, recognizes and uplifts TFN members' strengths, and generates a passion for the community's land, people, and governance. The Nation has established a property tax authority, a standing committee on language and culture, the Tsawwassen Traditional Territory Boundary Commission, an advisory design

panel, and a trust society. The TFN economic development company seeks partners to build the capacity of their members (TFN, 2023b).

TFN balances opportunity with a seven-generation approach with an ambitious agenda of sustainable economic development, attracting over \$1 billion in private investment. By finalizing a 99-year land lease agreement to build a 1.2 million-square-foot retail mall in 2014, TFN entered into the most significant non-resource agreement signed by a BC First Nation. It leased 100 acres for an industrial logistics center for the nearby Deltaport container terminal. Both projects started on behalf of Tsawwassen members on Tsawwassen Public Lands (TFN, 2023b). Other sources of revenue include a 60-year prepaid lease with Beedie Real Estate that provides royalty rental payments, joint ventures in construction and security, and taxation (TFN, 2023b). Funds are reinvested in community infrastructure, with \$60 million toward transportation upgrades and a state-of-the-art sewage treatment facility.

Summary of the Cases: Differing Trajectories for Self-Governance

Table 6.1 provides a comparative overview of key findings about the self-governance strategies and experience of the four Indigenous communities. While these four Indigenous Nations shared similar challenges in dealing with the loss of traditional lands, impacts of disease, removal of children, and coercive regulation by the Canadian government, more recently they were able to productively engage the governments of Canada and British Columbia to negotiate treaties, receive compensation, and arrive at new administrative arrangements, standing as examples of positive public administration. Their accomplishments include new governance regimes and the development of their own laws and policies, reflecting traditional approaches and contemporary needs. They have reduced economic dependency, established businesses ventures and revenue flows, invested in infrastructure, and recovered or gained access to traditional lands.

What is striking, though, is the unique trajectories they have taken to do so. The reasons for this are evident. Each community has distinct locations, ranging from very remote to densely urban contexts, and different territorial configurations, ranging from 724 hectares to 200,000 hectares. The capacity of the Nations varies considerably, too, with the number of registered members varying from 500 to 7,000, and some Nations worked largely on their own or with or through a larger tribal council, reflecting historical connections and what critical governance mass they needed to negotiate self-governance agreements. They took different approaches to whether they pursued land claims and compensation for land taken, negotiated treaties, or worked within authorities delegated under the *Indian Act*. Finally, the leadership styles within each community varied considerably, ranging from long-serving chiefs focused on entrepreneurship to steady

executive leadership to persistent expression of rights and inclusion of hereditary and elected representation, and distinct governance styles reflecting different clan and family structures, and distinct spiritual and cultural practices.

CONCLUSION: GAUGING INDIGENOUS SELF-GOVERNANCE SUCCESS

This exploratory study has elaborated an approach for analyzing diverse examples of successful self-governance strategies in Indigenous communities by complementing and elaborating a wise practices perspective and presenting four short case studies. Our cases show that Indigenous Peoples have re-developed complex and effective government systems informed by their histories, societies, cultures, and territories before the settlers arrived. They have done so by reminding other governments of their long histories, titles to lands, and inherent rights, and by variously negotiating treaties, using room under the *Indian Act*, and entering into agreements on a nation-to-nation basis over larger traditional territories. They have developed models of governance, articulated policies, and pursued opportunities better aligned with their values and priorities. Indeed, “success” for Indigenous communities is far broader than the specific policies and programs the PPPE framework seeks to appraise, embracing broader notions of governance, instituting an extensive waterfront of policy initiatives, and envisioning much longer timeframes for moving forward and achieving the ultimate goals of self-reliance and relative autonomy.

The four cases show that Indigenous communities have different points of departure in dealing with settlers before the modern era; varying proximity to major urban centers and degrees of encroachment on their lands; varying scales of territory and kinds of natural resources; and distinctive histories before contact with settlers and their governments. The cases show that the four Nations have put in place scores of laws, policies, and programs over the last decade or two, but have different strategies and ideas about what self-governance looks like. They developed their own approaches to governance, articulated new policy regimes, struck new agreements for providing better education, social, and health services, and invested in or developed partnerships (large or small depending on their location) to encourage business, provide jobs, and build a tax base. Two nations negotiated treaties, while two others opted to use the *Indian Act*’s flexibilities. We do not have the space here to appraise the success of each initiative of these nations, but the fact that these new governance and policy regimes were led by Indigenous communities and not imposed by settler governments – must be seen as successful efforts to further Indigenous sovereignty within a federalism system of government (Russell, 2021).

Our cases suggest that self-governance does not come quickly or easily. This has been due in part to the racism and reluctance of the federal and provincial

Table 6.1 Features, pathways, and accomplishments of four Indigenous nations

	Osoyoos Indian Band	Williams Lake First Nation	Nisga'a Lisims Government	Tsawwassen First Nation
<i>Territorial location and configuration</i>	13,073.8 hectares	1,983.1 hectares	200,000 hectares	724 hectares
<i>Registered members</i>	589	967	7,000	500
<i>Relevant Tribal Council</i>	-1980 Okanagan Tribal Council established -1987 Okanagan Nation Declaration -2018 Sylix Okanagan Nation Declaration (across Canada-US border)	-1915 joined the Allied Tribes of BC -1994 joined WLFN the Northern Secwepemc te Qelmuw (NSQ) group	-1890 Nisga'a Land Committee established -1955 Nisga'a Tribal Council established -2000 Nisga'a Lisims Government established	-1983 Naut'sa mawt Tribal Council
<i>Governance arrangement</i>	-Elected Chief and Band council which operates under the <i>Indian Act</i> -Member of the Okanagan Tribal Council	-Adopted new governance system in 2018 using a custom election code	-First "modern" treaty negotiated in 1998 (ratified in 2000); pre-dated BC modern treaty process	-First urban treaty negotiated in BC (2009). Led to a new governance regime and 14-member legislature including the Chief, along with Executive and Advisory Councils
<i>Pathway to success</i>	-Successful land claims: some with Okanagan Tribal Council Strong entrepreneurial political leadership -Focus on business ventures with revenues from business and land claims invested into acquiring business and land -Property and income tax regime (own-source revenues) in place	-In Stage 5 of land claim process with four Northern Secwepemc te Qelmuw communities, having received (BTC has 6 stages) -Steady development of its own membership, land use, tax, and other laws, so that Indian Act does not apply in those areas. -Investment in many businesses and has own-source revenues	-Strong, continuous leadership expressing concerns over settler incursions into Nisga'a territories. One leader became a provincial MLA -Tribal council formed by four Nisga'a Nations to challenge governments in the courts. Using recognition of rights from court challenges, entered into treaty negotiations in 1976. Finalized agreement in 1998 and weathered challenges to it -Developing its own governance model, steadily built administrative capacity, and negotiated agreements	-Initiated a treaty process in the late 1990s. Agreement identified reserve lands, transferred Crown lands, and provided for engagement on land use on other lands and options for purchase -Steady development and adoption of laws and policies reflecting TFN values and aspirations, with an emphasis on ensuring transparency -Entrepreneurial posture, leveraging lands near ports, airports and a ferry terminal for business opportunities involving lease arrangements

	Osoyoos Indian Band	Williams Lake First Nation	Nisga'a Lisims Government	Tsawwassen First Nation
<i>Accomplishments</i>	-Many businesses established; low unemployment; agreements with neighboring municipalities; considerable self-sufficiency	-Expressed early concern about territorial incursions in 1879 and to the prime minister (1910)	-Developed own-source revenues and negotiated agreements with other levels of government and other entities to deliver services, develop infrastructure, manage lands, and invested in business and economic development	-Attracted significant investments in TFN business and lands (including the Tsawwassen Mills project), generated employment opportunities for TFN members, upgrading of infrastructure and investment in culture and language
<i>Leadership style</i>	-Clarence Louie's long tenure as Chief, hard-driving work style, and focus on entrepreneurship	-Persistent expression of land and governance rights, and collaboration with other bands -Transparency in promulgating adopted laws and policies -Long tenure of Chief Sellars on Council and as Chief with a reconciliation mindset	-Several strong leaders (Calder, James, and Joseph Gosnell) led dedicated teams, and groomed successors. Since 1998, steady executive leadership of President Eva Clayton	-Strong community member engagement in governance. Kim Baird was Chief from 1999 to 2012 (six terms) and led negotiations to 2009 treaty, then succeeded by a new generation of younger TFN leadership

Source: Author.

governments and the communities they represented over many decades to meaningfully engage with Indigenous leaders. On the other hand, Indigenous communities have had to muster the resolve and resources required to launch court challenges and negotiate treaties, partnerships, and business deals. Likewise, obtaining community support required a great deal of communication, engagement, trust building, and conversation with community members to govern outside the *Indian Act* (Baird, 2011). Critics of Indigenous governments may focus on the slow pace of Nation-building and perhaps the monetization of their lands, rooted in Western precepts of private property. However, each Nation has moved forward with deliberate, strategic, and community-engaged processes which seek to further self-determination and to balance present needs with seven-generations thinking and the wellbeing of people, land, and non-humans. The relatively small size of each Nation's government means metering the efforts of elected leaders, staff, and community members so they can deal with much larger provincial, federal, municipal, and regional governments on numerous issues. Our cases show that each Nation has made significant progress on their multi-decade journey towards building sustainable governance and policy regimes, uniquely configured to and controlled by their own communities.

NOTES

1. On the commissions, see Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) and National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019). The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs was renamed Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development (2011–2015) under the Harper government. In 2015, the Trudeau government renamed it Indigenous and Northern Affairs and in 2017 divided it into two departments: Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) to work “collaboratively with partners to improve access to high quality services for First Nations, Inuit and Métis” and increase the independent delivery of services (ISC web site: <https://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada.html>, April 2, 2023); and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC) to renew “the Nation-to-Nation, Inuit-Crown, government-to-government relationship between Canada and First Nations, Inuit and Métis; modernize Government of Canada structures to enable Indigenous Peoples to build capacity and support their vision of self-determination and lead the Government of Canada's work in the North” (CIRNAC web site: <https://www.canada.ca/en/crown-indigenous-relations-northern-affairs.html>, April 2, 2023).
2. In BC, Indigenous Peoples are called First Nations. However, we use the term ‘Indigenous’ in this chapter to respect the connections that all Indigenous Peoples in Canada have with the land and their claims over them. This includes the particular histories and governance practices of Inuit and Metis communities and their pursuit of self-determination.

3. Examples include the Māori in New Zealand, those from the Maluku Islands in Indonesia, and the Haudenosaunee tradition spanning Canada and the United States (Beatley, 2022).

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7. Puerto Rico's independent community aqueducts: service delivery in a complex setting

Omar Pérez Figueroa and Nicola Ulibarri

INTRODUCTION

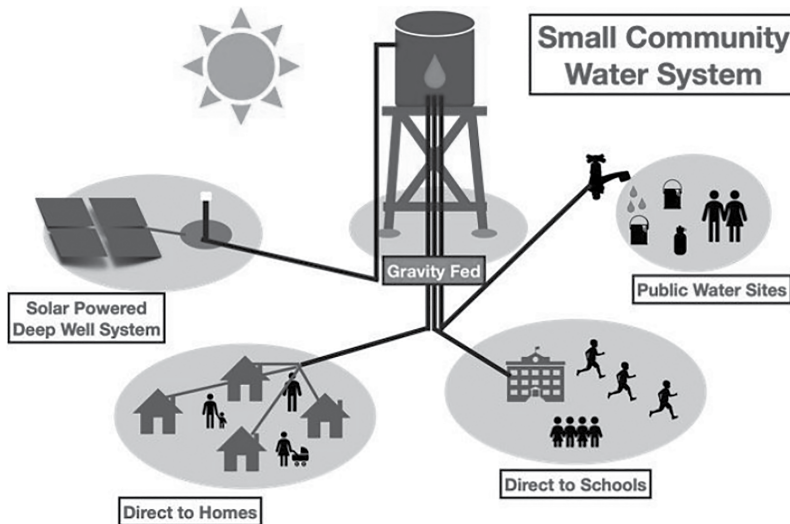
In their call to advance a theory of positive public administration (PPA), Douglas and colleagues (2021) seek to identify successful instances of public governance and uncover the behavioral and structural factors supporting them. These examples of PPA should be viewed as successful by the people implementing them and the communities they affect, should be robust over time, and can include examples of success and failure (Douglas et al., 2021). However, without a critical lens, PPA risks perpetuating traditions that reinforce status quo institutional systems (Flinders, 2023), creating a “revolution from above” (van Ostaijen and Jhagroe, 2022).

This chapter offers a PPA analysis that explicitly addresses the tendency of public administration to exclude marginalized voices and overlook colonial and racially unjust systems (Witt, 2011; McCandless and Blessett, 2022). Specifically, we aim to evaluate what success looks like for marginalized communities, as well as to interrogate the power embedded in definitional exercises by assessing how success is defined for different stakeholders working within these systems. To do so, we examine the case of small rural water systems in Puerto Rico, which are under-resourced, lack technically trained, professional staff, and operate in locations plagued by repeat disasters, yet provide drinking water for communities otherwise overlooked by the state. The chapter begins with an overview of community aqueducts in Puerto Rico, including their context, operation, and challenges. We then evaluate the ways these systems are “successful,” drawing on both top-down and bottom-up versions of success, as well as features that support those outcomes. We conclude with a discussion of lessons learned for public administration.

PUERTO RICO'S NON-PRASA AQUEDUCT SYSTEM

At the moment, Puerto Rico has 235 registered small rural water systems. These small drinking water systems are colloquially referred to as non-PRASA, because they fall outside the main water grid of the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Agency (PRASA). They are community-driven drinking water systems that emerged to provide water in rural parts of the island. In this chapter, we use the terms non-PRASA aqueduct system and community aqueduct interchangeably, with both referring comprehensively to the physical infrastructure and the organization that runs this infrastructure.

Figure 7.1 shows a schematic of the typical physical components of a non-PRASA aqueduct system. While aqueducts vary, most typically have a central water reservoir, connected to a form of physical-chemical treatment (filtering or chlorine), from which water is carried through plumes and/or pipes to houses, schools, churches, and public pick-up sites. Most of these systems obtain water from groundwater wells, but some obtain water from surface sources, including small creeks and rivers. Most operate with electricity from the grid, but they also can be powered by solar energy and/or by gravity.



Source: OSAN (2023).

Figure 7.1 Physical components of a community aqueduct

The operations of non-PRASA aqueduct systems are divided into physical components (e.g., operation and repairs of the reservoir, pipes, and plumes) and organizational components (e.g., who runs the aqueduct, who handles finances, how decisions are made). The physical operation of non-PRASA aqueducts often is conducted by volunteers, typically community residents who are served by the aqueduct, while some aqueducts with more financial resources hire external operators (Pérez Figueroa, 2022). Similarly, the organizational structures of community aqueducts can take many forms. Many systems have one person in charge of both the organizational and physical components, while others have an informal board of trustees in charge of managing both components. A few have a well-defined institutional structure that divides the physical and organizational management by position (e.g., president, operator, treasurer); these often have 501(c)(3) status (Pérez Figueroa, 2022).

Non-PRASAs operate in a very challenging context. First, non-PRASAs have faced decades of marginalization from and disregard by local and federal governments, operating with little to none of the technical and financial support that the PRASA water systems enjoy. Often, the individuals or groups operating non-PRASAs are low income, have little formal education, and lack technical training in how to operate these systems.

Second, the island's colonial status as a US territory also affects non-PRASA operations. For instance, in 2016, the US Congress passed the PROMESA Law, which established a Fiscal Oversight and Management Board (FOMB), a non-elected body of seven members locally referred to as *la Junta*. *La Junta* has nearly absolute powers over Puerto Rico's finances and can overturn local laws that may interfere with the implementation of fiscal austerity measures (Brusi and Godreau, 2019: 235). After reviewing an existing agreement between the non-PRASA aqueduct systems and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that exempted non-PRASAs from paying registration fees with the local natural resources agency, the FOMB overturned the agreement. Interviewees felt that the FOMB overturned the agreement with the rationale that the exemption meant fewer funds coming in to repay Puerto Rico's debt to the federal government, without paying attention to the non-PRASAs' ability to pay these fees.

Finally, Puerto Rico regularly faces large disasters. Since 2017, it has dealt with multiple Category 4 hurricanes, earthquakes, and a global pandemic. The rural non-PRASA communities tend to be especially vulnerable to these disasters, with federal and territorial recovery efforts focusing on more populated parts of the island (Roque et al., 2020).

Under these complicated circumstances, community aqueducts have been able to provide what are, in many instances, the only reliable sources of clean drinking water to communities that otherwise would not have access to potable

Table 7.1 Interviewees

Institutional actors	Community actors
Federal agency (n=3)	Non-PRASA operators (n=16)
Local government agency (n=4)	Grassroots organization (n=7)
Technical organization (n=2)	Community residents (n=3)
	Higher education organization (n=3)

Source: Author.

water. In addition to providing water, they also support their communities by offering other social services such as tutoring, jobs, and disaster relief. However, the majority of non-PRASAs operate with serious deficiencies, often failing to meet US Safe Drinking Water Act regulations, causing local governments and federal regulators to refer to the non-PRASA as decaying and damaged systems.

This chapter explores what “success” looks like in this challenging public service delivery context. Specifically, we ask: (1) what is success for non-PRASA aqueducts, and (2) how do they achieve these successes given their difficult settings? We also evaluate tensions between their notions of success with the broader goals articulated by the US and Puerto Rican regulatory systems. This case illuminates how non-PRASA systems demonstrate PPA, underscoring critical mechanisms to address the lack of water access to marginalized communities.

METHODS

This chapter draws on 38 unstructured interviews with key stakeholders involved with non-PRASA systems, including regulators, government officials, grassroots organization personnel, technical personnel, and residents who operate non-PRASA systems (Table 7.1). Interviews were conducted in 2021 and 2022 by the lead author. During this time, the author also worked as a volunteer with a local grassroots organization called Bosque Modelo de Puerto Rico (BMPR), which has been providing technical and capacity building support to non-PRASAs since 2016. BMPR work with community aqueducts includes providing workshops to support their decision making processes and grant programs to install solar panels. While volunteering with BMPR, the lead author designed a series of workshops on a variety of topics, such as learning to apply for relief funds and ways to build community participation. Interviewees were identified from workshop attendees, with snowball sampling to identify other diverse stakeholders collaborating with non-PRASA.

The interviews focused on three main topics: (1) barriers that community aqueducts face in achieving their objectives (e.g., improving the physical structure, becoming compliant with the Safe Drinking Water Act); (2) how diverse organizations and personnel interacted with non-PRASA systems; and (3) identifying the ways in interviewees defined success. In the following sections, we report our results. We start with how success is defined for non-PRASAs, and then turn to mechanisms that support that success.

ASSESSING SUCCESS FOR NON-PRASA AQUEDUCTS

To answer our first question, we focus on how success was defined by actors working with non-PRASA aqueducts. We found that interviewees tended to align into one of two visions of success: one group focused on compliance with drinking water regulations (especially the Safe Drinking Water Act or SDWA) and another focused on a broader set of community aqueduct activities.

The first group, composed mostly of institutional actors, viewed compliance as the key to success. Interviewees in this camp argued that compliance was vital in accessing resources that led to benefits like public health and access to clean drinking water. As one interviewee said, “Now they [aqueducts] know how important it is; if you comply, then you will receive the benefits, but if you are not complying, that will delay the process of obtaining assistance” (Local Agency #8). Other local government agency personnel mentioned how important technical assistance was in being able to comply with local and federal water regulations. These interviewees highlighted the link between compliance and public health. For example, one said, “Health is crucial. Having permission from the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources to be able to extract from the well is important. I think that in the long term and to guarantee the continuity of the service and ensuring that it is a quality service, they [non-PRASA] need to comply with the Puerto Rico Health Department.” Some local and federal agency interviewees voiced frustration with how compliance was not moving forward. “When I started working with community aqueducts, getting them in compliance took forever, it was very slow, I felt that it was not moving forward. Some community aqueducts did collect samples for the chemical test, but many did not” (Local Agency #7). Interviewees pointed out that it is hard to estimate which aqueducts are out of compliance, since an aqueduct might be both in compliance and out of compliance at different times in a given year. However, federal agencies estimate that around 40 percent of aqueducts – usually those that obtain their water from surface sources – are out of compliance at any given time. While most interviewees who held the compliance view of success came from institutional actors, some non-PRASA operators also highlighted the importance of compliance to be a successful aqueduct. For example, one community interviewee mentioned,

“We have aqueducts that measure the water extraction of each individual and charge for the water extraction as well. For those aqueducts, efficiency is key, and compliance can definitely affect it.”

The second group, composed mostly of community actors, tended to articulate a much broader definition of success. This group articulated success in the diverse public values that non-PRASAs provided, highlighting they are not only a water utility, but also provide other social services like tutoring and in-home assistance for the elderly. As one community operator shared, “We wear many hats for the communities we serve. We have to be psychologists, contractors, and even public health officials. I remember at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic that we went house by house delivering masks to the elderly, because no one had given them one” (Community Aqueduct #8). Similarly, in the aftermath of hurricanes Irma and Maria, the non-PRASAs served as centers for their communities’ recovery, becoming hubs for food, ice, water, electricity, and other resources. Communities further stated the pride they feel in managing their own water system. “Usually, what I have seen is great pride [in] community members of having their own aqueduct and not being connected to PRASA. I’ve seen communities that could be connected to PRASA fighting to keep their community aqueduct running. Those communities think that their water is better, and that PRASA water is not good for their health” (Local Agency #3).

Several interviewees highlighted the tensions between these two definitions of success. For instance, community actors felt that defining success solely as compliance meant that failure was inevitable for some non-PRASAs, as it was not feasible for all non-PRASA to be in compliance. As one interviewee noted, “Part of the SDWA established that aqueducts would need to pay retroactively for water they already extracted and that is just not going to happen [given non-PRASA’s limited financial resources]” (Community Aqueduct #6). Moreover, institutional actors acknowledged that while they appreciated the rich and vital services provided by non-PRASA, a focus on those secondary services sometimes made non-PRASA forget how important it is to be able to provide clean drinking water. “Sometimes we need to remind them, that we [government personnel] are a resource to help them to complete their main objective, as businesses that provide a service, but sometimes that service becomes secondary” (Federal Agency #11).

The two definitions of success also lead each group to focus on different parts of the aqueduct when identifying areas of improvement. The first group, which sees the goal as helping non-PRASA systems achieve compliance, prioritizes the physical components of the systems as a way of improving them. For example, if pipes are cleaner and better maintained, they are more likely to comply with federal and local water quality standards. The second group, which takes a broader view of success, prioritizes the organizational compo-

nent of the systems. These individuals see improving organizational elements (e.g., better fiscal management, more participation) as a way to improve the overall success of the non-PRASA system.

In sum, institutional actors tended to define success in a relatively narrower way than community actors. More specifically, institutional actors emphasized a more traditional view of success as achieving the core goal of providing a clean drinking water supply, while the community actors emphasized a more comprehensive view of success of upholding public values and providing bottom-up services. Among other tensions, these differing views of success have implications for how actors view uses of aqueduct improvement.

MECHANISMS SUPPORTING SUCCESS

To answer our second question, we evaluate specific mechanisms that enable or constrain the ability of non-PRASAs to be successful, both in terms of regulatory compliance and for providing other organizational and social services. We argue that several mechanisms serve as pathways, individually or in tandem, for non-PRASAs achieving “success.” These mechanisms include informality, flexible decision making configurations, and collaboration and community mobilization.

Informality

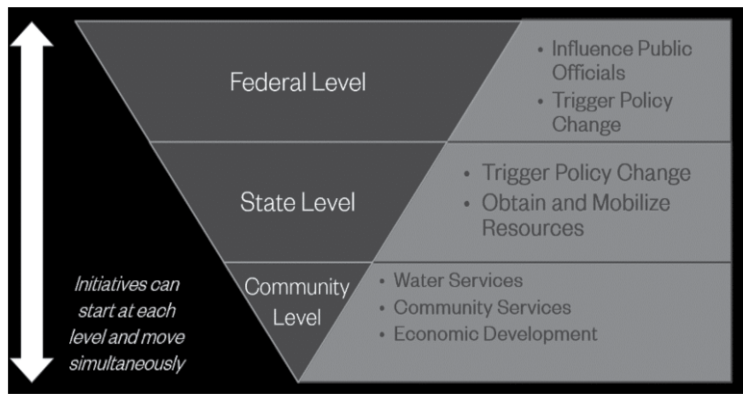
In urban planning, informality refers to strategies that emerge outside the realm of formal government control (Roy, 2012). Because not all community aqueducts are registered with the Puerto Rico Health Agency and/or the Puerto Rico Department of State, they have a partially (but not fully) informal status. The informal status comes from the fact that some entities recognize non-PRASAs, while others do not. For example, the Puerto Rico Electrical Power Authority considers non-PRASA to be structures that qualify to be connected to their electrical grid, but because non-PRASAs are not registered with other institutions, they cannot access other services (e.g., tax exemption, repair materials at lower cost).

Informality is sometimes treated as a limitation for organizations to achieve their objectives (e.g., Heintz, 2012), as it reduces the opportunities and resources available to them. For example, a technical organization told us, “I took a credit card with my own money to help the aqueduct register and obtain their DOM and SAM number.¹ Without these numbers they would not be able to apply to federal grants that would provide them with power generators” (Technical Organization #1). However, community interviewees viewed informality as an advantage for Puerto Rico’s small rural drinking water systems. Non-PRASAs’ informal status within Puerto Rico’s water institutions

provides a liminal space in which they can trigger political or environmental changes by choosing whether to engage with authorities. For example, some aqueducts have decided to register their electrical service, which gives them the legal status to apply for energy subsidies, but not to register their water intake to avoid taxation expenses. Having an informal status means that community aqueducts can decide whether to comply with specific tax mandates, especially if they deem it to their advantage. Some of these tax mandates enable them to access certain government funding, but paying taxes can hinder their capacity for other expenses, such as completing repairs.

The non-PRASA engagement structure (Figure 7.2) illuminates the role of informality in helping non-PRASA systems access resources on a day-to-day basis. In a form of emergent strategy (Brown, 2017), the non-PRASAs are engaging politically at different levels (macro, meso, micro) to trigger change. Emergent strategy is defined as a flexible and adaptive approach to decision making and planning that emerges organically in response to changing circumstances and conditions (Wielk and Standlee, 2021). It is characterized by its ability to respond to unexpected events and adapt to new information, rather than relying on a predetermined plan (Wielk and Standlee, 2021). In the context of community aqueducts, emergent strategy can be a valuable approach for non-PRASAs to garner resources and political support. As one community resident mentioned, “You have to play all the bases [and leave no leaves unturned]” (Community Aqueduct # 15). For instance, aqueduct systems organized under island-wide organizations can strategically lobby and negotiate with or engage government agencies at the community, state, or federal levels based on what types of resources or political change they desire. At the community level, they not only provide water services but also provide other social services, like helping the elderly, tutoring services, and sometimes providing paid work for the community. At the state level, they have the potential to trigger policy and access to resources. In the last few years, networks of community aqueducts lobbied for successful legislation that gives them a voice in decision making processes regarding drinking water infrastructure and that has provided them with financial relief (e.g., maintaining fixed prices of pipes and plumes under storm and hurricane conditions). At the federal level, non-PRASA can influence public officials and trigger policy change. Aqueduct systems have been in conversation with EPA officials for the past decade to identify how federal policies and guidelines can be amended to non-PRASA systems’ context. Additionally, non-PRASAs can engage at different levels collectively or individually and their initiatives can start at each level and move simultaneously if and when needed. For example, island wide non-PRASA organizations were working at the federal level on a concession for a water tax. When the overseeing FOMB overturned the decision,

the non-PRASAs shifted strategy to work with state representatives to submit a new policy.



Source: Pérez Figueroa (2022: 122).

Figure 7.2 Non-PRASA engagement structure

Community aqueducts’ multilevel engagement approach enables them to make use of informal water services (unpaid water extraction connections) and informal governance practices to supplement “gaps” left by the main water utility (PRASA) that often cannot provide water to these communities. Like other examples of small rural drinking water systems in the global South (Peloso and Morinville, 2014), access to drinking water from community aqueducts is achieved through a plethora of strategies and infrastructures. It is important to highlight that the ways in which people draw from informal practices for their water supply are related to the inequitable social relations that place some individuals in a better position to obtain water because of their class, gender, or ethnicity (Cleaver, 2009). For the purposes of success, informality both enables and constrains. On the one hand, it allows them to navigate complex political and institutional systems to obtain resources while, on the other, it can prevent them from obtaining resources that require a legal status.

Flexible Decision Making Configurations

Another factor supporting aqueduct success was their diverse and flexible decision making configurations. Aqueducts make decisions about selecting new members, collecting water bill payments, applying for funds, conducting repairs, and many other topics. Some aqueducts have all decisions made by the

president, while others have a governing board in which each member votes, and still others have defined roles aligning specific individuals with specific decisions. These decision making configurations do not depend on their status as “registered” community aqueducts. When non-PRASAs need a board of trustees with defined roles to qualify for non-profit status, those roles are sometimes in-name-only, filled for the purposes of completing the paperwork. As a consequence, non-PRASAs’ decision making configurations have more to do with the type of decision at hand, whether that is applying for funds or completing repairs, rather than with their registered or unregistered status. However, most non-PRASA use a consensus approach or democratic voting systems in which all participants vote.

Interviewees highlighted the importance of their organizational and decision making structure in being successful. As one noted, “Organizing is key in being successful, it shapes whether an aqueduct can be successful or not” (Community Aqueduct #6). While no single approach was seen as most effective, having multiple individuals working within a clearly defined organizational structure helped with dividing labor and making sure the aqueduct ran smoothly. Aqueducts operated solely by one person tended to struggle in implementing their goals, as they lacked supporting structures and processes. Clearly defined roles also ensured that when issues arose, a point person was available to solve them, or the collective knew how to solve them. For instance, interviewees talked about the role of organizational structure and clearly defined roles in being able to access recovery funds. “I knew there were some recovery funds available, and I did not wait for the board approval, I applied directly to them, I was the point person for this. They later thanked me even when they were mad because I did not consult with them” (Community Aqueduct #3). Other community actors talked about the role of having a board in being a successful aqueduct, especially in the board being able to audit financial processes and making sure that person in charge (typically the president) was running the aqueduct in a manner that aligned with their goals (whether that be providing drinking water or a broader suite of community services).

Because of the complex setting in which community aqueducts work, their organizational configurations are constantly changing. For example, when the series of cascading disasters (hurricane, earthquake, pandemic) forced large scale migration across the island and beyond, some communities that had a strong group support for the aqueduct suddenly found themselves without personnel. In other instances, people who had been running the aqueduct for 50 years suddenly decided to retire. With this turnover, community actors highlighted the importance of knowledge transfer in continuing the operation of non-PRASAs and guaranteeing water for future generations. Recognizing this challenge, some aqueducts have started employing local high school students

over the summer so they can learn how to operate the aqueduct. Aqueducts recognize that without being able to pass on organizational knowledge, they are bound to perish. As one interviewee aptly said, “I know that if we do not involve the young people in our community, we will disappear, but it is very hard to get them involved, sometimes they do not want to participate in anything aqueduct related” (Community Aqueduct #5).

It is worth noting that aqueducts’ decision making configurations shaped their recovery process after hurricane Maria (Pérez Figueroa and Roque, n.d.). For instance, some aqueducts in which the president took most of the decisions were able to access recovery funds more quickly, perhaps because they were not burdened by internal deliberations. However, these same aqueducts lacked the capacity to manage those relief funds effectively (e.g., taking too long to distribute them because of lack of a bank account to store the funds), suggesting a benefit for more distributed organizational configurations.

Robust yet flexible decision making structures help non-PRASA achieve both versions of success. Having well-defined roles and point persons helps the non-PRASA access critical resources for their operation while also staying accountable to the requirements of the SDWA. In addition, by embracing flexibility, adaptability, and innovation – being willing to update their organizational structure and processes to new external shocks – community aqueducts can effectively respond to complex and evolving challenges.

Collaboration and Community Mobilization

Aqueducts’ success also was supported by their ability to collaborate with the communities they served, other non-PRASAs, and the government. Many non-PRASA operators had worked in their communities for decades, building trusting relationships with residents and other organizations in their neighborhoods. Even when these operators had low levels of formal education, the relationships they built with the communities helped them keep the systems running and keep the community engaged in supporting the aqueduct’s operation.

Collaboration was especially important in helping them to recover after disasters like hurricanes or earthquakes. The aqueducts’ capacity to collaborate with their community networks and with outside partners helped them to locate and mobilize needed resources. For example, in the aftermath of a hurricane, one non-PRASA was able to recover quickly because they knew someone in the community who owned an excavator that they were able to use to clear away rubble and make repairs to the systems. This same aqueduct had ties to local faith-based organizations that helped them to channel essential goods to help them with their recovery.

Non-PRASA also coordinate across the island, via boundary spanning non-profits, in a form of polycentric arrangement (Carlisle and Gruby, 2019). At the moment there are two island-wide organizations that group many non-PRASA systems: Organización de Sistemas de Acueducto no PRASA (OSAN) and Asociación de Acueductos Comunitarios de Puerto Rico (AACPR). OSAN focuses on supporting aqueduct day-to-day practices, by sharing their experiences and resources. AACPR provides solar energy systems to community aqueducts and is supported by an Environmental Protection Agency grant. Both organizations have supporting aqueducts' capacity building as a main objective, aiming to improve their infrastructure and compliance. As discussed in the section on emergent strategy, these island-wide nonprofits have also helped non-PRASA engage in broader policymaking activities with Puerto Rican and federal officials.

Non-PRASA also increasingly have begun to collaborate with government officials, in response to growing willingness by the regulators to work jointly with the aqueducts. Over time, as regulatory agencies have learned more about the realities of non-PRASAs, they have shifted their engagement from more punitive to more collaborative approaches. Federal agency regulators told us that they originally had three ways of getting aqueducts to comply with the SDWA: (1) connecting them to the PRASA water grid, (2) convincing them to change their water sources from surface water to groundwater, which has less risk of contamination, and (3) auditing and lawsuits. Local agencies articulated similar tactics but admitted that sometimes it was very hard to explain to community aqueducts why compliance with regulations was advantageous for them, feeling that the community members only saw the hurdles to being compliant, like paying for water-quality tests.

As agencies have increasingly recognized the complexities that aqueducts face in achieving compliance, they are using more collaborative approaches. For example, the EPA has created the "circuit riders" approach, in which they provide grants to technical organizations or grassroots entities to provide day-to-day support to small rural water systems. Other ways regulators are moving away from strictly pursuing audits and lawsuits is to visit community members and have conversations to identify needs and opportunities that would get them in compliance, as well as developing a multisectoral board that brings together and connects all agencies and efforts working with community aqueducts. While these efforts represent a change from the old punitive approach, without follow up, coordination, and clear objectives, these efforts will continue to disappear.

Through these collaborative activities – whether partnering with their local communities, coordinating via island-wide organizations, or collaborating with regulatory authorities – non-PRASA have been able to increase their capacity to provide diverse services and become more "successful."

Collaboration enables non-PRASA to be more compliant with drinking water regulations, as it helps them to learn and share best practices for managing drinking water as well as access technologies (like solar energy) that provide a more reliable supply. It also helps them to access diverse resources to aid in recovery and provide services to their communities. Finally, it enables them to aggregate their collective voice to reshape how public administrators and policymakers interact with non-PRASA so they are able to work in a more supportive system.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Success means different things for different actors engaged in the community aqueducts. For many aqueducts and their community stakeholders, being successful means being able to operate their systems, provide water (even if the water violates public health regulations or if the revenue from water bills is not enough to cover operational costs), and provide a broader suite of services to their rural, poorly resourced communities. In contrast, stakeholders from outside these communities, such as regulators and local government officials, define success as complying with the Safe Drinking Water and Clean Water Act regulations, which they see as necessary to protect public health and guarantee the future operations of non-PRASA.

The fact that the non-PRASAs' definition of success is not shared by regulators and policymakers at higher levels creates challenges. In particular, many small water rural systems are reluctant to upgrade their systems or adopt new governance approaches because of the cost and technical burden it entails. Besides the capacity barriers, this reluctance comes in part from decades of marginalization and oppression from local government and federal agencies, as they do not feel empowered to embrace and achieve their own definition of success. Without a change in attitude from stakeholders that seek to support aqueducts (governments and NGOs), we risk perpetuating the same attitudes that have hindered improvement of the aqueducts' capacity. Some regulators are beginning to recognize the limitations of a purely punitive approach that focuses on bringing non-PRASA into compliance and punishing them when they fail, a shift that has led them to focus more on capacity-building and helping non-PRASA navigate the complex (and costly) regulatory system. However, this was not a universal mindset among our institutional interviewees, with many still focused on compliance as success and adopting a narrower set of tools (monitoring and fines) to steer non-PRASA in that direction.

At the same time, the non-PRASA are engaging in diverse activities that support their broader view of success. They employ diverse and flexible operating structures and decision making approaches, collaborate within and outside their communities, and use their partially informal status to strate-

gically choose when they want to engage with government. Together, these approaches enable them to access resources and build operating capacity, creating a resilient water supply and enabling faster recovery from disasters. In particular, by organizing into broader island-wide networks, non-PRASA have been able to both share best practices among themselves (effectively amplifying their individual capacity) and have a unified voice when interfacing with policymakers and administrators.

In considering non-PRASAs as an instance of PPA, this case highlights the importance of recognizing multiple definitions of success and the power dynamics that emerge when deciding whether a case is “positive.” Recognizing and amplifying a bottom-up definition of success may be particularly critical in settings with large power imbalances, such as those with ongoing colonial legacies. Identifying these multiple definitions also sheds light on challenges that arise when other stakeholders in a network do not share the same understanding of success. This case also highlights the fact that PPA can be achieved by small, very poorly resourced organizations operating in complex and marginal settings. The non-PRASA continue to operate their systems in spite of the disasters and social challenges they face. Their continual work to improve their compliance, adapt their decision making processes, and provide diverse community services will have a multiplying effect in improving water management and quality and helping their communities become more resilient to future climate change effects.

NOTE

1. These refer to identification numbers needed for applying for federal grants (i.e., through SAM.gov).

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8. Positive public administration for sustainable development: the crucial role of municipalities in driving success

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INTRODUCTION

As the quest for sustainable development continues, scholars have pointed to a frequently apparent goal-action gap in achieving related public aims, including curtailing greenhouse gases to achieve climate action targets (e.g., United Nations Environment Programme, 2022). While public and academic debates often focus on the drama of international negotiations (amongst others on the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs)¹ and the development of national politics, the implementation of actions for sustainable development needs to happen locally “on the ground.” Indeed, Elinor Ostrom insisted that impactful bottom-up action at lower governance levels and by a range of actors crucially contributes to achieving sustainability goals (Ostrom, 1990, 2005, 2010; see also Dimand and Neshkova, Chapter 22 in this volume for a discussion of green public procurement at the local government level). This chapter therefore focuses on the role of municipal administrations (i.e., the administrations of towns, cities, and villages) in driving sustainable development through organization and action in order to gauge what success in terms of positive public administration (PPA) looks like at this (in many jurisdictions) lowest governance level. It demonstrates what PPA looks like in municipalities, focusing on programmatic, process, and political elements (see de la Porte et al., 2022). Many municipalities have already become active, both individually (e.g., Otto et al., 2021; Kern, 2019; Bulkeley, 2013; Schoenefeld et al., 2023) and sometimes through networks such as the Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, which “brings together local and regional authorities willing to

engage in local climate action and sustainable energy policy” (see Fünfgeld, 2015 for additional examples).²

In Germany, our focus area in this chapter, municipalities enjoy a constitutional guarantee of self-governance, and they are responsible for all “affairs/requirements of the local community.”³ The guarantee includes the right to raise local taxes and to receive (financial) means from higher levels to fulfill their duties. German municipalities are thus both receivers of EU, national, and (sub-national) state-level policymaking (legal frameworks, financial resources, fiscal means, etc.), and, at the same time, active policymakers themselves. While they face a range of legal, political, and other constraints, they also typically have degrees of freedom in developing innovative solutions, such as actions oriented toward the SDGs, including climate action and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (see Ruge and Ritgen, 2021). We depart from the assumption that the administration of “wicked problems” (see Rittel and Webber, 1973), among them climate change, requires more than the municipal government halls and offices for effective governance. Therefore, our view of PPA in municipalities includes how the administration works in concert with other societal actors, including civil society, academia, or the private sector, to achieve key sustainability aims.

Against this background, this chapter focuses on two cases of PPA for sustainability, namely climate policymaking in the German city of Darmstadt and networked approaches to sustainable development in the so-called *KommunalHub*, an innovative small-scale network of mid-sized municipalities and scientists in central Germany. To do so, the chapter draws on participant observation, as well as document analysis, to unpack rich stories of what success in public administration for sustainability looks like in the real world. Participant observation is particularly suited to gain deep knowledge of people’s actions in trust-based settings. It allows the researcher to be a part of the field of interest and was originally developed as an ethnographic method to understand other cultures and other communities. In the field and as an author team, we continuously reflected on the results to ensure that they remained interpersonally understandable and to enable convincing process tracing (see Vennesson, 2008: 238). In some instances, we additionally verified our findings through expert interviews. Following the case studies in the second section, the third section presents an analysis, where we link aspects that we perceived as positive as participant observers with the emerging literature on PPA, demonstrating that municipalities can and do produce positive outcomes, driving the transition towards sustainability by leading decisions, creating new networks, and reconfiguring ways of working to address today’s challenges. The final section concludes and highlights opportunities for future conceptual development and corresponding empirical exploration.

CASE STUDIES

This section presents two cases of municipal sustainability policy making in Germany: first, the city of Darmstadt with its leading “*Top priority for climate action*”⁴ decision, considering its genesis, contextual factors, and leading actors in order to unpack the subsequent process of action and co-production among public actors, academia, civil society, and the private sector for addressing the sustainability of buildings and neighborhoods. Second, we explore the so-called *KommunalHub* (municipal hub), an innovative, dynamic network of mayors from the mid-sized German cities of Eltville and Eschwege, as well as academia, who solve problems collaboratively and engage with other actors in a “Learning Lab” and the “Creative Bureaucracy Festival” to spread usable knowledge. In each case, we explore how the municipalities collaborate with the above-mentioned actors to restructure the decision process to drive problem-definition and produce innovative solutions.

Case 1: Darmstadt (Top Priority for Climate Action)

The SDGs, the climate goals and, in particular, greenhouse gas neutrality, as defined in the 2015 Paris Agreement,⁵ have become guiding principles for policymaking in Germany. Federal law addresses the implementation of greenhouse gas neutrality until 2045 (foremost the National Climate Action Law of May 2021, which was tightened because of a Constitutional Court ruling in March 2021 [1BvR 2656/18]). Cities and municipalities play a crucial role in the implementation of this target. As Ban Ki-moon, then the United Nations Secretary-General, highlighted in 2012: “our struggle for global sustainability will be lost or won in cities.” Case 1 correspondingly demonstrates how different actors related to municipal administration work in order to cope with the multiple challenges of climate change and to achieve carbon neutrality in time.

Compared to the national level, many German municipalities have more ambitious timetables to reach greenhouse gas neutrality (for an overview of municipal climate ambition in Germany, see Otto et al., 2021). The German city of Darmstadt (situated in the Rhine-Main area in Germany, with approximately 160,000 inhabitants, considerable population increases up to 2023, and a recurrent housing shortage) established its carbon neutrality vision in September 2019, aiming to reach CO₂ neutrality in the municipality’s sphere of influence by 2035, ten years before the German federal government⁶ and fifteen years earlier than the EU⁷ aim to be greenhouse gas neutral – the *Top Priority Decision*. This decision was grounded in a (local) *Agenda 21 process*⁸ that had initiated climate action in 2013. Civil society and action groups began to contribute to the process since then. Since 2018/2019, local action groups

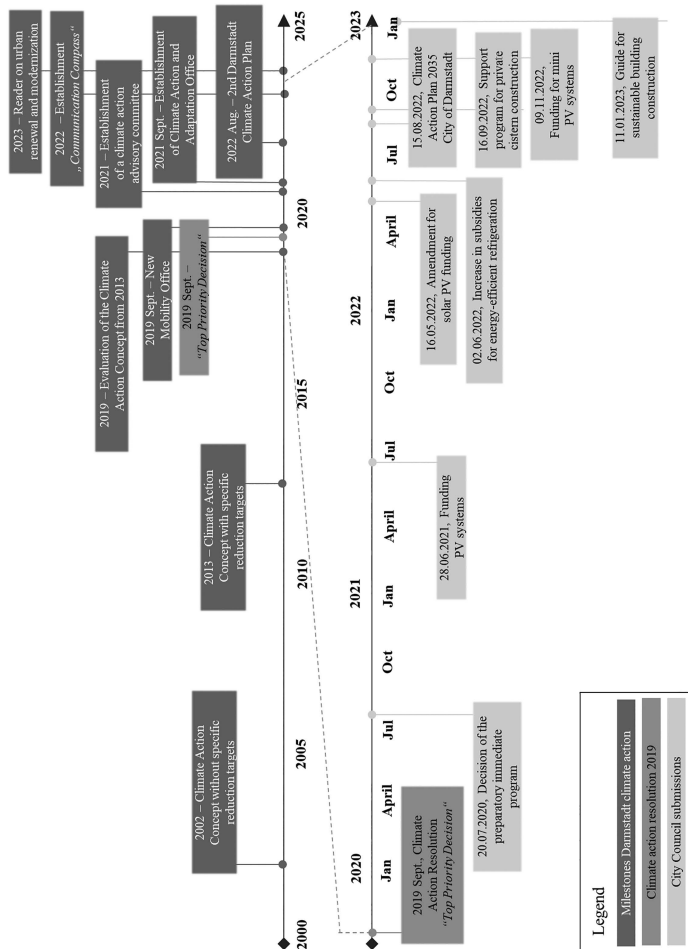
have gained additional strength and put more pressure on the political/administrative institutions as heat spells, droughts, and severe floods occurred not only in other parts of the world, but also in central Germany. These high-impact events highlighted the growing urgency of fighting climate catastrophes to a broader public constituency. There is general agreement among social and political actors in Darmstadt that civil society actions,⁹ namely the so-called “Klimaentscheid Darmstadt” (a civil society organization campaigning for a city-wide referendum on climate action), significantly influenced the *Top Priority Decision*.

Building on the *Top Priority Decision*, additional resolutions were adopted. It was decided, for example, that all future administrative activities and projects must be assessed with a regard to their respective CO₂ impact.¹⁰ This decision is binding for the whole administration, the local parliament, and all municipal subsidiary companies. It is not binding for private actors in Darmstadt. One major field of action of the *Top Priority Decision* concerns the modernization and refurbishment of buildings. We take this action arena to illustrate different degrees of administrative involvement and cooperation with other actors beyond the administration in order to achieve CO₂ neutrality. Figure 8.1 provides an overview of the development of the case over time (for an additional review of climate policy innovation and development in the City of Darmstadt, see Behr, Schoenefeld, and Frommer, 2023).

Three subcases from Darmstadt illustrate the impact of the *Top Priority Decision* on local actors (Figure 8.1) and present outcomes related to PPA in the field of carbon neutrality: first, activities of the municipal construction and maintenance company; second, activities of the municipal housing company; and third, activities of the private landlords’ association. Figure 8.2 depicts the actors involved in the case, as well as their relationships.

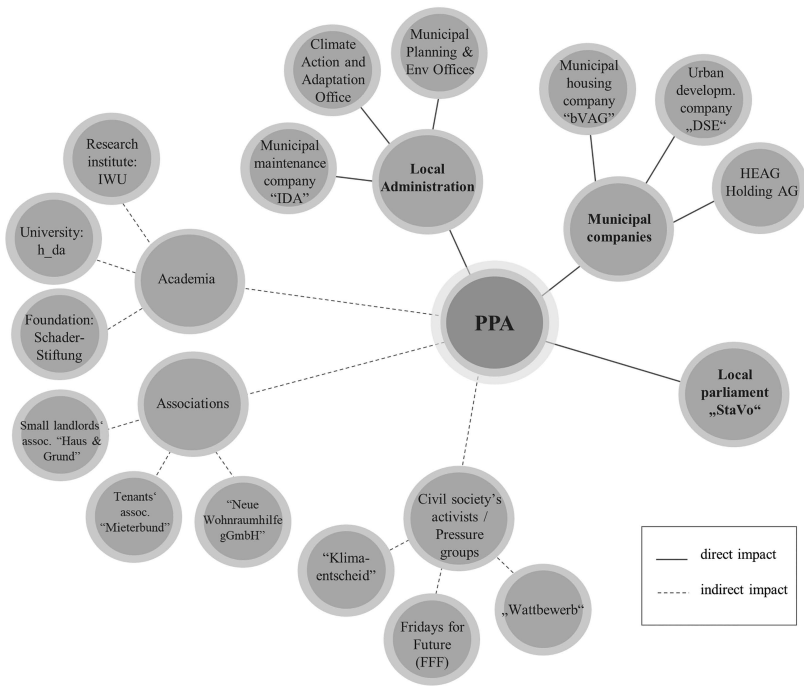
Subcase 1: the sustainable construction guidelines (public administration seeks cooperation with academia)

One of the major administrative actors in charge of building modernization (and construction) is the municipal construction, maintenance, and management company (Eigenbetrieb Immobilienmanagement der Wissenschaftsstadt Darmstadt, IDA). The IDA is in charge of all municipal buildings, including schools, kindergartens, fire stations, hospitals, museums and so on. Based on the *Top Priority Decision*, the IDA received a mayoral mandate to quickly define targets, criteria, and priorities and to estimate the necessary resources for implementation. In trustful cooperation with the experts from the (research) Institute for Housing and Environment (IWU),¹¹ recommendations for future IDA projects were developed. In so doing, the IDA also drew on the experience of the neighboring City of Frankfurt’s Energy Department, which had



Source: Author.

Figure 8.1 The development of climate action in the city of Darmstadt, Germany



Source: Author.

Figure 8.2 *The actors of climate action in the city of Darmstadt, Germany*

ample experience in ambitious building modernization. The recommendations soon became a working basis for IDA's projects.

While elaborating the recommendations, it became clear that other parts of the municipal administration and subsidiaries may benefit from them, too. It was suggested that the municipal holding company (HEAG Holding AG) should lead the process going forward. Yet, organizing the adaptation and enhancement of the recommendations as well as the application to other parts of the municipal administration and subsidiaries took until February 2023, when the municipal council made the guidelines a binding document.¹²

Subcase 2: the communication compass for municipal housing modernization (academia initiates cooperation among public entities and civil society)

Within the framework of the publicly funded, transdisciplinary project “Systems Innovation for Sustainable Development – s:ne,”¹³ the *Top Priority Decision* became an opportunity for academia through the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences (h_da), the IWU, and the Schader Foundation, which aims to connect practice and academia, to support the municipal housing company (bauverein AG) in improving its stakeholder communication of building modernization activities. The housing company and academia worked on transparent modernization by creating a *Communication Compass* (see Behr, Schoenefeld, and Spieker, 2023), which may be understood as a set of guidelines for successful communication processes that accompany building modernization. The tenant association (Mieterbund), the small landlord association (Haus und Grund e.V.) and an organization that provides housing for socially disadvantaged individuals (Neue Wohnraumhilfe gGmbH)¹⁴ supported and accompanied this collaboration by providing ideas, input, and feedback along the way.

The (energetic) modernization of rental housing offers high potential for CO₂ reduction. Construction and buildings account for around one third of all CO₂ emissions in Germany (German Federal Environment Agency, 2020). Modernization investments often lead to subsequent rent increases. Rents in Darmstadt and the whole Rhine-Main region in central Germany are very high, producing significant housing costs. Therefore, the tenant association, the small landlord association, and the Neue Wohnraumhilfe GmbH closely observe housing modernization planning. The municipal housing company (acting on behalf of the city of Darmstadt) is politically obliged to consider ecological and social aspects (thus key aspects of sustainability) when modernizing its building stock. The company’s philosophy states among other goals: climate action and care for customer needs while improving the housing stock and associated services.

During this process, academia’s benefit materialized in its perceived “neutrality,” that is, the absence of a direct financial interest in the modernization process or other sources of partiality, providing a position as a suitable moderator. Doing so enabled the housing company and the tenant representative to speak and collaborate with one another at an early stage rather than interacting through courts, which had been their usual way to interact. Academia stressed the outcome, that is, the *Communication Compass*, as a means to foreground communication besides technical and social aspects of modernization, thus supporting and legitimizing the company’s head communication officer in introducing new targets and additional work for the staff. It remains to be seen

to what extent the municipal housing company's staff use the *Communication Compass* in their daily work.

Subcase 3: the *Top Priority Decision* and its outreach to private homeowners

In the context of the same project (see above), the *Top Priority Decision* also served as a starting point for a series of workshops on activating the climate action potential of existing buildings. In this way, the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences, the IWU, and the Schader Foundation initiated a process of learning and awareness-raising together with representatives from various offices of the municipal administration, from various municipal companies, and from civil society organizations (representatives of associations for tenants and private homeowners). Besides communication (see above), a focus on embodied energy and the associated embodied greenhouse gas emissions related to buildings, their modernization and construction (for a more detailed discussion of the outcomes, see Stein, 2022; Stein et al., 2023), emerged in the process. It became clear that municipal actors, unlike private actors, are not only bound to municipal decisions, but also strive to anticipate upcoming national and European Union legislation as early as possible. In this context, the pioneering role of municipal (and other public) actors was emphasized repeatedly. Private homeowners are often laypeople in the field of construction and benefit from good examples, pilot projects and schemes as well as associated experiences and best practices.

Case 2: the *KommunalHub*

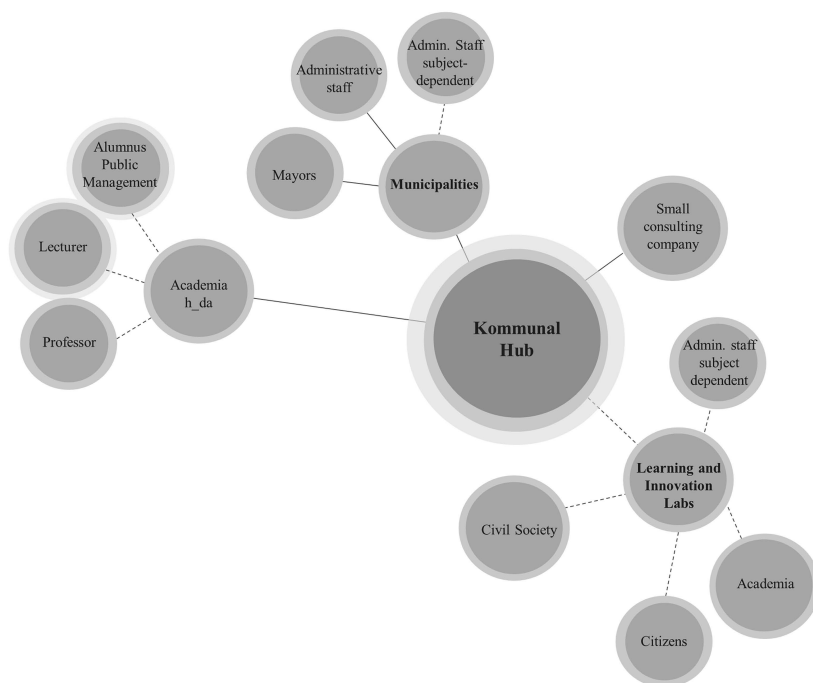
The *KommunalHub* is an informal network of municipal administrators and scientists, who meet regularly for one-hour meetings via video call to discuss topics of mutual interest with a view to advancing sustainability. The meetings do not have a set agenda and their topics arise from the current needs of practice and develop through dialogue. A small group of two creative bureaucrats and two mayors from the towns of Eltville¹⁵ and Eschwege¹⁶ in the German federal state of Hessen invented and initiated the format after they had met by chance at the Creative Bureaucracy Festival¹⁷ in Berlin in 2018. The founders agreed that they needed significantly more exchange and that innovative ideas emerge from spending time together. In the words of one participant: “we have to spend more time together. That’s how the idea of a regular municipal conversation group in the format of a ‘fireside chat’ emerged.”

The network is not very formalized and builds on voluntary participation. The two participating municipalities, which were highlighted for successful climate management (Eltville – p. 193) and innovative personnel development (Eschwege – p. 235) in a recent municipal report by the Hessian Court of

Auditors (Hessischer Rechnungshof, 2023), do not see themselves in competition with one another. The core participants include seven people and it is therefore relatively small and flexibly expanded by municipal administrative staff, depending on the topic. This way of operating overcomes hierarchies to some extent and generates feasible solutions that emerge from a creative format. After its creation, the network met about every two weeks for two years. In 2020, the *KommunalHub* expanded to incorporate a professor of public management from the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences.¹⁸ Once again, more or less random encounters at the Creative Bureaucracy Festival in 2019 and at the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences in 2020 sparked this connection. In 2022, the group experimented with meeting every four weeks, but doing so turned out to be too little, especially when someone missed a meeting. The network had thus been operational for more than three years at the time of this writing.

The *KommunalHub* relies on participants with high public service motivation, positive energy, curiosity, an openness to experiment, and who are equipped with the willingness and the wherewithal to act. In short: they all share a common mindset, which is directly related to the central elements of Theory U according to Otto Scharmer (2009): “curiosity (open mind), compassion (open heart), and courage (open will).” The participants share a common purpose, namely, to create public value, to share knowledge and to learn with and from each other for a sustainable future society. This commitment arose from the need for an easily accessible format for exchange and collaboration among decision-makers of different municipalities, as well as between municipal decision-makers and academia in a transdisciplinary manner. The informal network transcends boundaries between academia and municipal practice, fosters mutual understanding, and therefore promotes transdisciplinary collaboration. The *KommunalHub* fills an organizational gap that exists in the public sector and in society in times of transformation, regardless of the topic (Edel et al., 2024). It is therefore a substantial and sustainable “social innovation.” In the words of one participant: “we want to explore new ways and create networks. We depend on the best available knowledge. It is important to leave the silos and venture beyond the trodden paths by seeking cooperation with science and sharing in networks.” In times of shrinking budgets and increasing challenges, local authorities struggle to carry out their tasks. The pressure for new solutions and cooperation is increasing. This suggests a growing impact and contribution of the format for public administration in the near future (figure 8.3 depicts the actors of the case and their relationships).

Trust and a high commitment to participate in the regular meetings count among the foundations of the network. As one participant put it, it is important to “not read in the next day’s papers what I’ve said here,” that is, the application of Chatham House rules. The *KommunalHub* therefore provides



Source: Author.

Figure 8.3 The *KommunalHub* network

a protected space for open exchange to discuss issues and to develop new solutions. In the everyday business of the mayors, there is often too little time for “free thinking” and the fixed appointments mean that everyone benefits from a set time for open and creative thinking as a part of their diaries. The high frequency of the meetings every two weeks means that pressing issues can be discussed and addressed at an early stage. A former spokesman of the German Association of Towns and Municipalities moderates the meetings.

With a view to the content of the meetings, municipal decision-makers support each other in the *KommunalHub* to address their specific challenges of sustainable development, such as sustainable urban development, strengthening democracy, or sustainable human resources policy in the public sector. The municipalities describe mission statements, challenges, needs, or requirements and discuss them in the sessions of the *KommunalHub*. In a pilot phase, experts from public administration, the university, and the public sector collaborated on selected projects. For example, the *KommunalHub* developed and imple-

mented the project “Green Oasis in Eltville – Children Let Their City Bloom,” which was based on a joint learning lab of public management university students and the city of Eltville. The students addressed the question: “how can sustainable urban development become tangible?” For this purpose, a centrally located parking lot in Eltville was closed to cars on a weekend in summer 2022 to make room for new ideas for use. The university students in turn developed sustainable prototype plant boxes with construction and care instructions, which kindergarten children from Eltville adapted. With their self-designed and planted boxes, they transformed the parking lot into a temporary pop-up garden.

In so doing, they demonstrated how to design and use public space in a new and different way. The weekend gave people from the city and the region an idea of how green oases can be created in the middle of urban space. The campaign also brought even the youngest children into contact with ideas on sustainability and urban development. The students worked hand in hand with the city’s communication, green spaces, and kindergarten departments. To do so, staff from the municipal administration and the university students appointed two project leaders, namely one from the municipality and one from the students, who collaborated as a management tandem. This way of working allowed the municipalities to contribute to the qualification of junior staff. Students therefore collaborated with administrative practitioners on concrete projects, partaking in problem-solving and implementation. In this way, the students and the administrative staff participated in transdisciplinary research, were introduced to creative problem-solving strategies, and were thus empowered to help shape the future in terms of sustainable development.

One additional focus of the *KommunalHub* consists in training the next generation of administrative leaders. Because a significant proportion of employees in German public administration – including those in management positions – will retire in the next ten years, the need is high and the pressure to act is increasing noticeably. While the German federal government and also the German federal state of Hessen enjoy a competitive advantage in attracting applicants, the municipalities in particular will likely suffer from significant personnel and skills shortages.¹⁹ The Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences aims to train future-ready public managers who understand and shape the transformation of our society.²⁰ Students are involved in problem solving and implementation. In this way, they participate in transdisciplinary research, learn creative problem-solving strategies and thus help shape the future in terms of sustainable development. As one administrator commented: “we need the input from and the contact with young people at the municipal level and want to inspire them.”

Building on such successes, additional *KommunalHubs* are being launched, initiated either by the university or at the request of public managers from

municipalities near the university. The numbers of inquiries are increasing, and so is the range of topics. This scaling out demonstrates that the idea is not confined to a certain place or set of individuals and may also be used elsewhere.

CASE ANALYSIS: POSITIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

This chapter departed from the premise that the two case studies contain significant elements of PPA. It builds on Flinders (2023), who argues in the PPA tradition that a particular focus on positive elements of administration does not imply blindness to the challenges that public administration may face. Therefore, we analyze the cases with a view to positive elements, but also remain cognizant of the challenges that emerged while the cases unfolded. In so doing, we distill key insights from each case and then connect these with the emerging literature on PPA, especially those aspects relating to *programmatic success*, meaning approaches to create public value and outcomes, *process success*, meaning appropriate approaches in the context, involvement of stakeholders and adequate means and plans, as well as *political success*, referring to joint values, support, and enhanced reputations (de la Porte et al., 2022). Table 8.1 summarizes our insights from both cases, which this section discusses in greater detail below.

Programmatic Success

Especially the Darmstadt case contains a range of concrete decisions and plans that enabled action towards the sustainable development of the building stock. Likewise, the *KommunalHub* opened a space for experimentation in project-driven and focused ways. The possibilities to advance programming at this local governance level emerged in part from the guaranteed right to self-administration among German municipalities (see Ruge and Ritgen, 2021). As Ruge and Ritgen (2021: 139) highlight, “[b]ased on their traditional roots of the early nineteenth century, the modern communal administration and local self-government contribute significantly to the quality of public service delivery and to legitimation acceptance of public administration in general.” The German federal, constitutional order allows space for experimenting with all kinds of new forms of cooperation, communication, and processes and therefore developing innovations that can be tested at the local level and which may later diffuse (see Jordan and Huitema, 2014; Schoenefeld et al., 2022).

Both the case of Darmstadt and the *KommunalHub* thus aim to advance the key values of sustainability, which refers to ways of thinking and acting that enable “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of

future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland and Khalid, 1987). These values have more recently been codified as part of the SDGs, and they have also found expression in Germany in a Constitutional Court ruling (BVerfGE 29.04. 2021), which found the German Federal Climate Change Act of 2019 unconstitutional due to postponing greenhouse gas reduction too far into the future. Building on such thinking, scholars have recognized the key role of a “mission-oriented public administration” in advancing sustainable development (see Meuleman, 2021; Mazzucato, 2018) – ideas that emerged in both cases and which therefore embody positive elements. That said, what we describe above and list in Table 8.1 does not cover all actors (e.g., the private sector in Darmstadt is not addressed explicitly, though included more informally) and therefore the extent to which they generate meaningful and enduring change beyond policy outputs, and the extent to which these approaches diffuse into other parts of the municipal community, remains the stuff of future research and debate.

Process Success

Thinking and working in purposeful programs and projects with a clear focus on goals (see the previous section) does not sit easily with the classic, process-oriented approach of German public administration. The advent of new and complex governance and policy challenges, which reach all the way to the local level, drives the need for new forms of cooperation between academia and administrative practice. The aims are to overcome boundaries, learn with and from each other and to advance together by “teaching-silos-to-dance” (Niestroy and Meuleman, 2016; Lass-Lennecke, 2022: 18). Doing so is enormously important for solving the complex and pressing problems of the twenty-first century. Many public administrations in Germany struggle with their voluminous tasks, suffer from a shortage of skilled staff, lag behind on digitalization, and feel the restraining effects of increasing bureaucratization. In sum, municipal actors find themselves under enormous pressure to act and to handle the “wicked problems” (Rittel and Webber, 1973) of sustainable development.

In times of increasing uncertainty and complexity (a VUCA-world, see Mack et al., 2016), the hierarchical governance style with its clear and fixed division of tasks has quickly reached its limits (Meuleman, 2021). The public sector is widely expected to provide creative, entrepreneurial, and innovative impulses. Organizational and cultural transformation processes with regard to more agile forms of work and management, modern leadership models, and additional skill sets are required. The ability to respond appropriately to challenges and to develop new solutions is becoming essential at all levels and is not sufficiently developed or institutionalized in public administrations in

Table 8.1 *Municipal PPA for sustainability*

	Dimension of policy success	Key elements of positivity	Potential caveats
Case 1 (Darmstadt)	Programmatic success: purposeful and valued action	2002/2023: climate action concepts without and then with specific reduction targets 2019: <i>Top Priority Decision</i> for climate action 2020 decision that all future activities and projects must assess CO ₂ impacts where the city government has influence City-wide guidelines for sustainable building and modernization of municipal buildings published in 2023	Decisions not binding for the private sector Some actors argue that they are not ambitious enough Closed networks may emerge?
	Process success: thoughtful and effective policymaking practices	2022 Climate Action Plan: influence beyond the city government, including many other actors (purposeful network creation) Implementing demands from citizen initiatives (uptake in politics) A clear administrative mandate as a good basis for straightforward cooperation between administration and academia Administration needs political legitimization, including financial resources, for prioritizing CO ₂ -neutral modernization activities The political and the administrative levels cross-fertilize each other: political decisions justify and enable administrative action Single administrative units (e.g., IDA) can start transformative work, while an overall municipal roll-out, i.e., the application for all municipal units, requires the political legitimization with time-consuming negotiation processes between the different units Administration benefits from cooperation and co-production with academia for sustainable development Administration trusts in academia's "neutrality" where units (here housing company) need to cooperate with adverse actors (such as tenants, press media etc.) Academia is able to initiate cooperation processes between opposing actors Academia can support individual actors while they try to implement new activities to the staff – first seen as extra work Consensus that the building sector remains a major challenge with a view to CO ₂ neutrality; focus on life cycle analysis and more emphasis + action on these topics Academia's contribution: information and awareness-raising activities Private promotor ("translator") for advocating the municipal agenda, i.e., the <i>Top Priority Decision</i> and its implications The municipal construction and maintenance company (IDA) begins cooperation with scientists and the City of Frankfurt to advance building modernization with a view to energy efficiency Science-driven research project brings together administration representatives, the municipal housing company, civil society, and interest groups (tenants' and landlords' associations) to co-create solutions for modernizations of the municipal housing stock as well as the assessment of embodied emissions (co-creation) The private sector takes a particular insight in embodied emissions and finds an early learning opportunity in various workshops Entrepreneurial individuals who take things forward/virtue/people and institutions working together for a common goal	

Dimension of policy success	Key elements of positivity	Potential caveats
Case 2 (<i>KommunalHub</i>)	Creation of a common purpose (sharing, knowledge, sustainable future) Mindset: curiosity, compassion, courage (see Theory U, Schamer, 2009) Concrete, local policy experiments to test sustainability transformations in particular cases Starting with sustainability, other topics, such as democracy and the shortage of skilled workers, have been added Cooperation has deepened: at the beginning exchange, creativity, then more and more “action” Collaboration across sectors As a result of the Creative Bureauacy Festival, the platform <i>KommunalHub</i> was created, bringing together administrators, scientists, and external experts (focus sustainable development) Trust develops. A protected space for frank exchange Focus on collaboration; participating municipalities do not see each other in competition Openness to new actors – in 2020 the network as expanded to include the Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences	Open entry is not always possible/ requires consent from all participants? Not open to everyone ... joining by chance?
Political success: many winners, firm support, and reputational benefits	Participants benefit: time for “free thinking” beyond daily business routines Creation of a space for the emergence of innovation: regular meetings, continuous exchange. “Small-scale time management” Meeting the next generation of administrators – contacts and exchange between experienced administrators and university students, who are the next generation of administrators (joint learning labs) Municipalities contribute directly to the training of future staff Continuous, durable collaboration within the <i>KommunalHub</i>	

Source: Own compilation; PPA categories from de la Porte et al (2022).

Germany (Seibel, 2016). Responding to this need, the *KommunalHub* aimed to extend the existing governance logic by a new form of collaboration as a network, aiming at “[p]artnerships, collaborative learning, co-creation for innovation, informal arrangements, trust-based, harmony, communication as dialogue, process management, diplomacy, mutual dependence, mutual gains approach, consensus, voluntary agreements, covenant” (Meuleman, 2021: 11). As a result, a hybrid, networked organizational form began to emerge.

At the municipal level, the small scale of governance means that people tend to know each other personally and interact repeatedly in different settings and sometimes roles. Both cases revealed the importance of positive personal relationships in enabling collaboration and driving action. While in the case of the *KommunalHub*, a positive atmosphere emerged through the initiation of the network at a public administration conference that attracts motivated and entrepreneurial individuals, in the Darmstadt case, a trustful and positive working atmosphere required careful diplomatic work on part of the participating scientists. Actors like academics can at times help generate a setting and foster positive personal relationships. But in the case of the *KommunalHub*, a perception of the absence of competition between the two participating municipalities/mayors also helped the collaboration and positive atmosphere along. As trust developed in both cases, frank exchanges became possible, which emerged as a crucial condition for both identifying common problems and for developing solutions. However, while trust comes with very positive connotations, there is a risk of the development of closed networks, which may no longer be open to other actors.

In sum, PPA in the twenty-first century cannot be limited to government and administration alone. The complexity of the current challenges means that a much broader network of government and non-governmental actors need to collaborate in order to drive transformation. Both cases demonstrate how these aspects of collaborative governance (see Emerson et al., 2012) were among the key factors driving positivity. Bringing together different actors with multiple interests, aims and logics of acting is not always easy and requires careful moderation and balancing of interests and needs (for a related case at another level, see the Montreal Protocol in Albrecht and Parker, 2019). But when it happens, the combination of different types of knowledge and experience can generate innovations, foster cooperation, and help break deadlocks, which may have existed for a very long time.

This happened in the case of Darmstadt, where actors that had previously mainly interacted in court started a process of dialogue, which ultimately led to a different kind of solution. In the case of the *KommunalHub*, the municipal administrators learned along the way that they would benefit from an “outside” perspective and therefore invited an academic to join their conversation. A goal-oriented and flexible moderation was an important element in the

KommunalHub, as well as the participation of boundary spanners, who connected science and practice, developed ideas, and opened new perspectives. In several meetings of the *KommunalHub*, the challenges of both sides – municipalities and university – were brought together to generate a new form of collaboration in order to create value for both sides. For example, virtual learning labs supplemented the *KommunalHub* as a competence network. Learning labs are learning and experimentation spaces in each municipality in collaboration with university students and teachers.

Of course, neither the Darmstadt case nor the *KommunalHub* are fully democratic in terms of allowing free entry and exit of different actors. Furthermore, the deliberations were not always transparent and along the way only accessible to a very small and in many ways elite group of individuals.

Political Success

The regular meetings outside the daily routine of the actors allowed for “free thinking,” meaning that open brainstorming became possible without the worry that one’s words may appear in public soon thereafter. Doing so generated enduring support for the activity and allowed new ideas to emerge and individuals, such as for example university students, were empowered to take entrepreneurship roles by working in tandem with administrators in the case of the *KommunalHub*. The networks also generated opportunities for learning, as for example actors from various corners learned about life cycle aspects in the building sector in the Darmstadt case. This is a key element of PPA, especially when there is “[l]eadership that provides license to innovate” (Douglas et al., 2022: 285).

Both cases demonstrate important aspects of durability of action, which PPA scholars (Douglas et al., 2022), but also others (e.g., Jordan and Moore, 2020) have highlighted as an important aspect of success, including for sustainability. In the case of Darmstadt, durability of action both originated from political ambitions to advance climate action but also, crucially, from relentless civil society demands, which propelled action forward and ensured that politicians found themselves under constant pressure to act. In the case of the *KommunalHub*, it was less external demands and more internal problem pressure and the perceived usefulness of the format, which stimulated and maintained a continuous process of exchange and learning. By including academics, which brought in students, who in turn interacted directly with members of the municipal administration, the durability of the effort also materialized through an intergenerational element of training and sharing experience.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Public administration and particularly successful public administration are key to addressing the multiple challenges of sustainable development of our time. This chapter presented two case studies, namely aspects of climate action in the city of Darmstadt in Germany and the small and informal municipal network *KommunalHub* in central Germany, as potential examples where positivity emerged in various elements with a view to programmatic, process and political success (see de la Porte et al., 2022). In both cases, the drive for (mainly ecological) sustainability, which is the central concern they seek to address, emerges from innovative platforms involving co-production, driving new and positive ways of public policymaking.

In analyzing the two cases, the first aspect was programmatic success. Both cases demonstrate key programmatic achievements, namely concrete decisions, aims, and guidelines in Darmstadt, as well as project-based activities in the context of the *KommunalHub*. The cases demonstrate how programmatic success built over time, responding to the needs and demands that found their way into these novel processes. However, the success analyzed here mainly focuses on governance outputs, such as decisions or assessment processes. Future research should explore the eventual outcomes that these efforts generate. More time will need to pass to conduct such assessments in the future.

Therefore, the second aspect, namely process success, emerges most prominently in this contribution. We observed and partially participated in the creation and operation of new platforms and networks in order to deal with modern-day challenges, which no longer represent the traditional, hierarchical structures of public administration. The democratic state focuses on providing common goods and public value, but in light of complex societal challenges and “wicked problems” (Rittel and Webber, 1973), which include many sustainability challenges such as climate change, public administrations alone rarely have the requisite expertise, capacities, or resources to advance on their own.

The participation of and collaboration with other actors, including civil society, but also the private sector, has been highlighted as important in more networked forms of governance for sustainability. These aspects emerged in both cases, which demonstrate how actors came together in new constellations and ways to innovate together. Doing so required effort from many and was not always a straightforward or automatic process. While the actors remained fairly stable in the case of the *KommunalHub*, in the Darmstadt case it became clear that some actors were more willing to invest time and effort than others. A coalition of the willing therefore emerged, but maintenance of the network still required careful curation and moderation. In the process, it became clear

that all participating actors were needed to advance with challenging problems and that it is indeed possible to generate new alliances for a common, sustainability-related goal.

Political success mainly emerged through the durability of the efforts, as well as changes in actor relationships to enable novel alliances, enhancing reputations and generating win-win situations. In both the Darmstadt case and the *KommunalHub*, the durability of the effort demonstrates the ongoing and growing support of these activities by many different actors over time. Actors that had previously been antagonistic (Darmstadt) or who had not yet perceived the benefits of collaborating (*KommunalHub*) engaged in new forms of defining and unpacking joint values, leading to a sense of common purpose. These aspects of positivity resulted from concerted efforts and did not emerge automatically. Furthermore, the perspective on durability of effort is only a partial one in this chapter, given that – much like in the case of programmatic success – not enough time has passed to assess developments in the long run. At the time of this writing, the financial situations of many municipalities began to worsen, along with a more general, economic downturn at the national scale. These emerging contextual factors will likely put both climate action in Darmstadt and the *KommunalHub* to a new test of durability and resilience.²¹

NOTES

1. See <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (last accessed on 23 May 2024).
2. See www.covenantofmayors.eu (last accessed on 23 May 2024).
3. Source: German Basic Law (i.e., de-facto constitution), Article 28.
4. *Decision SV 2019/0043: Höchste Priorität für Klimaschutz – Weltklima in Not – Darmstadt handelt.*
5. See https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf (last accessed on 23 May 2024).
6. See Federal Climate Change Act, Article 3, Section 2, https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_ksg/index.html (last accessed on 23 May 2024).
7. See European Climate Law, Article 1, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/%20EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1119&from=EN> (last accessed on 23 May 2024).
8. See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf> (last accessed on 23 May 2024).
9. *Decision 2020/0235: Prüfung der Zulassung des Bürgerbegehrens Klimaentscheid Darmstadt und inhaltliche Auseinandersetzung, Klimaschutzstrategie der Wissenschaftsstadt Darmstadt.*
10. *Decision 2020/0252 (replaces 2020/199): Prüfung zu Auswirkungen von Magistratsvorlagen auf das Stadtklima/und oder die CO²-Bilanz.*

11. The IWU is partially owned by the city of Darmstadt (40 percent) and by the federal State of Hessen (60 percent). Two authors of this chapter (Jonas J. Schoenefeld and Britta Stein) are IWU employees.
12. “Leitlinie für den nachhaltigen Hochbau der Wissenschaftsstadt Darmstadt 8/2022” in German.
13. See <https://sne.h-da.de/>.
14. The *Neue Wohnraumhilfe* is committed to procuring and securing housing for socially disadvantaged people, who face difficult conditions on the open housing market. See <https://www.neue-wohnraumhilfe.de/> (last accessed on 23 May 2024).
15. Eltville is a small town with about 17,000 inhabitants located in the south-western part of the state of Hessen in central Germany.
16. Eschwege is a small town with about 19,000 inhabitants located in the north-eastern part of the state of Hessen in central Germany.
17. On their website, the organizers write: “Every year thousands of international participants from government, politics, civil society and other change-making organisations join the Creative Bureaucracy Festival and celebrate outstanding examples of innovative public administrations.” See <https://creativebureaucracy.org/> (last accessed on 23 May 2024).
18. Professor Dr. Friederike Edel, one of the co-authors of this chapter.
19. According to a study by the consulting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), there will be a shortage of 800,000 employees in the public sector in 2030 – primarily administrative specialists and teachers and thus in the core area of public service. See <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/industries/government-public-services/public-sector-research-centre/skilled-labour-deficit-in-the-public-sector.html> (last accessed on 23 May 2024).
20. See https://issuu.com/wbgu/docs/wbgu_jg2011_en?e=37591641/69400200 (last accessed on 23 May 2024).
21. Acknowledgements: the authors thank the participants of the *s:ne* project (funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, grant number FKZ 03IHSO36A), as well as the representatives from the municipalities and other organizations for generously engaging in new ways of collaborating and for allowing us to be part of them and/or observing how they unfolded. The editors and the authors of the other chapters of this volume deserve credit for their constructive feedback, which tested, expanded, and sharpened our arguments. Judith Heilmann provided research assistance.

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9. What explains the performance of participatory governance?

Nicolas W. Jager and Jens Newig

INTRODUCTION

Participatory forms of public decision making and collaborative governance have gained a firm place in governance systems worldwide, notably to tackle complex societal challenges such as in the fields of environment and sustainability. While originally advocated to empower local communities (Arnstein, 1969) and to improve the democratic qualities of public-sector governance (Fung and Wright, 2001; Smith, 2003), the participation of citizens and organized stakeholder groups has become a means to improve the performance of governance in the sense of, for example, better informed and more implementable public decisions (Ansell and Gash, 2007; Dietz and Stern, 2008; Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015; Newig and Fritsch, 2009). Hence, the ‘success’ or ‘performance’ of participatory governance involves multiple dimensions (Compton et al., 2019; Douglas et al., 2021), including, for example, more effective problem-solving, finding more just solutions, or contributing to economic welfare. Particularly in the field of environmental and sustainability governance, participation has become a widely advertised principle (Cattino and Reckien, 2021; Dietz and Stern, 2008; Meadowcroft, 2004; Newig et al., 2018; United Nations Environment Programme, 2019).

A growing number of studies have evaluated the ‘success’ of participatory governance in different dimensions individually, and some larger studies are available for the field of environmental governance (Beierle and Cayford, 2002; Jager et al., 2020; Scott, 2015; de Vente et al., 2016; Young et al., 2013). However, the multi-dimensionality of successful participatory governance has not yet been systematically assessed. Hence, we are often left with expectations of trade-offs: while, for example, a highly participatory planning process may foster an environmentally beneficial and socially just solution, this may be economically sub-optimal, and so on. And yet, decision making-processes exist that are wholeheartedly ‘successful’ in the sense that they produce environmentally beneficial, socially just, *and* economically advantageous out-

comes. What characterizes such successful decision making processes? Under which contexts do they take place? Are they exceptionally ‘participatory’? If so, in what respect?

Taking up the call by Douglas and colleagues (2021), this research aimed to identify the *conditions* of successful governance (see also Nieto-Morales and Heyse, Chapter 4 in this volume for a methodological discussion of configurational approaches to studying positivity). We focus on the role of participation in different dimensions (as we specify below) to explain governance success related to outcomes that are positive in environmental, economic, and justice-related terms. Our data is drawn from the EDGE-SCAPE database (Newig et al., 2021) and comprises 300 cases of public environmental governance in 23 different Western industrialized democracies. By limiting the geographical, cultural, political, and economic context of decision making we aimed to be able to arrive at sufficiently meaningful interpretations of governance processes that are much shaped by their context. The database covers quantitative coded information on the situational context of decision making; various attributes of the decision making context, in particular with respect to its participatory nature; and environmental, social, and economic governance outcomes. Covering a wide range of contexts, process forms, and outcomes, the database shows sufficient variation to identify both contextual and process-related factors that explain governance success. To this end, we performed a two-step Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) (Ragin, 2008; Schneider, 2019) that allows us to uncover patterns of complex causality, where outcomes are determined through multiple causal pathways each consisting of a set of inter-twined explanatory conditions.

In the remainder of this chapter, we first introduce in the second section the essential concepts of our study (participation, context, outcomes) and then, in the third section, describe our data and the QCA method in some detail. Our results, presented in the fourth section, show that environmental, social, and economic outcomes indeed show trade-offs, but cases exist that score high in all dimensions. Our two-step QCA serves to explain these distinctly ‘positive’ governance outcomes. We find that such outcomes are enabled through a ‘reconciliatory context’ and consensus-oriented process designs that prove instrumental in balancing diverse interests and perspectives among stakeholders. We close this chapter with reflections on our findings, the methodology and suggestions for further research. By synthesizing case-based knowledge from 300 cases, our study helps to develop a cumulative body of knowledge (as called for by Douglas et al., 2021) on how to achieve genuine success through participatory governance.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Public decision making processes that involve non-state actors – the broad public, representatives of citizen initiatives and organized interest groups from civil society or private business – have a long tradition in Western societies. They range from formalized hearings, local citizen juries and stakeholder roundtables to long-term institutionalized regimes in which a variety of stakeholders collaborate with public officials to solve issues of public relevance (Ansell and Gash, 2007; Rowe and Frewer, 2005; Scott and Thomas, 2017). The scholarly community refers to such governance processes as participatory and/or collaborative. While both terms overlap to some degree, they each show distinct features: “‘participatory governance’ – the more widely used term in Europe – stresses the involvement of actors who are not normally charged with decision making. ‘Collaborative governance’ – more common in the North American context – emphasizes the process of working together” (Newig et al., 2018: 272–273). Here, we focus on participatory governance as the overarching term, defining it as “processes and structures of public decision making and management that engage actors from the private sector, civil society, and/or the public at large, with varying degrees of communication, collaboration, and delegation of decision power to participants” (Newig et al., 2018: 273).

Our conceptual framework, which motivates and guides our analysis, assumes, first, that different aspects of a participatory and/or collaborative process impact on its outcome in terms of environmental, social, and economic success. We assume, second, that the (situational) context impacts both the governance process and its outcomes. Taken together, to assess how and when participatory governance successfully reaches multi-dimensional goals, we suggest an explanatory model that combines process-related (proximate) factors with a set of contextual (remote) factors. While the former influence the decision more directly, the latter are causally more distant and reflect the context in which proximate conditions unfold (Blatter and Haverland, 2012). Below, we first describe the relevant aspects of participatory and collaborative governance, and then go on to specify relevant contextual conditions and outcome features.

Process Characteristics

Following the above definition of participatory governance, we distinguish three central dimensions of public decision making processes (see also Fung, 2006): (1) the *kinds of actors* involved; (2) the type and intensity of *communication*; (3) the degree of *decision making power* shared with, or delegated to, participants. We assume that the success of participatory governance of

reaching the goals of environmental effectiveness, social justice and economic gain will depend on the ways in which participatory processes are organized and configured along the three described dimensions. This means that the kinds of stakeholders represented, how intensively they communicate, and the discretionary powers delegated to participants will ultimately influence the content of governance outputs. Previous research has shown that more intensive forms of communication and wider discretionary powers delegated to participants enhance the quality of governance outputs (Dressel et al., 2020; Jager et al., 2020; Scott, 2015). But also, the question of who participates is of great importance. To reach a broad basis for a decision including ecological, social, and economic aspects, broad representation of key stakeholders appears instrumental; however, especially private sector representatives are often left out of collaborative processes (Brody, 2003) despite their interest and problem-solving capacities (Meadowcroft, 2004). Hence, we will particularly assess their role in our analysis.

Collaborative governance processes are typically characterized by *consensual decision making* (Ansell and Gash, 2007; Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). To capture this essential element of collaborative governance in addition to merely participatory governance, we assessed whether or not a decision was made through broad consensus of participants.

Moreover, following Dietz and Stern (2008), we assume that the leading *agency's commitment* plays an important role for the success of decision making, not least because participants are more likely to engage seriously when agency staff are committed to maintaining a high-quality process. To capture this aspect of the decision making process, we assessed the extent to which the responsible authority was committed to (maintaining) the decision making process.

Contextual Conditions

Participatory processes do not exist in a vacuum but have their own prehistory and are embedded in their particular institutional, environmental, and societal context that determines how processes may unfold and ultimately influences whether and how successful they can be in reaching positive outcomes (Ansell and Gash, 2007; Beierle and Cayford, 2002; Fischer, 1993; Newig et al., 2018; Webler, 1995). We examined the following six contextual factors that are repeatedly mentioned in the literature to shape governance outcomes (see Table 9.1 for technical details):

1. Pre-existing conflicts may shape decision making in various ways. For example, the further the positions of participants differ, the less scope there is for negotiation, and the more likely it becomes that solutions will

emerge at the lowest common denominator (Heikkila and Gerlak, 2013; Newig et al., 2018). We assess the extent of pre-existing distributional and value conflicts.

2. Relatedly, the salience of an issue (i.e., the degree of public attention it receives) may require particular participatory procedures to involve a larger public, which in turn may restrict an intensive deliberative and collaborative search for solutions (Newig et al., 2018). On the other hand, pressure for finding a solution may be higher for salient issues, increasing chances for compromise and pragmatic agreements.
3. NIMBY ('Not In My Backyard') issues (Carley et al., 2020) entail a specific conflict between individual costs and collective benefits and may pose particular difficulties to reach decisions that satisfy social, environmental, and economic goals. Participation is considered one means to mitigate these challenges and to arrive at viable solutions, e.g. through mobilization of well-informed citizens or grassroots initiatives (Ryan, 2001). We assessed whether a decision making process took place in a NIMBY context.
4. On the other hand, the existence of social capital within communities, including trustful relationships among stakeholders and trust in governmental institutions and actors, may facilitate the success of participatory decision making processes (Bryson et al., 2006; Jager et al., 2020). We assess the degree of social capital among stakeholders (potentially) involved in the decision making process.
5. Complexity and uncertainty are major characteristics of difficult, wicked problems, which are considered particularly difficult to address (Head, 2022). Here, the exchange of perspectives has been argued to be particularly beneficial (Kirschke et al., 2017; Pellizzoni, 2003). We assess the degree of technical complexity and factual uncertainty of the issue at stake for decision making.
6. The geographical scales of environmental issues may impact decision making in various ways. For example, rather localized issues tend to be more easily resolved in a collaborative, participatory way (e.g., by incorporating local knowledge) (Newig et al., 2016; Ostrom, 1990). Conversely, it has been argued that at higher spatial scales, participants tend to have greater competency because of more professionalized organizations (Rockloff and Moore, 2006), hence improving decision making quality.

Successful Governance Outcomes

We conceive of governance 'success' if the outcome is positive in environmental, social, *and* economic terms (i.e., balancing the different dimensions

often considered as part of sustainability) (Purvis et al., 2019). To this end, we assess the extent to which a decision made is likely (1) to protect (or deteriorate) the environment (i.e., the preservation and restoration of ecosystems, the protection or sustainable use of natural resources, and the protection of human health from environmental factors such as pollution); (2) to benefit (or harm) the regional economy; and (3) to benefit (or harm) social equity.

DATA AND METHODS

Data

For our analysis, we draw on a unique dataset – the SCAPE dataset (Newig et al., 2021), comprising 300 cases of public environmental decision making from 23 Western democratic countries, covering a range of participatory and non-participatory process types.¹ This data stems from a large case survey meta-analysis (Larsson, 1993) of published case studies. This meta-analytical method involves the translation of rich, qualitative information from narrative case studies into quantitative data, representing a numeric interpretation of the case study texts. Here, a case is defined as a public environmental decision making process aimed at reaching a collectively binding decision, which can vary in the degree to which it can be characterized as ‘participatory’.

To derive this data, we took the following steps (Jager et al., 2022; for a more detailed account of the process, see Newig et al., 2021):

1. Case study identification and selection: through a thorough search of several scientific databases, we identified over 3,300 single studies, describing more than 2,000 unique cases of environmental (participatory) decision making. We limited our search to cases from Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand and included peer-reviewed literature as well as books, edited volumes, theses, working papers, and further gray literature. Identified texts were screened for suitability, while those with insufficient information were eliminated. This resulted in 639 ‘codeable’ cases, from which we drew a random sample of 305 texts for full coding.
2. Coding scheme development: based on our conceptual understanding of public participation, we developed an analytical coding scheme (Newig et al., 2013). It contains 256 quantitative variables measuring the process, context, outputs, and outcomes of decision making mostly on a 5-point scale.
3. Case coding: each case was independently read and coded by three trained coders. After initial coding, coders discussed divergent ratings, caused, for example, by coding mistakes or diverging interpretations. However,

to explicitly embrace different interpretations of the case material, coders were not asked to reach consensus. Despite this deliberate inclusion of varying interpretations, comprehensive reliability tests indicated overall good data quality (intercoder reliability, measured through $G(q,k)$ (Putka et al., 2008) was at 0.74, and intercoder agreement – r_{WG} (James et al., 1984) – at 0.73).

Methods: Two-step Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)

For the actual analysis, we use QCA based on set-theory and Boolean algebra (Oana et al., 2021; Ragin, 2008; Schneider and Wagemann, 2012). As a structured comparative method with strong qualitative momentum, QCA allows the uncovering of patterns of complex causality, that is, phenomena in which a given outcome may be the result of a number of complex combinations of multiple causal conditions (equifinality, multivariate explanations) describing relations of necessity and sufficiency (Rihoux and Ragin, 2009). A condition is deemed necessary if it always must be there for an outcome to occur, while a sufficient condition implies the observation of an outcome whenever this condition is present; but an outcome here can also occur under different (sufficient) conditions (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012). Given our research aims of uncovering patterns of conditions under which public participation leads to multi-dimensionally successful policy outcomes, QCA serves as a suitable method, given that we assume not only one but multiple interacting pathways leading to this successful outcome (see Jager et al., 2020).

In QCA, every case is expressed as a combination of membership scores, indicating for each condition and the outcome whether it is present or absent in this case. We rely on the fuzzy-set (fs) version of QCA, in which membership values lie between 0 and 1, with 1 indicating full membership, and 0 full non-membership of a case in a given condition or the outcome. The value of 0.5 represents the cross-over point, where a qualitative shift from relative non-membership to membership occurs. Central for each QCA's analytical moment is the so-called truth table. It comprises all possible configurations of conditions. Based on all cases, each configuration in the truth table is assessed on whether it is consistently sufficient for the outcome to occur and in turn included in the analysis. Finally, through Boolean algebra, the method minimizes the truth table, identifying a minimum set of solution pathways sufficient for the outcome to occur (Ragin, 2008).

In line with our conceptual model, we employ the variant of two-step QCA (Schneider, 2019), which distinguishes between distant (contextual) conditions and more proximate process-oriented ones. It brings together insights on contextual circumstances and the particular mechanisms through which public participation may yield successful governance outcomes. In step 1,

only remote factors are analyzed through a test of necessity, establishing ‘outcome-enabling conditions’ (Schneider, 2019). These are not meant to fully explain the outcome, but rather to specify the context under which the outcome is made possible. These will be also included in step 2, an analysis of sufficiency together with the proximate factors. This final analysis reveals how remote and proximate factors interact and produce causal pathways sufficient for the outcome to occur.

Outcome, Conditions, and Calibration

Within this analysis, we define ‘success’ if a policy decision taken at the end of a participatory process leads to improvements with regards to environmental quality, social justice, and economics gains:

- The measurement for *environmental quality* is constructed by considering the dimensions of conservation (i.e., the preservation and restoration of ecosystems independent of their instrumental value for humankind), natural resource protection (i.e., the protecting, restoration and sustainable use of stocks and flows of natural resources that are of instrumental value to humans), and the protection of human health (i.e., enhancing environmental factors beneficial, and/or mitigating environmental impacts detrimental to human health) (Newig et al., 2013). Additionally, it comprises both policy decisions and their actual impact.
- Social justice measures the degree to which policy outcomes of the decision making process are socially equitable in a distributional justice sense, including the distribution of all types of costs and benefits (e.g. economic, environmental, access to information, education) (Newig et al., 2013).
- We measure economic gains by considering the extent to which economic outcomes of a given decision are economically positive or negative. Economic outcomes include consequences for productivity, competitiveness, standard of living, employment rate, or general economic well-being.

Each variable is measured on a scale from -4 to 4 , where 0 indicates no divergence from a hypothetical business-as-usual scenario, while -4 means that the governance output approaches a ‘worst-case’ scenario, and 4 a hypothetical optimum (Underdal, 2004). For our QCA, we consider each case as successful that in every one of these three dimensions scores a value above zero. This yields 93 ‘successful’ cases, which will be assigned a fuzzy score above 0.5 , while the remaining 207 ‘unsuccessful’ cases will be assigned a value below 0.5 . The actual value is determined through direct calibration by the extent to

which cumulated environmental, social, and economic effects approach the end of our measurement scale (−4 to 4).

Original variables for remote and proximate factors were usually measured on a Likert-type scale from 0 to 4, where 0 denotes the absence, and 4 the full presence of a variable in a given case (Table 9.1). For calibration of these factors, our rationale was to set the cross-over point in the middle of the scale at a value of 2 and employ a direct mode of direct transformative assignment, with full non-membership around 0 and full membership around 4. However, in order to not be driven solely by statistical characteristics and to include some qualitative assessment of each variable, for the actual calibration, we looked into the distribution of each variable and searched for natural gaps and clusters around our envisaged anchor points (i.e., qualitative steps within our data) (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012). Hence, actual anchor points usually slightly deviate from these even numbers, as shown in Table 9.1. For each condition, also alternative calibrations were tested that lead to largely consistent results.

RESULTS

Within our set of 300 cases, we observe synergies, but also trade-offs between ecological, social, and economic goals (Table 9.2). While environmental quality and social justice aspects are highly correlated, the dimension of economic success points in a different direction: here, we see no correlation at all with social justice and a slight negative relation with environmental quality, highlighting that there indeed is a trade-off between different dimensions of success.

To identify under which conditions cases are successful in maneuvering this trade-off and arrive at positive outcomes for all dimensions, in the first step of two-step QCA outcome-enabling conditions are established through a necessity analysis of remote conditions (Schneider, 2019).² This analysis revealed one necessary solution term that met the thresholds for respective parameters of fit (Table 9.3).

Either a societal environment characterized by high levels of social capital (*SOCAP*) and/or low levels of conflict around the issue at hand (*conflict*), and/or a policy problem of rather large scale (*SCALE*), that is, more than 200 square kilometers, jointly form an empirically non-trivial, consistent enough necessary condition for successful participatory sustainability decision making. Other potential remote conditions (see Table 9.1) did not prove to be of relevance.

This first finding is in line with our conceptual assumptions (see Table 9.2), but also adds further specification. As also stressed in the literature (e.g., Bryson et al., 2006), social capital serves as an important ground condition for

Table 9.1 List of conditions and calibration decisions

Condition/ outcome	Description (from Newig et al., 2013)	Original scale	Calibration – anchor points			Influence on outcome
			0	0.5	1	
<i>Contextual (remote) factors</i>						
NIMBY	<i>‘Not in my backyard’</i> : existence of a NIMBY situation in the political conflict at hand. A NIMBY situation exists where there is general agreement on the need for a particular facility or activity, but disagreement on the appropriate location. In particular, there is widespread and strong resistance by people to its being located in their neighborhood or immediate vicinity.	[0;1]	0	0.5	1	–
SCALE	<i>Spatial scale issue</i> : approximate size, in km ² , of the environmental issue area.	count	1.1	201	600,000	+/-
COMPLEX	<i>Complexity</i> : constructed by aggregating (means): Technical complexity: degree to which the key environmental issue at stake in the DMP is difficult to understand and process intellectually. Factual uncertainty: degree to which knowledge of the environmental issue and its human or ecological causes and effects is uncertain or incomplete, and therefore hinders reliable prediction of impacts.	[0;4]	0.1	1.99	3.6	–
SALIENCE	<i>Salience</i> : constructed by aggregating (means): Public attention: degree to which the issue at stake attracted public attention before the process started. Perceived urgency: degree to which members of the public perceived the issue at hand as one requiring urgent attention and/or action.	[0;4]	0.2	1.28	3.15	+/-
SOCAP	<i>Social capital</i> : constructed through factor analysis: General trust in government: degree of general public trust in the capabilities and intentions of the government to act in the public interest. Trust in governmental actors: degree of trust of stakeholders in the specific governmental actors potentially involved in the decision making process. Trust among stakeholders: degree of trust among stakeholders potentially involved in the decision making process. Shared norms: degree of social capital in the sense of informal values or norms shared among stakeholders that permit cooperation among these.	[-3;3]	-2.5	0	2.5	+

Condition/ outcome	Description (from Newig et al., 2013)	Original scale	Calibration – anchor points			Influence on outcome
			0	0.5	1	
CONFLICT	<i>Conflict</i> : constructed by aggregating (means): Conflict of values: degree to which there was an actual or potential conflict of values associated with the issue at stake, consider diverging ethical, social, cultural, and ideological values. Conflict of distribution: degree to which there was an actual or potential conflict of distribution (=conflict of interests) associated with the issue at stake. This type of conflict concerns the distribution of resources or opportunities among stakeholders.	[0;4]	0	1.98	3.01	–
<i>Process-oriented (proximate) factors</i>						
COMM	<i>Communication</i> : constructed by aggregating (means): Information: degree to which participants received all relevant information available to process organizers. Consultation: degree to which participants gave all input they considered relevant. Dialogue: degree to which a two-way information flow and direct interaction among participants and between participants and the process organizers took place.	[0;4]	0.45	2.15	3.75	+
POWER	<i>Power</i> : degree to which the participants developed and determined output.	[0;4]	0	2.1	4	+
REPRIV	<i>Representation private sector</i> : representation refers to the extent to which the composition of participants in the process mirrors the interest constellation in the public. Full representation of private sector actors is reached when there are a sufficient number of representatives and when those representatives are fully accepted as such by their constituencies.	[0;4]	0	1.01	3	+
COMMIT	<i>Commitment responsible authority</i> : degree to which the responsible authority was committed to (maintaining) the decision making process.	[0;4]	0	1.9	4	+
CONSENS	<i>Consensual decision mode</i> : was the output decided through broad consensus, i.e., as many as possible could accept the agreement?	[yes/no]	no		yes	+

Note: In the last column, ‘+’ implies a positive influence of the condition on the outcome, ‘–’ a negative influence, and ‘+/-’ suggests that the influence is mixed or contested. For the latter conditions, no assumptions will be taken for the intermediate analysis.

Source: Author.

actors to enter into a constructive, trustful dialogue, which considers interests and needs of divergent stakeholders. The absence of substantive conflicts points in a similar direction. It emphasizes the role of a positive societal climate, but also of an 'easy' problem setting, where the issue at hand is not subject to intensive ideational or material conflicts. Finally, counter to the idea of 'small is beautiful', issues of bigger than rather small, localized scale (200 km²) are part of this necessary condition. Taken together, this solution can be characterized as the higher-order construct of *reconciliatory cases* offering fertile ground for balancing divergent interests and realizing policy success in different dimensions.³ This construct is entered in step 2 of our analysis as a condition of its own, named *CONTEXT*.

Subsequently, in step 2,⁴ we analyze the five proximate conditions together with the necessary remote solution term of reconciliatory cases (*CONTEXT*) in one single analysis of sufficiency of the outcome *SUCCESS*. The truth table for the analysis, containing all 64 potential ideal typical combinations of conditions is in the Appendix. The 300 cases observed can be assigned to 35 different configurations leaving 29 possible combinations without information.⁵

For the analysis, QCA uses a truth table algorithm that minimizes configurations that are consistently sufficient for the outcome to occur, in turn identifying more parsimonious solution pathways. Following established recommendations to identify cut-off points through gaps in consistency values, we used a consistency threshold of 0.84.⁶ We base the discussion and interpretation of our results on the intermediate solution that only includes counterfactuals relying on the targeted assumptions about the direction of conditions' influence on the outcome (see Table 9.1, column 7).

Table 9.4 summarizes the identified three solution paths each leading to the outcome of successful, sustainable policy decisions, including enhanced environmental quality, improvements in social justice and economic gains. Path 1 (*POWER*COMM*CONSENS* → *SUCCESS*) consists of cases where participants are granted high discretionary powers over the output, where they communicate intensively and take their decision by consensus. One could characterize cases in this solution as archetypical collaborative, deliberative processes. Participants engage in intensive discussions about how to solve a given environmental problem at hand. Relying on consensus decision making assures the accommodation of various interests and goals in the final outcome. Note, other than in the other pathways the necessary reconciliatory context is not part of this pathway (i.e., this solution leads to a successful outcome irrespectively).

Path 2 (*CONTEXT*COMMIT*CONSENS* → *SUCCESS*) exhibits the favorable, reconciliatory context identified in step 1, a high commitment by the responsible authority and a consensual decision mode. Hence, all of the cases covered by this path share a strong institutional support and also procedural

rules that cater to the inclusion of all interests, providing supportive institutional provisions for multi-dimensionally successful sustainability decisions.

Path 3 (*CONTEXT*POWER*COMM*REPRIV*COMMIT* → *SUCCESS*) is the only path that does not include consensual decision making as a condition, but requires the presence of all others. It is highly consistent and has a broad raw and unique coverage, including many cases. The solution highlights that there are many cases where – also with potentially lacking consensus-oriented institutional rules – positive outcomes can be realized by means of intensive communication, strong institutional support by the responsible authority and high discretionary powers for participants.

DISCUSSION

Our two-step QCA revealed a mix of remote and proximate factors that pave the way for positive public administration on questions of sustainability. Step one of our analysis highlighted which contexts appear favorable for multi-dimensional sustainability outcomes to successfully occur, namely those that we framed as reconciliatory case contexts. Such contexts can be constituted by characteristics of the problem at hand and/or the policy subsystem.

Issues with little ideational or value conflict provide one favorable context for realizing multi-dimensional sustainability benefits. Such problems stand in contrast to what is often framed as ‘wicked problems’ (Head, 2022). The absence of conflict and divergence may be a sign of a setting with little pronounced and complex trade-off between economic, social, and environmental goals. This does not mean that such comparatively easy or simple problems are always successfully addressed, but they offer suitable starting conditions for participation processes to unfold constructively from the start and to arrive at positive outcomes.

Contrary to claims for ‘small is beautiful’ (Lovell et al., 2002), our analysis suggests that successful balance of interests can better be reached in problems of a larger scale (>200 km²). One reason for this might be that larger-scale issues also attract the attention of more professionalized actors (Rockloff and Moore, 2006), especially also from those interests that often rely on voluntary work, such as conservation groups, facilitating informed negotiations among participants. Additionally, questions of economic livelihoods and welfare are often more pronounced locally rather than at higher levels (Hein et al., 2006), making compromises between different goals more feasible for larger issues.

But even if problems themselves do not present themselves with such favorable characteristics, the context might still enable the realization of multiple sustainability outcomes, in case of high levels of trust and social capital among stakeholders and government actors. This finding is in line with much scholarly research that identified social capital as driver for many single positive outcomes

Table 9.2 *Correlation matrix between the three individual measures of ‘success’*

	Environmental quality	Social justice	Economic gains
Environmental quality		.54***	-.12*
Social justice	.54***		.03
Economic gains	-.12*	.03	

Note: Pearson’s correlation coefficients, *** p<.001, * p<.05.
Source: Author.

Table 9.3 *Solution of necessity test (step 1)*

	Consistency	Relevance of Necessity (RoN)	Coverage
SOCAP + conflict + SCALE	0.90	0.59	0.61

Note: Within QCA solution terms, CAPITAL letters indicate the presence of a condition, while lower-case letters indicate absence. + means logical ‘OR’, * logical ‘AND’.
Source: Author.

(Ansell et al., 2020; Jager et al., 2020), but additionally emphasizes its positive role for balancing different policy goals. As Oh and Bush (2014) highlight, social capital may unfold this positive role by fostering trust, reciprocity, and a sense of common mission among participants. In turn, these help to set up channels for realizing resource exchange and balancing different interests, ultimately providing the fundament for achieving simultaneously multiple sustainability goals.

While these remote characteristics of the problem and the policy subsystem usually do not lie in the hands of public administrators and policymakers, they have still ways to address these. For instance, conflict levels attached to a problem are only partly a characteristic inherent to the problem itself but result also from political framing and contestation (Weible and Heikkila, 2017). Against this background, participatory processes are often rolled out when conflicts have already escalated and other means of decision making have failed. However, our results show that the success of public participation is enabled particularly in those instances where conflicts did not escalate, suggesting that participatory processes not be used as a last resort in forlorn situations, but rather as a genuine instrument for balancing divergence from the start.

Step 2 of our analysis reinforces this insight as it identified the commitment of the responsible authority as a necessary condition for two of three sufficient solution pathways, always together with the favorable, reconciliatory context. Commitment implies support for the objectives of the process throughout its

Table 9.4 Immediate solutions for achieving success

	Solution		
	1	2	3
Context		●	●
Power	●		●
Communication	●		●
Consensus	●	●	
Representation private sector			●
Authority commitment		●	●
Consistency	0.73	0.79	0.87
PRI	0.51	0.58	0.62
Raw coverage	0.47	0.41	0.61
Unique coverage	0.073	0.013	0.280
Number of cases covered	85	76	61
Overall solution consistency		0.76	
Overall PRI		0.51	
Overall solution coverage		0.76	

Note: Each column describes one sufficient solution path. Full circles denote presence, crossed-out circles (here none appeared) the absence of a given condition. Large icons denote core conditions, which are part of the most parsimonious solution, small icons are contributory conditions, only part of the intermediate solution.

Source: Author.

whole lifecycle, including clear accountability about how and by whom process outcomes will be used (Dietz and Stern, 2008). Our results highlight that such commitment is necessary to take advantage of the enabling context and for participants to feel taken seriously and regard their engagement as meaningful (Baldwin, 2018).

Yet, to ultimately realize successful multi-dimensional sustainability outcomes these foundations have to be combined with different combinations of procedural rules and traits. For pathways 1 and 2, a consensual decision-mode was an essential condition emphasizing the value of ‘consensus-oriented’ (Ansell and Gash, 2007), collaborative process designs for realizing positive outcomes. Usually, participants have individual interests that prevent them from realizing a common interest. Consensus-oriented processes preclude that particular interests are simply overruled by a majority as the representation of individual view-

points and cooperation among diverse actors is encouraged (Margerum, 2011). Especially intensive dialogue and deliberation are instrumental in uncovering a common ground between diverse interests (Brody, 2003), or even spreading a common-good orientation among participants (Smith, 2003) including all studied dimensions of sustainability. Given participants' direct influence over the governance output, such intensive, consensus-oriented participation may ultimately lead to outcomes that reflect a broader range of interests. And even if decision making powers are limited, regulators are more likely to adopt participants' recommendations when these represent consensus among diverse actors, indirectly fostering positive sustainability outcomes and their implementation (Ansell and Gash, 2007; Baldwin, 2018).

In fact, our analysis further revealed that this mechanism of consensus orientation is that strong that it even leads to a positive outcome, irrespective of the favorable context and institutional support, as solution path 1 shows. Here, intensive communication, paired with a consensual decision mode and high discretionary powers over the output proves sufficient to arrive at multi-dimensional sustainability outcomes. Among the cases covered by this solution path are some that were characterized by a rather divided stakeholder field or lacking commitment by the responsible authority (see, e.g., Majumdar et al., 2009). Nonetheless, participants, often on their own initiative, upheld consensus-oriented processes that also under these conditions were successful.

The only path that does not necessarily include a consensus-orientation is number 3, where all other conditions must be present. Also, this is the only path that necessarily includes the participation of private-sector actors. Furthermore, cases of this path show a strong commitment of governmental authority and involve processes of intense participation (high communication and power delegation). This suggests we are seeing cases in which a range of stakeholders, particularly including private-sector representatives, are involved in intensive and creative exchange under favorable contextual and institutional circumstances. Given the strong agency and commitment of actors, such a setting appears, even without necessarily including consensual decision rules, instrumental for reaching a balance of interests and for realizing positive policy outcomes.

CONCLUSION

With our study, we highlight how public participation in the face of multi-dimensional sustainability challenges may contribute to positive policy outcomes that comprise improvements in environmental quality and social justice, while at the same time fostering economic gains. Relying on a unique dataset of 300 cases of (more or less) participatory environmental decision making from 23 Western democratic countries, we indeed identified a trade-off particularly between the environmental and economic policy outcomes, while

environmental and social outcomes appeared rather synergistic. For identifying the conditions under which a case appears successful in all three dimensions, we employed the method of two-step QCA. Step 1 of this analysis established the outcome-enabling contexts, namely those where environmental problems at hand stretch over larger areas (more than 200 km²) and/or are subject to little conflict, and/or where social capital among stakeholders is high. We termed such contexts as reconciliatory contexts because they appear instrumental for bringing together diverse interests in a trustful manner. Step 2 in turn identified those procedural mechanisms through which positive outcomes could be realized. The three identified pathways together highlight the role of consensus-oriented collaboration, characterized by meaningful interaction among participants and consensual decision modes, as promising mechanisms to balance diverse viewpoints and reach mutual gains, ultimately leading to successful outcomes in all dimensions. The solutions further emphasize the important role of the responsible authority. Their sincere commitment to the participatory process and its outcomes is an essential ingredient to success in most pathways, reemphasizing that positive public policy and administration, even by the means of public participation and the involvement of non-state actors, is dependent on committed public actors and their meaningful interaction with society.

NOTES

1. The original data set contains 305 cases. However, five cases had to be omitted due to missing values.
2. The actual analysis was executed in R, using the packages QCA (Duşa, 2019) and SetMethods (Oana and Schneider, 2018).
3. Seven cases represent deviant cases in kind, that is, they display the outcome without membership in our necessary condition, which can be regarded as acceptable empirical divergence given the large-N application of QCA.
4. For this step, we followed the procedure of the Enhanced Standard Analysis (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012).
5. In order not to produce solutions with logically untenable assumptions, the outcome needs to be set to 0 in all rows where remainders do not exhibit the necessary remote context.
6. And a PRI (Proportional Reduction in Consistency) threshold of 0.51. Other thresholds might have been possible (e.g., 0.89 or 0.92), but we chose this threshold as it includes several relevant configurations with a large number of cases.

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APPENDIX 9

Table 9A.1 Truth table

COMM	POWER	COMMIT	CONSENS	REPRIV	CONTEXT	SUCCESS (outcome)	N	Consistency	PRI
1	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	0.980	0.777
1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0.972	0.728
1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0.968	0.733
0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0.967	0.606
0	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	0.958	0.625
1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0.955	0.588
0	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	0.947	0.641
1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0.947	0.697
1	1	0	1	0	1	1	4	0.944	0.592
1	1	0	1	1	1	1	6	0.924	0.594
1	1	1	1	1	0	1	4	0.915	0.659
1	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0.912	0.448
1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.881	0.352
0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0.875	0.197
1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.873	0.170
1	1	1	0	1	1	1	15	0.873	0.517
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	46	0.871	0.676
0	1	1	0	1	1	0	2	0.867	0.239
1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.865	0.104
1	1	1	1	0	1	1	22	0.859	0.585
1	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0.859	0.150
1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0.856	0.195
1	1	1	0	0	1	0	12	0.853	0.410
1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0.851	0.122
1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.847	0.149
0	1	1	0	0	1	0	11	0.820	0.166
1	0	1	0	1	1	0	8	0.819	0.258
1	0	1	0	0	1	0	6	0.809	0.161
0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4	0.788	0.070
0	0	1	0	1	0	0	5	0.767	0.058
0	0	1	0	1	1	0	9	0.758	0.117

COMM	POWER	COMMIT	CONSENS	REPRIV	CONTEXT	SUCCESS (outcome)	N	Consistency	PRI
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0.751	0.079
0	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	0.726	0.070
0	0	0	0	0	1	0	18	0.703	0.079
0	0	1	0	0	1	0	32	0.667	0.149
0	0	0	0	1	0	?	0	—	—
0	0	0	1	0	0	?	0	—	—
0	0	0	1	0	1	?	0	—	—
0	0	0	1	1	0	?	0	—	—
0	0	0	1	1	1	?	0	—	—
0	0	1	1	0	0	?	0	—	—
0	0	1	1	1	0	?	0	—	—
0	0	1	1	1	1	?	0	—	—
0	1	0	0	0	0	?	0	—	—
0	1	0	0	1	0	?	0	—	—
0	1	0	0	1	1	?	0	—	—
0	1	0	1	0	0	?	0	—	—
0	1	0	1	0	1	?	0	—	—
0	1	0	1	1	0	?	0	—	—
0	1	0	1	1	1	?	0	—	—
0	1	1	0	0	0	?	0	—	—
0	1	1	0	1	0	?	0	—	—
0	1	1	1	0	0	?	0	—	—
0	1	1	1	1	0	?	0	—	—
1	0	0	1	0	0	?	0	—	—
1	0	0	1	0	1	?	0	—	—
1	0	0	1	1	0	?	0	—	—
1	0	0	1	1	1	?	0	—	—
1	0	1	1	0	0	?	0	—	—
1	0	1	1	1	0	?	0	—	—
1	1	0	0	0	0	?	0	—	—
1	1	0	0	0	1	?	0	—	—
1	1	0	0	1	0	?	0	—	—
1	1	1	0	1	0	?	0	—	—

Source: Author.

10. Improving the public purse: the Kenya Revenue Authority as an example of positive public administration in Africa

Gedion Onyango

INTRODUCTION

The literature on African politics and governance has featured long-standing discussions about the sub-optimal performance of most countries' political institutions and public organizations (Hickey, 2019; Roll, 2014; Leonard, 1991, 2010). But, like elsewhere in the world today (e.g., Peters and Pierre, 2019; Douglas et al., 2021), this discourse of endemic failure has been analyzed haphazardly and has thrived on growing public distrust and political propaganda anchored in populist ideals and unrealistic and misinformed political demands on public administration (Nkrumah, 2021; Akhaine, 2022). Moreover, donors' contextually skewed governance philosophies and imposed reform frameworks often muddy the waters in African countries' reform agendas (see Milton and Mano, 2020; Muhumuza, 2022). And yet, belying the storylines about endemic failure, several African governments manage to deliver policies and public services that 'work,' even when faced with complex policy issues beyond their control, like the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant economic crisis.

Indeed, alongside the widespread narrative about government failures in Africa, the positive public administration (PPA) agenda also has had a long tradition since the 1970s (see Hyden et al., 1970; Leonard, 1991, 2008, 2010; Hyden and Bratton, 1991; Therkildsen, 2008; Hickey, 2019). Positive public administration takes a more appreciative and optimistic view of governments, casting its gaze towards such instances of both 'ordinary' and 'extraordinary' public value creation by governments and public sector actors (Grindle and Hilderbrand, 1995; Lindquist et al., 2022; Compton et al., 2022; Douglas et al., 2021; Douglas, 2022; Karimuribo et al., 2017). While the positivity agenda may have remained peripheral in the neoliberal public administration

research, it has deep historical roots in Africa (see Duncan, Chapter 2 in this volume; cf., van Ostaïjen and Jhagroe, 2022 in the Western world). The reason for this may reside in the transdisciplinary epistemology of African public administration and its well-developed criticism of Westernized approaches to studying African governance contexts. Despite efforts to apply Anglo-Saxon theories and experiences to African public administration, classical and influential works on African public service, which draw on development studies, anthropology, sociology, history, international development, and political science, have presented adequate empirical evidence of positive outcomes in the public sector.

So, whether in relation to development and economics (Ochieng, 2007; Peiffer and Armytage, 2019; Kjær, 2022), disease control (Karimuribo et al., 2017), political and administrative sector reforms (McDonnell, 2020; Newiak et al., 2022), or digital technology and public innovation (Onyango and Ondiek, 2022), one important way of applying a PPA perspective to governance in Africa consists of identifying and analyzing government agencies that perform their tasks well under improbable governance conditions (see also Otenyo, Chapter 11 in this volume for a discussion of pockets of effectiveness in African public services). Some of these analyses have been less explicit and broadly anchored on the role of state politics (de Sardan, 2008), on working with and realizing market principles (Leonard, 1991), or on the entrepreneurialism of traditional authorities in public policy and development processes (Afrifa and Ohemeng, 2022). All have focused more on understanding *how* public institutions work and *what* they do well than on how they *ought* to work or perform (Grindle, 1997; Levy, 2014; Kjær et al., 2021). Their objective is to understand functional governance in Africa.

This chapter builds on this growing body of knowledge and efforts to identify impact strategies by locating examples of functional governance (as opposed to good governance) approaches to organizing government activities (e.g., Hyden and Bratton, 1991; Onyango and Hyden, 2021). It is anchored on key research streams of PPA in Africa, including positive deviance (PD) and pockets of effectiveness (PoEs). The Kenyan public sector presents an interesting case of analysis given that, since the 1970s, its positive experiences have been used to advance bolder discussions on public administration performance in African contexts (e.g., Hyden et al., 1970; Leonard, 1987, 1991, 2008; Ochieng, 2007). The Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) is used as the unit of analysis, with a focus on its institutional competencies and innovations to promote tax compliance. Notwithstanding some work on African revenue authorities addressing issues around their performance (e.g., Fjeldstad and Moore, 2009), most scholars agree that revenue authorities have not delivered or that there is scarce information about their performance (e.g., Sarr, 2016; Dom, 2019). By contrast, KRA has ensured revenue growth and created effec-

tive taxation and regulatory regimes since its creation in 1995. It has introduced institutional innovations to manage the economy and improve the public purse. The KRA has made these positive milestones despite a cocktail of challenges, including political patronage, corruption, and low public confidence.

The chapter is organized as follows. It first reviews the positivity literature in Africa in light of the PPA agenda. It explores theories and factors that enable public institutions to perform under challenging political and economic conditions. Next, it presents background on KRA, detailing its institutional objectives and structures. It then discusses the methods used for the case analysis and turns to the results, which explore several factors underpinning performance in KRA. The chapter concludes by linking the case discussion to the broader subject matter of PPA.

A PPA PERSPECTIVE ON AFRICAN GOVERNANCE: TOWARDS A FUNCTIONAL GOVERNANCE APPROACH

Positive evaluations of governance in Africa have been conducted under various nomenclatures, including positive outliers, positive deviance, and islands or pockets of effectiveness, to mention a few. These perspectives need to be theoretically integrated to promote a vibrant *positivity* research agenda. The good (normative) governance hegemony has meant that studies echoing these positive experiences have rarely informed indicators used in African governments' monitoring and evaluation activities (Andrews, 2015). Auditing of African government performance still resides in and mirrors *optimal* or the *ought-to-be* policy outputs, and what comprises the *effectiveness* of public administration rarely measures practical gains and experiences.

Nevertheless, studies on positive governance experiences offer interesting insights into government performance across governance sectors. This has prompted a call for a bolder research agenda on how the African state actually works (Bierschenk and de Sardan, 2014; Levy, 2014). This 'functional governance approach' considers the broader context of governance (Hyden and Bratton, 1991; Onyango and Hyden, 2021) and seeks practical knowledge about how public institutions work in Africa and other global South contexts (Booth, 2011; Grindle, 2017; Heilmann, 2008). Scholars and practitioners have increasingly recognized the importance of understanding more functional pathways to improved governance (Grindle, 2017), an issue similarly underscored recently by the 2017 *World Development Report* (World Bank, 2017). The World Bank (2017: xiii) report accentuates the need for the international development community to move beyond asking, "What is the right policy?" to instead asking, "What makes policies work to produce life-improving outcomes?" The report notes, "Policymaking and policy implementation do not

occur in a vacuum. Rather, they occur in complex political and social settings where individuals and groups with unequal power interact with changing rules as they pursue conflicting interests” (World Bank, 2017: 29).

The significance of this lens, or what has been referred to as a *functional approach to governance* (Hyden, 2021), resides in its integrative conceptualization of positive governance outcomes. It puts together insights on understanding the political economy of institutional performance and the state’s role in development or governance outcomes. It also seeks to rectify how neoliberal philosophies and the ‘good governance’ approach have understood the African state’s role in development (de Sardan, 2008; Kjær et al., 2021; Hyden, 2021). Whether applying Public Authority (Kirk and Allen, 2022), working with the grain (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2014), limited statehood (Risse, 2011) or hybrid governance lenses (e.g., Ekeh, 1975; Meagher, 2012), functional governance prioritizes understanding or leveraging practical solutions and institutional innovations as conceptualized in pockets of effectiveness, positive deviance, and positive outliers.

Overall, the functional approach assesses the instrumentality of specific contextual variables of governance that may introduce and sustain fit-to-context institutional and political reform initiatives (Grindle, 2017). This has been clear in the last twenty years, where emerging empirical evidence and knowledge exchange in Africa have been more intentional in pursuing a fit-to-context development agenda, for example, in the aspirations of the *Agenda 2063* (Levy, 2014; Onyango 2023a). Statutory studies and locally produced datasets by Afrobarometer, the African Union, the African Development Bank, and the World Bank have shown remarkable positive governance trajectories and transformation of state systems across African countries (Onyango, 2022, 2023a; Otenyo, 2022; Newiak et al., 2022). The African Union’s *Agenda 2063* evaluation reports show that these transformations are slowly introducing a paradigm shift in how African governance is being framed: from the paradigm of doom (Chege, 1997) or the Afro-pessimism of the 1980s and 1990s to that of change or *Afro-optimism* (e.g., Aniche, 2023). In public administration, this agenda primarily considered intentional reporting of African states’ progressive developments and reforms in different policy areas (e.g., Roll, 2014; Levy, 2014).

The PPA agenda has come out more explicitly in favoring this positive reporting of sectoral reforms and policy successes, taking stock of how incremental approaches, unintended consequences, and institutional innovations impact development programs and the performance of public organizations (Roll, 2014; Muhumuza, 2022; Bierschenk and de Sardan, 2014; Hyden, 2021; Onyango, 2023b). Whether termed positive outliers, PoEs, or PD, PPA perspectives show how progress or positive outcomes occurred against the odds, especially under poor governing conditions like those associated with fragile

statehood. The positive outcomes are considered “aberrations from the norm, as ‘islands’ cast adrift within a broader sea of patronage” (Hickey, 2019: 5). They emerge from a complex mix of factors underpinned by political context variables, such as political settlements or other institutional innovations. More broadly, as Kjær (2022: 81) observes, dimensions of PPA, and PoEs in Africa, reside in and respond to “(i) the debate on the developmental state and (ii) a debate on good governance.”

Positive deviance studies assume that positive outcomes, like in public sector reforms, may be induced by either problem-driven interactive adaptation or solution- and leader-driven change. In problem-driven interactive adaptation, unusual positive outcomes occur “when reforms are introduced through an iterative process more reflective of ‘muddling through’: change is motivated by a problem, not a solution; the reform content emerges through a process of experimentation and trial and error; with multiple agents playing different leadership roles; producing a mixed-form hybrid that is fitted to the peculiar context” (Andrews, 2015: 197). The assumption is that the context of implementation already may have in place potential solutions and resources needed for reforms to succeed.

According to the *Public Authority* literature, mainly produced by researchers in the Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa at the London School of Economics and Political Science, the political context in Africa has multiple and sometimes overlapping public authorities who may need to be engaged to guarantee the social embeddedness of public policy (Hyden, 2012; Kirk and Allen, 2022). These public authorities (both state and non-state in nature) possess unique resources and knowledge that should be explored to improve policy success. Since their resources and solutions “are locally owned, they are potentially more sustainable than externally driven solutions which are often backed up by external resources (aid and policy conditionality)” (Ochieng, 2007: 458). This has been the case in Kenyan Agricultural Policy since the Swynnerton Plan (1954–59), where organizational, institutional, and policy innovations and reforms were at the core of policy success (Ochieng, 2005). Integrating indigenous knowledge and solutions has played a crucial role in the good performance of the Kenyan agricultural sector and other sectors across Africa, such as environmental and conservation policies, state-building projects, and inclusive governance (e.g., Bedigen, 2021). Also, democratic innovation in Africa is replete with relevant evidence of positive deviance (e.g., Adejumobi, 2015).

On policy fronts, the United Nations has recognized the role of these indigenous knowledge systems in its Agenda 2030.¹ Among the Gedeo community in Ethiopia, for example, Maru and colleagues (2020: 2) show that indigenous and local knowledge in “*songo* indigenous institutions, traditional beliefs, taboos, and local rules (seera) have been playing an enormous role in

promoting environmental protections and cultural conservation.” Similarly, Bedigen (2021: 457) shows that in South Sudan women’s use of indigenous (*Honyomiji*) institutions to participate in “preventing, managing and resolving conflict by applying customary laws and implementing ceremonial/ritual practices is foundational to successful and sustainable peacebuilding.” In short, as a PPA dimension, problem-driven interactive adaptation of positive deviance recognizes and leverages a diversion from standardized frameworks and norms in favor of context-informed solutions and approaches to creating functional governing structures in Africa. Bureaucratic ethnographic methodologies may be more suitable for understanding how such divergent innovations occur and become institutionalized, as suggested in Bierschenk and de Sardan’s (2019) study of African bureaucracies.

In solution- and leader-driven change studies, positive outcomes are said to occur “when reforms are introduced through a disciplined, formal project process: solutions are fully identified up-front and are the focus of change; the reform is fully planned out at the start and implemented as planned; a champion drives the process; and a pure-form best practice solution is produced” (Andrews, 2015: 197). Within these theoretical pathways, especially in the development administration research (e.g., Leonard, 1991), scholars have wrestled with showing how and when PoEs emerge (Kjær, 2022; Leonard, 2008; Roll, 2014). Whereas PD may be keen on unconventional norms and innovations that divert from the standard procedures or frameworks to produce unexpected performance within an institutional context, the PoE literature has sought to unpack how and why organizational performance occurs under unfriendly governance conditions. PoEs can emerge from exceptional leadership and good management and also can be placed in the country’s political economy or development agenda (Leonard, 2010).

For example, in his study of renowned Kenyan civil servants, Leonard (1991) showed that PoEs emerged from professional integrity, political connections, organizational autonomy, access to donor resources, self-discipline, commitment, risk-taking, and Africanization (local legitimacy or bureaucratic representation). Hathaway (2021) uses an institutional logic framework – integrating kinship, individual, professionalism, bureaucratic, and development and management logics – to show that organizational restructuring, institutional autonomy in employment and budgeting processes, institutional entrepreneurship, and networking enabled oversight institutions in Zambia, mainly the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Office of Auditor General, to perform better. In addition, dedicated, highly entrepreneurial, professional leadership in the Auditor General’s office championed relevant impactful reforms. Other studies have demonstrated that the direct disengagement of donors in pursuing strategies that are not adequately matched with local polit-

ical interests is also essential in generating PoEs (see Johnson, 2015; Kamara et al., 2023; Sitali et al., 2022; Muhumuza, 2022).

Muhumuza (2022) provides an interesting comparative analysis concerning public sector reform outcomes and donors' role in Uganda. He shows that reform outcomes were disastrous when donors pursued their interests and determined the pace and implementation mode. In contrast, in the Uganda Defense Forces reforms, where donors stepped back and let the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government leverage and "determine the needs, pace and mode of implementing the sensitive defense reforms, the results were relatively impressive" (Muhumuza, 2022: 339). In emphasizing coupling reform objectives to local political interests, this study shows that political will is critical in facilitating institutional depoliticization (cf., Leonard, 2010).

Overall, leveraging PPA involves a mixed basket of factors like appropriate organizational culture and capable management (Therkildsen, 2008), political autonomy (Evans, 1995), effective coupling of political loyalty and merit (Hickey, 2019), and societal embeddedness, among others. Recent studies on digital transformation in service delivery and public policy (e.g., Nambisan et al., 2019; Mhlanga and Moloi, 2020; Onyango and Ondiek, 2022) and evidence-informed policymaking in Africa (e.g., Goldman and Pabari, 2020) also have emphasized the importance of these variables.

The next section dissects how these factors may underpin selected cases of positive performance in the KRA. Given its political relevance, KRA is a high-stakes public institution. Its role in socioeconomic development puts it at the center of politics and contestations around revenue allocation. Thus, it must manage complex public demands and effectively respond to various political interests, political transitions, and regime priorities. These issues, along with the problems of the state's institutionalization, aid regime conditionalities, and historical challenges (Onyango, 2023a), make it a perfect case for a PPA analysis.

THE KENYA REVENUE AUTHORITY (KRA)

The creation of the KRA on July 1, 1995, like most in Africa, was a consequence of the need to improve state capacities to generate internal revenue, which conditioned the proliferation of Semi-Autonomous Revenue Authorities undertaken in response to donor-led New Public Management (NPM) reforms in the global South (e.g., Jeppesen, 2022). The KRA is an example of a successful policy transfer or implantation of NPM's isomorphic institutional reforms in the global south. Its creation was a culmination of a complex mix of factors, including internal pressures, integration of institutional fragmentation on revenue collection, and donor concerns about developing countries' ability to mobilize their own revenue by improving institutional and political

conditions for such endeavors. Donors thought semi-autonomous revenue authorities (SARAs) would lead the needed tax reforms, enabling African countries to improve revenue collection capacities and administration by being outside traditional bureaucratic structures. KRA was created to assess, collect, and account for all revenues, advise on the administration and collection of revenue, and perform other revenue-related functions as directed by the Ministry of Finance. The creation of KRA was a product of donor pressure, including the creation of the Anti-Corruption Bureau. As Shaoul (1999: n.p.) notes:

It was against this backdrop that the IMF, in 1997, suspended a \$220 million aid programme, which has still not been resumed. The international bankers issued a list of demands, including energy sector 'reform', autonomy for the Kenya Revenue Authority and the establishment of an independent anti-corruption authority. They demanded the prosecution of those responsible for the Goldenberg International scandal in the early 1990s when the government paid out \$500 million in compensation for fictitious exports.

The KRA has operated in an environment of extensive political and bureaucratic corruption, patron-clientelism, and a lack of institutional autonomy. For example, President Ruto "stated that corruption, abetting tax evasion and unwillingness to upgrade processing systems were some ills plaguing the taxman's efficiency in tax collection" (Barasa, 2023). The KRA has also struggled with political interference, as recently demonstrated in the premature exit of the commissioner general, Mr Githii Mburu, in February 2023, after the United Democratic Alliance party took over the government. It is believed that the previous government used the KRA to frustrate William Ruto and his political allies. On February 23, 2023, *The Nation* reported that

During his campaigns for the August 9 elections [2022], Dr Ruto claimed that his close allies were targeted for political prosecution or were being intimidated so that they could abandon him. Sources close to Mr Mburu reckon he opted to throw in the towel rather than wait to be pushed out by a board that wanted operations of KRA to take a different turn. (Muiruri, 2023)

Given its intractable political nature, KRA is used as a tool by those controlling state power to reward or punish the opposition or those considered unfriendly to the government. This has negatively affected its performance and generated a lack of public confidence. KRA also has been accused of pursuing predatory tax collection approaches despite a shift toward more customer-friendly compliance strategies since 2015. However, the poor perception of Kenyans towards the Authority may also be considered within the wider or overall low public confidence in public administration in Africa.²

Even so, the KRA has performed relatively well compared to most public institutions in undertaking its core mandates. Tyce's (2020) study of KRA as a potential PoE noted that the Authority emerged as a PoE in 2003 during the late former president Kibaki's largely technocratic leadership. It enjoyed relative political insulation that allowed it to perform. Thus, despite being created as an elite response to donor pressures to resolve revenue collection and administration deficits, it fits well with local demands. Consequently, attendant political settlements have found ways of effectively adopting it to the regime's political objectives.

The high political and economic stakes around KRA's role in governance do not allow it the luxury to underperform. Since its creation, the Authority has expanded its organizational structures, regional presence, and human resource capacity. It has ensured continuous growth of both the number and capacity of human resources. Despite the recent hiring freeze in most public institutions in Kenya, KRA leadership has been keen to increase its human capacity by bringing on board and training recruits. According to KRA, it "has built a strong professional team of over 6,000 employees deployed across the country ... [and] created a favorable work environment with able mentors who ensure talent is developed. [It has] also been ranked among the top five (5) employers of choice in the country."³

Accordingly, the KRA has risen somewhat above most challenges encumbering the public sector by becoming the hub of innovation and effectiveness to improve the public purse. It has remained one of the critical agencies in driving post-COVID-19 economic recovery policies, as shown in the World Bank's (2023) *Kenya Economic Update*. According to the report, "Kenya's economic performance softened in 2022, steering towards the country's long-term growth rate. Real GDP expanded by 4.8 percent in 2022, [...] with the strong rebound from the Covid-19 crisis at 7.5 percent annual growth in 2021 but broadly aligned with growth rates of Kenya's potential GDP as well as of the pre-pandemic decade" (World Bank, 2023: iv). It is within this context that KRA is explored as a case of PPA.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses two pathways to evaluate KRA as a case of PPA: (1) interrogation of public perception composites like public trust in government agencies, and (2) examination of internal reports and secondary data that point to institutional performance.

In terms of the first path, an online survey was administered to map public perceptions of KRA's performance and rating in the public sector. Thirty-four people completed the form. Of the respondents, 97 percent identified as taxpayers, and all reported engaging frequently with KRA services. Of the

34 respondents, 11 were female, 22 were men, and one preferred not to say. Moreover, 23 respondents worked in the formal employment sector, 10 worked in the informal employment sector, and one was unemployed. Of those in the formal employment sector, 11 worked in public administration, 7 worked in nongovernmental or international nongovernmental organizations, and 6 worked in other categories.

The survey for this chapter showed unsurprising public distrust in the KRA. On a scale of 1 to 5, the average survey score for KRA's performance was 2.62, and the average score for whether it met its mandate was 3.06. These responses resonate with Round 8 (2020/21) Afrobarometer, which showed that 28.6 percent of respondents had little trust in KRA, 27.4 percent had some trust, and only 15.2 percent had a lot of trust. The Afrobarometer data also show that 57 percent of Kenyans find it difficult to get information on taxes and fees and that almost 48 percent believe KRA has no right to make people pay taxes.

In addition, most respondents to the survey for this chapter considered innovation as key to institutional performance. They identified KRA's digital or online service delivery platforms as some of the most innovative channels public institutions use to improve performance. Of the respondents, 56 percent said public institutions' good performance is tied to innovation (pursuing newer strategies and methods to resolve problems). However, 93 percent of respondents felt that more could be done to enhance public innovation in the KRA. About 97 percent of respondents felt that KRA must strengthen its online tax systems and find innovative ways to ensure equitable tax collection, and 88 percent said adequate funding (linked to political will or support) and staff training (capacity building) are essential for institutional performance in public administration.

While informative, using public perceptions to examine organizational performance may generate blind spots. They are one-sided, primarily experiential, highly subjective evaluations. Moreover, members of the public are rarely adequately knowledgeable about how government institutions and processes work (Somin, 2015). They are also uninformed and unaware of incremental changes and institutional developments inside government institutions, including learning processes and resulting changes in performance. For these reasons, the second path for assessing PPA conditions in KRA entailed an analysis of statutory and other independent studies, including self-evaluation reports documenting what KRA has done or is doing. While these documents have limitations, like the possibility of KRA over-reporting its performance, they also provide insights that may complement or counter public perceptions. Findings from this analysis are discussed in the next section.

KEY MECHANISMS OF KRA PERFORMANCE

The analysis reveals that KRA has generated several positive outcomes, largely because of entrepreneurial leadership who built several collaborative networks and implemented total quality management principles. As such, the analysis aligns more with the solution- and leader-driven change than the problem-driven interactive adaptation dimensions of PPA.

First, KRA leadership has proactively engaged in building collaborative networks with national, regional, and global stakeholders. These networking efforts aimed to build international trust relationships, train professional staff, and build capacity. For example, KRA moved staff training responsibilities from its flagship Training Institute to the Kenya School of Revenue Administration (KESRA), which operates as a semi-autonomous entity. KESRA now engages in capacity-building for KRA and interested industry professionals. It offers market-driven academic programs, corporate training, and research from African industry experts in tax, customs, and fiscal policy. KESRA is one of only four World Customs Organization accredited Regional Training Centers in Eastern and Southern Africa. In 2022, KESRA trained over 600 students graduating with certificates in various areas.

Likewise, KRA, along with other Revenue Authorities and stakeholders in customs administration in the region, collaborated with the Japan International Cooperation Agency on the Master Trainers Program, which was part of the *Project on Capacity Building for the Customs Administrations of the Eastern African Region (Phase 2)*. The innovative and interactive Master Trainer Program is designed in a train-the-trainer format. It has improved trainers' skills and knowledge, which should ultimately scale up the capacity and professionalization of KRA staff, particularly in customs valuation, commodity coding and classification systems, and intelligence analysis. The program is in line with World Customs Organization standards, as well as East African Community Customs instruments, including, among others, the Management Act, Union Protocol, Rules of Origin, Management Regulations, Union Common External Tariffs, Compliance and Enforcement Regulations, Procedure Manual, Valuation Manual, and Post Audit Clearance Manual.

Second, KRA leadership have implemented total quality management (TQM) principles. TQM is thought to improve institutional leadership, employee relations, data quality and reporting, customer relations, service delivery design, and quality performance (Sharma and Hoque, 2002). "TQM is an interactive organizational-wide philosophy that [is] aimed toward continuously improving the quality of products/processes and meet[ing]/exceed[ing] customers' expectations" (Addis, 2020: 127). KRA's TQM efforts have led to

a strategy that focuses on improving public awareness and relations, building customer-sensitive structures, and using facilitative enforcement approaches.

KRA has taken numerous steps to improve public relations and public awareness about its purpose and role. For example, KRA's website is one of the most comprehensive and interactive in the Kenyan public sector, showcasing an effective e-government system. Its *innovate* site is an open content creation page where anyone can produce information or ideas on how KRA can improve processes, revenue collection, and customer service.⁴ In addition, KRA used Roadshows, KRA TV, VAT workshops, PAYE training, and tax assistance exhibitions to provide tax education, raise public awareness, and ultimately improve public relations.

KRA also has developed new structures that respond to customer needs. For example, it created six regional-level offices – South Rift, North Rift, Western, Central, South (Coast), and Northern – to provide services closer to the people. It developed iTax tutorials that make it easier to fill out and file tax returns. It also designed the eTIMS System, which uses an Online Sales Control Unit or Virtual Sales Control Unit to help taxpayers who need to integrate their automated billing/invoicing systems with KRA.⁵

Finally, KRA has implemented less-punitive approaches for addressing non-compliance, including waivers for defaulters. It also uses alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to expedite complex tax disputes outside law courts, for example, through the Quasi-Judicial Process and Tax Appeals Tribunal. KRA asserts that ADR is a cost-effective approach that moves from enforcement to trust and facilitation, preserves relationships, and resolves uncertainty around the dispute.

Together, these and other TQM-based approaches may be responsible for increasing tax compliance and mobilizing revenue for the nation. In July 2022, KRA released a press statement, saying:

For the first time in Kenya's history, the annual revenue collection has hit and surpassed the Two Trillion mark, defying the problematic economic environment brought about by COVID-19. This is after Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) recorded a monumental revenue collection of KShs. 2.031 Trillion for the Financial Year 2021/2022 (July 2021–June 2022) compared to KShs. 1.669 Trillion collected in the last financial year (FY 2020/2021). The Authority registered an above-target stellar revenue performance after exceeding the fiscal year target as stated in the Budget Policy Statement. (KRA Press Release, 2022)

Since its creation, KRA's institutional infrastructure, management principles, and norms have evolved to respond to complex demands and challenges and build its capacity to perform. A closer PPA analysis demonstrates that the Authority uses entrepreneurial leadership to build collaborative networks and implement TQM strategies to maximize performance. As an institution,

KRA wrestles with intractable challenges posed by its complex political environment, public trust deficits, socioeconomic demographics, and checkered history of state politics. While traditional performance analyses center on how these challenges constrain KRA performance, a PPA perspective paints a more hopeful picture. It shows that positive performance is not necessarily about the absence of bureaucratic dysfunction but rather about how institutions function in spite of dysfunctions to achieve core mandates.

CONCLUSION

The ‘good governance’ approaches typically used to assess performance stand in the way of an effective paradigm change in African public administration. Rather than focusing on policy failures, public sector leaders and reformers would be better served by learning from and building on institutional successes. As resoundingly advocated for in the positive deviance and pockets of effectiveness research, the PPA agenda is well positioned to identify such success and generate such practical, informed, context-specific, and institutionally customized solutions.

Although examinations of government failures highlight areas of concern and needed reform, they build on stereotypical ways of assessing government institutions, even in places where government agencies have performed relatively well, as the KRA case shows. Indeed, a transformative shift is taking place in Kenyan public administration, as in other African countries. Recent studies show that most government institutions across Africa (e.g., Goldman and Pabari, 2020), including parliaments (e.g., Blaser et al., 2020), are making considerable attempts to improve public relations, design context-specific impact strategies, and engage in collaborative network building and innovation. Overall, this shift has been attributed to the improving democratic conditions in the continent (e.g., Onyango, 2022, 2023a) and incremental changes that are improving governance conditions. Still, more research needs to be done to understand how these individual PPA cases can help build a repertoire of knowledge that will generate even more sustainable public innovation and improve the quality of government and governance in Africa.

Despite dealing with structural, political, social, and other challenges rooted in colonial legacies, African governments and their administrative apparatus have shown they can enhance performance. Nevertheless, the scholarly and journalistic reporting of PPA cases in African public service remains – in most quarters – insufficient and obscured by the negative evaluations of the good governance agenda. Many public administration scholars, particularly those working in African contexts, have yet to rise to the challenge of reporting *positivity*. Instead, they frame and analyze institutional reforms and evaluate performance in terms of failure rather than success. This may explain why recent

positive frames like ‘Africa is rising’ have yet to generate a solid research agenda. However, the PPA agenda is well poised to awaken the academic consciousness needed to unpack the gains being made by public agencies in Africa and elsewhere.

NOTES

1. See <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenoustpeoples/mandated-areas1/environment.html>, retrieved 10 June 2023.
2. See <https://www.afrobarometer.org/online-data-analysis/>.
3. See <https://kra.go.ke/careers>.
4. See <https://innovation.kra.go.ke/>.
5. See <https://kra.go.ke/etims-now-live>.

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11. Delivering immigration services: a case of positive public administration in Kenya

Eric E. Otenyo

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reflects on how efforts to modernize administrative processes at the Kenya Directorate of Immigration Services (DIS) have contributed to positive government program outcomes, which in turn continue to change Kenyan citizens' lives. Arguably, the department's performance in its core mission has produced highly valued societal outcomes, such as reducing poverty. As such, it provides a key case of positive public administration (PPA) in Kenya.

The chapter opens with a general discussion about bureaucracies in Africa and the need for stronger cataloguing of PPA examples on the continent. It then turns to the DIS case, exploring how the Directorate engaged in organizational reforms, modernized critical operational tasks, and reconfigured its organizational designs. Through these actions, the DIS was able to foster organizational learning, use technologies effectively, and transform service delivery, which in turn led to measurable improvements in policy implementation and program outcomes. This not only enhanced the Directorate's legitimacy within the national political establishment, but also enabled it to emerge as a "pocket of effectiveness" – and a case of PPA – in African bureaucratic development.

LOOKING FOR POSITIVITY IN AN UNLIKELY PLACE

Most African bureaucracies derive from colonial organizations that were associated with authoritarianism and centralized structures. After independence, many of those features were recalibrated to align with ethnic and religious identities, which in turn morphed into sophisticated spoils and patronage personnel systems. Many African scholars argue that the resulting organizational underperformance fueled a loss of confidence in government operations (Arriola, 2009; Hope and Kempe, 2012). Not only did government ministries

fail to deliver “development,” but the underlying organizational structures also remained unchanged and served narrow elite interests. Thus, the overreaching centralization of power created conditions of mistrust (cf., Ostrom, 1974). For Kenya and other East African countries, the centralized systems undermined accountability, which led to ineffective and inefficient public service delivery in many sectors (Otenyo, 2007). In addition, the enabling patronage systems fueled the widely proclaimed narratives of corrupt, excessively partisan, overcontrolling, and incompetent public administrators (Khadiagala and Mutullah, 2004).

As a result, scholars and practitioners expressed profound apprehension about state bureaucracies (Jreisat, 2002: 108), which were echoed by technical assistance organizations such as the United Nations Development Program and World Bank. Specifically, their concern was that human progress and social change would not occur where administrative determinants of development, like institutional capacities and requisite political systems, were weak, corrupt, without transparency, and unaccountable. For them, “corruption and poverty stroll hand-in-hand” (Henry, 2006: 910). To address these and other issues, Western donor agencies conceptualized accountability – enabled through rule of law and public participation – as the cornerstone of good governance (Schiavo-Campo and McFerson, 2008; World Bank, 1997a).

This view negates non-Western perspectives of good public administration and incentivizes the adoption of Western concepts (Drechsler, 2004; Haque, 2019). Indeed, some scholars advise against a global conceptualization of public administration (e.g., O’Flynn, 2022), particularly when the ecology of public administration is shaped by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (Van Der Wal, 2017). Instead, they suggest we should be more appreciative of what practitioners do to respond to policy problems in ways that impact society (Kirlin, 1996).

More specifically, David Leonard (2010) argues that exceptional well-functioning government agencies can exist in countries that have poor governance and weak public sectors. Case studies of these “pockets of effectiveness” enrich development administration by avoiding political determinism and negative attributes associated with failures in leadership and management (Leonard, 2010; see also Onyango, Chapter 10 in this volume for a discussion on pockets of effectiveness in African public services). Similarly, recent scholarship, especially by Douglas and colleagues (2021), makes the case that negative performance is not the full story and attainment of policy goals must be contextualized with a mindset that showcases arrangements and institutions that work. There are examples of organizations that have streamlined procedures and processes leading to commendable delivery of public services with positive impacts on developing countries. The larger field of public administration has benefitted from a well-developed body of work

that tells the story of how exemplary public organizations institutionalize in a productive and adaptive manner (e.g., Boin et al., 2021).

Despite these suggestions, scholars of African bureaucracies have yet to develop a catalogue of organizations whose performance is vibrant, innovative, and informed by a consistent culture of learning. Perhaps one reason for the lack of cases is the challenge for scholars is identifying measurable attributes we might assess in spotting policy implementation success in organizations. Indeed, we know “success is in the eyes of the beholder” (Compton and ’t Hart, 2019). It is multi-dimensional, situational, fragile, and mostly studied in relative terms. To give us a better theoretical picture of which measurable attributes we might apply in spotting policy implementation success in organizations, we rely on Compton and ’t Hart (2019) who demonstrate that comparative governance scholars can move away from fault-finding and highlighting of corruption and policy failures through exposing understudied cases of effective public value creation (Moore, 1995, 2013). They observe that success involves devising reforms and programs that lead to meaningful impacts for members of the public. In addition, ruling elites may work with international partners for coalition building and articulation of an enabling political ideology. In short, Compton and ’t Hart (2019) offer a way to evaluate the *process* of work done by focusing on linking the reforms within the organization (craft work) and adjustment of mission to respond to external global changes. Their work provides the framework for examining the outcomes of programs and services at the Kenya Directorate of Immigration Services.

Therefore, if one accepts the argument that descriptors like corruption, nepotism, and maladministration mesh with the concern in PPA about a prevailing negative discourse of government and public administration, there are good reasons to explore counter narratives about the net impact of DIS services and particularly where evidence leads to plausible rebuttals of claims of bureaucratic dysfunction. The task, therefore, is to offer a counterintuitive narrative based on our understanding of the Department’s relative effectiveness in service delivery and public service value addition. To that end, this chapter explores multiple economic and social measures of success drawn from public sources that underscore the policy outputs or agency actions and outcomes of the services offered by the DIS, which stands as a case of PPA.

THE DIRECTORATE OF IMMIGRATION SERVICES (DIS): A CASE OF PPA IN KENYA

In Kenya, the DIS is among the key modernizing ministries founded to offer services supportive of the development agenda. Historically, its broad mandate was to issue passports and other products that allowed Kenyans to travel abroad for purposes of education, trade, human capital training, diplomacy,

and consular services. More services were added to the docket as the country developed its global political and cultural profiles, but as commerce, trade, and international travel increased, so too did the demand for immigration services. This prompted the modernization and expansion of ministerial operations.

The emerging bureaucratic expansion fueled a one-sided narrative centered on increased opportunities for nepotism and corruption. This dominant discourse fueled bureaucracy bashing and erected barriers to organizational learning. Negative stories about government blunders, corruption fiascos, and white elephants were readily seen in numerous press reports, investigative exposés, books, and social media accounts (e.g., Khamisi, 2018; Wong, 2010). Perhaps this is unsurprising as the existence of corruption subcultures at the DIS is a matter of public knowledge (Associated Press, 2015; Kenya News Agency, 2019; Kimuyu, 2021; Ombati, 2013). Specifically, corruption involving bribes to acquire citizenship in Kenya is an old and ongoing story. It was documented in James Scott's (1972) important work on comparative corruption, and in the early 2020s, the country ranked at 128 of 180 countries, making it among the worst performers on Transparency International's corruption perception index (Transparency International, 2021). Although it is the national police department that is widely known for the endemic corruption, DIS was also implicated in malfeasance leading to widely publicized terrorist activities (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2000). However, due to the national government's concern with terrorism and the need to conform to demands of the USA and other Western countries, substantial reforms ensured a high degree of administrative development, organizational self-correction, and modernization.

Intuitively, one would not expect the DIS to feature as an exemplary performer in public service delivery, and indeed, it was not featured in literature about the excellent performance of Kenya's public bureaucracy in rural development, agricultural extension, and provincial administration (see Leonard, 1977, 1991, 2010). Nevertheless, the DIS has clearly created public value through its work and is an example of PPA in Kenya. The following sections explore how DIS launched organizational reforms, modernized critical operational tasks, and reconfigured its organizational designs to emerge as a "pocket of effectiveness" – and a case of PPA – in African bureaucratic development.

Organizational Reforms and Unit Modernization

Modernization and use of information technologies in the immigration sector are part of Kenya's larger public sector reform initiatives. These initiatives serve different objectives, including budget rationalization, professionalization, greater political oversight, and greater operational efficiencies and effective administration (Dassah, 2013; Schuppan, 2009). The reforms also

seek to be conscious of self-correction and cognizant of Kenyan cultural and social needs (Karyeija, 2012). The next section reflects on the centrality of administrative development to attainment of positive policy outcomes amidst complex political and bureaucratic organizational exigencies.

Initially, the reforms targeted both critical operating tasks (COTs) and strategic management task (SMATs) areas. Table 11.1 describes the COTs and their identified problems and applied solutions. COTs are described as duties and tasks that must be carried out for an organization to justify its existence. They entail making improvements in business processes and adopting realistic plans for performance improvements. As Kiggundu (1989: 48) points out, COTs are dependent on technological dynamics. In that vein, the DIS modernized its passport production, control, and archiving services with advanced cutting-edge technologies.

SMATs are the leadership and managerial tasks embedded in the organization's mission statement. The Directorate's vision statement notes the desire "to be the lead immigration service provider in the world." As captured on the DIS website, the mission is "To contribute to security and socio-economic development of the country by facilitating international travel, regulating entry, exit, residency, citizenship, and delivery of consular services" (Immigration Department, 2022). SMATs define the uniqueness of the organization and shape its interactions with external environments. Thus, for example, DIS has a responsibility to adhere to a broad legal framework that includes the Constitution of Kenya, the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act of 2011 with subsidiary legislation, and a broad range of ordinances under the aegis of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Migration Dialogue, African Union Migration Policy Framework, the framework of the African Union Migration Policy Framework, and 2012 IGAD region protocols. Overall, a broad range of policies in areas of citizenship, immigration control, management of foreign nationals and associated issues guide the unit's implementation strategies.

Several organizational dynamics shaped the output of the DIS. First, the government paid attention to anti-corruption organizational strategies. Officers at DIS were subjected to lifestyle audits and to numerous trainings and interventions aimed at reducing corruption. Organizational changes ensured that new technologies facilitated internal and external accountability. The initiatives not only reduced roles of corruption cartels and middlemen, but also supported other efforts for effective and efficient service delivery. In particular, reforms in Kenya's civil service targeted areas prone to corruption. Increased use of new technologies (including mobile money payments) and support for whistleblowing made operations more transparent, which is consistent with other comparative anti-corruption messaging (Roman, 2012).

Table 11.1 Tasks, problems and solutions in the Directorate of Immigration Services

Selected operating tasks	Identified problems	Applied solutions
Staffing at border control posts	-Inadequate training of staff on key areas of security/public safety and immigration law -Coordination of services with other government units, NGOs, and international partners -Weak liaison of related services -Inefficient visa process procedures -Inadequate staff complements	-Senior staff trained at National Defense College, Staff trained at Kenya School of Government and overseas; in-house organization development training; Kenya Institute of Migration Studies with Maastricht Graduate School and University of Nairobi -Robust human resource development and performance management practices and programs offered in the USA, EU, GIZ, IGAD, IOM, China, and Egypt; One Stop Border Post within East Africa -Whole-of-Government approach; Coordination with Kenya Ports Authority; Kenya airports/ Kenya Citizenship and Coordination Committee; Border Control & Operations Coordination Committee; decentralized Border Management Committees established -Consultative meetings/task forces with civil society partners and police; increased accountability and clarity of responsibilities (Whole-of-Society Approach) -Positions filled at critical border posts/morale boosters/staff uniforms/better labor relations/overtime allowances -Streamlined e-visas; increased consular services and visa-on-arrival; visa process cashless online payment system
Maintaining technical equipment and computerized operations	-Loss of files -Inefficient information verification systems -Disappearance of files/problems with early database structures/weak record keeping -Use of inoperable unintegrated legacy computer systems	-Increased links to Kenya Identification Systems; digitization eliminated loss of files -Increased use of management information systems and support from ICT Authority of Kenya -Access to global immigration databases and networks and local organizational databases electronically managed on secure interrelated portable devices; donor hardware support -Computerized and digital archival systems
Work permit issuance	-Corrupt middlemen or brokers (cartels)	-Elimination of middlemen and cartels through digitization of services, online payment of permits and fees, issue of e-permits
Dissemination of education about Immigration Services	-Lack of proper channels for communication with public and stakeholders	-Use of social media and open government portal website; increased consular services; automated query and response feedback systems -Improved supervision of public relation products and introduction of employee Service Charter (Otung and Jagero, 2014)
Issuance of passports	-Insecure easily duplicable passport -Cybercrime -Long wait for application processes, high demand for passports -Weak biodata verification systems and insecure critical data -Use of inefficient technologies and procedures -Lack of standards and procedures, reinforced 10-year expiration -Long waits for passport issuance undermine trust in government	-Issuance of e-passports with secure passport parts made in UK, Ireland, and Malta -Decentralized passport collection, shared service centers; issuance of secure East Africa e-passport to replace machine readable (decentralized verification of applications) -Efficient digital biodata verification processes; use of Automatic Finger Integrated System -Mechanisms were benchmarked with South Africa (for eGate Services), the EU, and the USA operations/private sector raters such as by Global Passport Index/Hanley Passport Index/Nomad Consultancy -Installation of digital kiosks and passport reader at airports (continued digital transformation) -Administrative efficiency

Source: Author.

Second, a concerted effort was made to move closer to a meritocratic personnel policy, to adopt modern modes of management, and cultivate front-line professionalism in interpreting difficult street-level immigration challenges. Enhanced training, and other HR initiatives enabled great strides in improving capacity to deliver outputs – i.e., passports, visas, entry passes, work permits, permanent residence, citizenship, border management, investigations and enforcement of immigration laws, consular work, and travel assistance endeavors – in a timely and efficient manner. Moreover, several internal reviews of operations were routinized in response to stakeholder demands. Among the key guiding principles for the move to meritocracy were ideas from departmental working papers, especially the Needs Analysis Paper of 2001, the Immigration Reform Report of 2005 on restructuring, and the Systems, Practices, Policies and Procedures Audit Report of 2006. The latter was a result of audits by the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC).

Third, the principle of service to “customers” and “clients” through Huduma (Service) Centers made it easy for members of the public to access immigration services. Huduma Centers were constituted as part of user-centered decentralization efforts. Although DIS is embedded within the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government, it remained relatively autonomous in making technical operational decisions. However, some of the policy decision making apparatus especially in national security matters were made through guidance from national political leadership. Still, DIS instituted unique oversight changes that work best in decentralized structures. The need for greater flexibility and discretionary decision making was evident in responding to certain immigration policy questions, such as aspects of reciprocal border management within regional economic blocks.

Beyond changes and revisions to operation rules, DIS also underwent structural changes to facilitate responsiveness. For decades, most immigration work had been centralized in Nairobi. Subsequent reforms resulted in bureaucratic growth, and especially, shifting immigration service centers to areas outside Nairobi. Tasks like scrutinizing travel documents are now done in those centers and the overlap with the Nairobi office adds a layer to security and veracity of the supporting documents. The provision of informational services and mandated verification of applicant identity documents at the decentralized clearing offices leaves much of the planning and policy oversights, rulemaking, and strategic decision making at the head office. On account of reducing workload in Nairobi and enhancing bureaucratic responsiveness and efficiency, decentralized operations together with greater use of integrated technologies made it somewhat easier than before to provide essential immigration public services.

Positive Changes Through Improvement Initiatives

To explore the significance of improvements in organizational operations, we must evaluate DIS on generalized measures of effectiveness with regard to its core mandate. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to describing success from a national system wide perspective. The point is to demonstrate that increased attention to operational reforms enhances organizational legitimacy and yields better policy outcomes.

Areas of considerable success can be seen in the production of Kenya's immigration department's premier artifact, the national passports and work permits. Analyses of employee performance in timely delivery of reputable travel documents show that the overall quality of the work done by immigration officers in Kenya is comparable to that in developed countries, if one focuses on economic and societal outcomes in terms of value addition. There are some indicators that valid comparisons can be discerned from weighing costs and benefits of services offered. For instance, with respect to overall operational costs, services in Kenya and other African countries are often pegged on dollar exchange rates, which is a bigger burden to developing nations. Moreover, African countries pay higher amounts for visas to the USA (Agbor and Meissner, 2020). That said, delivery of immigration services as a critical component of Kenya's economic development supports the country's economy in much more profound ways than is usually acknowledged. Despite a great deal of scrutiny of the work done by DIS staff, the articulation of DIS's public value addition is less explored in administrative discourses. For some services like issuance of passport, there are hardly any macro-level evaluations of social benefits of such service.

Further insights into differences between DIS's ability to deliver on its core mission suggest that at the operational levels, for example, the management of cross border transit has substantially improved. Through collaborations with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the US Embassy, One Stop Border Posts have delivered on lowering illegal activities across the borders (US Embassy, Kenya, 2019). And thanks to fast paced internal reform processes, the delivery of core DIS services and products is, for the most part, successful.

In Kenya, the nationwide increase in use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the public sector proved to be beneficial in operations like document verification, data archiving, and issuance of travel documents. ICTs underline globalization, enable diffusion of innovative techniques and processes and promote organizational learning and transformational change (Jreisat, 2012). ICTs made it easier for members of the DIS to achieve performance targets in service and products based on international standards.

Boosted by internal personnel improvement interventions, tremendous success is visible in areas where human power and technologies have combined to increase effectiveness in service delivery. Kenya is one of the few African countries that has instituted the use of performance measurement tools to leverage improvements in policy implementation at the national level. Instituting performance measurement reinforces the nudge to compare unit performance against relevant international pegs or benchmarks for gauging own administrative processes.

With oversight from the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government, DIS implemented such a performance management strategy. The process entailed annual performance evaluation and performance contracting to ensure program and project goals were met. The directorate established evaluation criteria and indicators which included service impacts on citizens, implementation of Citizen's Service Delivery Charter, attainment of organizational core missions, financial management, and prevention of corruption. In addition, the leadership at DIS provided a clear vision and cultivated *esprit de corps* within its body by rationalizing workplace structures and rebranding through symbolic dress codes and instituted professionalism and ritualized reward efforts for excellent service delivery. Training efforts to focus on "customer needs" were developed resulting in changes in organizational cultures. The changes made a difference in productivity of the overall DIS workforce.

In a quantitative performance rating of more than 300 self-reporting agencies and units, none attained an "excellent" performance ranking, and only two placed at "very good" (Republic of Kenya, 2021). Despite the fact that most Kenyan ministries rarely achieve performance targets, during the last reporting, DIS fell in the category of "good performance." The point here is that the Directorate delivered on most of its promises and avoided falling in the cluster grade of the "fair" and "poor."

While recognizing that modernizing the public sector was part of organizational learning, it also was Kenya's intention to be a regional leader. That aspiration is summarized by a distinct set of framework elements listed in Table 11.2. These elements are very much in line with emerging national policy goals. For example, the Citizenship and Immigration Act of 2011 and the Kenya Citizens and Foreign National Management Service Act of 2011 are aligned to goals of encouraging Kenyans to seek employment outside the country and send remittances to Kenya. Thus, the department has to strive to issue travel documents that meet global standards. In addition, by conducting consultations with regional partners, the country seeks to enforce international security protocols envisioned in statutes like the Counter-Trafficking Act of 2014 and the various anti-terrorism laws. Many other elements are meant to support regional immigration reforms geared toward greater integration in East Africa.

Beyond achievement of policy outcomes, we can infer examples of additional public service goods which exemplify the government's positive role in dealing with immigration services from the Directorate's e-passport and eVisa innovations. Although some services deliver effective immediate benefits to citizens, the well-designed strategy of earning foreign exchange through immigration services has implications on organizational development and work practices. To take advantage of the "proletarianization" of air travel and in response to the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution and the revised Immigration Act of 2011 which opened doors for dual citizenship, additional reforms were initiated. For example, decentralization of DIS offices allowed biometric data to be obtained in regional centers at Eldoret, Nakuru, Embu, Kisii, Mombasa, and Kisumu. These efforts led to increased travel to the Gulf region and other parts of the Middle East where Kenyans sought employment opportunities (Nigusie, 2022).

From a comparative perspective, DIS e-passport and e-visa operations under the new regime mirrored or matched those in advanced countries, especially in terms of functionality. For example, for applications to be successful, one must fill out forms, make payments, provide proof of citizenship and state-issued identification cards. Additional requirements are listed on agency websites and easily accessible to all interested parties. While document processing can be done on an expedited basis depending on specific needs, the average time for receiving the document is roughly three weeks, which is reasonable by international standards.

Today, Kenya's DIS offers e-visa allowing tourists to visit or transit the country without much of the previous red tape. In addition, the proliferation of numerous services on its e-citizen portal have made it relatively easy for visitors and residents to receive immigration services at all ports of entry, including airports, seaports, and land border control posts. And, with the rise of the mobile payment system (M-PESA), cash exchanges have been virtually eliminated and reduced inefficient paperwork.

Furthermore, the DIS case shows that bureaucracy in Kenya can serve not just the upper classes, but also the middle and lower classes. Such service across the classes is key to effective public administration (e.g., Lipsky, 1980; Sjoberg, Brymer, and Farris, 1966). Evidence now suggests that DIS provides services to the upper class, multinational corporations, the middle and lower classes, with varying degrees of success. The scale of outward emigration from Kenya and travel outside the country by persons seeking low-paid jobs has been previously understudied. Estimates from the World Bank's Migration and Remittances Factbook indicate that in 2013, almost 500,000 persons fit in that category (World Bank, 2016). Many of those studied took jobs not only in the United Kingdom, the Middle East, and the USA, but in neighboring Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Botswana, South Africa, and Lesotho. Thus, the

role of DIS goes beyond remittances and is a support service for the general social welfare of millions of Kenyans of all social classes and walks of life.

Increased Levels of Remittances

The implementation of the e-passport program had a positive, though perhaps unpredicted, spillover effect: increased levels of remittances. Passports have enabled millions of Kenyans to work and earn a living in many places including the United States, United Kingdom, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, and the Middle East. For example, over 300,000 Kenyans reside in the Middle East. In 2015, Kenya signed bilateral deal with UAE and Saudi Arabia each to recruit 100,000 Kenyans for mostly domestic work jobs (Manji, 2017). Other countries with large numbers of Kenyans include Belgium, Australia, Canada, Turkey, Germany, the Southern African region and, to a smaller extent, China, and other Asian countries. Many of those making the cash transfers are in the age brackets of 18 to 55, with 60 percent being identified as male (Central Bank of Kenya, 2021).

Remittances are key source of external financing in developing countries (Ratha, 2005). And for Kenyans, the ability to work overseas opened enormous opportunities and lowered the country's dependence on traditional exports of agricultural commodities like tea and coffee and the tourism sector (Ng'etich, 2011). To illustrate, in 2017, formal diaspora remittances overtook tea, coffee, and tourism as Kenya's highest foreign exchange earner (USD 2.2 billion/KSh. 228 billion) and the numbers continue to grow (Omondi, 2017). Remittances amounted to 3.1 percent of Kenya's GDP (World Bank, 2020). According to the Central Bank of Kenya (2021, 2022) remittance inflows have increased in the last 15 years, reaching USD 3.718 billion in 2021 and USD 3.397 billion as of May 2022.

Political leaders' proclamations on governance recognize the role of Kenya's diaspora workers, noting their contributions of over KSh. 375 billion was a "colossal" amount "driven by ordinary Kenyans" (Kenyatta, 2022). Further, the vast amount of the diaspora remittances (92 percent) was handled through Safaricom's mobile money service (M-PESA), which is available throughout the country. It is a success story because M-PESA outperforms US firms, Western Union, and Money Gram (Mburu, 2022). In addition, the non-monetary in-kind remittances like medicines and household and electronic goods are an important component of the cost-benefit equation. Remittances are lifeblood of millions of Kenyans who would otherwise fall into deeper poverty, and during the 2008 global economic downturn, Kenyans overseas stepped in to provide vital resources for their kin "at home." Remittances from diaspora Kenyans increased by 9 percent even during the Covid-19 crisis (World Bank, 2021).

Table 11.2 *Benchmarking framework in regional immigration service delivery*

Paradigm shift to e-passports (East African Passport)
Guideline changes in short- and long-term harmonization of policies and movement of people
Offer services that meet global standards (e.g., visa, permits, passports, border security & public health protocols); agreements on common terminologies and concepts
Regional consultations, monitoring, and peer review systems

Source: Author.

Cultural Diversity and Mutual Benefits

We must not forget the demand side of the equation. Immigrants add to the cultural diversity and intellectual capital of the receiving countries (Goff, Zarin, and Goodman, 2012). Often described as the “brain drain” this group of immigrant workers are a key parcel of the Western world’s human resources pool and, for example, a loss to Africa’s need for qualified scientists (Akinrinade and Ogen, 2011; African Capacity Building Foundation, 2016; Olutayo, 2017). Kenyans are an important part of the African immigration story of the USA and have among the highest academic qualifications and employment rates (Bashi and Zuberi, 1997; Felton, 2022; Hellman, 2020; Kposowa, 2002). The Pew Research Center (Tamir, 2022) and other researchers noted that in 2019, Black immigrants comprising persons from the Caribbean and African continent were 4.6 million, an increase from the 800,000 in 1980 (US Census Bureau, 2014; Anderson, 2017). The reasons for the growth in numbers of those leaving Kenya are varied, and include things like family migration (Kabuiku, 2017), the search for employment, and pursuit of higher education. According to the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (2022), in 2021, with 5,462 students, Kenya was among the top African countries to send students to the USA through the USIS Student and Exchange Visitor Program.

The need for passports and other travel services is much broader than issuance for settlement in other countries. Millions of Kenyans travel for sports, leisure, medical, peace-keeping, and diplomatic reasons. Many Kenyans travel to other East African countries for work and other reasons. Through the One Stop Border concepts and issuance of regional East African Community e-passport, Kenyans run business outside their country’s borders. Others have also sought asylum and traveled for religious reasons like the Haj to Mecca or Christian visits to Jerusalem. DIS is successful at collaboration with international partners in combatting crime and cross-border security challenges. Kenya is also host to refugees from Somalia, South Sudan, and Ethiopia (US

Department of State, 2021). Refugee crises typically involve work with international organizations that include the IOM and numerous UN agencies.

Besides providing travel documents and reducing the transactional costs for global engagements, the department's role mobilization and informational services is an important part of its positive contributions. DIS has decentralized visa issuance in many countries to expand its outreach. The Government of Kenya (2019) data show "an impressive performance in the tourism sector since 2015," with tourism arrivals growing by 3.9 percent from 2.02 million tourists in 2018 to 2.05 million in 2019. These numbers show that Kenya is one of the destinations of choice for international travelers. It is important to observe that the Directorate is part of the intergovernmental and integrated infrastructure that contributes to the tourist sector's enormous success at attracting visitors for a host of reasons, including cultural, heritage, sports, business, conference, beach, wildlife, and ecotourism visits. Those activities are within the large list of quality-of-life indicators and acceptable indicators of a growing economy (see, for example, Backer and Weiler, 2017; Eurostat, 2021; Hall and Jones, 1999; World Bank, 1997b).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented evidence that the Directorate of Immigration Services is a case of positive public administration in Kenya. In line with Douglas and colleagues (2021), the chapter asserts that times call for public sector reflection on positive aspects of the administration evidenced in measures of public value. That involves exploration of internal agency reforms tailored to achieve organizational goals and missions. We established that to shine as a bright spot of governance, DIS launched organizational reforms, modernized critical operational tasks, and reconfigured its organizational designs. Through these actions, DIS improved its operations, generating efficiencies, creating public value, and contributing to Kenya's prosperity. As a result, DIS has emerged as a "pocket of effectiveness" in African bureaucratic development.

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12. Understanding and learning from positive policy interventions in the context of Latin American public administration

Pablo Sanabria-Pulido and Cristian Plischoff

INTRODUCTION

Public administration scholarship must incorporate cases and data from the global South in building its main theories (Moloney et al., 2023). Cases and data from underrepresented regions of the world are frequently portrayed in the extant literature as examples of what not to do in sound public administration, as opposed to the “better-performing” administrative apparatus of the global North. Yet, Latin America and the global South can help expand and improve the understanding of governance and provide valuable contributions to governments worldwide, especially considering the pressing institutional challenges administrations often face and the pervasive lack of resources and capacity within their public sectors. Thus, our chapter shows what Latin America brings to the table when collecting experiences from the bright side of public administration.

In this chapter, we analyze some of the elements that contribute to success in public policy and public administration in Latin America. This is because more than the metrics usually used in the global North are needed to explain the variations observed in our region. We conduct a literature review and a case study methodological approach to account for the particularities of positive public administration in Latin America. To identify some of the particularities of positive public administration in this part of the world, this chapter starts with a review of the extant research on what has been understood as success or failure in public administration and policy scholarship from abroad and the region. Following this, we present three experiences to what we can learn from our countries with a positive public administration lens. These cases are Ciclovía from Bogotá, Colombia, participatory budgeting, and the Bolsa Familia program in Brazil. Finally, our chapter concludes with three

elements of policy success in Latin America. They are the following: taking a citizen-oriented approach, the need for adaptation over time, and the power of a mission-orientation. These lessons help us understand some of the features of positive public administration in countries with weak institutional settings. In doing so, our chapter contributes to understanding how public administrations in middle-income countries can learn to successfully operate within and hack the political, economic, and social restrictions that often appear in the context of global South countries.

HOW HAS THE LATIN AMERICAN LITERATURE ADDRESSED POSITIVE ASPECTS OF ITS PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?

The review of the main empirical literature in Latin America reveals that, in general, public administration literature in the region has focused more on failure than on identifying positive practices. This is a problem because there is a rich vein of research and learning that can occur by understanding the positive contributions that Latin American public administrations can make in challenging institutional contexts. This is particularly so because there are significant flaws in the functioning of political-administrative systems and low institutional capacity in the region. Hirschman (1975) long ago called for a broad understanding of the capacities and possibilities of governments in the region. Despite this call, it is evident that a large part of the literature on Latin American public administration has focused instead on demonstrating failure and providing policy recommendations to help overcome various institutional problems.

This lens for analysis has primarily come from political science. In particular, a group of academics focused on institutional weakness to understand the problems Latin America experienced with political and governmental processes (e.g., O'Donnell, 1993). This research ushered in frameworks that seek to politically explain what hinders virtuous governance in Latin America's governments, which share problems such as clientelism, favoritism, and patrimonialism. Thus, these academics have provided a helpful framework for understanding dysfunction. These governance arrangements generally sustain a system with significant inequalities and state deficiencies that often operate in favor towards particular groups or narrow interests, hindering the achievement of an effective state serving all citizens equally. For scholars like O'Donnell (1993), institutions are imperfectly created to facilitate the continuity of inequalities and to hinder more effective state action. Thus, according to this approach to institutional weakness, it is more than a result; it is baked into the system and is designed to maintain inequalities, rent capture, and imbalances that disproportionately benefit certain actors in the system.

While the reasons for governmental dysfunction in Latin America are well-articulated, it is less clear that there is a conceptual or theoretical framework that helps understand the positive aspects, neither from public administration nor from political science or political economy. What this means is that there is no framework for understanding success in the context of Latin American public administration. Brinks and colleagues (2019) made some efforts toward explaining how governance across Latin America works, describing the region as sharing certain basic aspects of institutional stability. This allows its political-administrative systems to function at a basic level, with a certain capacity and credibility in their electoral systems.

There are a range of challenges for identifying features of well-functioning public administration in contexts of low trust and weak institutional capacity. The context of institutional weakness that characterizes Latin American nations and governments (Chudnovsky, 2021) demonstrates a certain Latin American obsession with explaining and understanding deviation and failure rather than achievement, success, and policy learning. While the framework for analyzing institutional weaknesses has a clear focus on political aspects, it is not difficult to detect that multiple works in Latin American public administration clearly emphasize perversions rather than achievements or lessons from effective actions carried out by public administrations. Thus, the failure complex that bedeviled Latin American political discourse and research, known as “fracasomania,” persists (Hirschman, 1975). However, this may make sense in a Latin American context that continues to face challenges which reduce the quality of life for citizens and expose the low capacity of public administration in the region; for example, with high levels of corruption, low citizen trust in the state, rampant clientelism, or the evident capture of the state by privileged groups.

What Does the Scholarship Tell us About Positive Latin American Public Administration Views?

In this section, we conduct non-exhaustive searches for terms related to positive public administration in Latin America, such as “success” and “failure” in English, as well as “positive public administration” and “policy success.” Subsequently, we delve into two top journals in the region using the same terms in Spanish and Portuguese to identify works that capture perspectives on positive public administration. This review aims only to identify articles whose titles may reveal approaches, patterns, or specific methods in which the literature has addressed these topics in the region, not necessarily labeled as positive public administration. The listings will typically reflect the first 10–15 hits that the search generates. The obsession with failure seems to stem primarily from a common academic agenda in the 1990s and 2000s that often

used comparisons, establishing parallels between the policy achievements, for example, of the so-called Asian tigers compared to the poor achievements of Latin American countries that were barely recovering from the so-called lost decade of the 1980s. A simple search on policy success or failure in Latin America (Table 12.1) shows a bias in the approaches and comparisons of studies conducted in the region. Various works from that time highlight the “fracaso” of Latin American public administration and policy structures (Table 12.1). The evident focus on the usual failures from adopting internationally devised reforms appears to be a common theme in the development literature, which portrayed the failures of Latin America as a deviation from the well-behaved Asian countries.

Nevertheless, within public administration literature it is evident that these obsessions with failure rather than positivity persist decades later in the emerging empirical literature on public administration and public policies in the region. For example, a focus on positive public administration does not seem to be common in the Latin American context or, indeed, generally in the global South.

However, a more detailed search focused on Latin American authors reveals a certain movement unlike what is observed in Table 12.1. Latin American authors tend to find cases of success, for instance, as part of experiments with programs and policies in different countries across the region (Table 12.2). Perhaps the greater accumulation of knowledge and the increased capacity of academics and university institutions in the region have allowed for greater sophistication in analyses. In addition, this local knowledge may allow for the development of unique perspectives that more precisely examine and evaluate lessons, challenges, and achievements in terms of public policies and public administration in the region. That said, these studies focus more on sectoral public and applied policies than general public administration. There is still a significant gap in exploring perspectives of positive public administration in the region, as indicated by a comprehensive search on Google Scholar for works focused on positive public administration.

A preliminary examination of selected article titles concerning failure and success in Latin American public administration and public policy (Table 12.2) indicates that a significant portion of the studies originate from other disciplines, particularly in development economics, political economy, and political science. These findings show that while some strides are being made there is still an absence of a well-established knowledge domain in public administration in our countries that fosters empirical investigations specifically aimed at identifying positive facets and accomplishments within the public administrations of the region.

A rapid review of two top Latin American journals in public administration, *Gestión y Política Pública* from Mexico and *Revista de Administração Pública*

Table 12.1 Google Scholar search terms: “success,” “failure,” “positive public administration,” “Latin America” top results

Title	Discipline
Hira, A. (2016). An East Asian model for Latin American success: the new path.	Economics
Agosin, M. R., & C. Bravo-Ortega (2009). The emergence of new successful export activities in Latin America: the case of Chile.	Economics
Esquirol, J. L. (2008). The failed law of Latin America.	Law
Alemán, E., & E. Calvo (2008). Analyzing legislative success in Latin America: the case of democratic Argentina.	Political Science
Kay, C. (2007). East Asia’s success and Latin America’s failure: agrarian reform, industrial policy, and state capacity.	Economics
Grindle, M. S. (2007). When good policies go bad, then what? Dislodging exhausted industrial and education policies in Latin America.	Education
Homedes, N., & A. Ugalde (2005). Why neoliberal health reforms have failed in Latin America.	Health
Faust, J. (2004). Latin America, Chile, and East Asia: policy-networks and successful diversification.	Public Policy
Kay, C. (2002). Why East Asia overtook Latin America: agrarian reform, industrialization and development.	Economics
Etzkowitz, H., & S. Brisolla (1999). Failure and success: the fate of industrial policy in Latin America and South East Asia.	Economics
Hakim, P. (1999). Is Latin America doomed to failure?	International Relations
Singh, A. (1993). Asian economic success and Latin American failure in the 1980s: new analyses and future policy implications.	Economics
Uhlig, M. A. (1990). Latin America: the frustrations of success.	International Relations
Rosenn, K. S. (1990). The success of constitutionalism in the United States and its failure in Latin America: an explanation.	Law
Fishlow, A. (1989) Latin American failure against the backdrop of Asian success.	Political Science

Source: Author.

from Brazil (Table 12.3) reveals that terms like “success” and “failure” in public administration do not pull out many articles. Also, those works tend to be recent. As a matter of fact, some terms like *éxito* or *fracaso* in Spanish and *sucesso* or *fracasso* in Portuguese do not identify more than one or two articles in each journal. However, more articles appear when the terms are expanded to policy success or positive public administration.

Table 12.2 Google Scholar search “policy success Latin America” top results by local scholars

Title	Discipline
Ramírez de la Cruz, E., E. Grin, P. Sanabria-Pulido, D. Cravacuore, & A. Orellana (2020). The transaction costs of government responses to the COVID-19 emergency in Latin America.	Public Administration
Centeno, M., & P. Silva (eds.) (2016). The politics of expertise in Latin America.	Political Science
Alfonso, A., A. Romero-Barrutieta, & E. Monsalve (2013). Public sector efficiency: evidence for Latin America.	Economics
Porrua, M. A. (2013). E-government in Latin America: a review of the success in Colombia, Uruguay, and Panama.	Public Administration
Cunill-Grau, N., & S. Ospina (2012). Performance measurement and evaluation systems: institutionalizing accountability for governmental results in Latin America.	Public Administration
Grugel, J., & P. Riggirozzi (2012). Post-neoliberalism in Latin America: rebuilding and reclaiming the state after crisis.	Social Policy
Gilbert, A. (2011). Public service delivery in Bogotá: a success story?	Urban Studies
Tommasi, M. (2011). Latin America: how state capacity determines policy success.	Public Policy
Rey de Marulanda, N., & F. Tancredi (2010). From social innovation to public policy. Success stories in Latin America and the Caribbean.	Economics
Peruzzotti, E., & C. Smulovitz (Eds.) (2006). Enforcing the rule of law: Social accountability in the new Latin American democracies.	Political Science
Barnes, G. (2003). Lessons learned: An evaluation of land administration initiatives in Latin America over the past two decades.	Public Policy
Ghai, D. (2000). Social development and public policy: some lessons from successful experiences.	Social Policy

Source: Author.

The search itself does not yield many articles, but several interesting observations emerge. Firstly, several works simultaneously explore different dimensions of success and failure, mainly based on specific instances of programs or policies in different countries. Secondly, the cases are typically crafted by authors from the region in their native languages, Spanish or Portuguese, undoubtedly showcasing a greater richness than in more general searches in international journals and by academics from countries outside Latin America. Finally, the cases extensively detail processes that acknowledge achievements and failures, costs, and benefits, and strive for a balanced view of the analyzed programs. While they still constitute a set of cases, and it remains challenging to find a positive public administration perspective systematically, the journals

Table 12.3 *Article search “success,” “failure,” “éxito,” “fracaso,” “sucesso e fracasso” top results in English, Spanish, and Portuguese in two journals: Gestión y Política Pública and Revista de Administracao Publica*

Title
Gutiérrez, G., G. Barba, & I. Arroyo (2022). Movilidad educativa intergeneracional en jóvenes beneficiarios del Progreso-Oportunidades-Prospera, 1997–2017.
Cortez, W. W., & A. Grijalva Eternod (2021). Pobreza, desigualdad y tamaño de municipio como factores explicativos del robo en México.
Bello-Gomez, R. A., & P. Sanabria-Pulido (2021). The costs and benefits of duality: Colombia’s decentralization and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
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Source: Author.

specific to Latin America seemingly provide more room to explore positive aspects of public policies and public administration in the region.

In conclusion, the literature analysis explains that public administration research tends to identify more problems than positive aspects within the Latin American public administration context. As we show in Table 12.1, it is

particularly notable in the English-language literature that there is an emphasis on identifying distortions in Latin American cases and proposing theoretical frameworks to understand them, usually stemming from political science and political economy or developmental economics. Upon closer examination, comparative cases frequently draw parallels between policy and program failures in Latin America and the achievements and successes of other “successful” regions like East Asia.

However, the review of two top publications in Latin American public administration, in Spanish, Portuguese, and/or English, shows that more works by regional authors aim to provide more balanced perspectives on achievements and challenges. These works focus on successes *and* failures, or costs *and* benefits related to specific programs, policies, or initiatives as instances of public administration policies. All in all, this analysis suggests the absence of a consolidated body of Latin American empirical literature on positive public administration. Additionally, there is limited access to publications in flagship journals, which are often dominated by literature and authors from the global North. This narrowed range of Latin American publications focusing on success makes it more challenging to find such cases and types of work in internationally published journals in the English language. In doing so, it also narrows scholars’ perceptions of what good public administration in Latin America looks like.

EXPERIENCES OF POSITIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN LATIN AMERICA: CASE STUDIES

Latin America is a region of disparities and differences. Several countries in the region have high income inequalities, showing a great difference between those who have and those who have not. Moreover, the region has significant groups of its population below the poverty line. Criminality rates are among the highest in the world. But low-performing public agencies coexist with “pockets of effectiveness” (Roll, 2014; see also Otenyo, Chapter 11 and Onyango, Chapter 10 in this volume). In some sense, these manifestations are not expressions of states in good shape, nor would they be sites to understand what contributes to positive public administration. However, despite those characteristics, the region has implemented several actions worth studying regarding the theoretical considerations that can be drawn from a positive public administration perspective. This section will develop three initiatives pointed out as innovations or improvements for individuals and society. By presenting this, we are contributing to the empirical dimension of the positive public administration discussion.

Ciclovía: From Bogotá to the World

In 1974, the use of several streets of Bogotá was changed. Cars and buses were banned on Sundays and holidays from the streets and avenues of the biggest city in the country. Instead of those motor vehicles, the city opened its streets to bicycles. This initiative was put forward by a group of citizens with limited support from the Department of Transit and Transportation. The so-called “Great Pedal Demonstration” started one of the most well-known urban interventions (Montero, 2017). After two years, the mayor of Bogotá decided to improve the Ciclovía range and enact two decrees to formalize this initiative. Later, however, the program diminished the number of streets and infrastructure needed to make Ciclovía possible. Twenty years later, the program's administration moved to the city's Institute of Recreation and Sports (Instituto Distrital de Recreación y Deporte), giving a more strategic orientation to the initiative. The idea was to create “the biggest temporal park on earth.”¹ The institution broadened the scope of objectives of the program to promote quality of life and physical activity. Between 1995 and 2000, the program increased its surface from 20 to 120 kilometers, as well as its budget and administrative support. A consensus emerged in terms of the potential of the program and the need to coordinate efforts with other sectors to strengthen its impact in terms of public health (Sarmiento et al., 2010).

Díaz del Castillo and colleagues (2011) studied the characteristics of this effort in terms of its physical activity promotion potential and as an urban intervention. They recognize that the program has evolved over time, with ups and downs regarding political and administrative support. In the late 1990s, improvements to Ciclovía aimed to broaden the scope of activities. The original initiative to promote the use of bicycles moved to a wide range of public health initiatives, along with promoting the practice of sports and fostering quality of life.

The longevity of this initiative is grounded in three key elements. First, the initiative has evolved, allowing continuity and improvement (Montero, 2017). Second, part of this evolution entailed the original intention and orientation, particularly to promote bicycle use in Bogotá, being redefined as a comprehensive intervention to address public health issues (Sarmiento et al., 2010). Third, the program has a straightforward citizen orientation, which has been consciously fostered. It has created an important use and support for low-, middle-, and high-income individuals in the city (Sarmiento et al., 2017).

Learning to Design Participatory Budgeting From Porto Alegre

In 1989, a new coalition took office in the city of Porto Alegre, Brazil. The Popular Front, a coalition of left parties, won the election, and a new approach

to managing the municipality occurred. One of the key decisions for changing the functioning of the local power was to implement participatory budgeting. This initiative “tries to break away from the authoritarian and patrimonialist tradition of public policies, resorting to the direct participation of the population in the different phases of budget preparation and implementation, with special concern for the definition of priorities for the distribution of investment priorities” (De Sousa Santos, 1998: 467). Citizens, particularly community leaders, had the opportunity to have a voice on the budget structure. This opinion is translated into prioritizing projects that should be included in the budget.

The initial decade of implementing participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre had two elements. First, technical expertise was considered for giving inputs to individuals participating in the process to make a better decision. Second, the participation itself was a combination of representativeness and territorial distribution. Citizens, particularly their representatives, had the chance to give an opinion in a usually technical domain, allowing an allocation of resources determined by citizens and not by technocrats. Participatory budgeting is an expression of deliberative democracy aimed at giving more power to the people rather than formal authorities. Following Miller and Fox (1994), participatory budgeting is an expression of challenging the orthodox model of public administration by giving access to the decision making process beyond an election.

Participatory budgeting has been widely promoted and adopted in other cities in Brazil, the rest of Latin America, and other parts of the world (Sintomer et al., 2012). Fung (2006) places this initiative as a good example of direct authority given to citizens, with open participation and the ability to aggregate and bargain the decision making process. Hence, participatory budgeting is an interesting example of positive public administration because of two key elements. First, it combines technical information regarding the budgetary process with community leaders’ interests. In so doing, it allows a dialogue between public employees and citizens in a concrete domain, with a concrete task, to have a public budget prioritized according to the needs of citizens and considering the particularities of the territories. Second, this initiative adds to the discussion of positive public administration in the dimension of temporality. Time plays a role in implementing and developing good initiatives in public management. Several subsequent processes of budgeting creation create a learning process. In so doing, implementing participatory budgeting for one year helps improve the next round of the cycle.

Bolsa de Familia Program in Brazil

In the 1990s, a new approach to overcoming poverty and implementing social policy started in Latin America. The trend in implementing actions to address basic needs moved from traditional social policies aimed at alleviating the conditions of people experiencing poverty to including private actors, helping the state broaden the scope of interventions. Among those new recipes to improve the quality of public interventions was the incorporation of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programs (Osorio Gonnet, 2020). These interventions are tailored “to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty through long-term human capital investment while providing cash benefits to meet the short-term needs of the most vulnerable citizens for food and economic security” (Brooks, 2015: 556). Two programs in the region are pointed out as one of the oldest interventions of this type: Bolsa Scola (Brazil) (which changed to Bolsa Familia in 2003) and Progresia (Mexico). The latter started in 1997 and the former in 1995. These programs started in particular territories or to intervene in specific regions or groups. In 2003, Bolsa Escola changed to Bolsa Familia, with an improvement in orientation and covering. After this modification, the program has persisted, with some fluctuations, but it celebrated twenty years in 2023.

Bolsa Familia is a program that provides a certain amount of money for low-income families according to the number of children and their age. The conditionality of the money relies on the children’s school attendance and several health check-ups for them and the pregnant women. This is a federal program covering more than 21.45 million families in 2023.² It is a short-term social policy intervention with a broader scope regarding the future conditions for children and their families. During these twenty years, the Bolsa Familia program has evolved, including more requirements for increasing the amount of money at the family’s disposal. Recently, with the new period of President Lula’s presidency, the program is facing new challenges, such as broadening its scope and adding other services. Another element to consider is the usual criticism of this type of intervention because it tends to be too narrow (Handa and Davis, 2006).

CCTs are broadly used worldwide to overcome poverty and improve social policy. The examples of Bolsa Familia or Progresia, two truly Latin American innovations in this realm, can shed light on the all-too-common tension between the call from the left to strengthen the state as the only solution to improve society’s well-being and the right’s interest in allocating cash or vouchers to affect the conditions of those living in poor conditions (Brooks, 2015). This last element might be interesting in using this case as a positive public administration example. CCTs “speak” to a broad audience, allowing supporters and critics to find positive elements in the intervention despite the

political-ideological lenses used to justify a particular social intervention. A second insight from this case is the massive capacities that the state must develop to implement a program like this. It is not only a matter of having an institutional capacity for offering schools to children or public hospitals to do regular checkups, but also the institutional infrastructure to consolidate the information and follow-ups that families must abide by.

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, Latin American citizens undertake the all-too-common “bureaucrat bashing” (Goodsell, 2018) tendency, blaming bureaucrats when things go wrong. Some surveys, such as *Latinobarómetro*,³ present dire results regarding trust and the expansion of corruption within the state. However, Latin America is a region with challenges *and* opportunities (Chudnovsky, 2021). Public administrations across the region have seen modifications in practices and routines. This allows problems, such as corruption and other malpractices, and leaves the promise of a fully merit-based civil service still in the making. However, this reality does not prevent public officials from implementing policies and delivering services to improve the lives of this region’s citizens. The example of public officials improving citizens’ quality of life in a city like Bogotá, with the example of *Ciclovía*, highlights the idea that despite the constraints, there are capacities to connect to modify certain material conditions. Similarly, in times of lack of trust in “the State,” opening the decision making process in local government budget preparation helps show citizens that participation should not be limited to the election process. The interaction between citizens and public officials in this process helps produce better public outcomes. Finally, the example of *Bolsa Familia* shows us that public interventions can combine short- and long-term interventions to address complex problems. In all these three examples, one can see public officials committed to creating public value and improving the lives of many.

Latin America has collaborated with the positive public administration debate with several examples despite the evident material limitations still present within and among public agencies. Considering this chapter’s cases and literature review, three key features of success are evident in this region that relate to positive public administration. First, positive public administration must be citizen-centered. Developing citizen-centered public policy fosters increased transparency and accountability by actively involving the public in decision making processes, ensuring policies align with the diverse needs and preferences of the population. This approach enhances the legitimacy of governmental actions, promoting public trust and engagement. Ultimately, citizen-centered policies result in more effective and responsive governance,

addressing societal challenges with a comprehensive understanding of citizens' perspectives and priorities.

Second, successful policy interventions require adaptation over time. Public organizations, their employees, and their context change considerably. Thus, something correct in a particular moment does not imply it will remain the same forever. Public administration must constantly examine its routines, processes, and results to be positive. In other words, for a public intervention to be meaningful, time is a critical asset (Douglas et al., 2021). Adaptation over time in public policy development allows for continuous refinement and improvement, ensuring policies remain relevant and effective in the face of evolving societal needs and challenges. This iterative process enables policymakers to incorporate valuable feedback, data, and lessons learned, fostering a dynamic and responsive approach to governance. As a result, adaptive public policies are better equipped to address emerging issues, promote long-term sustainability, and deliver enduring positive outcomes for the community.

A final element that one can draw regarding positive public administration in the discussion generated in Latin America is the notion of mission or challenge. Being mission-oriented in public policy development provides a clear and focused direction, guiding policymakers to address specific societal challenges and achieve well-defined goals. This approach fosters a sense of purpose and cohesion, encouraging collaboration among various stakeholders to work towards a shared vision. Additionally, a mission-oriented approach enhances accountability, as policymakers can be held accountable for their efforts in achieving the overarching mission, promoting transparency and public trust in the policymaking process. Public administration must make a change to align the resources and actions of public employees toward a clear objective.

This chapter shows that positive public administration is present in the region and can be a significant stream of academic inquiry for the Latin American public administration community. We argue that Latin America can add a new perspective to this effort to join the bright side of public governance. Thousands of Latin American public employees work hard to improve citizens' quality of life, and we, as scholars, should commit to retrieving that experience and sharing it with the global public administration community.

NOTES

1. See <https://www.idrd.gov.co/recreacion/ciclovía-bogotana/historia-ciclovía-bogotana> (accessed October 10, 2023).
2. See <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/es/direitos-humanos/noticia/2023-10/bolsa-familia-cumple-20-anos-y-llega-214-millones-de-familias>.
3. See <https://www.latinobarometro.org/>.

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13. Pandemic partnerships: politicians, public servants, and the people of Aotearoa New Zealand

Verna Smith, Lesley Middleton, Jocelyn Cranefield and Lina Guo

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the role of novel partnerships in the successful pandemic management by the government of Aotearoa New Zealand between 2020 when the pandemic began, and 2022 when the nation emerged from the restrictions applied during this time. It adds to the existing body of research by examining a single nation, Aotearoa New Zealand, and a government that is widely acknowledged to have proactively responded to the COVID-19 outbreak and effectively contained the virus for an extended period. Our purpose is to add to the nascent ‘positive’ scholarship sought by Douglas and colleagues (2021: 1) and explain why and how particular partnerships developed to deliver these outcomes.

Our definition of partnerships follows Dowling, Powell and Glendinning (2004: 315) in seeking (i) process issues, such as how well the partners work together in addressing joint aims and the long-term sustainability of the partnership; and (ii) outcome issues, including changes in service delivery, and subsequent effects on the health or well-being of service users. In their recent work, Butcher and Gilchrist (2020: 2) critiqued Dowling et al.’s (2004) approach, arguing that it “revealed the rudimentary state of the art in conceptualizing, measuring and demonstrating the success of partnerships. Success can be understood in relation to both the processes and the outcomes of partnerships.” In their work, Butcher and Gilchrist (2020) discuss the notion of collaborative spaces, where a diverse range of stakeholders come together to collectively reach a shared understanding of a problem and agree on path forward. This has given rise to the notion of collaborative capacity within partnerships. This concept encompasses partnerships that rely less on mechanisms of control and hierarchy and more on relational aspects such as trust, shared values, and consultation. As has been observed

by Mazzucato and Katel (2020) during the COVID-19 pandemic, the dynamic capabilities available to governments were able to be deployed to design approaches in the public interest that were critical to successfully governing in a fast-moving environment.

In this chapter, we utilize the definition of policy success developed by Luetjens and colleagues (2019: 7) and deploy a Policy Success assessment map to evaluate the government's response, examining programmatic, process, political and temporal characteristics, and provide an assessment of their policy success. The chapter will explore empirically the ways in which a new set of pandemic management processes, implemented through a series of distinct partnerships between politicians, public servants, public health academics, and the people of Aotearoa New Zealand, prevented major loss of life in the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic. While these partnerships stumbled at times in a fast-moving and challenging environment, they nevertheless were key to delivering high-performing public policies which saved many lives. The partnerships also demonstrated leading-edge public value creation and established new role models of public servants and politicians. Taken together, they make the case for Aotearoa New Zealand's response as an example of positive public administration.

CONTEXT: AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Aotearoa New Zealand has a Westminster-based parliamentary system, the legacy of settlement by European colonists. Based in the Pacific, the population of approximately five million people benefit from a high-performing health care system that provides universal coverage at reasonable levels of expenditure (Cumming, 2021). That said, there are significant disparities between the health of the indigenous Māori population and non-Māori despite the existence of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) which was signed in 1840 establishing a partnership of equals. Comprising 17 percent of the total population, Māori have argued for greater autonomy to manage and deliver their own programs to overcome disparities. Central to this agenda is the recognition of the centrality of culture, identity and socio-economic factors to Māori health and well-being (Durie, 1999), and the institutional role of the Waitangi Tribunal. The tribunal operates in a semi-judicial role assessing whether actions by the Crown are in accordance with the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. A major concern to Māori leaders from the outset of the pandemic was that Māori would bear a disproportionate burden of COVID-19 (see Russell et al., 2023).

Management of the COVID-19 pandemic in Aotearoa New Zealand during 2020–22 resulted in fewer deaths per head of population than any other country in the world (664.38 per million in November 2023).¹ The widespread

approval of the pandemic management approach, and the comparatively low death rate, helped in the re-election of a majority Labour government in 2020. This electoral success occurred against the grain of the country's proportional representation system which usually delivers coalition governments rather than outright winners (Blair et al., 2022). While the experience of Aotearoa New Zealand is a broadly positive story, this is not to say that many lessons cannot be learned from this period of pandemic management, and in particular from the alienation of certain communities during this time. An anti-government movement gathered strength over the two-year period, culminating in violent protests in the grounds of the country's Parliament Buildings in 2022.

While we recognize these issues, our primary intention is to isolate and promote those positive lessons of partnerships which we observe to have delivered widely valued societal outcomes. In this sense this research contributes to "an explicitly self-conscious and cohesive strand of 'positive' scholarship" and assists in building understanding of the "factors and mechanisms that enable high performing public policies and public service delivery mechanisms" (Douglas et al., 2021: 441).

Key findings from our study are in two areas. First, new partnerships between politicians, public servants, public health academics and the people of Aotearoa New Zealand were required to develop an appropriate and adequate strategy for elimination of COVID-19. These included partnerships between political and public sector actors; scientists and government decision-makers; business and government decision-makers; decision-makers and international actors; and various players within the health care delivery sector. Second, we find that the success of these partnerships in the pandemic response strategy was dependent on high levels of trust and compliance in government by the people of Aotearoa New Zealand and high levels of reliance by decision-makers upon scientific advice.

These findings are based on interviews undertaken with proximate participants in Aotearoa New Zealand, as well as themes that have arisen in comparative research. We also draw upon a novel data source – the text of a play based on the verbatim transcripts of 20 hours of interviews with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance, and a leading epidemiologist. Together, these provide us with insights in the Aotearoa New Zealand experience.

New Risks and the Need for Policy Adaptation

Like many nations, the New Zealand Pandemic Plan of the Ministry of Health (2017) and its powers were developed for an influenza pandemic and therefore based on a goal of mitigation rather than elimination. However, the characteristics of the COVID-19 pandemic, including longer periods of incubation and higher transmissibility than influenza, meant that the Pandemic

Plan was unsuitable for the pandemic that emerged in 2020. The Pandemic Plan was also based on assumption that a vaccine would be developed fairly rapidly, as is typical for influenza pandemics, thus limiting the need for non-pharmaceutical interventions. As is now well known, this was not the case for COVID-19 (Kvalsig and Baker, 2021). In addition, the Aotearoa New Zealand health system was significantly unprepared for a major infectious disease threat (Haworth, 2021; Kvalsig and Baker, 2021). It had been ranked 35th of 195 countries in the 2019 Global Health Security Index published by Nuclear Threat Initiative (2019), earning a score of just 54/100 for country-level preparedness for a global catastrophic biological risk. Factors contributing to this score included the shortage of epidemiologists, insufficient commitment to collection of surveillance data and a lack of regular exercises to test readiness (Kvalsig and Baker, 2021). In addition, the ratio of intensive care unit (ICU) beds to population was dangerously low. Among 22 OECD countries, Aotearoa New Zealand had less than one third of the OECD average for intensive care beds per capita (Skegg, 2021).

With the first case of COVID-19 crossing the border in February 2020 and diagnosed on 28th February, the inappropriateness of the Pandemic Plan had become clear from the experience of other countries dealing with the outbreak. Decision-makers quickly determined it was best to follow an elimination strategy. As an isolated island nation with no land borders, Aotearoa New Zealand was in an optimal position to pursue such a strategy. By August 2021, elimination of the first wave of COVID-19 had been achieved, with 600 cases and six deaths per million people in the population of 5.1 million. This gave the country critically needed time to wait out the development of vaccines, secure stock and begin a vaccination rollout to its citizens. Several factors played a part in the success of this approach, with particular importance placed on well informed and highly centralized decision making patterns which were facilitated by the structural advantages of Aotearoa New Zealand's political model. The model is a unitary, majoritarian state with considerable autonomy for the Executive to make rapidly implementable decisions. Webster (2021: 11) confirms that "the New Zealand system of central government decision making, as set out in the Cabinet Manual and operated by the Cabinet Office, was continually adapted to ensure that the Prime Minister and Ministers, and the officials working to them, were provided with a system that facilitated both rapid and considered decision making and promulgation of those decisions." These decisions included the rapid and strict border closure, introduction of rapid determination of chains of transmission through requirements for contact tracing and subsequent isolation, purchase of adequate supplies of vaccines and the preservation of economic growth, and a focus on social cohesion throughout the period. Another important factor that contributed to these achievements was the high standard of communication with the people of

Aotearoa New Zealand in daily press conferences held by the Prime Minister, the strong messaging about ‘go hard and go early’, ‘be strong and be kind’, ‘following the science’ and acknowledging ‘the team of five million’. The academic literature has elsewhere documented this successful policymaking process (Cumming, 2021).

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

To reach these findings we undertook a case study of the activities and results of a set of various partnerships within the public sector during a critical timeline in the pandemic. Our focus is on identifying partnerships that combined high performance by a number of actors/organizations, had strong legitimacy and adaptive capacity, and which sustained a constructive equilibrium over the first two critical years of the pandemic. Our approach can readily be applied (in a comparative sense) to negative cases during the same period, providing an opportunity for policy learning.

We utilized qualitative methods including a gray literature review, semi-structured interviews with key informants and participants in the pandemic management program, and analysis of data relating to popular reaction to pandemic management strategies. This data was utilized to explore and analyze the process of decision making during the pandemic, the design of management strategies and their effects. A novel source of data utilized is the text of *Transmissions*, a play premiered in April 2021 which is based on the verbatim transcripts of interviews with the Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, and a leading epidemiologist and “told almost entirely in their own words, taken from over twenty hours of interviews” by its writer and co-director Stuart McKenzie (McKenzie, 2021). An example of verbatim theater, this resource allowed the researchers to access insights from some key decision-makers who were unavailable for interview.

In exploring this case we are focused on generating deeper understanding and insights of the “enabling conditions, mechanisms and actor repertoires” for developing the kinds of positive adaptive working pandemic partnerships sought by Douglas and colleagues (2021: 444). To do so we draw on case study literature including Weick and Sutcliffe (2011) and Luetjens and colleagues (2019). In developing our case study, we are especially focused on three key questions: (i) can the policy be judged a success according to the criteria of Luetjens and colleagues (2019)? (ii) What are the lessons to be learned from this case study of pre-pandemic planning of public policy readiness and subsequent pandemic management? (iii) How applicable are these findings about partnerships to future pandemics in Aotearoa New Zealand and other jurisdictions?

Framing for the literature review included seeking definitions of policy success and theoretical exploration of partnerships of different kinds. Particular consideration has been given to the evidence of such partnerships between politicians, public servants, public health academics and Aotearoa New Zealand citizens at different stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, political and public sector partnerships and established ways of working may be stretched and re-fashioned (Waring et al., 2021). Different types of leadership may be displayed within partnerships (Carroll, 2021: 44–56) and greater agility and capacity for learning may need to be demonstrated.

We find that partnerships between science and government are pivotal to the positive outcomes in this context. In this sense, Aotearoa New Zealand is idiosyncratic, having science advisers in every government department and a highly rationalist policymaking process for public policy. In our case study we also explore factors of success relating to this partnership in pandemic management. Martin considers Aotearoa New Zealand “fared better in terms of trust in science because we are small and tight knit, but also we had a team of people who stepped up to communicate” (Martin, 2022: 4). Partnerships between government and business and with international players were also an important feature of the pandemic management strategy. Finally, partnerships within health and organizing care to meet demand are explored, including new models of virtual health care.

A number of measures of positive outcomes are explored and assessed and these provide an important guide to our analysis. These measures include key goals such as deaths avoided, vaccines administered, civilian rights upheld, compliance levels of general public with guidance, and management of health care system integrity, which are analyzed. We also look to seemingly unsuccessful aspects of this episode such as late and inequitable vaccine rollout and problems with managed isolation facilities. Performance against these goals is explored, in particular through the roles of the various public service personnel and other actors such as media and lobby groups.

In our findings, five key partnerships are identified, along with the main factors or drivers of these outcomes. Elements of circumstantial luck and skill including the professional competencies of incumbent officials including the Director General of Health, Sir Ashley Bloomfield, and the Prime Minister are also candidly explored.

FINDINGS

The Initial Response: Rapid Iteration

Aotearoa New Zealand’s initial response to COVID-19 involved multiple parties in a cycle of rapid iterations, engaging in an intensity of collaborative

agility that was notable in a government setting. The scale and immediacy of the threat made this period critical and engendered five key partnerships: (i) the partnership between the political decision-makers and the public service generally; (ii) a partnership between the central health decision-makers and the public health and general health system; (iii) an interorganizational partnership across the public service generally; (iv) a partnership between policymakers and scientific and technical experts; and (v) partnerships between central government and communities.

Our analysis finds that these distinct partnerships were important in mobilizing the pandemic response behind a common sense of purpose. Butcher and Gilchrist's (2020) identification of the need for collaborative spaces, where a diverse range of stakeholders come together to collectively reach a shared understanding of a problem and agree on a path forward, was vividly illustrated in the case. This was particularly evident in descriptions of the pre-briefing meetings between the Prime Minister and the Director General of Health at which Sir Ashley emphasized that "Trust was absolutely the key ingredient, there needed to be a strong sense of trust underpinning the relationships between all those different parties." This trust, in turn, helped to engage the general public as partners in fighting the virus with a common purpose to keep one another safe from harm.

In terms of the capability of the public sector, Aotearoa New Zealand had turned from previously embracing public management outsourcing to seeking to rebuild capacity within government through a process of insourcing. The resulting investment in skills and capabilities within government formed a basis for agility and responsiveness during the crisis. Mazzucato and Katel (2020) explore the contrasting trajectories of the COVID-19 response in the USA and UK with Germany, New Zealand, Vietnam, and South Korea, making the argument that the capacity to manage a crisis is dependent on the dynamic capabilities of the state. These capabilities involve the capacity to learn and adapt, to align public services with citizens' needs, and to catalyze intelligence across the system. They argue that these investments in long term skills and capabilities are highly novel for a government setting. In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, dynamic capabilities emerged as important in an interview with then Director General of Health, Sir Ashley Bloomfield. He expanded on the moment where the existing pandemic plan was put to the side: "so really, from that point in time we were developing strategy, policy, and implementation in this very rapid sequence and in a very iterative way. So certainly, for the first six months, I would say that was very much the approach."

At an early stage of the pandemic, key partnerships were established between technical/policy/public servant personnel and the key political leaders including the Prime Minister and other senior ministers who fronted the government response. Serendipity applies here to some extent. It was the good

fortune in Aotearoa New Zealand that the then Director General of Health had pre-clinical training in basic sciences around microbiology and pharmacology and physiology and clinical medical and public health training as well as ten years of executive leadership training. This provided an expert authority with an early bank of trusted relationships across the system.

In the play *Transmission*, which draws on verbatim speeches and media addresses, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance discuss the need for rapid iterations, with the Prime Minister noting: “there wasn’t any rule book. There wasn’t anything. There was no manual that says, ‘when this happens you do this’ [...] What we used to consider a day is now an hour [...] I’m not going to deny the pressure was enormous” (McKenzie, 2021: 42). Sir Ashley Bloomfield, in an interview for this study, noted that, “every day I used the full gamut of my experience [...] I have described it as assembling a 5,000-piece jigsaw puzzle without the benefit of having the box with the picture on the front.” In *Transmission*, Epidemiologist Michael Baker’s character is quoted as saying:

It was all about blogs and phone calls and texts. Just suddenly switching from a hierarchical model to a network model [...] everyone was so stunned they couldn’t absorb anything that didn’t fit onto a page with an illustration. All communications coming in you had a picture and dot points. (McKenzie, 2021: 43)

This sudden switch in approaches for managing the pandemic reflects a rapid adjustment of policy-related communications to the new environment of uncertainty, which created a need to minimize cognitive burden, a point made in work by Cairney and Kwiatkowski (2017).

A key decision was made to abandon the influenza model and it is described by the characters thus: epidemiologist Baker says “I got the view that we should do everything we can to eradicate it because it was controllable. You can control our borders” (McKenzie, 2021: 45). The Prime Minister responds:

And that’s when I thought ‘Flattening the curve’s not enough’. We’re still going to lose New Zealanders, because our capacity, even with this flattened curve, just won’t be sufficient [...] so I said “We need an alert system that tells New Zealanders where we are and what we need to do” [...] The magnitude of that felt huge to me! I’d never just broken through programming to talk directly to New Zealanders before [...] I felt like I was preparing New Zealanders for war. And in a way I guess we were.

While the advice of epidemiologists was crucial, the partnership between the country’s most senior public health official and the Prime Minister was unusual in Aotearoa New Zealand’s history. In an interview for this study, Sir Ashley confirmed this point: “It’s very unusual even for chief executives to

be fronting media issues. They are [usually] managed much more tightly and [kept] close to the heart of Ministers' offices [...] and so this was unusual in that we had much more of a partnership type approach". The ongoing pairing of public health official with the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister signaled that the response was not only political but rested on a range of partnerships, appealing to the public's trust in non-political leaders.

One expert, microbiologist Associate Professor Siouxsie Wiles, who has won multiple awards for her science communication efforts and had previously given media interviews on infectious disease such as Ebola and Zika, decided her role would be as a communicator to the general public. She repeatedly delivered the evidence-based message that the way the nation would get through this was by working together. Amongst the several thousand media interviews and articles by Associate Professor Wiles, this message was communicated repeatedly and firmly. Wiles, Morris and Priestly (2023) also collaborated with an award-winning cartoonist, Toby Morris, to visually communicate important information about COVID-19 including how to 'flatten the curve'. Their work was used by governments and organizations around the world, including the World Health Organization. While usually a solo operator, Associate Professor Wiles advocated a partnership between the people of Aotearoa New Zealand and the government and scientific community to unite together to defeat the virus. Later, Associate Professor Wiles was an adviser to the Chief Science Advisor but also adopted a role of forwarding any scientific analysis or guidance on the pandemic to relevant decision-makers during the period of the emergency. A proactive release of government information in response to an Official Information Act request made by a third party revealed several hundred pages of unsolicited emails from Associate Professor Wiles which provided relevant references and studies and other useful information to decision-makers.

Where the government was late to develop a key partnership was in the management of vaccination roll out in communities which were typically disengaged from health services. Community organizations had to seek the aid of the Waitangi Tribunal to encourage the Ministry of Health to share vaccination data about citizens in particular communities and enable community organizations to lead local initiatives to promote vaccinations. This is perhaps understandable in that the sharing of personal and other health data of citizens with non-government agencies is not usual and would be seen as high risk, but it certainly delayed achievement of a level of protection in those communities which were particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. These communities were not passive in the light of delays. Iwi, hapu and rūpū Māori ('tribal' collectives and Māori groups) collectivized to deliver culturally embedded, comprehensive COVID-19 responses. This was a response which drew from foundational principles in Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) about acting as a collective and

sharing resources within culturally located concepts of whakapapa (ancestry), tikanga, whanau and manaakitanga (care for others). Over time these delivery responses evolved into ‘high trust’ relationships with government agencies linked to delivering services on the promise of future payment (Russell et al., 2023).

The Importance of Key Messages and Communication

Messages developed in the early stages of pandemic management became totemic: the slogans ‘go hard and go early’, ‘be strong and be kind’, ‘follow the science’, and ‘we are a team of five million’ were important in building public confidence and trust. Sir Ashley reported that “Clever comms people” took the lead but in the background, “always, especially with her background, the Prime Minister determined the suitability of these messages.” He explained that these messages were debated and refined at a key meeting on March 20, 2020 in the Prime Minister’s office. But as the pandemic developed, each day for an hour before the daily press briefings, the Prime Minister would review and develop her speech in consultation with her Director General of Health, testing these messages with communications professionals immediately prior to delivery. This reflected the partnership approach that developed quickly as the crisis unfolded.

Goal Setting

Goal setting was a key element of decision making from the beginning of pandemic management. In Sir Ashley’s view, four key guiding goals were implicit in the response: keeping people safe; keeping the health system functioning; keeping the economy strong and fulfilling the country’s responsibility to the Pacific. The final goal followed a devastating measles outbreak in Samoa in the previous year. Once it was clear that citizens were ready to tolerate an elimination approach to the virus then that too became a goal. These goals were able to be driven forward for the first 18 months of the pandemic with wide acceptance across all stakeholder groups and communities. Sir Ashley explained that

the event that really started to cause the fraying of that acceptance was the long lockdown in Auckland and Northern Waikato in 2021 [...] we more or less achieved what we set out to do which was (a) to protect the country from the Delta variant of the virus which was nasty but (b) to eliminate it [...] at that point there was a shift towards the decisions being driven by more political considerations [...] and the imperative became finding a way to [...] implement] vaccination was really a key thing.

The Reviews

The need for constant adaptation through the two-year period was significant – in Sir Ashley’s words, “this whole thing was not standing still but constantly maintaining the initiative, being agile and adapting.” At this point,² a number of review committees were established to focus on whether the public service was focused on the right things, resourcing the right actions and whether the decision making and advisory structures across the public service were fit for purpose. In his interview, Sir Ashley noted:

One of the most challenging things for people, the people who were working so hard and doing extraordinary hours and getting tired was this layer of reviews across the top [...] the tenor of some of those reviews and the way they were conducted [...] could have been more constructive ... [such as] not looking to apportion blame or use language that was really in some respects quite undermining of the people who were working more hours than we could or should ever expect them to work and really giving of themselves. So that was a quite difficult dynamic to manage.

THE COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCE OF AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND’S PANDEMIC MANAGEMENT

The COVID-19 pandemic affected the entire world, causing widespread illness, death, and economic disruption, having a profound impact on virtually every aspect of life, from health and health care systems to the health of economies and social interactions. Governments and health organizations around the world implemented a range of measures to try to slow the spread of the virus, including lockdowns, mask mandates, social distancing and vaccination campaigns. Despite these efforts, the pandemic presented significant challenges, particularly in countries with low vaccination rates or limited access to health care resources. As news media and academic researchers have confirmed, Aotearoa New Zealand’s strategy on pandemic management remains one of the most widely discussed Western cases in terms of successful government intervention (Baker, Wilson and Anglemeyer, 2020; Wilson, 2020; Anttiroiko, 2021). Reviews of the comparative performance of New Zealand’s pandemic management provide evidence for its relative success.

Several nations, including but not limited to Aotearoa New Zealand, Singapore, Greece and South Korea, effectively managed to contain the spread of the virus within their borders. In a table, New Zealand is shown as having a mortality of 3.7 per 100,000 which is the lowest in 21 countries portrayed by a considerable margin, and reported extremely low or even negative mortality rates, proving that it was indeed feasible to control the pandemic (Bilinski et al., 2023; see also Baker et al., 2020; Wilson 2020; Anttiroiko 2021). Aotearoa New Zealand’s approach, which involved using geographically targeted and

shorter lockdowns to achieve elimination, continues to be one of the most frequently referenced examples of successful government intervention in the Western world (Bafarasat, 2021).

Aotearoa New Zealand's success in managing the COVID-19 pandemic is partially attributed to its government's commitment to being guided by science, seeking information from experts, and employing clear messaging led by trusted individuals to engender trust and mobilize collective effort (Wilson, 2020; Wong et al., 2021). For example, the government implemented a comprehensive vaccination program with priority given to high-risk groups and frontline workers.

The government provided a range of social programs to lower the costs of compliance. In addition, the Ardern Government actively provided wage subsidies and loan schemes for businesses, alongside additional income support, changes to business taxes and funding support for key sectors (Wilson, 2020). Success has also been attributed to visible leadership guided by scientific expertise resulting in public trust in government and a collective response. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's effective crisis communication and leadership, including her regular Facebook Live sessions, was highlighted as an example of this. Craig (2021: 288) outlines how Ardern employed a "complex negotiation of expressions of kindness and political control" to unify the public while implementing an approach that "closed the border and suspended civil liberties and freedom of movement."

These measures, combined with the border closures and periodic lockdowns, were successful in limiting the spread of COVID-19 in Aotearoa New Zealand, allowing time for the country to roll out vaccinations to its population. While there were outbreaks and small clusters of cases, the country was generally able to contain them quickly and prevent widespread transmission. This chapter adds to the existing body of research by examining a single nation, Aotearoa New Zealand, and a government that is widely acknowledged to have proactively responded to the COVID-19 outbreak and effectively contained the virus.

THE GAME CHANGERS

Our analysis identified two factors which were linked to the positive results achieved. The first was the decisiveness of the Prime Minister in putting the responsibility of looking after people and saving lives first. Together with other leaders, she demonstrated humility, seeking advice, listening to that advice,

and being prepared to change her mind. The second factor was the strength and quality of the relationships between key participants. In Sir Ashley's view,

That is ultimately how you get stuff done in these situations isn't it? It has to be this high degree of trust, confidence in each other. I needed to know when I was putting my neck out that I was not going to get thrown under the bus [...] that ability to get on with others is fundamental.

It should be noted that leaders were not only in government. Leaders in the scientific community had a mission to communicate with the people of Aotearoa New Zealand about how to survive the pandemic. There was an ability to leverage informal networks and relations as Hendy (2022: 42) reflects:

It is curious that this integration took place in the absence of any coordinating infectious disease research center or institute, as might have occurred in an overseas jurisdiction. Instead, the government science advisory network filled this role, taking advantage of other, less formal networks of researchers around the country. These research networks, such as those supported by Te Pūnaha Matatini, played key institutional roles in the pandemic response.

In addition to these two primary factors, the quality of the decision making and the agility displayed through quickly absorbing the experience of other countries and closing the country's borders as soon as the first case of COVID-19 was detected, and the successful vaccination program, were both critical to achieving the low death rates recorded in Aotearoa New Zealand.

APPLYING THE POLICY SUCCESS ASSESSMENT MAP

Luetjens and colleagues (2019: 7) developed a useful map that seeks to define policy success. The map comprises four components: programmatic assessment, process assessment, political assessment and temporal assessment. Together these provide an indication of the policy's public value proposition and achievement of societal outcomes, the nature of deliberation and experience of stakeholders, the nature of political coalitions which support the policy and the extent to which its success is sustained over time (Luetjens et al., 2019: 7). Utilizing this map, we provide an analysis of the success of the pandemic policy in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Programmatic Assessment

The public value proposition of the pandemic response (i.e., elimination of the virus) was clear. It was scientifically grounded and proved to be feasible in the first two years of the pandemic response when COVID-19 was prevented from

spreading uncontrollably. The utilization of managed isolation and the rapid rollout and take up of vaccination by citizens were instrumental in this success and grounded in epidemiological theory. Government was able to achieve an important social goal of minimizing deaths. Although it can be argued that they did not suppress deaths equitably, there having been disproportionate numbers of elderly people and people of Pasifika origin dying (Public Health Agency, 2022), the measures adopted minimized the number of overall deaths more successfully than in any other country.

Process of Policymaking

The process of public policymaking during 2020–22 involved robust deliberations, often in public, as epidemiologists sought to influence government action, but always in the weekly analysis of facts, strategies, and tactics within the Prime Minister's close team of political colleagues and senior civil servants. These actors juggled values and interests which finally led to the abandonment of the elimination approach when it was perceived that there was no longer widespread support for this following the Auckland lockdown in 2022. At this point elimination was no longer perceived as just and fair and the policy was rapidly changed, however it was also true that the Omicron variant was so infectious and had such a short pre-infectious period, that an elimination approach had effectively become untenable. These adaptations and adjustments reflect what Mazzucato and Katel (2020) describe as dynamic capabilities which enable governments to better meet the public interest in a fast-moving environment.

Political Assessment

An astonishingly broad and varied coalition of citizens supported the government policy between 2020 and 2021, enhancing the political capital of policymakers to the extent that an overall majority of seats was won by the governing Labour Party in the 2020 election. The performance of senior public servants during the pandemic, particularly that of Sir Ashley Bloomfield, won wide appreciation. Indeed, Sir Ashley established something of a cult following in a phenomenon previously unseen in Aotearoa New Zealand. This lifted the reputation of the public service and in particular the Ministry of Health considerably.

The vast majority of media stand-ups featured both a senior Cabinet Minister, such as the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister or Minister for COVID-19, and a senior public health official. This partnership, especially with the Prime Minister or her Deputy appearing daily during the lockdowns, helped provide people with the sense of reassurance that the response was not

simply a political one. Sir Ashley noted, “by happenstance, my role became a very critical one in terms of the public communication [...] to be the technical/policy/public servant front face of the government response in many situations alongside the key politicians, key political leaders, including the Prime Minister [...] we had built a level of trust and understanding for each other by then. So then when the pandemic came [...] we were working off that base [...]. I don't think our communication would have been as effective if [...] it had looked like you could put a wedge between us. That didn't mean we always agree [...]. Ministers, of course, are the decision-makers, and the prime minister, so I guess that trust was really there.”

Temporal Assessment

Finally, the degree to which the policy sustained its success and its political legitimacy over time can be assessed. A Royal Commission commenced and will report in 2024 and, in an interesting development, it has eschewed the approach of an adversarial public hearing. It can be argued that the policy and political success factors are still present as we assess the response in retrospect – New Zealand has maintained its place in the world as the most successful manager of the social, health and economic risks of the pandemic. But political legitimacy was lost among a small sector of New Zealanders during 2022, resulting in serious and disruptive challenges to that legitimacy. Protestors occupied the grounds of the New Zealand Parliament for an extended period of time. This has, however, not damaged the legitimacy of the overall political system of Aotearoa New Zealand, with an election taking place in 2023.

Despite the planned and purposeful conduct of the pandemic response (Stockman, 2021: 2), “there was, no doubt, a healthy pinch of luck and some useful built-in settings that contributed to New Zealand's success. For instance, being an island nation at the bottom of the world can be a lonely existence – but during a pandemic, it certainly has its advantages.” Low population densities especially in the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand enabled the maintenance of isolation in ‘bubbles’ of closely related persons more easily than in smaller and more densely populated countries (see also Chohan, Chapter 14 in this volume for a discussion of *fortuna*, or pre-existing, and *virtu*, or policy effectiveness, in Pakistan's COVID response). Aotearoa New Zealand was able to maintain a relatively prosperous and open economy during the critical year of 2020 until the arrival of Omicron in the Auckland region.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter documents a strikingly successful story of pandemic management in Aotearoa New Zealand during the 2020 to 2022 pandemic years.

This is grounded in the development of successful partnerships which were facilitated by able and empathic political leadership and key public officials as envisaged by Dowling, Powell and Glendinning (2004), resulting in some of the most positive health outcomes during the experience of the pandemic in the world. Documenting these partnerships in the words of their key actors has revealed the “nature, practices, preconditions and enablers of highly valuable and widely valued forms of public governance” (Douglas et al., 2021: 443), and how they were ultimately endorsed by the people of Aotearoa New Zealand through a landslide election for the Labour Party at the height of the pandemic. New partnerships operating across government departments and between government departments and community-based organizations facilitated a roll out of the vaccination program which quickly achieved sought after targets of high vaccine take up by vulnerable New Zealanders. The ability to leverage Aotearoa New Zealand’s isolation, low population densities and New Zealanders’ willing adoption of stringent requirements for keeping to protective bubbles ensured death rates amongst the lowest in the world. The effectiveness of these partnerships in achieving public value and demonstrable programmatic successes was attributable to the actions and attitudes of scientists at the heart of government policymaking and adventitious skills exhibited by key political participants such as the Prime Minister. In this way the case provides an exemplary example of positive public administration.

The research provides opportunities for scholars and practitioners to learn from the planned and serendipitous factors in this story of successful pandemic management. It illustrates the need to prepare in advance for appropriate modern day public service management of a country’s particular populace, but also to identify and utilize to maximum advantage the attributes of actors and institutions at critical times. It identifies the key factors which influenced decision-makers in the Aotearoa New Zealand experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. It shows how these translated into a period of successful elimination of the virus and led to policy successes of a surprising level despite significant initial disadvantages and subsequent challenges. It is a positive story of how effective partnerships between politicians, public servants and the people of Aotearoa New Zealand helped to save the country from the ravages of a punishing pandemic.

NOTES

1. Data sourced from *Our World in Data*, available at https://ourworldindata.org/explorers/coronavirus-data-explorer?tab=map&zoomToSelection=true&time=latest&facet=none&country=~NZL&pickerSort=desc&pickerMetric=total_cases&hideControls=true&Interval=Cumulative&Relative+=to+

Population = true & Color+ by+ test+ positivity = false & Metric = Confirmed+ deaths.

2. The legislation that set up the Covid Inquiry reports that 75 individual reviews have been undertaken across government since 2020, generating 1,639 recommendations covering a broad range of issues and subjects. See <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2022/0323/latest/LMS792965.html>.

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14. Positive public administration in developing countries during crises: the case of Covid-19 in Pakistan

Usman W. Chohan

INTRODUCTION

There is a pressing need for public administration to embrace an oft-forgotten positivity that underpins the toil and praxis of public managers (see also Douglas et al., 2019, 2021). The case for positive public administration (PPA) is robust, but as this chapter shall argue, it must appeal as much to (1) developing countries as to developed ones, and (2) to crisis contexts as much as to peacetime conditions. In other words, as both conceptual principle and as an ethos guiding public managerial praxis, PPA must speak with a degree of relevance. This is important to articulate as part of this volume on PPA because, as with public value theory and other discourses in public administration, the focus of scholars tends inherently towards WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) societies (see Samaratunge and Wijewardena, 2009; Jutzi et al., 2023). Such a tendency will lead the literature to overlook the conditions, moods, approaches, and outcomes of public management in the developing world to an unfair degree (Chohan, 2019: 21–37).

Yet PPA would be incomplete and limited in its scope without finding resonance in developing-country conditions. Furthermore, PPA must be tested to see its applicability beyond normal, peacetime, genteel conditions, and instead in the crisis contexts that visit societies with a seemingly increasing frequency (see *turbulence* in Ansell et al., 2021). Positivity is comparatively easy to find during periods of relative normalcy, but to demonstrate positivity *in the face of adversity* requires a sterner mettle and more resilient sensibility. In that regard, this chapter constitutes one such exploratory effort with the twofold ambition of studying PPA in (1) developing countries in (2) crisis contexts, with a view to studying whether public administration can engineer “procedurally and distributively fair processes of tackling societal conflicts”; and muster “robust and resilient ways of coping with threats and risks” (Douglas et al., 2021: 441).

It is important to note, however, that the general prognosis for developing countries' public administration is often grim and mired in negativity. The "negativity bias" that encompasses perceptions, discourse, and judgment about politicians and public managers (Vis, 2011; Soroka, 2014) is considerably stronger. For example, data from the IPSOS Global Trustworthiness Monitor (IGTM) found that while many large, developed nations had high positive net trust (the spread difference between positive and negative respondents), many developing countries had negative net trust in government (IGTM, 2021). This could be seen in countries such as Germany and Netherlands having +10 percentage points net trust, Canada having +20 points net trust, and Japan having +30. Conversely, Mexico and Brazil had -10 percentage points for net trust in government, Peru and Colombia had -20 percentage points, and Chile more than -30.

The negativity bias in such countries, and often the "democratic deficit" (see Nabatchi, 2010), is notable both from the vantage point of outside observers as well as for local stakeholders (Önder and Zengin, 2022). This negativity is visceral and ubiquitous, but to a more accentuated degree in the developing world. With respect to crises such as natural disasters, the hope of adequate and proactive government response is dim in such countries (Stenchion, 1997), and the public's expectations are low and mired in considerable cynicism (Wijkman and Timberlake, 2021; Ghesquiere and Mahul, 2010). There is often a blame-shifting exercise (Alcañiz and Hellwig, 2011) and bureaucrat-bashing (Schillemans and den Otter, 2014). One may hypothesize that the "expectations gap" in public administrative performance (Flinders, 2012) is often smaller, simply because the public expects that the government will do very little, if anything, for them (Doig et al., 2007). But to merely remark on their shortcomings would belie the public value limitations that constrain public managers in the developing world (see Chohan, 2022a: 117–137). When framed in terms of the public value strategic triangle (see Alford and O'Flynn, 2009; Hartley et al., 2017), they face issues of public legitimacy, of limited operational resources (funds, expertise, technologies), and scarcer recognition of their value proposition. In crisis conditions, the constraints become even more stringent and exacting (see Chohan, 2022c, 2023), and offer a foreboding of "public administration in dark times" (see Nabatchi et al., 2011: 29). These constraints are enumerated in Table 14.1.

These *ex ante* dispositions lead to inherent and intensified *negativity* vis-à-vis public administration, and it is even more "common to disparage the work of public servants and public organizations" (Nabatchi et al., 2022: 1), while the "substantive, material, and psychological impacts" (Douglas et al., 2021: 443) of suboptimal governance are much more evinced and acute, not least when crises arise (Stenchion, 1997). With this in mind, one is compelled to argue that, if positive public administration can be effectively deployed in

Table 14.1 Positivity research framework

Strategic triangle element	Explanation
Legitimacy	Governments generally enjoy weaker public compliance and lower public trust. This makes it more difficult to deliver public value in a co-creative (multistakeholder) manner and to persuade the public to follow policies that may require personalized trade-offs.
Recognition of public value	Publics are more skeptical and grudging in any recognition of the public value potential of governments and may even see government as part of the problem rather than the solution. This is informed both by a negativity bias and by an erratic track record of public value creation.
Operational resources	Governments may face deficiencies across the full gamut of operational resources, pertaining to funding, personnel, infrastructure, data, operational tools, management, and countless others.

Source: Author.

the crisis contexts of the developing world, it would aid PPA's ambition considerably as an affirmation of its universality and extensivity of application. This effort would also echo extant research on islands of public sector excellence in turbulent societies/developing countries (Douglas, 2011; Roll, 2014), as well as broader research on "policy success" (Compton and 't Hart, 2019; Leong and Howlett, 2022; see also review in Chohan, 2022b). It may also, in turn, speak to the ambition for positive public administration to have "to craft usable language, methodologies, and theories to sustain the effort" (Douglas et al., 2021: 443; see also Compton et al., 2021).

In that regard, this chapter explores a case study of Pakistan's response as developing country to the crisis context created by Covid-19 pandemic. Pakistan's response to Covid-19 offers an exemplary case study for positive public administration because it is able to exemplify a scientific, dispassionate, and multistakeholder approach (see also Chohan, 2022a, 2022b) that was driven by a positive ethos in public administration, and one that offers a glimpse into developing country manifestations of triumphant outcomes without triumphalism. In terms of Douglas and colleagues' (2021: 443) appeal, it "yields an exemplar as well as preliminary insights about enabling conditions, mechanisms and actor repertoires." Furthermore, in terms of Douglas and colleagues' (2021: 446) guidelines for positive public administration, the chapter fits well with several considerations, as is depicted in Table 14.2.

The scope of analysis encompasses both public health outcomes as well as economic performance during the early and medial phase of Covid-19

Table 14.2 *Developing country public value constraints*

Core theme	-Learning to learn from “what works” in public settings	The “what works” in a crisis-context (Covid-19) in a developing country (Pakistan) offers lessons for how positive outcomes can be realized by public administration, even and in spite of limited operational wherewithal and legitimacy
Conceptual starting points	Success is likely to be the product of a combination of <i>virtu</i> and <i>fortuna</i> Success can consist of both desirable things happening and undesirable things not happening Success is multidimensional and multiperspectivist	There were ex ante advantages for Pakistan in Covid-19, along with inherent disadvantages of equally significant extent. Yet the outcome was distinctly positive Success can be measured in terms of the deaths and debilitations prevented (didn’t happen), along with the damage to the economy that didn’t occur Success could be measured along various dimensions: economic, social, public health (epidemiological), and thanatological (studying death and loss)
Methodological considerations	Quantitative studies of the antecedents of positive outcomes Qualitative studies of the antecedents of positive outcomes	Empirical assessments of Covid-19 cumulative deaths, cumulative cases, both in absolute and in relative terms to other large countries Empirical assessments of quarterly economic growth rates, both in absolute and relative terms to other developing countries Discourse analysis of messaging by the government/leadership

Source: Author compilation; framework from Douglas et al (2021).

(2020–21) in Pakistan. As expressed in Table 14.2, the core theme of “what works” in a crisis-context in a developing country offers lessons for how positive outcomes can be realized by public administration, even and in spite of limited operational wherewithal and legitimacy. Yet one might add another core theme to Douglas et al.’s typology, which is that of seeing if positivity can be found in adversity, or perhaps put in another way, whether positivity can be realized where positivity is less likely to be found. As conceptual starting points, the chapter can be seen as setting forth in several directions.

Pakistan’s success, as will be examined in the next section, was a combination of *virtu* (policy effectiveness) and *fortuna* (ex ante advantages); it could be seen in terms of *harm not done*, to both the economy and to public health; and it was multidimensional/multiperspective, lending itself well to measurement across various parameters: economic, social, public health (epidemiological), and thanatological (studying loss and death). The outcomes that a developing

country attained, both in public health and economic terms, were of even greater noteworthiness, the next section shall argue, because they surpassed those of even developed countries that faced fewer public value strategic constraints. The next section presents the case study and explores how a developing country with weak public value endowments can nevertheless “thrive, advance important democratic values, and produce widely valued societal outcomes” (Douglas et al., 2019: 1).

CASE STUDY: PAKISTAN’S COVID-19 RESPONSE

At the time that Covid-19 struck the world with a sense of both surprise and fury, most countries appeared almost entirely unprepared for a highly infectious respiratory epidemic (Carinci, 2020), especially in the developing world (Gilbert et al., 2020). This suggested that public administration would be grappling with “dark times” (see Nabatchi et al., 2011) characterized by extreme turbulence (Ansell et al., 2022). While it is true that epidemiologists had long been cautioning governments against possible infectious-disease outbreaks that might attain catastrophic proportions (see Anthony et al., 2017), insufficient heed had been paid across nearly all countries (Capano et al., 2020). Covid-19’s spread threw down a unique gauntlet against public managers by challenging them to preserve both lives and livelihoods, which is to say, protect the economy as well as public health (Chohan, 2020a, 2021).

Developing countries were, as discussed previously, thought to face a more substantial challenge, and a latent negativity colored expectations about their performance potential during the crisis. As Rasul (2020: 59) noted, “all countries are challenged, but low-income and developing countries are facing a more challenging situation than others [during Covid-19],” which was in no small part due to “their limited health infrastructure, limited financial and human resources, low human capital, and limited capacity of governments to respond.” Pakistan was no different in this regard, mired as it was in potential public value constraints, including: typically low public trust levels and a democratic deficit (Nabatchi, 2010; Nabatchi et al., 2011); low recognition of value, where government was seen as constituting at least as much of the problem as the solution due to serial misgovernance (Haque, 2021; Haque and Husain, 2021); and meagre operational resources due to longstanding under-investment in healthcare (Hassan et al., 2017; Hafeez, 2014). In March 2020, a mathematical model produced at Imperial College warned that Pakistan would, in a worst-case scenario, suffer 79,000 deaths by August 10, 2020 (Mangwat, 2020). If left entirely unchecked, by January 26, 2021, the toll of casualties could touch in excess of 2.3 million deaths (Mangwat, 2020). This model was heavily criticized later on by medical professionals for

its extrapolative simplicity (see Woolhouse, 2022), but it did raise sufficient alarm bells at the time.

Such foreboding did not materialize, and a series of multipronged policy initiatives were set into motion early on (see policy mix in Chohan, 2022b) to combat the threat from Covid-19 head on (Table 14.3). Various authors have identified a combination of elements that successfully kept Covid-19 in check, even as neighboring countries suffered catastrophic economic and public health consequences, including Iran, India, and China (see Chohan, 2022a). This chapter does not describe the measures in full detail but does enumerate and summarize them in Table 14.3. On the purely epidemiological front, Pakistan undertook “rigorous measures, including: establishing special hospitals, testing laboratories and quarantine centers; providing treatment; increasing public awareness; and ensuring the emergent response of local communities” (Shah and Xing, 2020: 92).

On the economic front, the government used its constrained fiscal space in a prudent manner by targeting the most poor and vulnerable for stimulus measures, which amounted to US\$ 5 billion, or 2 percent of GDP, a figure that was much more modest in both absolute and relative terms than many countries, even developing ones (see IMF, 2020; Chohan 2020a, 2022c). The vehicle for mobilizing this stimulus was an existing transfer program known as *Ehsaas*, which was an income support program for the bottom 4.5 million households. Supplementary support was provided to the most cyclical industries, including construction. As a result, even with only a meager fiscal endowment, macroeconomic contraction was minimal, and Pakistan had a –0.4 percent decline in 2020 followed by 3.9 percent growth in 2021.

All of this was coordinated by a unified command under the National Command Operation Centre (NCOC), which served as a “nerve-center” for institutional coordination that could “synergize and articulate united national effort against COVID-19” (NCOC, 2020). By drawing upon a multistakeholder composition of public health officials (including those with WHO experience), high-level political representatives, civil and military experts, along with provincial representatives, the NCOC’s public value contribution lay in creating a “one-window operation to collate, analyze and process information based on digital input and human intelligence across all [of Pakistan]” (NCOC, 2020: 1; see also Chohan, 2022a, 2022b). By tracing the spread of Covid-19 in real time across hot zones, and mobilizing resources in a targeted manner, the NCOC and its composite institutions could deploy technology and operational agility to address the problem at the nationwide level.

At the same time, the government mobilized civil society agents to fill the gap where the state was deficient, and so civil society was activated to co-create public value where public managers would fall short. While there were many groups working at various levels, the most noteworthy (WHO,

2020) was the Rural Support Program (RSP), which constituted a vast and loosely organized network of civil society groups that worked towards social development goals, such as the eradication of polio. Units of the wider RSP network were present in 149/156 districts of Pakistan and mobilized over 8.4 million rural households (equivalent to roughly 54 million individuals) into a network of 498,200 community institutions (RSP, 2020). Their primary contributions lay in awareness-creation (on hygiene, prevention, symptoms, etc.), dissemination of tools (e.g., masks), and later vaccines.

The manner in which *multilevel governance* (see Szarfenberg, 2015) was deployed showed that, even in crisis-contexts, and that too in a developing country, it was possible to preserve public value and to muster a response that faced the challenge head on. It is worth noting, however, that success was a combination of *virtu* and *fortuna*. For example, Pakistan's population was comparatively young, which meant that the early strains that disproportionately affected the elderly were less damaging to a demographically youthful country. Pakistan's obesity rate is also very low (Chohan, 2022a, 2022b), and Covid-19's severity correlated with underlying health factors (comorbidity) such as obesity. Pakistani cities were also low-rise and spread out, thus decreasing the nodes of transmission. Furthermore, 86 percent of the Pakistani population had BCG inoculation, which was observed to have provided a "non-specific immunity" against Covid-19 (Safdar, 2020; O'Neill and Netea, 2020), although the value of BCG as ex ante contributor is disputed and worth highlighting as contentious (see Upton et al., 2022; Pittet et al., 2023). Nevertheless, it may be argued that there were various ex ante advantages that the Pakistani population enjoyed.

Then again, neighboring countries such as India enjoyed such endowments as well, if not more so, and yet their outcomes were damningly different (Figure 14.1), which leads to the inference that fortune alone could not explain Pakistan's success, and rather, that the virtues of the policy mix it deployed made the difference (see Chohan, 2022a). The most important difference, with regards to Pakistan's performance relative to India or other such countries, lay in preventing the rural transmission of Covid-19, where the primary vector would have become endogenous community transmission. In India, for example, the severity of lockdowns forced the poor masses to flee to the countryside, carrying Covid-19 along with them, thus decimating rural areas where healthcare facilities were severely deficient; and then the masses brought Covid back with them to urban areas with a much larger disease burden and viral load.

All of this has been the subject of extensive research (Shah and Xing, 2020; Rasul, 2020; Chohan 2020a, 2020b, 2022a, 2022b), but a gap in the literature which still exists is precisely the subject of this volume: the positivity that was shown in the face of a daunting challenge. There are two elements to the

Table 14.3 Key policy measures in Pakistan's success

Policy area	Success measures
Leadership	Regular appeals to the nation by the leadership (Prime Minister Imran Khan) including technocrats (senior public admin cadres) to take utmost preventative care, with a recognition of limitations (“we can’t afford to give up or close down”) and urging observance of best practices.
Healthcare specializations	Establishing special hospitals, testing laboratories and quarantine centers.
Learning from abroad	Careful observation of the international situation (particularly China), and deployment of international best practices in <i>optimal lockdown</i> (targeted) policies as well as other methods from the WHO.
Civil society	Civil society inputs (collaborative governance) and mobilizing existing networks (rural support program) to fill the gap left in administrative cover. Mass-messaging with a positive, sober insistence on compliance.
Unified command	Centralizing towards a unified effort (NCOC), using both civil and military expertise, real-time inputs, and depoliticized technical expertise.
Economic/fiscal stimulus	Precise stimulus strategies, data-driven and needs-based disbursements overseen by the State Bank via the Ehsaas program, along with countercyclical stimulus for vulnerable industries (e.g., construction).
Network governance	Hospital system realignment through networked governance, Rural Support Program’s coordination, and the NCOC’s real-time inputs of field data guiding targeted lockdowns and healthcare.
International best practices	Applying standard international epidemiology best practices, as prescribed by the WHO, and overseen by Pakistanis with previous WHO experience.

Source: Chohan (2022a, 2022b).

measurement of positivity (Figure 14.2) that speak to Douglas and colleagues’ appeal: one is in the empirics of Pakistan’s Covid-19 performance, that is positive outcomes; and the other is the positive temperament with which the government tackled the problem, that is a positive approach. The next section examines both as alternating interpretations of positivity in public administration.

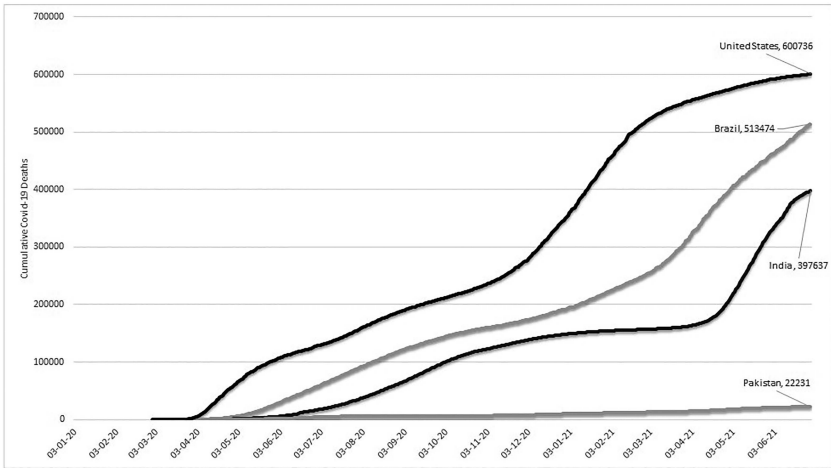
ASSESSING POSITIVITY: THE EMPIRICS AND THE MINDSET

Having laid out the importance of developing-country applicability and crisis-context relevance to positive public administration and having demonstrated thus far that Pakistan’s response to Covid-19 exemplifies both, the

question lingers about what was so “positive” in all of this. What does it even mean to be “positive” or to have something “positive”? This section argues that the matter can be dealt with in two ways (Figure 14.2). This echoes Douglas and colleagues’ contention that “we should avoid focusing only on measures for which data is readily available, and not walk away from normative debates about how to assess value” (Douglas et al., 2021: 445). First, there are the empirical metrics that speak to success in this instance. It is also worth mentioning, however, that what *might have happened* is an even larger source of solace, and the counterfactual deduction is made when looking at countries with similar endowments, such as India (Figure 14.1). Yet seen on its own terms, the empirics square favorably with what might be seen as a net-positive result (Table 14.4). Second, there is the “positive mindset” that was imbued throughout the response of Pakistan, which warrants attention. This is not necessarily an upbeat or gleeful notion of positivity, but rather one that is grounded in notions of sobriety and steadfast resoluteness in the face of adversity knowing that things will work out (see “the sober society” in Chohan, 2021). It may be seen as a “we shall overcome this” form of determination as positivity.

In terms of the first account of positivity, outcomes, this chapter looks at three key outcomes that would have been considered important in assessing national performance in the pandemic. On the first metric, which is by all means the most important, Pakistan did very well in terms of keeping its case count and death count consistently low. As Figure 14.1 indicates, Pakistan’s death count was only 20,000 as of July 2021, compared to countries such as the United States (nearly 600,000 deaths by then), Brazil with its similar population size (500,000 deaths), and India (400,000 deaths). By March 2023, that point has remained true, according to the tally of the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Research Centre (JHCRC) with Pakistan’s death count having touched 30,600 while the United States has touched 1,123,000 deaths, Brazil 699,000 deaths, and India 531,000 deaths (JHCRC, 2023). This occurred despite what we might think of as public value constraints related to legitimacy, recognition of value, and operational resources, as discussed previously. The significant differences were both a source of pride, and even wonder, as when Shah and Xing (2020: 92) described this success as “puzzling.” Yet the aforementioned discussion (see also Chohan, 2022a, 2022b) suggests that the puzzle can be demystified to quite an extent.

In terms of the second metric of economic stability, intervention by public managerial institutions including the State Bank of Pakistan, the Ehsaas program, and the relevant economic ministries meant that, even with a small stimulus in both absolute and relative terms, a significant amount of economic stability could be maintained. Pakistan’s economy did not fall by even –1 percent in 2020, as compared to significant drops in both developed and devel-



Note: Data as at June 29, 2021.
Source: Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Research Centre (2021).

Figure 14.1 Covid-19 deaths in four large countries

oping countries (IMF, 2021; Chohan, 2022c). Thereafter, the increase was still notable at nearly 4 percent growth in 2021, thus representing well balanced (poor-specific) stimulus measures directed through existing policy instruments (Chohan, 2022b; Rehman, 2020). This resilient growth continued into 2022, when Pakistan recorded 6 percent GDP growth (Rana, 2022).

Additionally, in terms of the normalcy index, which represented a measure of a return to normal socioeconomic conditions after the pandemic’s initial

Table 14.4 Empirical measures of positivity

Metric	Explanation
Cases/deaths	Compared to other large countries, at various levels of economic development, Pakistan achieved extremely good results in terms of low cases and deaths from Covid-19.
Economics	Pakistan’s economic drop from Covid-19 was less than –1 percent (2020), while its subsequent year GDP was high at 4 percent, indicating a low cyclical impact from the pandemic.
Normalcy index	Pakistan was among the top three countries <i>in the world</i> in terms of <i>The Economist’s Global Normalcy Index</i> (i.e., it was among the world leaders in terms of a multidimensional evaluation of Covid-19 recovery that resembled the pre-Covid era).

Source: Chohan (2022a, 2022b).

onslaught, Pakistan scored extremely high (*The Economist*, 2021). According to the *Global Normalcy Index*, which deployed a series of parameters to assess effective returns to pre-pandemic conditions, Pakistan scored among the top three *in the world*. This put it on par with New Zealand and Hong Kong, who had a far easier task, not simply because of fewer potential public value constraints, but also because they were geographically separate (as islands) with very small populations, akin to mere districts in Pakistan. Yet for a country of 220 million people to attain such returns to pre-pandemic conditions was an endorsement of the foregoing measures with positive results.



Source: Author.

Figure 14.2 Two forms of positivity

On the second account of positivity, that of a positive state of mind in confronting challenges, Pakistan's Covid-19 response offers an interesting proposition. Rather than being jubilant or triumphant in its response, positivity reflects a sober appraisal of the challenge and the expressed resoluteness towards overcoming it. The essence of it would equate to saying that "we see the challenge we must confront, and we will do our best to confront it; God willing, we shall prevail." This essential message was evinced time and again by the leadership during the pandemic. A critical discourse analysis of the then Prime Minister Imran Khan's first Covid-19 public service message pointed to an "endeavoring to [bolster] the Pakistani people's assurance towards dealing with the matter of Covid," while ensuring the public's "conviction is built" and the force of public potential is reinforced (Yasin et al., 2021: 2831). Subsequent speeches by Imran Khan pointed to consistent vigilance, as well as the compassionate need to balance lives and livelihoods (Chohan, 2022a: 54). The tenor of international speeches he made during this period highlighted the need for international cooperation, coordination, and sympathy (Chohan 2022a: 142).

Other public officials maintained similar positivity couched in modesty and emphasizing proactiveness and vigilance. The central bank's Governor Dr.

Reza Baqir said as early as September 2020 that, although victory couldn't be declared as of then, the signs of strong economic recovery were evident (Rehman, 2020). Noting that Pakistan was a country that had and could withstand any challenge, he would observe that positive signs were everywhere, but it would take time for the full impact of the pandemic to materialize. Dr. Sania Nishtar, who headed the social protection program under Ehsaas, noted that public managers were "doing things that were completely new in a very difficult environment," and were "taking huge risks along the way," but nevertheless, "all I can say is that it was a huge responsibility and it was deeply humbling" (Al-Kibsi, 2021). Speaking to a gathering of his alma mater at Yale School of medicine, the Minister of Health and head of the national coronavirus strategy, Dr. Faisal Sultan, noted that while expectations may have been low at the outset, the positive nature of the response and the positivity with which it was handled warranted mention (Viswanathan, 2022). In his words, "generally people have a poor expectation of a public health response, whereas in this case, I think it was a good response and the public feels it was," adding that "I think it's very important to share the *positive* parts of our story" (Viswanathan, 2022, emphasis added).

In examining both the empirics and the mindset of positivity, it is worth remarking upon some second-order effects of the successful strategy that may go comparatively underappreciated. Above all, unlike in a great many other countries, there were *never* any public protests or demonstrations against the Covid-19 response of the country. Remembering that this was a country with low recognition of public value and government legitimacy deficits, the lack of public ire or retaliation is all the more remarkable. Although positive expressions from the public are one thing, the fact that open-ended and broad-based negativity was not to be found is itself akin to positivity. Another element worth considering is that, although the pandemic was addressed in a positive manner, the post-pandemic era was (and still is) one of far greater difficulty. Pakistan suffered catastrophic floods in 2022, and its economy fell victim to larger exogenous forces including US interest rate policy and Russia's war on Ukraine. By late 2022, there was an acute fear that the country would face its first sovereign default. In other words, where Covid-19 was handled deftly and comprehensively, the events of the post-pandemic era have posed a much more worrisome situation. As new challenges unfold, therefore, there will sadly be more case studies, from the very same country, of whether a developing country musters positivity in crisis contexts.

CONCLUSION

The premise of this chapter was that, for positive public administration to serve as a viable and meaningful discourse within public administration, it would

require an applicability beyond the WEIRD contexts that typify much public administration research. Instead, the discourse would need to find resonance in (1) crisis contexts, and (2) developing-country settings. Were one to find examples of positivity in such circumstances, the chapter contended, positive public administration would gain the requisite applicability and relevance that such a discourse would require. In this edited volume, there are other chapters which also grapple with developing countries and with crisis contexts, leading to the contention that Pakistan's Covid-19 successes were not a singular instance, and that there is much more in the world for which public administration should feel positive, based on the positive outcomes attained (in this volume, see e.g., Ostermann and Wouango (Ch. 5); Onyango (Ch. 10); Otenyo (Ch. 11); Dem (Ch. 15); Noyoo and Matela (Insight 4); Fohim, Kodabux, and Seeam (Ch. 19); Medina and Sánchez (Ch. 23)).

The theorization regarding the definitional elements of “positivity” in this chapter reflects two distinct aspects. There is the positivity of outcomes, which in this case pertained to low deaths, very tame economic fluctuation, and a fast return to normalcy. Not only could these be seen in relative terms (*vis-à-vis* other countries) but also in absolute terms of due recognition. This echoes the contention that it was not just that good things happened, but also that bad things *didn't happen*. Then there is also the positivity of mindset, which isn't necessarily an upbeat disposition but rather a stoic one of the “we shall overcome this” sort. The chapter sought to take an example of “what works” in a developing country and crisis-context, while pointing out that success was a function of both *virtu* and *fortuna*, with a complex set of policy measures working in unison to achieve positive outcomes. This resonates with the argument that success is multidimensional and multiperspectivist.

It is worth cautioning, however, that our contemporary world seems to be characterized by increasing turbulence, and so there is less time to appreciate positive outcomes, since new crises emerge, and recent ones are quickly forgotten. In Pakistan, the outstanding Covid-19 response has been overshadowed in many ways by the devastation of the 2022 floods, incessant political infighting among parties, and the looming risk of the country's first sovereign default. Covid-19 thus fades from memory, and a widespread negativity enshrouds the public, as of this writing.

Nevertheless, there is a need for positive public administration as a guiding principle in administrative praxis. As the world faces interlocking wicked problems, this positivity should in fact be part of a global effort, unlike in Covid-19, where national-level responses overrode a concerted global initiative. The challenges of the future for public administrations will require that public managers and politicians are suffused with enough positivity, bolstered by the recognition and appreciation of the public (where due), to overcome the tides of adversity that shall ebb and flow in the years to come. This is where

one can, irrespective of peacetime gentility or raging calamity, and irrespective of prosperity versus penury, appreciate the urgency and salience of a spirit that embodies positivity in public administration.

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15. Bhutan's pandemic response and vaccination campaign: lessons on positive public administration

Sigay Dem

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores a case of positive public administration (PPA), examining the pandemic response that was developed in the small nation of Bhutan. It draws on key themes from Douglas and colleagues (2021), who called for more attention to be paid to situations where governments do well, moving us beyond what they called a negativity bias. They argue that scholars need to seek to uncover the mechanisms and factors that allow for public problems to be solved, for public services to be high performing, and for fair processes to be developed in tackling conflicts. Of particular interest for the discussion that follows is their emphasis on identifying, “robust and resilient ways of coping with threats and risks” (Douglas et al., 2021: 442).

Along with all nations, Bhutan confronted the threats and risks that emerged with the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. In this chapter, the experience of how Bhutan responded to this threat, drawing on its unique characteristics, is explained. Aspects such as social norms, culture, trust, respect, and religion all played a role in the success of the Bhutanese response to the global pandemic.

This chapter explores how Bhutan inoculated its population within a short period of time through farsighted and compassionate leadership, public solidarity and trust, strategic collaboration, and partnership among various institutions, besides leveraging cultural norms and Buddhism, serving as an exemplar of PPA.

BHUTAN

Nestled in the mighty Himalayas, Bhutan is a relatively small country sharing borders with two economic giants, China and India. Its rugged terrain covers an area of 38,394 square kilometers. It has a population of 770,276, a GDP

per capita of USD 3,833.03, and a GDP growth rate of 5.21 percent (National Statistics Bureau, 2023). Bhutan is currently undergoing a major transformation in its efforts to become a developed country. It aims to increase its GDP from USD 2.5 billion to USD 5 billion by 2029, and to USD 10 billion by 2034, and increase GDP per capita to USD 4,256 by 2029, and above USD 12,000 by 2034 (Prime Minister's Office of Bhutan, 2022). The country is scheduled to graduate from the least developed country to a middle-income country by the end of December 2023. Alongside its ambition to increase GDP, preserving Bhutanese identity and social cohesion is an equally important aspect of its transformation agenda.

What sets Bhutan apart goes beyond these statistics. It is a collective society with unique norms. It is a young democracy, with democracy bestowed upon the nation by His Majesty the Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. When he first advocated for democratic transition in the country, the citizens, who deeply revered his leadership, expressed their preference for continuation of the existing monarchical system of governance. However, His Majesty pushed forward, leading the drafting of the constitution and Bhutan transitioned to a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy in 2008.

Bhutan's geographic location makes its challenges unique as well. Bhutan has a narrow economic base, and it has been heavily reliant on hydropower exports, agriculture, and tourism. In addition, the country's rugged terrain and remote locations make infrastructure development, such as road networks and transportation, a significant challenge. This challenge, in particular, has hindered access to markets and economic growth. While Bhutan faces economic challenges, it has made a remarkable contribution to the global effort to combat climate change. This extraordinary commitment was articulated when Bhutan pledged to not only maintain carbon neutrality but surpass this by achieving a carbon-negative status at the 15th Conference of Parties (COP15) in 2009. Its forests absorb three times the carbon it emits, and its constitution mandates the country to have 60 percent of its land under forest cover.

Bhutan is guided by a development philosophy known as Gross National Happiness (GNH), a gift from the fourth king. GNH doesn't imply that Bhutan is the world's happiest country by conventional measures; instead, it signifies a holistic approach to development. In a royal address in India in 2009, the reigning sovereign, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck stated, "Today, GNH has come to mean so many things to so many people but to me, it signifies simply – Development with Values [...] Thus, for my nation, today GNH is the bridge between the fundamental values of kindness, equality and humanity and the necessary pursuit of economic growth" (RAOnline, n.d). This distinctive philosophy places importance on non-material aspects of well-being, such as environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and good governance, alongside conventional economic development. Culture and

Buddhism, deeply rooted in Bhutanese lives, not only shape national ethos but also play pivotal roles in critical national undertakings. One such example is Bhutan's vaccination drive, where leveraging cultural norms and religion helped mobilize citizen demand for vaccines. Amidst the global turbulence of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bhutan achieved a remarkable feat by inoculating 94 percent of its population in a mere two weeks. In this response we see an exemplar of PPA, in particular in demonstrating a robust and resilient response to a threat and risk.

BHUTAN'S COVID-19 RESPONSE: PHASE 1

Bhutan detected its first case of COVID-19 on March 19, 2020, when a 76-year-old tourist was confirmed positive by the Ministry of Health (MoH). Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bhutan has adopted a phased management approach under the guidance of His Majesty the King and the diligent execution by the government. The subsequent analysis highlights two important phases where Bhutan navigated through the crisis.

The first phase was called 'Prevention and Containment Phase'. The main priority was saving the lives of the people over anything else and to do so by introducing timely measures to keep Bhutan free from the virus. In this phase, the country was also investigating ways to procure vaccines. Two years into the pandemic, the then prime minister Dr. Lotay Tshering¹ mentioned, "Due to His Majesty's personal guidance and leadership, and the wholehearted support of the people, Bhutan has emerged largely unscathed even during the most dangerous periods of the pandemic" (PMO, 2022).

From the beginning of the pandemic until March 2022, a range of strategies to combat COVID-19 were implemented, demonstrating how Bhutan built its response to threats and risks associated with the pandemic. From the outset, the country was physically categorized into high-risk and low-risk zones between the southern and northern sections. Southern Bhutan, which shares an open, porous border with India, was identified as a high-risk region, given the possibility of the virus spreading over from across the border. To protect the central and northern parts of the country that were relatively safer geographically, an internal buffer was introduced through the zoning mechanism which reduced movement and required quarantining when people moved across these zones. Whenever people moved from the high-risk region to low-risk region, a mandatory fourteen-day quarantine (gradually decreasing the number of days as the risk reduced over time) was required. Their vehicles were meticulously escorted until the people traveling from high-risk zone got into quarantine facility. Besides vaccinating people against the virus, Bhutan underwent several lockdowns, isolated positive cases, quarantined primary contacts, and imposed systematic quarantine requirements for people traveling from

high-risk to low-risk zones at the state's expense. Together these strategies sought to protect the lives of the Bhutanese population.

Bhutan's First Steps Toward Procuring Vaccines

During the first phase of the pandemic response, access to the vaccine was a challenge, as was the case with many other nations. When asked about the challenges, the then health minister, Dasho Dechen Wangmo said:

Challenges varied during different phases. Initially, the entire world was struggling to get the vaccines [...] during that period, the challenge of procuring vaccines kept me awake at night. I tried using every tactic and strategy I knew to secure vaccines. (D. Wangmo, personal communication, January 12, 2022)

The National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) started discussing and developing vaccination plans around July 2020. Dr. Sonam Wangchuck,² Chief of Royal Center for Disease Control, noted at this time “we knew there will be vaccines, but didn't know what kind of vaccine would be there and we were aware that the access to vaccine would be tough.” He also mentioned that when a pandemic happens, vaccines are rolled out as therapeutic intervention, after scientists undertake important studies and have identified genomic information. Once this process is complete, vaccine production begins. On average, conventional vaccines take 12 to 15 years for production due to required processes such as clinical and post-clinical trials. However, during this pandemic, this process took just 9 to 10 months. The government expected that there would be a fast tracking of vaccines (S. Wangchuk, personal communication, December 9, 2021).

In April 2020, the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access (COVAX) mechanism was established to ensure equitable vaccine distribution between high-income and low-income countries. This initiative was co-led by the World Health Organization (WHO), the vaccine alliance Gavi, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). COVAX opened its membership to lower and middle-income countries, including Bhutan, to help them access vaccines. Member countries were encouraged to contribute funds based on their financial capacity. The incentive for joining COVAX was that member nations, based on their population, would receive enough vaccines for 20 percent of their population once they became available. As a result, Bhutan became a COVAX member to ensure early vaccine access. Initially, COVAX set a condition for countries to access vaccines based on their efficiency in vaccine distribution, because they anticipated limited availability of vaccines at that time. The better a country performed in its vaccine roll out, the more it could propose for vaccine procurement. COVAX would then handle the procurement for these

countries. The WHO screened these procurement proposals by assessing each country's vaccine distribution performance. For Bhutan, meeting this condition was its only hope for obtaining vaccines during that period (S. Wangchuk, personal communication, December 9, 2021).

India's Generous Vaccine Gift and Bhutan's Roll Out Decision

Bhutan received 150,000 doses of the Covishield vaccine on January 20, 2021, as a gift from the government of India, the first country to do so. Bhutan and India have shared a profound friendship since establishing diplomatic ties in January 1968, a relationship that was commemorated on its Golden Jubilee in 2018. Rooted in trust, goodwill, and mutually advantageous cooperation, this bond was originally forged by His Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the Third King of Bhutan, and India's first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Their vision has been upheld and enriched by subsequent leaders. India has been significant supporter in Bhutan's socioeconomic development since its first Five Year Plan in 1961, with partnerships spanning cultural exchanges, education, trade, and especially hydropower (MFAET, 2021).

Whilst the vaccines arrived in January, the Bhutanese prime minister informed the people through the media that the vaccination drive would not start until mid-March. The government chose to wait to vaccinate its people for two important reasons. Firstly, the central monastic body³ advised the government to wait until the *dhana*,⁴ which fell between mid-February and mid-March in 2021, was over. Secondly, the government wanted to wait until it procured sufficient vaccines for a campaign mode of vaccination where the maximum number of people could be vaccinated. This was based on the notion of achieving herd immunity.

Auspicious Timing

Integrating culture and religion into various ventures – from starting new events and launching products, to making critical decisions – is innate to the Bhutanese. The Buddhist astrological concept of a 'good day' holds significant psychological importance. The belief is that initiating any venture on such a day – from personal endeavors to government projects – enhances the probability of success. Given its significance, vaccination was no exception. For instance, the vice principal of the Pangrizampa school of astrology told the media that the year of monkey is considered auspicious for undertaking various tasks, and it is believed that a woman born in the monkey year will bring good luck (Bhutan Broadcasting Service, 2021). Thus, the school recommended that the first vaccine be administered to a woman born in the year of the monkey at the auspicious time of 9.30 am on March 27, 2021. Additionally, when the first

batch of 150,000 vaccines arrived at the Paro International Airport, Venerable *Laytshog Lopen*⁵ presided over prayers for an auspicious endeavor and conducted a *thruesoel* ceremony (spiritual cleansing and purification) for the consignment (PMO, 2021). As the vaccines were transported to the districts in preparation for distribution, local monastic communities carried out prayers and purification ceremonies for the vaccines. According to Kinga (2022), these rituals, led by the central monastic body, enhanced the “psychological resilience” of the people, helping them to better cope with the challenges of the pandemic. This provides a unique example of how resilient and robust responses to threats and risks developed in Bhutan.

The Auspicious Day and the First Vaccination Drive

The vaccination campaign commenced on the auspicious day of March 27, 2021. The vaccines had been purified with prayers, strategic plans were set, and a woman born in the favorable year of the monkey was identified to receive the first dose. Lending further spiritual support, the central monastic body fortified the campaign with *Kurim*.⁶ The Ministry of Health began the vaccination drive with a 30-year-old female born in the year of the monkey, administered by a nurse born in the same year. Following her, the prime minister received his first dose. After this ceremonial start, the Ministry of Health aimed to vaccinate the 533,558 eligible individuals within a week (Tshedup, 2021). Within just three days, Bhutan had vaccinated 56 percent of its eligible population. By April, 8, 93.69 percent (472,139) of the eligible individuals had received the vaccine, achieving a 94 percent coverage within the first two weeks. This positioned Bhutan as one of the first countries in the region to achieve such a high vaccination rate (MoH, 2021, August 8).

In April 2021, *The Economist* highlighted a comparative analysis of the first-dose vaccination rate among United States, Britain, Seychelles, Israel, and Bhutan. It reported that Bhutan had vaccinated almost all its adult population. In terms of the proportion of the population inoculated, only Israel and Seychelles outpaced Bhutan in terms of the rate of vaccination (*The Economist*, 2021).

Sufficient Vaccines for the Roll Out

The MoH and the government had set an ambitious target: a campaign-style vaccination drive where over 75 percent of the total population would be vaccinated within a week. This required 1.2 million doses for a target population of around 533,000 (Wangchuk, 2021). Whilst waiting for the auspicious date was religiously appropriate and psychologically important for the Bhutanese population, it also gave the government additional time to secure vaccines for

the eligible population. Following the inauspicious month, the government procured a second batch of 400,000 vaccine doses from India on March 22, 2021. This allowed for the large-scale vaccination drive to commence on March 27, 2021.

People's Attitudes Toward Vaccination

When formulating the vaccine deployment plans and establishing systems, the MoH had concerns regarding the public willingness to participate in the initial vaccination drive. To address these concerns, the MoH conducted a vaccine hesitancy survey one week prior to the roll out. The findings were encouraging: “The results showed that vaccine hesitancy was low. However, we didn’t want to rely on that alone, so we employed strategies such as having the prime minister being among the first recipients of the vaccine” (D. Wangmo, personal communication, January 12, 2022).

Further, a survey executed by the NITAG in January 2021, involving a sample size of 7,476 participants, revealed that nearly 85 percent of the respondents were open to getting vaccinated (Tshedup, 2021). This suggested that Bhutan began its vaccination campaign with a substantial base of acceptance.

Stakeholders and Decisions for Vaccination Roll Out

The NITAG played a major role in Bhutan during the COVID-19 pandemic and worked closely with the MoH and the government to provide evidence-based technical assistance to tackle COVID-19. The WHO South-East Asia Region initiated the formation of NITAGs in member countries in 2015. NITAGs were established as independent committees to advise policymakers on all immunization-related issues. During the World Health Assembly 2012, the member countries endorsed Global Vaccine Action Plan 2011–20 which was aimed at enhancing vaccine use and availability, as a part of the broader initiative called a Decade of Vaccines. Consequently, the member countries also agreed to establish NITAGS by 2020, ensuring they conformed to WHO standards. The establishment of NITAG in Bhutan was a direct outcome of the WHO initiative.

The NITAG members in Bhutan comprise doctors and officials with a health and medical background, with a doctor chairing the NITAG. During the initial phase of the pandemic in Bhutan, as a first step, the NITAG proposed to identify risk groups for prioritization as an initial step, even while the vaccines were still under clinical trials. Three groups were given priority in case of a low supply of vaccines, including: (i) active frontline workers (health workers) who were directly in contact with the patients, (ii) the elderly (aged 65 and

above), and (iii) people with medical conditions (any age) (S. Wangchuk, personal communication, December 9, 2021). Chezom (2020) noted that at the time there were “5,932 high-risk health workers, 35,786 active frontliners, 41,527 elderly people, and 34,522 people with comorbid conditions”. The Health Minister told the national broadcaster – Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) – that passive frontliners and school staff would be vaccinated in phase 2, followed by the others if Bhutan were to receive more vaccines.

Technically, NITAG proposed the strategic framework, and the government made the final decisions regarding the roll out. Thus, the government's strategy was to identify the different risk groups first. According to Dr. Sonam Wangchuk, the government was well-equipped to make informed decisions, especially since the cabinet included two ministers with health backgrounds. The Health Minister was a public health expert, and the Foreign Minister was a medical doctor. Furthermore, the Prime Minister himself was also a medical doctor and served as a surgeon at the Jigme Dorji Wangchuk National Referral Hospital for many years. Thus, the government leveraged the health expertise of NITAG as well as their cabinet members in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially while making decisions for the vaccination campaign. NITAG also developed guidelines for health workers in preparation for the first vaccination roll out and conducted training of trainers in February 2021 in three regions – eastern, central, and western Bhutan. The training programs were then cascaded down to the health workers.

The MoH, under the leadership of the Health Minister, alongside the cabinet, took pivotal decisions guiding the vaccination drive, with NITAG offering technical guidance and recommendations. Under the guidance of His Majesty and the government, Bhutan opted for a campaign-style vaccination approach, aiming to inoculate the entire nation swiftly.

BHUTAN'S COVID-19 RESPONSE: PHASE 2

In May 2022, Bhutan transitioned to second phase of its COVID-19 response, also termed ‘the Protection Phase’, following a progressive vaccination drive. This decision was supported by extensive vaccination coverage, enabling the government to open up the nation confidently. By November 17, 2021, Bhutan had fully vaccinated 76.8 percent of its entire population, 93.2 percent adults (18 years and above), and 92.8 percent of children aged 12–17.

In November 2021, the MoH began exploring Pfizer pediatric vaccines for 83,227 children aged 5–11 years. This exploration followed the US Food and Drug Administration's approval of the vaccine for this age group. At that point, only the USA and Israel had initiated vaccination for children in this category (MoH, 2021, November 19). The vaccination drive for these children began on March 6, 2022, achieving a 97.25 percent vaccination rate within a week.

The protection phase signified relaxed restrictions and emphasized protecting the vulnerable. The Prime Minister in his press release mentioned that the Omicron variant's higher transmissibility, made lockdowns a less favorable approach. He also noted that its effects are milder than previous variants (PMO, 2022). Heeding the Prime Minister's advice, Bhutan continued its vaccination efforts and provided medical care to all COVID-19 confirmed cases and did away with lockdowns. In this phase, positive cases were recommended to undertake home isolation. Quarantine duration for fully vaccinated international travelers or returning Bhutanese with a negative RT-PCR test was shortened from 21 to 5 days. For the unvaccinated, it was reduced to 10 days.

Additionally, in this phase, His Majesty emphasized safeguarding the vulnerable and urged members of the COVID-19 task forces in different regions to learn from the previous experiences in preparation for the second phase. His Majesty's Secretariat introduced 'reverse isolation' in all 20 districts, targeting the vulnerable. According to MoH, this group included those with severe health conditions, and the destitute (aged 65 and above or disabled). Vulnerable individuals could voluntarily register for reverse isolation, receiving specialized care and medical assistance. From the initial days of the pandemic, His Majesty emphasized the need to think ahead and prepare long-term strategies to deal with the pandemic and he led by example, demonstrating astuteness and foresight.

The second phase was noticeably more relaxed. With increasing vaccination rates, confidence surged, lockdowns were lifted, and unrestricted domestic travel resumed. In contrast to the first phase, there was no mandatory hotel quarantine when moving from high-risk to low-risk zones. Through developing clear plans and building on the unique characteristics of the Bhutanese culture, the government was able to create a novel response to the threats and risks of the pandemic.

Challenges and Interventions

During the second wave of the pandemic, when the Delta variant hit India severely, India faced immense pressure. The government of Bhutan began exploring options for obtaining second-dose vaccines from Europe and elsewhere. Given the strong relationships with India, His Majesty advised the Bhutanese government that sourcing vaccines from India under those circumstances would be inconsiderate. Meanwhile, Bhutan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs began seeking vaccines for the second vaccination campaign. As per UNICEF (2021), Bhutan received vaccines from multiple sources. It received 500,000 doses of Moderna from the USA through COVAX facility, 250,000 doses of AstraZeneca from Denmark, over 100,000 doses of AstraZeneca from Croatia, Bulgaria, and a few other countries, 5,850 doses of Pfizer from

COVAX facility, and 50,000 doses of Sinopharm from China. The successful roll out of the first vaccination campaign helped the Bhutanese government to secure vaccines from other countries for the second round of vaccination.

Once there was sufficient global evidence regarding the efficacy of mixing and matching vaccines (known as the heterologous approach), NITAG made a recommendation that people above 30 years receive AstraZeneca and those between 18 and 30 years receive Moderna. This approach was intended to reduce vaccine wastage and to preserve Moderna doses for children. However, before the roll out of the vaccination commenced, His Majesty drew on the emerging evidence and stressed that separate vaccine procurement should occur for children, and that the most effective approach should be adopted for others. Consequently, the public were offered the option to mix and match, which is what most people chose to do. While most people had received AstraZeneca for their first dose, almost 95 percent chose Moderna, while a smaller percentage opted for AstraZeneca as their second dose (S. Wangchuk, personal communication, December 9, 2021).

The limited initial knowledge about these new vaccines posed a challenge. Most people were unfamiliar with the evidence supporting the heterologous approach. During the first vaccination campaign, Bhutan had AstraZeneca for the entire population. Bhutan had options between AstraZeneca and Moderna for the second dose. However, a statement by WHO's Chief Scientist Dr. Soumya Swaminathan about the risks of mixing vaccines led to public concerns. Later she clarified her statement through a tweet saying, "Individuals should not decide for themselves, public health agencies can, based on available data [...] Data from mix and match studies of different vaccines are awaited – immunogenicity and safety both need to be evaluated" (Reuters, 2021).

By July 2021, evidence suggested that mixing vaccines could enhance efficacy. The Prime Minister played a pivotal role in restoring public confidence. He advocated for the vaccine's safety and volunteered to be the first to receive a Moderna shot during the second-dose campaign. As a result, 95 percent of the population chose heterologous vaccines, and the remaining 5 percent opted for homologous vaccines (MoH, 2021). The Health Minister cited His Majesty's directive to "give what is best for our people" as a guiding principle. In addition, several rounds of risk communications were held with local government leaders, who were in strategic positions such as *Dzongdags*⁷ and *Dungpas*,⁸ *Gups*⁹ and *Mangmis*,¹⁰ including the five *Lopens* of *Zhung Dratshang* and 20 *Lam Netens*¹¹ in the districts, and the school teachers. These consultations aimed to ensure awareness and understanding, promote safety, and encourage public participation in the vaccination campaign (S. Wangchuk, personal communication, December 9, 2021).

ANALYSIS: SUCCESS FACTORS

One key focus of PPA is to discern why certain public policies, programs, organizations, networks, or partnerships are more successful than others in delivering societal outcomes that are highly valued. In the case of Bhutan's exemplary COVID-19 management and vaccination campaign, PPA prompts an investigation into two fundamental questions: (i) What were the underlying reasons for Bhutan's effective response to the pandemic? (ii) How was Bhutan able to inoculate its population both widely and swiftly, outpacing many other nations despite its economic and geographic constraints? According to the WHO, the latest data showed that Bhutan had 62,697 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with a remarkably low death toll of only 21 people (WHO, 2023). This outcome is a testament to the country's extraordinary leadership and effective response to the pandemic.

The foundation of Bhutan's successful response to the pandemic rested on several pillars: the visionary and compassionate leadership of His Majesty the King, the people's trust and solidarity, strategic collaboration, and partnerships, and leveraging social norms and religion. These factors collectively paved the way for a successful vaccination drive, effectively mobilizing citizen demand for the vaccines. They also provided the foundation for a robust and resilient response to the threats and risks posed by the pandemic. According to Klitgaard (2023: 130), the role of leadership and management is not just to supply goods and services; their key role is to mobilize demand from citizens: "Mobilizing demand means such things as using the human touch: building relationships with users and intermediaries, utilizing indigenous networks [...] providing users with timely, pertinent and credible information, including both quantitative data and stories of success [...]."

In Bhutan, effective collaboration with the central monk body was crucial for the national vaccination program. Aligning the vaccination drive with auspicious timing and leveraging cultural and religious norms played a key role in its successful implementation. The *Kurim* (prayers and rituals) by the central monastic body before the vaccination roll out and appeasing the Medicine Buddha helped people gain psychological assurance. This approach significantly boosted people's trust and confidence in the vaccine uptake. For example, the Health Minister noted that "Public perception and public safety can be ensured through programs and science, and also through psychology, by giving people assurance" (D. Wangmo, personal communication, January 12, 2022).

Additionally, His Majesty's foresight in preparing the nation for vaccination and the government's efforts to mobilize demand for the vaccines were pivotal. In an interview the Prime Minister said, "His Majesty prepared the people

a year in advance, announcing that until vaccines became available, we must not let our guard down and should continue taking measures to contain the disease” (L. Tshering, personal communication, June 9, 2023). His Majesty’s proactive communication through various national broadcasts set a resilient tone for the country. In a notable address on September 12, 2020, he alerted the nation to the enduring nature of the pandemic and underscored the necessity of a vaccine, preparing people mentally for the forthcoming vaccination efforts. In his nationwide address he mentioned:

As we battle the pandemic, we need to be aware that it will not disappear in a matter of months [...] We need a cure or a vaccine to see an end to COVID-19. There will undoubtedly be a vaccine, but it will take some time before it is ready, and some more time before it becomes widely accessible. All our planning [...] must be based on this fact. (His Majesty the King’s Address to the Nation, 2020, para. 5)

This prepared the ground to mobilize citizen demand for the vaccine. His Majesty’s constant encouragement inspired people and garnered their trust. Such leadership fostered unity and encouraged institutions to work collaboratively towards a common goal.

As we grapple with this pandemic today, our religious institutions continue to supplicate the blessings of our Guardian Deities, and the government will not relax in its efforts to contain the threat. Our institutions, armed forces, Desuups, public servants, and volunteers will continue to serve the nation. The elderly will remain safe, and the people thoroughly conscientious.

We look to the youth of Bhutan to come forward – in this hour of need – so that, beyond overcoming the challenges posed by COVID-19, we build a stronger nation.

During this pandemic, my only priority is the well-being and happiness of our people, including those living abroad. With the blessings and protection of our Guardian Deities, we will all remain safe. And, as I always say, if our people stay diligent and committed, united in purpose and spirit, all will be well. (His Majesty the King’s Address to the Nation, 2020, paras. 15–17)

His Majesty did not just address the public, but his active presence, visiting high-risk areas to monitor preparedness and response measures in place against the spread of COVID-19, and adhering to COVID-19 protocols, bolstered public confidence and compliance.

The Health Minister identified leadership, public trust in the health system, and public solidarity as the “the three key enablers” of Bhutan’s achievement. She pointed out that His Majesty’s leadership galvanized the government and the citizens to confront the pandemic with determination. His Majesty’s visits to vaccination sites and high-risk areas, alongside the prime minister’s endorsement of the “mix and match” vaccine strategy during the second dose vaccination campaign, played a critical role in cementing public trust and

resilience. The Prime Minister was the first person to receive Moderna mRNA three days before the second dose vaccination roll out (Sharma and Jain, 2021).

Secondly, collaboration among various institutions, pulling together efforts, garnered success. Under the overarching guidance and leadership of His Majesty the King, the vaccination drive in Bhutan was supported by institutions such as the Prime Minister's Office, the central monastic body, and the *De-suung* – 'the guardians of peace' volunteers. *De-suung* was established by His Majesty the King in 2011 to promote a sense of community, harmony, and cooperation as a group and as active members of society. The *De-suups* (members of the *De-suung*) lived up to these aspirations through their services to the community, especially during the pandemic. They became a symbol of solidarity and service to the community. During the vaccination roll out when 1,217 vaccination posts were identified for vaccine accessibility to the public, nearly 3,300 health workers, and 4,400 *De-suups* volunteered to assist and manage the crowd (Ministry of Health and World Health Organization, 2022: 81). They were instrumental in managing vaccination sites and reinforcing the community spirit.

In addition, the health ministry's efforts in detailed planning led by the health minister were critical in executing the plans and strategies on the ground. This included preparation for cold storage capabilities, supply chain reinforcement, and contingency planning to ensure no vaccines were wasted. "As a leader you must know in and out, of every component of what you are dealing with [...] Micromanagement has a bad connotation, but to achieve success you must know every detail, one must have an in-depth understanding of what is happening" (D. Wangmo, personal communication, January 12, 2022).

According to the Health Minister, six months before the vaccination drive, the government was aware that the vaccine will have to be rolled out at the *Gewog*¹³ level. Thus, all the districts were equipped with storage facilities and the refrigerators were upgraded. MoH then focused on strengthening the supply chain. It also procured refrigerated vans. "Timing was everything which was dependent on planning" (D. Wangmo, personal communication, January 12, 2022). The health personnel meticulously prepared both logistics and strategies to ensure every vaccine eligible individual was reached, including those in easily accessible areas as well as the more remote populations like yak herders and hermits in retreat (Ministry of Health and World Health Organization, 2022).

The MoH also developed the Bhutan Vaccination System to manage registration of people, monitor real-time data and address adverse effects following immunization so that instant support could be provided, wherever and whenever necessary. The MoH re-deployed doctors to all centers and put teams of doctors in all regions to monitor adverse effects. The Bhutan Vaccination

System also helped assess the vaccine turnover. MoH opened the registration system before the actual vaccination campaign to assess how many people were located at different places for logistical planning. To maximize the vaccination turnover, the government restricted inter-district movements of people. This encouraged people to get the vaccines where they were registered as per the plan to minimize vaccine wastage (S. Wangchuk, personal communication, December 9, 2021).

Furthermore, Bhutan has a well-established foundation for immunization policy and programs. "Bhutan has a history of high coverage of any vaccine. We had no vaccine hesitancy. This is partly because people have faith and trust in the government" (S. Wangchuk, personal communication, December 9, 2021). According to MoH (2011), Bhutan had its first vaccinations when it joined the global vaccination during the eradication of smallpox. Following this in 1976 a few districts were introduced to diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, oral polio and Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (tuberculosis) vaccines. In 1979 the expanded program on immunization (EPI) was launched which was followed by the national plan of action for acceleration of EPI in 1987. In 1988, the 66th National Assembly passed a resolution for all children and pregnant mothers to have access to immunization services. In effective response to this, Bhutan achieved Universal Child Immunization. Bhutan always had more than 90 percent vaccination coverage throughout its vaccination history. For example, in 2006 it achieved 98 percent nationwide measles and rubella vaccination coverage, and in 2010 it achieved 98 percent human papillomavirus vaccination coverage for 12- to 18-year-old girls. Bhutan also maintained zero polio status since 1986 and had only one case of neonatal tetanus case reported in 2006 due to high vaccine coverage. Further, Bhutan prepared its first national immunization policy and strategic guidelines in 2004, which was revised in 2011. The document is a guide to plan, introduce new vaccines, and for surveillance and vaccination safety. The history itself is a testament to the high importance the government in Bhutan placed on vaccination.

Further, the pandemic management in Bhutan was greatly enhanced by strong public solidarity. Across the nation, people, and institutions, from farmers to businesspeople, voluntarily contributed resources ranging from rice to vegetables, and even hotels as quarantine facilities. These acts of generosity, motivated by a sense of community and inspired by the King's leadership, highlighted the collective spirit. This unity was further exemplified by contributions to His Majesty's Kidu (welfare) Fund and the government's COVID-19 response fund, reflecting a deep-rooted national ethos of mutual support and cooperation during challenging times (Rinzin, 2020). Similarly, during the vaccination campaign, the vaccine roll out extended beyond Bhutan's boundaries. Through official visits, the government delivered vaccines to Bhutanese living in countries like India, Bangladesh, and others,

aiming to protect its nation-family (Ministry of Health and World Health Organization, 2022).

As the pandemic continued, the MoH continued its vaccination drive. Fewer COVID-19 cases were reported every day, and there was no COVID-19 caused death after April 29, 2022. The country had recorded just 21 death cases due to COVID-19 during the entire pandemic period. Thereafter, Bhutan prepared and opened the country to tourists in September 2022. The Government further reduced the five-day quarantine for incoming travelers to Bhutan to 24 hours of home or hotel quarantine after a COVID-19 test at the port of entry (Wangdi, 2022).

CONCLUSION

Douglas and colleagues (2021: 446) argue that “successful governance needs to be robust: both good in time as well as over time.” Bhutan’s successful COVID-19 pandemic response and the vaccination drive is the result of forward-thinking policies and strategies of the leadership, especially the King of Bhutan whose foresight and commitment to his people’s welfare guided the nation through difficult times and continues to serve the country for good. This leadership was complemented by the public’s deep-rooted trust, a solid sense of solidarity and collective will, which manifested in widespread support for the vaccination drive.

Moreover, Bhutan’s unique approach of integrating cultural and religious practices into the vaccination campaign, such as aligning the vaccine roll out with auspicious timings and involving the central monastic body, played a crucial role. These steps, often overlooked in conventional public health strategies, significantly boosted the psychological resilience and trust of the Bhutanese people. Their combination provided a strong foundation for the response and allowed Bhutan to develop the robust and resilient approaches that are identified as important to PPA (see, for example, Douglas et al., 2021).

Bhutan’s experience underscores the importance of leveraging social norms, trust, and solidarity, alongside technical competency, in managing crises. This highlights that leadership is more than just decision making; it involves building trust, inspiring hope, and mobilizing collective action. Such approaches can enhance a robust governance, a fundamental principle of PPA. Bhutan’s story of managing COVID-19 serves as an example of how nations can navigate through crises by harmonizing values, vision, and action. As the world continues to grapple with public health challenges, Bhutan’s pandemic management and vaccination success story offers valuable insights into the power of PPA. It is a beacon of hope, exhibiting that even a small developing nation can overcome global challenges like pandemics through inspirational

leadership, vision, strategic partnerships, unity, and leveraging unique societal norms.

NOTES

1. Dasho Dr. Lotay Tshering is the former prime minister of Bhutan (2018–23). His Excellency started his career as a medical doctor and was the head of His Majesty's Kidu Medical Unit (2014–18) and prior to that, consultant urologist at the national referral hospital in Thimphu and the regional referral hospital in Mongar.
2. Dr. Sonam Wangchuk is the Chief of Royal Center for Disease Control and a member of the NITAG.
3. According to the Constitution of Bhutan, the central monastic body also known as Zhung Dratshang is an autonomous institution, financed by an annual grant from the Royal Government.
4. Dhana refers to an inauspicious month in Buddhist astrology.
5. A "Lopen" within the context of the Zhung Dratshang (the central monastic body of Bhutan) refers to a title given to masters in specialized religious disciplines. These individuals are part of the Supreme Sangha Council, which is the governing body of the monastic community in Bhutan, and they hold ranks equivalent to a government minister as conferred by the constitution. Lopens are in charge of the five areas: religious tradition, ritual services, social services, institutions for education, and administration & finance. See <http://drukjournal.bt/zhung-dratshang-the-central-monk-body-of-bhutan/>.
6. Prayers and rituals.
7. Governor, head of a district.
8. Head of a Dungkhag (sub-district) in the large districts. There are 15 Dungkhags in Bhutan.
9. Head of a village.
10. Deputy of the head of a village.
11. District abbots.
12. A 'gewog' is a block – the lowest level of a local government. Groups of chiwogs form a gewog. A group of gewogs together forms a district.
13. A 'gewog' is a block – the lowest level of a local government. Groups of chiwogs form a gewog. A group of gewogs together forms a district.

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Insight 3. Disruption, iteration, and policy success: lessons from six US cases

Richard F. Callahan and John Kirlin

In this insight, we argue that making progress on complex public policy problems requires a combination of two strategies: disruption of existing policy strategies and iterative implementation of alternative ones. The analysis contributes to positive public administration theory building by illustrating the counterintuitive link between disruptive policy designs and positive public value creation. Particularly in already densely populated policy spaces, value creation presupposes a certain degree of disruption of existing beliefs, practices and institutional arrangements supporting the status quo. In fact, the very complexity, uncertainty, high stakes, and high conflict of wicked problems – whose wickedness is partly a product of the unintended consequences and inherent limitations of past and current policy settings – *demands* that we are prepared to disrupt (Head and Alford, 2015).

We draw on insights from six case studies, all set in California and covering county, regional and state levels of government serving populations of 10, 19, and 39 million, respectively. They cover public policies across a range of wicked problems including social services, natural resources, and infrastructure. The cases demonstrate a recurring pattern of success-enhancing strategies for tackling these intractable problems (Table Insight 3.1). The pattern illustrated is one of initial disruptive problem framing and agenda-setting (compare Heifetz, 1994) followed by an experimental-iterative approach to policy development and implementation (compare Termeer and Dewulf, 2019). In other words, positive value creation occurs through disruption and adaptation on an iterative path to stability.

At the core of the pattern identified here is that it involves both *craft work* in devising, adopting and implementing programs and *political work* with stakeholder groups and formal institutions (Compton and 't Hart, 2019). The pattern entails the following key components:

1. Disrupt the status quo by making an issue salient – elevate the visibility of the issue and challenge existing problem definitions and solution sets.

2. Develop an initial plausible alternative policy design.
3. Identify (or create) and “win over” an authorizing environment to approve and empower the experimental alternative policy.
4. Review and revise the initially proposed policy in light of stakeholder and implementing agencies’ feedback.
5. Introduce and revise an initial implementation approach.
6. Iteratively move to stabilize both the policy and the administrative arrangements supporting its implementation.

Rather than conceptualizing these six components as a set of steps to be undertaken sequentially, following Elinor Ostrom (2010), it is more helpful to consider them as being “nested,” with one component connected to and supporting the next. For example, in the Alameda Corridor case (Callahan, 2000) the first step of making the issue salient and challenging current policy beliefs about it also involved engaging the authorizing environment of the Transportation Commission (which is responsible for funding). At the same time, the salience of the issue had to be demonstrated continuously, not just at one point in time. Likewise, implementation politics is not confined to the post-adoption phase of the policy process but is anticipated and engaged in from the word go by stakeholders, including both potential beneficiaries and those who stand to lose from the new policy approach being implemented.

Craftwork and political work are evident across the cases. In the two state government cases – health care for prisoners (CCHCR, 2022) and ocean marine life protection (Fox et al., 2013) – for example, the State of California sought to disrupt existing policy regimes by recruiting and then empowering external experts to craft new policy. In five cases, non-governmental actors were given powers and resources not available to state agencies. In all cases, political leadership was required, but policies were similarly propelled by community advocates.

In addition to disruptive agenda-setting and policy redesign, iterative implementation dynamics proved critical to public policy success, as nearly always the first efforts at implementation proved insufficient to deliver what was needed. The case studies showed that feedback loops (e.g., in the form of authoritative review processes of early implementation strategies) revealed their inadequacies relatively early on, and maintained or created momentum for further institutional learning. For example, three years after the state had settled a lawsuit alleging unconstitutionally inadequate health care in prisons, a federal Judge ruled that progress towards improvement was insufficient and named a Receiver with extraordinary powers to run prison health care. Again, the process was iterative: the first Receiver made limited progress and a second Receiver was appointed, one who used their deep experience with improving

Table Insight 3.1 Six Californian cases of value-creating policy disruption

Case study	Make issue salient	Develop plausible public policies	Authoritative arena to approve new/revised policy	New/revised public policy	Implementation	Public value outcomes
Children’s Protective Services Department (1984–2023)	County-wide public hearing on protecting	Task Force minority report recommends creating a new Department	County of Los Angeles Board and State Legislature	First department of Children’s Protective Services in California	Established out of a division in a department with citizen oversight commission	Increased focus, funding, and oversight for protecting children
County-wide Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee (1981–2023)	Board of Supervisors comprehensive motion to publicly reduce gang related homicides and violence	Law enforcement coordinating meetings across county departments, large city agencies, federal and state agencies	County BOS, Courts, LA City Council, US Attorney’s Office, State of California Highway Patrol	Formal County-wide Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee (CCJCC)	Director or Elected Official to represent agency at monthly meeting and assign staff to working groups	Improved coordination across agencies and levels of government, reduction in gang violence, more effective warrants and other systems

Case study	Make issue salient	Develop plausible public policies	Authoritative arena to approve new/revised policy	New/revised public policy	Implementation	Public value outcomes
Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority (1995–2023)	Southern California Association of Governments transitions exploratory Task Force into formal Authority	Funding not primarily federal through public–private partnership	Creates new legal entity as Joint Powers Authority (JPA) through legal authorities of two cities and two ports	Eliminates at grade rail traffic crossings along 20 miles, private sector as primary funding by container fees - improved good movements and air quality	Initial JPA-revised after two years	Improvements in container rail logistics, air quality, job creation, local traffic congestion, underground water contamination
Creation of unified regional transit provider (1992–2023)	State Legislation to address problems in subway construction and overlapping governance	Merged LACTC as funder, light rail construction, and planning agency with RTD as bus and rail transit operator, subway construction	Legislation and local approval combined two separately appointed governing boards	MTA as oversight agency for planning, funding, construction, and operations	Initial Executive Director for only one year, cost over-runs, governance	Improved over time governance, executive leadership, built additional lines, continued operations over the next three decades

Case study	Make issue salient	Develop plausible public policies	Authoritative arena to approve new/revised policy	New/revised public policy	Implementation	Public value outcomes
Health care for prisoners, State of California (2005–2023)	2001 class-action lawsuit against the California over quality of medical care in the state's 33 prisons (population of 184,015)	State settled the suit (2002), agreeing to bring prison health care in line with constitutional standards	United States District Court for the Northern District of California	Judge Thelton Henderson rules CA must improve health care in state prisons (2005)	Fails to improve sufficiently, Judge appoints a "Receiver," extraordinary powers, to create health care system	Improved health care services delegated back to 19 of 35 prisons; created Coordination Group with two federal courts on related class actions
Marine Life Protection Act Initiative (2005–2011)	Advocates for ecosystem approach to marine resource management succeed in enacting new CA legislation (1999), but implementation efforts are unsuccessful	CA Secretary of Natural Resources enters into MOU with a non-profit to establish a "Marine Life Protection Act Initiative" supported by philanthropic funds	CA Fish & Game Commission acts on recommendations developed through four regional processes structured by the MLPAI	Network of 124 Marine Protected Areas are created by regulation of uses in designated areas of state waters	Department of Fish & Wildlife takes lead in education and enforcement. Monitoring assigned to Ocean Protection Council	Established roles continue, augmented by region-specific non-profits providing education and outreach

Source: Author.

the performance of state agencies to good effect in taking prison health care provision practices to the next level (CCHCR, 2022).

The disruptive and then iterative nature of implementation is also illustrated when the California state government twice proved unable to implement the Marine Life Protection Act (Fox et al., 2013), leading to a partnership between the state's Resources Agency and a non-profit, which obtained philanthropic funds for a new approach. That effort was successful in developing processes informed by science, with deep stakeholder involvement, and effective use of a blue-ribbon task force empowered to make recommendations to the Fish and Game Commission. In four iterations of the process, the Commission established 124 Marine Protected Areas in state waters – a singular achievement by any subnational government.

The implementation of the first county level Department of Children's Services for protecting abused and neglected children in the State of California, was initially rejected but approved eventually through a year-long Task Force Process and re-engagement with the authorizing environments at the state and county level (Callahan, 2020). Similarly, in attempting to reduce gang violence a plausible policy alternative of government funding for community-based interventions was imported from Philadelphia to Los Angeles County with implementation negotiated not only at the onset but cyclically in each year's budget deliberations (Callahan, 2020).

In sum, these brief illustrations of the twinning of disruption and iteration suggest that we would do well to shift our understanding of how to make progress on tough public policy challenges. It cannot be done without raising the temperature on the status quo to create space for new thinking, new coalitions, and new and initially untried policy solutions; and it cannot be done in a one-shot approach to "rolling out" those solutions – there has to be the expectation of problems and failures along the way – and the willingness to treat these as data points and learning opportunities.

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PART III

Tools

16. Transnational approaches to improving public services: the case of the open government partnership

Alex Ingrams, Suzanne J. Piotrowski and Daniel Berliner

INTRODUCTION

Public administration scholars have hotly debated whether the inauguration of ‘new’ approaches to governing the affairs of public organizations and services results in a better functioning system that will improve government and the lives of citizens. Sometimes reforms seem to come about due to coalitions of the powerful rather than being intrinsically meaningful reforms (Jann and Wegrich, 2017). At other times, the costs of reform seem to seriously undermine the successes (Alonso et al., 2015; Blom-Hansen, 2016) or reforms may just place unnecessary costs and burdens on government and citizens (Wynen et al., 2019) and run into implementation problems (Hood and Dixon, 2015). Of various historic reforms such as the New Public Management or the panoply of reform ideas called New Public Governance or post-New Public Management, the track record on ultimate rewards gained by the changes is very mixed (Hood and Dixon, 2015; Ingrams et al., 2020). Research has also shown that the results of open government styles of policy reform such as transparency and public participation are ambiguous (Schnell, 2022), and technology-inspired public sector innovations have attracted criticism for being overly optimistic about underlying political incentives and institutional capacities (Cucciniello et al., 2017; Meijer, 2018; Ingrams et al., 2020).

The intractability of these puzzles about reform success and failure makes it challenging for scholars to find clear cut answers about how and when types of reform have positive impacts. However, one way to begin partially disentangling the effects is by shifting focus outside of the normal set of institutional parameters that constitutes the individual nation state, and instead to examine transnational processes. State sovereignty and the conventional decision making hierarchies of the state apparatus mean that states are natural places

to look for answers. Yet, much policy change that takes place within states is actually driven by the actions of global actors, including transnational structures that are constituted of multiple states and non-state actors, and therefore can have considerable influence. There is, for example, a rich literature on international institutions such as the United Nations or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and transnational initiatives such as the Kimberley Process and the United Nations Global Compact, that explores the design of international institutions and the behavior that those designs foster among member governments (e.g., Finnemore, 1993; Haufler, 2009; Berliner and Prakash, 2015; Grohs and Rasch, 2021). Seen in this way, the question about the success of reforms primes quite a different set of answers that links changes set in motion by the process of membership to relationships based on partnership and the activities that take place through the partnership.

The key question of this chapter is, therefore, as follows: *Can participation in transnational multistakeholder partnerships drive successful public sector reform?* To examine this question, we focus on participation of governments in the Open Government Partnership (OGP), which is a compelling and recent case of a transnational multistakeholder public sector reform initiative. The OGP was founded in 2011 and is today a partnership of over 180 national, regional, and municipal governments. Its core goal is to advance openness in governments, which it defines as transparency, accountability, and public participation. The OGP aims to counteract democratic backsliding around the world and harness information and communication technology (ICT) as a positive force for citizens. It rests on the belief that its formula, based essentially on intergovernmental collaboration, strong civil society involvement and public participation, can bring about qualitatively better public services and policies (Open Government Partnership, 2019).

The arrival and ambition of the OGP raises the question of whether this type of intergovernmental collaboration and public participation could drive successful public sector reform. Despite criticism, the approach the OGP takes to engaging governments in a multistakeholder decision making process has novel and unusual characteristics that deserve closer attention from scholars. Where public reform initiatives often sputter and stall, is there something new we can learn about the kinds of impacts that the OGP has had in member governments? We argue in this chapter that, while the OGP is a large, decentralized, and complex system that could not be classed as a complete success in all respects, it nevertheless provides a potent example of how transnational partnership structures can drive positive public service reform domestically. We address the fact that the mechanisms behind such pathways of change are still relatively obscure to public administration scholarship, and we focus on what we call an “indirect pathway” to change. We argue that this path is the one that is the least well understood though it should be critical to our

understanding of success and failure. The OGP aims to have a positive effect on public administration and its wide application across many countries and policy domains offers a way to understand whether and how it is successful.

The analysis for the chapter focuses on the role that member governments of the OGP play in facilitating open government reforms. We consider how pathways of reform set in motion by the OGP can result in varying degrees of successful changes in the public services within participating countries.¹ Different kinds of success may be similarly absent and present in the same initiative creating a multi-layered picture where identification and understanding of causal mechanisms become key for researchers (Compton et al., 2022). This aligns with the goal of positive public administration (PPA) to ultimately address questions of why particular public initiatives do much better than others in producing valuable societal outcomes (Douglas et al., 2021; Flinders, 2023; Lindquist et al., 2022). We home in on (1) the uniqueness of the OGP, and (2) the extent to which successful cases within the OGP could be attributed to those unique characteristics. While transparency and accountability reforms have been blamed for at least some of the negative attention the public sector receives (Douglas et al., 2021), the OGP is a complicated counterexample where these types of reforms have led to some cases of positive impacts.

TRANSNATIONAL MULTISTAKEHOLDER INITIATIVES AND THE OGP

Transnational multistakeholder initiatives are distinguished from other forms of international institutions in several ways (Bäckstrand, 2006; Raymond and DeNardis, 2015). First, they tend to have more diverse forms of membership, including not only states but also potentially firms, civil society actors, subnational entities, and other international organizations. Second, they tend to have more flexible requirements and rules than traditional treaty-based institutions. And third, they are generally aimed at tackling specific governance challenges, and often emerge specifically due to dissatisfaction with shortcomings of more traditional state-centric forms of international organization. Transnational multistakeholder initiatives bear many similarities to other forms of informal and collaborative international governance, such as soft law, orchestration, and regime complexes (e.g., Abbott and Snidal, 2010; Albrecht and Parker, 2019; Mitchell, 2014; Newman and Posner, 2016).

Applying Elinor Ostrom's institutional analysis perspective (Ostrom, 1990) to transnational multistakeholder initiatives is useful. Though not always addressing specifically common-pool resource problems, they can be seen as attempts to govern complex policy problems through cooperation that is neither fully state-driven nor market-driven. Yet the effectiveness of such cooperation still depends on institutional features for monitoring and enforce-

ment. The “gamble” of many such initiatives is that the risks from weaker rules on membership and enforcement will be offset by potential gains from flexibility and diversity, such as speed, innovation, learning, and norm-building.

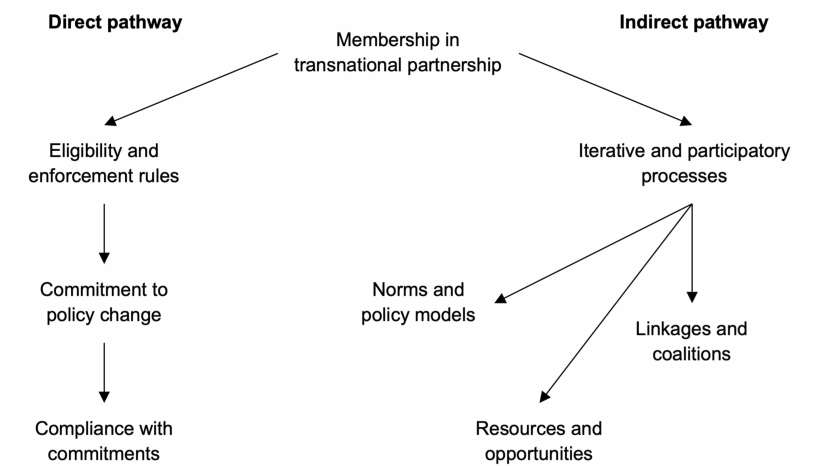
In the case of the OGP, its initial design represented a bargain between prospective state and civil society stakeholders, whereby civil society accepted weaker rules on membership in exchange for institutionalized participation and iteration at both domestic and global levels (Berliner et al., 2022). While there is a relatively “low bar” for membership and there are few sanctions for not implementing commitments, the basic requirement for continued membership is iterative collaboration between government and civil society representatives in producing new action plans every two years. The progress of reforms in such collaborations is a matter of iterative steps set in motion by both the central structure and the member governments, working in tandem. This feature is key to our understanding of success through complementary direct and indirect pathways. It also presents a new challenge as well as an opportunity for our way of thinking about public sector reform success as a transnational, multi-actor process.

The OGP was designed with a central vision of co-leadership of governments and civil society at the level of its central governance committee as well as at the top of each reform decision making process in each member government. A requirement for membership is that there is a credible partnership process in place that gives civil society organizations (CSOs) an equal role in the development of open government policy initiatives and the subsequent process of tracking and evaluating their progress. This engagement with civil society must be visible and reciprocated by both the government and civil society side. Membership eligibility requirements also stipulate that countries must possess basic features of commitment to open government practices by passing an open government ‘Values Check’ and demonstrating an adequate level of maturity in the areas of fiscal transparency, public right to information, disclosure of public officials’ assets, and citizen engagement. Once countries have entered into the membership policy cycle – which involves crafting, implementing, and evaluating a national action plan (with the help of civil society and an independently appointed reviewer) – they are expected to show integrity and timeliness in the process of fulfilling their commitments.

The scope of the actual reform actions and initiatives (the “Commitments”) that can be undertaken is not one-size-fits-all but rather is quite broad, as long as commitments fall within the definition of ‘open government’ or more specifically the values of transparency, public participation, and accountability. Examples of the kinds of things that could be included are publishing datasets about public service activities, engaging citizens in public deliberation, or creating an accountability or transparency watchdog. The OGP approach is remarkable given that the rise of new attention to government transparency

and accountability has more often been viewed as a response to public sector failure. While antagonism between citizens, governments, media, and business is central to these debates, the OGP’s participatory, big tent approach to creating change shows a path forward that has some shown unexpected successes.

We argue that the reform impact of the OGP should be understood through a dual trajectory of reform actions that are undertaken by member countries. We call these trajectories the direct pathway and the indirect pathway (shown in Figure 16.1). Each captures different notions of public sector reform success. The *direct pathway* covers the processes of reform that are undertaken as explicit commitments. As a result of drafting commitments, members commit to them as a policy action and subsequent efforts are aimed at complying with agreements. Fulfilling these commitments is a matter of success legalistically understood as doing what is required for membership: completing action plans, designing a good plan, and delivering it on time and according to the original promises.



Source: Piotrowski et al (2022: 17).

Figure 16.1 The direct and indirect pathways of change through membership

In contrast, the *indirect pathway* encompasses the other consequences of participation that come about as a result of the work towards the direct pathway. Indirect effects are primarily process-based in that they relate to how actors (governments and civil society) behave and the relationships and norms that are reshaped and revamped in the public sector. There are three types of indirect mechanism: (1) norms and policy models, (2) resources and opportunities,

and (3) linkages and coalitions. The success of the indirect pathway comes via a dynamic process of reconfiguration in actors and structures giving an enduring quality to the reforms; the changes put in motion spark reactions that are a continuing source of political, normative, and organizational support for changes even going beyond their original target (Patashnik, 2014). For indirect pathways to work, the activities undertaken as part of the direct pathway need not even be particularly successful and they are not dependent on what happened in the activities of the direct pathway. In fact, sometimes it is the fallout from direct failures that can galvanize actors to work toward more meaningful outcomes.

IDENTIFYING SUCCESS FACTORS: ANALYTICAL APPROACH

By “uncovering the factors and mechanisms that enable high performing public problem-solving and public service delivery” in a unique transnational partnership (Douglas et al., 2021: 442), we critically assess the success factors of reform in terms of direct and indirect pathways using multi-country analyses of how the OGP’s structure, governance and processes are linked with the activities undertaken in member countries where the impact of reforms is designed to come into effect. Now, over ten years since the founding of the OGP, studies of long-term success can be used to understand contributing conditions and mechanisms.

Our analytical approach to understanding these mechanisms relies on data from the large network of countries and the OGP’s centralized evaluation process used by governments to focus on how to learn and imitate successes. We use multiple evaluative modes and draw on data from several different sources: (1) the OGP Independent Reporting Mechanism data which includes evaluative commentary submitted by the researcher and CSOs that were consulted during the evaluation process, (2) academic articles, (3) news reports and civil society reports, and (4) official reports and data collected by the country governments. We use this data to provide illustrative cases of the direct and indirect pathways of change.

Defining and measuring the results of public sector reforms is challenging because of the many different kinds of outputs and outcomes that come out of reform and the difficulty of comparing across different geographical and political contexts (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2017). Impacts of open government reform in our case will be understood as successful governmental efforts to realize public service characteristics that support the values – transparency, participation, and accountability – that underpin open government and democratic government more broadly. Such evaluations could be subjective and viewed differently by different actors. We focus on the challenge of being aware of implicit biases of current methodological approaches by looking at

the direct and indirect pathways both in the original intention of the OGP's institutional designers and through the perspective of the member governments at the front line of implementing open government reforms. Interventions by the OGP to stimulate a responsible framework of incentives for better performance may highlight shortcomings of explicit or direct influence on member governments, but these are only part of a story that includes the indirect stimulation of positive multistakeholder learning and development processes.

As the OGP is a membership-based organization, there are various levels of agency and impact where the analysis of success could focus. For example, the OGP secretariat itself as the central leadership agency of the organization plays an interesting role. Similarly, individuals involved in facilitating compliance and learning processes such as independent reviewers or the International Experts Panel are responsible for how the organization of the OGP performs as well as the kinds of results that are shown in countries. Our approach to this complex institutional picture is to limit the unit of analysis to the member countries themselves, thus considering the impacts at the level where the OGP ultimately aims to make a difference. In so doing, we do consider factors that are responsible for these effects that stem from the participatory and membership requirements of the OGP itself. It is as a result of these two things – the process that countries sign up to and the response of countries to that process – that the unique mechanisms of transnational multistakeholder participation become realized.

DIRECT PATHWAYS: LIMITED SUCCESS

Has the direct pathway of commitment development, monitoring and implementation been successful? We can show evidence from performance statistics to suggest that it has actually not been very successful. Table 16.1 shows the rates of completion and the ex ante ratings for relevance and potential transformativeness that were given to commitments by the OGP. It shows that commitments in general have not been very successful on these measures in terms of the ability of member governments to change the public sector for the better by making it more transparent, participative, and accountable. However, a closer inspection of the commitments is more revealing, both for discovering that there are some bright spots in this overall picture of mediocrity and that – among the bulk of the mediocre performers – there are some interesting stories going on within the overall narrative of underwhelming success.

For a start, there are certainly some success stories that we could pick out from within this large collection of commitments. The OGP used a 'star' system to identify highly successful commitments that were undertaken, and this is a system that we follow here. Star commitments are ones that meet all of three criteria, being (1) completed within their scheduled completion data,

Table 16.1 Open Government Partnership commitment performance (2011–2019)

<i>Commitment Characteristics</i>	
Number of country members	78
Withdrawn countries	4
Number of commitments	4,094
<i>Commitment Level of Completion*</i>	
Complete	19%
Substantial	29%
Limited	38%
Not started	14%
<i>Commitment Potential Impact**</i>	
Transformative	13%
Moderate	40%
Minor	42%
None	5%
<i>Relevance to Open Government</i>	
Relevant	70%
Not relevant	30%

Notes: * Not including unclear or withdrawn, not determined (ND), etc. ** Not including not available (NA), ND, etc.

Source: Piotrowski et al (2022: 127).

(2) classed as potentially of high impact, and (3) related clearly to open government values of transparency, participation, and accountability. They are an example of a minority of commitments that show the direct pathway in its best light; member governments take on a plan to reform a specific area, manage to keep to what was promised and – in the short term at least – make things substantively better in terms of openness.

As one example of such a starred commitment, the government of Ukraine began a process in 2014 of publicizing Soviet era records of USSR internal affairs bodies and secret services dating from 1917. Documents were declassified and made freely available by law with the understanding that free access to the information is an important step towards undermining totalitarianism and fostering social dialogue (Law of Ukraine, 2020). It includes nearly one

million volumes that are stored in different cities across the country and many of the files have been digitized (Security Service of Ukraine, 2023). In a similar example from 2014, the government of the Republic of Georgia launched an initiative to publish information on all government surveillance operations that had been approved by a specially designated court. Through the commitment, the government pledged annual publication of statistics on the permissions that have been given by the court to carry out covert surveillance operations in the interest of national security. Another country, Croatia, launched an online citizen participation portal in 2015, which included training sessions for officials, facilitated public deliberations on 84 different public policy items in the first 60 days of its creation. Some 1,645 comments on draft laws, other regulations and acts were submitted by a diversity of different sources including: 867 individuals, 419 companies, and 116 civic associations and cooperatives.

While our current focus is on understanding patterns of success, we also want to give a realistic picture of how representative such success stories are in the overall universe of OGP direct pathway cases. It may not come as a surprise to the reader that such successes are not at all typical of OGP member commitments. Statistically stated, about 7.5 percent of OGP commitments could be classified as “stars” (Open Government Partnership, 2019). But there are also some ways we could conceptualize a priori the possible impacts of the direct pathway. While some commitments could be classed as stars because they are completed as promised while also having strong potential relevance and transformativeness, many other OGP commitments could fall into *non-successful* classification zones where they are either not achieved or simply have low relevance or potential impact. Further, another batch of the commitments is so poorly conceived or implemented that they actually have a negative impact on open government (Piotrowski et al., 2022).

Consider the Philippines’ ‘People’s Watch’ commitment which according to its action plan would involve “participation of the people to safeguard and protect their communities” from the illegal drugs trade (Republic of the Philippines, 2017: 67). Human rights organization Amnesty International said that such an approach could actually lead to permission to commit vigilante killings which would be in direct contradiction with the principles of an open and accountable society. The commitment was fortunately removed by the government within a year of its publication. Whole countries may be considered unsuccessful too: In March 2022, El Salvador was added to a list of countries including Turkey and Azerbaijan whose membership was made inactive by the OGP for fundamentally failing to deliver or act on its action plans. In some critical respects, by passing legislation that was harmful to transparency, accountability and civil society, El Salvador fell even further behind than when it had started (Open Government Partnership, 2022a).

Given the evidence on the direct pathway, we might wonder why there has been such a mixed level of success. While we cannot tackle this question here in depth, several scholarly explanations could provide clues. First, it could be about how the OGP membership system has been designed with quite a *low barrier to entry* and a soft approach to holding members accountable (Lipsy, 2017; Ruggie, 2018). The OGP eligibility process – counting basic levels of attainment in areas such as strength of civil society, transparency, and freedom of information – does go some way towards selecting members that have demonstrated adequate ambition. However, that some countries will face a very steep learning curve and may even begin to back slide seems to be something that the designers of the OGP system were willing to accept as a necessary risk of giving weak open government countries the opportunity to climb higher at their own pace.

Second, there is the phenomenon of ‘*open-washing*’, which scholars have observed as an unfortunate side effect of the growth of open government in global good governance practices (Chatwin et al., 2019). Such practices can frequently be vulnerable to manipulation when public leaders use evidence of (superficial) steps taken to become more open to improve their own reputation. This is especially the case when countries have strong economic or political incentives to demonstrate their open government credentials but simultaneously have low levels of political will or capacity to actually realize those things in practice.

Third, *political turbulence or instability* could also be disruptive for the direct pathway. Governments go through changes of administration or regime and even administrations that retain power for a long period of time can face political opposition to their reform agendas that makes it difficult to get stuff done (Goldfinch et al., 2013; Pollitt and Summa, 1997). For this reason, governments often falter in delivering their promises.

Finally, *capacity problems* and various kinds of design-reality gaps might emerge when governments try to undertake reform initiatives (Alam Siddiquee, 2006; Berman and Wang, 2000). Governments may often find that they do not have adequate material capacity for delivering goals or they may be unable to control complex collaborative partnerships that are responsible for implementing commitments.

INDIRECT PATHWAYS: THREE MECHANISMS

If we viewed the success of the OGP model of transnational partnership solely through the lens of direct pathways of change, we would have to conclude that evidence of how well the model works is at best highly mixed. However, the OGP model also gives rise to a different kind of change mechanism, which we need to give a more complete picture of the OGP’s influence. In contrast with

the direct pathway of change, the indirect pathway does not lead to results that were explicitly accounted for in the commitments and project delivery plans of member countries. The indirect pathway does not come about by a formal agreement that can either be delivered or broken, and it does not depend on the performance of the direct pathway as members may either fulfill or fail their explicit commitments and still either inhibit or facilitate successes that come about through the indirect pathway.

The indirect pathway is driven by the process-focused characteristics of the OGP. By requiring a co-governance approach with civil society, giving considerable local freedom to choose the kinds of reforms that governments can focus on and delegating a transparent evaluation and answerability processes to independent local researchers as well as to civil society, the influences of the OGP seep deeper into the normative life and institutional practices of member countries. We consider three different indirect pathway dynamics that follow from this – *norms and policy models*, *linkages/coalitions*, and *resources/opportunities* – and we argue that these mechanisms should fall within the scope of scholarly attempts to understand the success or failure of public sector reforms driven by transnational partnerships.

Norms and Policy Models

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) define a norm as a standard of appropriate behavior. Norms can change with older norms becoming displaced by new ones. They may spread from an initially marginal position to complement or even displace earlier norms. Perhaps the most notable cases of spreading norms and policy models are in core areas of the OGP's reform values: transparency and participation, and their application in specific policy domains. Mexico, for example, saw the novel co-creation with civil society of legislative drafts on access to information and anticorruption legislation, and a subnational open government collaboration that was independent of the OGP's own subnational program, though its approach was inspired by the OGP model (Berliner et al., 2022).

The spread of policy models was particularly notable in the areas of open data and public participation where the OGP catalyzed the spread of norms into other domains that were not part of formal actions plans or commitments. The open data movement was not founded by the OGP. However, the role of the OGP as a catalyst for the open data norm in governments has been highly significant, as the OGP and its associated processes advocated for open data reforms and raised awareness through biannual global summits. Similarly, public participation has long been integral to good governance norms. The norm of participatory government is by no means new, but it is one that has received a notable boost from the OGP's model of civil society parity in deci-

sion making and implementation. According to Fraundorfer (2017: 150), “The OGP national processes have also created channels of trust and confidence between government and civil society actors.”

The OGP has also played a key role as a catalyst for gender-conscious public policymaking, beneficial ownership, and open contracting norms. Mainstreaming of gender and diversity perspectives in public policymaking has resulted in global norms becoming entwined with entire reform proposals such as in Argentina where the commitments of that country’s fourth action plan were critically assessed using the question of whether they would help close gender gaps (Open Government Partnership, 2023). In 2016, at the Open Government Partnership Global Summit, Colombia, France, Mexico, the UK, and Ukraine launched the *Contracting 5* partnership and pledged to uphold the open contracting data standard. That partnership has since expanded to over 40 national and subnational governmental members and led to a proliferation of similar transnational multistakeholder initiatives that aim to advance open contracting, such as the Open Contracting Partnership and the Financial Transparency Coalition.

A similar spread of policy norms can be seen in the area of beneficial ownership. For example, in 2018, the Open Government Partnership, together with the Beneficial Ownership Transparency Network, launched new disclosure principles and “A Guide to Implementing Beneficial Ownership Transparency” (Guriev and Treisman, 2019). Later, in 2019 at the OGP summit in Ottawa saw the UK government and NGO Open Ownership launch the Beneficial Ownership Leadership Group, which aims to “drive a global policy shift towards free, open beneficial ownership data and set ambitious best practice” (Guriev and Treisman, 2019).

Linkages and Coalitions

The collaborative process between governments and civil society as well as the opportunities for international engagement is a vehicle for achieving policy commitments of OGP members, but the consequences of this way of working extend well beyond the design and delivery of commitments. To an extent, through the OGP’s subnational membership category, this characteristic of OGP membership has become formally incorporated into the direct pathway of public sector reform. However, the augmentation of vertical and horizontal collaboration both within countries and between them goes much further than subnational governments.

At the national level, the civil society groups that were originally summoned to provide the nongovernmental voice in the national action plan process are typically made up of organizations that are highly motivated to achieve reform goals. As a result of their formal role in the policymaking process, it

became almost inevitable that its function would be repurposed for other kinds of national advocacy and leadership. Participatory and iterative processes of OGP membership have led to the formation of new coalitions and linkages both across civil society groups that had not previously worked together, and between civil society groups and individual reformers in government departments (Berliner et al., 2022). For example, in the United Kingdom, the group filling this role, the Open Government Network, now works far beyond this initial scope, including probing data transparency around COVID-19 pandemic regulations and shaping the civil society response around other topics on the policy agenda, such as race and gender equality. In October 2022, at the OGP Europe Regional Meeting in Rome, it was announced that the OGP had launched a memorandum of understanding with the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) to strengthen resilience in areas most affected by the Russian invasion (Open Government Partnership, 2022b).

The activities of the OGP and its member governments have also generated linkages at the international level. The OGP has given its members leverage through its work with many of the major regional and global organizations such as the United Nations, Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), European Union, Group of 7, Group of 20, African Union, and the Asian Development Bank. One notable example of this is the ‘EU for Integrity Program’ launched jointly with the EU and the OECD, which targets “open reforms on the fight against corruption, integrity, open government and civic engagement” (Open Government Partnership, 2021). The OGP is an official consulting partner with the European Union, regularly hosts side events at the meetings of the United Nations General Assembly and co-hosted regional meetings with the African Union in 2013 and 2016. The United Nations Development Programme even offers governments training on how to effectively develop and implement the OGP commitments (OGP Support Unit, 2017).

Resources and Opportunities

New linkages, which are often created around discussion of new public norms and policy models, facilitate new possibilities for coalition building that spark ideas and shape new political realities. But they also lead to access to material and symbolic resources, including for stakeholders who may previously have been on the margins of discussions about public sector reform. In Mexico, civil society used membership as external leverage to successfully stop an attempted presidential weakening of a draft access to information law (Berliner et al., 2022). In the Mexican case, a threat of exit by civil society from domestic collaboration with government was actually exercised for a time after an outcry over the exposure of government use of spyware to surveil civil society

groups. But reformers also gained less visible forms of influence, including a more frequent “seat at the table” and greater ability to get the attention of key decision-makers. In other countries, such as Croatia, CSOs successfully halted or changed national policy proposals by merely threatening to withdraw from their OGP position (Guillán and Taxell, 2015).

Material resources such as access to new technologies or knowledge and best practices may be shared in such networks. For example, in the United States, a network of police departments for sharing technology ideas and best practices called the President’s Task Force for Twenty-First-Century Policing provided a political and practical channel for police chiefs to tackle the growing issue of police bias and public trust towards the police (Ingrams, 2017). Symbolic resources obtained through collaboration were sufficient to create a gradual shift in the political opportunities that extended politically and chronologically well beyond the work planned by the United States in its action plan. But symbolic resources could also be quite a fast game changer in other circumstances. One important early case in this light is in South Africa where civil society groups used the OGP as “external leverage” in their fight to block passage of the so-called secrecy bill, and were ultimately successful (Heller, 2016). Opponents of the bill explicitly invoked the symbolic contradiction of the bill with OGP principles of transparency and accountability (Calland, 2011). According to one commentator, the OGP had provided a platform for civil society “by which to critique government inaction or reward improvements” (Eaves, 2012, para. 6).

ASSESSING OPEN GOVERNMENT REFORMS: CONCLUSIONS

While open government reforms have been offered by advocates as a way to improve the public sector, the positive impact of these programs is frequently unclear (Fung, 2013; Grimmeliikhuijsen et al., 2020). The attention on transparency and accountability in contemporary democratic governments can in some ways encourage a negative focus on government and on finding ways to identify or preempt ways that it fails (Douglas et al., 2021). This is an inevitable risk of openness and it should not be taken altogether negatively given that visibility of problems is a necessary step towards solving them. However, open government reforms also have another side to them which is in making decision making processes in government more collaborative and open to deliberative, citizen-driven forms of governing and policymaking (Meijer et al., 2012). How successful these reforms will become is a matter of understanding and then managing the factors that explain the instances that work and distinguishing them from the dynamics that lead to poor or dysfunctional instances.

The question then is whether and how open government reforms work. The analytical challenge faced in attempts to explain success in public sector reforms is that reforms work in a complex environment of competing actors and public values (Ingrams et al., 2020; Nabatchi, 2012). At the individual government level, such is the level of complexity that the analytical difference between successes and failures can appear the result of an inexplicable chain of interrelated events or even to be random. Answering the call “to identify micro, meso, and macroconditions, and the interplay between agent and institutional context at these levels” (Douglas et al., 2021: 443) our approach to circumvent this problem is to zoom out to the level of a transnationally driven governance model and to trace the policy influences from that level to the national or subnational level and the micro-level decision making processes that result.

One established framework of success is the *programmatic* (ends—means—impacts), *process* (fairness and smartness), *political* (legitimacy and support), and *endurance* (temporal and adaptive), referred to as the PPPE assessment framework (Compton et al., 2022). Process success is marked by having an appropriate policy instrument and influence by key stakeholders, with adequate funding, realistic timelines, and administrative capacity. If conditions are met, outcomes are achieved at an acceptable cost level (Lindquist et al., 2022). In the case of the OGP, programmatic success would be seen through individual policy commitments. This is exactly where our assessment suggests mixed results, with some very successful but others less so. Yet at the same time, our assessment of indirect pathways of change points to the possibility for multistakeholder collaboration to promote policy success through process, politics, and endurance as well. The OGP’s participatory and iterative processes have proved very successful and have achieved support from political actors from across the ideological spectrum. Related to both of these impacts, OGP membership has endured in nearly all countries even through major national and international political disruptions. Our analysis thus highlights how unalloyed programmatic success is not a necessary requirement in order to see some evidence of process, political, and endurance success; as well as the ways in which processes themselves can shape political and endurance success when the right “social, political, and administrative conditions” are observed. The implementation of past or future open government policies could be evaluated with this framework to better understand why some open government policies succeed and others struggle.

The history of public administration reforms is full of failures and false starts. Given the constantly shifting environment of politics, economics and society, a fully successful public sector reform is perhaps impossible to achieve. The OGP does not provide a perfect model either, but its model does result in surprising successes, and it demands that scholars look anew at how positive changes at a domestic level (whether regional, national, or local)

come about through transnational partnerships. These processes are often overlooked because the processes of change are slow moving and because our attention to policies and commitments of reform are normally focused on sovereign and elected institutions of government rather than initiatives that are led through a global, non-binding, peer-based collaboration.

We would argue that one of the major strengths of our approach is that it drives “an integrated agenda for systematic and sustained positive public administration research, and a carefully considered repertoire of impact strategies” (Douglas et al., 2021: 443). In so doing, we build upon insights from studies of international and transnational institutions. While our analysis is mainly aimed at testing a theory, our results do suggest that conditions of iterative and participative membership in transnational partnerships can be used to design real world interventions. It is a design potential that “can help students of positive public administration understand how different elements of a successful public policy, organization, or partnership hang together and what impacts redesigning and reconstituting them might have” (Douglas et al., 2021: 446). Central ministries and agencies can play a role in facilitating the kinds of highly successful intersectoral partnership effects that are seen in high performing cases of the OGP.

Will the results of OGP membership which we argue can be seen in a positive light through the indirect pathway “maintain this constructive equilibrium over considerable periods of time” (Douglas et al., 2021: 444)? The OGP has shown consistent growth in the number of members as well as the kinds of work that it does, diversifying its funding model and launching local and regional forms of membership in addition to country membership. It has also shown remarkable staying power in countries that have witnessed shifts of political power between different leaders and political parties. On the other hand, “positive outcomes can consist both of desirable things happening and undesirable things not happening” (Douglas et al., 2021: 444–445). While the kinds of collaborative partnerships and policy norms indirectly facilitated by the OGP could be seen as a net positive for the public sector given the opportunities that they present to include new prodemocratic actors, it is certainly possible that indirect pathways could lead to the spread of norms and policy models that harm society or which provide resources and opportunities to nondemocratic actors. Those interesting possibilities and their plausibility are beyond the scope of this chapter but merit further attention.

NOTE

1. The chapter builds and expands upon the arguments and evidence laid out in previous work by the authors (Ingrams et al., 2020; Berliner et al., 2022; Piotrowski et al., 2022) and makes linkages to literature on positive public administration (Douglas et al., 2021; Flinders, 2023; Lindquist et al., 2022).

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17. The Aarhus Model: countering the global wicked problem of radicalization with local pragmatist collaborations

Scott Douglas

INTRODUCTION: A GLOBAL WICKED PROBLEM FOR A LOCAL CIVIL SERVANT

The mayor's security advisor rushes to catch his train, having emerged from a rather chilling briefing at the Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security. The source of his unease is the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), a violent group born from the turmoil of Syria and Iraq, which had recently issued a global call to action. While the vast majority of the Netherlands' Muslim population rejects ISIS's ideology, intelligence services estimate that hundreds may still be drawn to join their ranks or plot attacks within the country (Noordegraaf et al., 2016). Suddenly, the geopolitical events in the Middle East have become alarmingly relevant to local communities, including the mid-sized city where this civil servant works.

The Ministry's briefing underscored the myriad interconnected challenges at play. Radicalization is a complex process, driven by various ideological, psychological, socio-economic, and social factors (Reiter et al., 2021). This process can unfold over years, with individuals openly expressing increasingly extreme views, or it can escalate within mere weeks, with teenage children surprising their families by suddenly texting them they have traveled to Syria to join ISIS. A misinformed governmental response could actually exacerbate the situation; a show of force may stoke the societal unrest desired by terrorist groups; while mass covert intelligence operations tracking all individuals' risk would infringe the freedoms the state aims to protect (Noordegraaf et al., 2016).

Radicalization can be framed as a classic example of a wicked problem: its complex and poorly understood nature, contentious solutions, and the need for the involvement of various actors make it a formidable challenge (Head and

Alford, 2015). And the rise of ISIS and such horrifying atrocities as the attacks on the Bataclan in Paris and violence in Brussels show that this is not an academic challenge, but a real-world problem requiring robust government action. However, such responses can inadvertently sow societal discord if perceived as either insufficient or excessive (Douglas et al., 2019a). Yet, for the security advisor traveling back to report to the mayor, the situation did not seem insurmountable. Reflecting later in an interview, he remarked, “I had figured out what we were going to do by the time my train reached the third train stop.”

AN EXEMPLAR OF GOOD PRACTICE: THE AARHUS MODEL

This chapter delves into the Aarhus Model, a pioneering approach to addressing radicalization that has gained international recognition. The model emphasizes early, personalized, and multidisciplinary interventions tailored to individuals at risk of radicalization. This approach is underpinned by a close, pragmatic collaboration between street-level professionals from diverse fields, including the police force, schools, social workers, housing agencies, welfare agencies, and other human services. This collaboration is further enriched by regular input from academic experts (Malmros, 2019).

A key strength of the Aarhus Model lies in its ability to enable early identification of individuals at risk of radicalization. Early warning signs can be reported to a multidisciplinary team by citizens and frontline professionals. In regular meetings, these signals are carefully assessed by experts from diverse backgrounds in security and social services, determining whether there is indeed a risk of movement toward violent extremism.

Where necessary, this same pool of experts can draw upon their respective organizations to implement appropriate interventions. These interventions prioritize positive measures such as providing housing, jobs, or mental support to offer individuals an alternative path, but can also involve police officers pointing out the risks associated with their behavior. Cases are then closely monitored by the multidisciplinary expert team to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions (Douglas et al., 2019b).

The Aarhus Model has garnered widespread acclaim as an effective tool for democratic societies to counter the threat of radicalization. The UN, NATO, and European Union have actively promoted its adoption (Douglas et al., 2019a). However, it is important to acknowledge the nuances surrounding this success story. While broadly praised by practitioners, researchers, and evaluators, the model still faces challenges in addressing diverse forms of extremism and safeguarding against potential governmental overreach. Moreover, the model’s success may be contingent on hard-to-replicate contextual factors

within the broader societal, democratic, and governmental system in which it is enacted.

The true significance of the Aarhus Model lies not in its potential as a standardized template for addressing radicalization, but rather in its pragmatist set of principles that offer professionals a hands-on perspective on what they can achieve and how to go about it. The model encourages practitioners to not be overwhelmed by the complexity of the problem, while also cautioning against unrealistic expectations of comprehensive, definitive solutions. Instead, the Aarhus Model demonstrates how practitioners can make incremental progress in addressing seemingly intractable problems by breaking them down into individual cases, collaborating with professionals from other domains who might hold a piece of the puzzle, and then collectively experimenting to find interventions that make a difference for a particular case.

The Aarhus Model offers valuable insights for the ongoing discourse on positive public administration. First, it serves as an empirical, optimistic counterpoint to the often fatalistic depictions of real-world problems as “wicked” (Rittel and Webber, 1973), “very wicked” (Head and Alford, 2015), or even “transboundary” (Douglas et al., 2019a). The Aarhus Model demonstrates that even in the face of such complex and challenging problems, real-world action can lead to positive outcomes.

Second, the case study highlights the effectiveness of a pragmatist approach (Ansell and Boin, 2019; Noordegraaf et al., 2019) in addressing these challenges. It provides detailed insights into how coordination, sense-making, experimentation, and meaning-making can provide concrete guidance for practitioners working in the field. The Aarhus Model demonstrates that practical, iterative approaches can be more effective than rigid, top-down solutions.

Finally, by tracing the origin of the Aarhus Model, including its roots in the response to 1970s policy challenges and in both the Dutch and Danish government systems, the case study underscores that success stories are often the culmination of long-term efforts and can involve detours, dead-ends, and re-routings. This highlights the importance of persistence, adaptability, and a willingness to learn from each other.

Drawing on over 35 interviews with civil servants, police officers, social workers, and others across multiple cities and ministries in Denmark and the Netherlands, along with reviews of national and local policy documents and academic studies conducted over the past decade, this chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the model. The chapter begins by examining the origins and desired outcomes of the Aarhus Model’s anti-radicalization approach. It then outlines the model’s practical arrangements. The case analysis seeks to uncover the underlying pragmatic mechanisms that contribute to the model’s effectiveness. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the

model's achievements and shortcomings, emphasizing its reliance on context for success.

THREE ORIGIN STORIES

The Aarhus Model is a widely recognized approach to countering radicalization, but its origins are complex and debated. There are multiple narratives about how and when the model emerged, each offering a unique perspective on its development.

Origin Story Number 1: a Danish Innovation

One narrative places the model's origins in Aarhus, Denmark, around 2007. Following the 2005 London attacks, local authorities across Europe were growing concerned about the potential threat from home-grown terrorists. In Aarhus, a collaboration was formed between the regional police force, the municipality, the school system, the social care organizations, and specialists from Aarhus University (Malmros, 2019). This collaboration developed a formal perspective on the radicalization process and identified levers that could be used to turn individuals away from violent action. The approach focused on the assumed fundamental human need for connection, self-realization, and a sense of purpose. While the police were involved in providing intelligence on individuals showing risky behavior, the action end of the approach centered on using positive measures to help people change course. Active contact was also created with local communities deemed at risk.

Origin Story Number 2: Adopting a Dutch Innovation

Another narrative suggests that the Aarhus Model drew inspiration from Dutch practices. As one Aarhus official involved in the model commented in an interview: "Basically, we just stole the whole idea from the Dutch." The official recounted that the germ of the idea of a multi-disciplinary, personalized, preventive model was copied by the Danes after a visit to the Dutch city of Amsterdam ten years prior.

In 2004, the Dutch were confronted with the threat of home-grown terrorism when an Islamic extremist murdered opinion-maker Theo van Gogh, and the police arrested the wider Hofstad-group in a violent showdown in The Hague. In response, the city of Amsterdam sought to actively reach out to local Islamic communities to reduce societal tensions, identify people at risk of radicalization, and take preventive action where necessary. This Dutch approach, known as *de Brede Benadering* (the Comprehensive Approach), emphasized multi-disciplinary action to offer a holistic approach. However, as the threat of ter-

rorism seemingly waned, the Dutch stopped funding the various programs and collectives after 2010. As the Aarhus official commented: “We stole all their ideas. The one thing we did differently, is that we kept funding the approach.”

Origin Story Number 3: Birthed in a Specific Context

Intelligence official and researcher Paul Abels (2012) argues that the Dutch comprehensive approach has even older roots. The Dutch intelligence services already signaled the threat of home-grown terrorism in 1998. In 2001, the service noted that two youngsters had traveled from the Netherlands to Kashmir to ‘join the jihad’ over there, and that there was a need for early warning systems and preventive interventions. Klerks (see Abels, 2012) argues that the so-called Dutch Approach predates even these dates and was formulated in light of the wave of post-colonial violence in the Netherlands by South-Moluccan fighters in the 1970s. In this account, the Dutch government rejected a purely repressive approach to avoid further escalation, planting the seed for a preventive approach. Terrorism experts De Graaf and De Graaff (2010) argue that this would be confusing political posturing with the reality on the ground. The Dutch government did not renounce the use of force – indeed, when a train was hijacked, the Dutch Royal Marines stormed the train using lethal force – but did promote the comprehensive frame in order to create intermediate options in between purely preventive and purely repressive actions.

Shared Principles and Contextual Influences

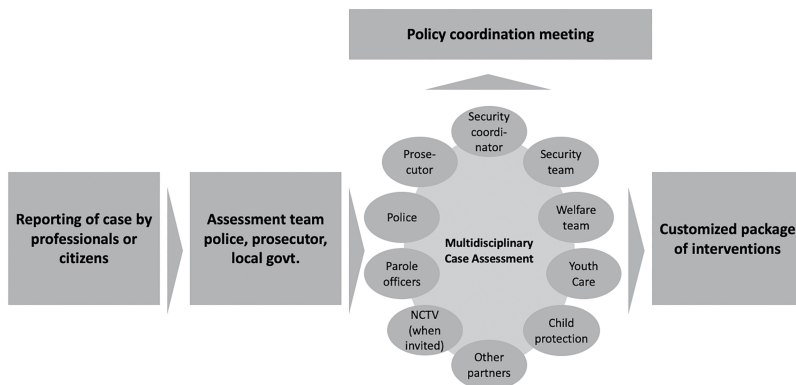
The three origin stories of the Aarhus Model, while differing in their specific timelines and locations, converge on a common theme: the recognition that addressing radicalization requires collaboration and a holistic approach. These narratives highlight the realization among officials that no single agency or approach could effectively counter the complex challenge of radicalization. Instead, a concerted effort involving actors from both the social and security domains was deemed essential. From another perspective, the Aarhus Model could be viewed as an extension of governance styles that have long characterized both Denmark and the Netherlands (De Graaf and De Graaff, 2010). Both countries have a history of emphasizing consultation and collaboration in public policymaking, empowering local governments, and fostering high levels of trust in government institutions (Douglas et al., 2019a).

In Denmark, the Aarhus Model explicitly builds upon the School–Social Service–Police (SSP) collaboration structures established in the 1970s, which closely integrated the work of School, Social Service, and Police professionals. In contrast, the Dutch adoption of a collaborative approach may have

been driven more by the inability of any single government actor to assert dominance than by a purely genuine commitment to collaboration. Therefore, the Aarhus Model should arguably not be viewed as a sudden breakthrough but rather as an ongoing process of cross-border refinement of policy options, shaped by the specific context of the Dutch and Danish government systems. The model's success lies not in its novelty but in its ability to synthesize and adapt existing governance practices to address a contemporary challenge.

THE AARHUS MODEL: DESIGN AND MECHANISMS

The implementation of the Aarhus Model varies across cities, but it shares several core features. Figure 17.1 illustrates the model's basic structure as implemented in the Dutch city of Arnhem around 2019. The model relies on a vast network of street-level professionals and community contacts to identify individuals at risk of radicalization. This includes teachers, police officers, doctors, sports coaches, religious leaders, and others who need to be able to recognize signs of radicalization and trust the local government to share their concerns.



Source: Author.

Figure 17.1 The basic outline of the Aarhus Model process

Upon receiving a report about a potentially at-risk individual, a small team then conducts an initial assessment to determine if further scrutiny is warranted. For instance, in Arnhem, this involves a discussion between the local police, prosecutor, and the municipality's security advisor. Often, cases may be referred back to the reporting individual or to a different process. For

example, a teacher might be overly concerned about a student simply showing interest in their Islamic heritage, or an individual exhibiting erratic behavior might be better served by the local psychiatric team. Alternatively, the police and prosecutor may deem the reported behavior criminal and initiate prosecution. Cases where the behavior is not deemed criminal but still worrying (e.g., increasing interest in extremist ideology, expressing support for violence, associating with radicalizing individuals) proceed to the next step.

The third step involves a comprehensive, multidisciplinary assessment of the case by the full array of human service organizations and police teams involved in the model. Typically conducted in a roundtable meeting, deputized professionals from various organizations exchange information about the individual, evaluate the risk of radicalization, and develop a tailored package of interventions. Often, these interventions are combined. For example, a police officer may be tasked with speaking to the parents of a boy suspected of associating with radicalized individuals, while a youth worker may encourage the boy to join the local football team and make new friends. Throughout and following the implementation of interventions, the multidisciplinary team closely monitors the case, reconvening every one or two weeks to discuss the interventions' impact and the case's overall progress. Ideally, after several months, an individual is deemed no longer at risk and exits the program. However, some cases may require monitoring for multiple years.

This practical process is embedded within a broader framework of policy support and information structures. The mayor encourages other organizations to participate, national policy centers on radicalization and terrorism provide expert input to local discussions, and academic experts contribute to understanding wider trends and introduce the latest knowledge on effective anti-radicalization interventions.

A Pragmatist Approach: Enabling Mechanisms

The Aarhus Model's effectiveness can be attributed to mechanisms that bear strong resemblance to those identified by Ansell and Boin (2019) in their pragmatist approach to crisis governance: coordination, sense-making, experimentation, and meaning-making.

Central to the Aarhus Model is its *holistic coordination mechanism*. The model's cross-sectoral, cross-organizational, and cross-professional nature necessitates the integration of information, expertise, and action capabilities from diverse actors spanning policy domains, organizations, and professions. This multi-disciplinary collaboration mirrors the multifaceted mechanisms driving radicalization. This collaboration is actively guided and led by key individuals and agencies. Stewardship is provided by national governments and agencies that allocate necessary resources to local actors, while minis-

ters and mayors encourage collaboration among their respective agencies. Hands-on coordination is facilitated by individual boundary-spanning officials, such as the mayor's security advisor, who literally cycles back and forth between partners to ensure their continued involvement and commitment (Van Meerkerk and Edelenbos, 2018).

The Aarhus Model's success is further fueled by a *continuous and comprehensive sense-making* process. Actors regularly gather for case reviews to interpret the thought processes and actions of individuals considered at risk. They also actively observe and analyze the evolving threat of radicalization, adapting to shifting modes of operation and emerging forms of extremism. The Dutch experience highlights the importance of specific moments in this sense-making process. In 2014, Dutch intelligence agencies released a report outlining the transformation of the Islamic extremist threat from a network-based structure (Al-Qaeda cells across Europe) to a swarm-based approach (ISIS inciting individuals to act independently through social media). This report enhanced the understanding of other agencies, enabling them to better identify potential threats.

Sense-making was also crucial at the individual level. For instance, schools and child protection agencies played a pivotal role in safeguarding minors from ISIS recruitment. However, they often misinterpreted signs of radicalization, such as reduced alcohol consumption, increased interest in global politics, and a generally low profile, as indicators of positive development, while the police viewed these same behaviors as potential warning signs (Noordegraaf et al., 2016).

The Aarhus Model's effectiveness also relied on a third key mechanism: *experimentation*. Despite the involvement of diverse professional expertise and the scientific underpinnings of the model, its essence lies in the practice of trying interventions and observing the outcomes (cf., Sabel and Zeitlin, 2010). Multidisciplinary groups would discuss an individual, tentatively diagnose the situation, and determine appropriate interventions. Respective agencies would then implement their assigned tasks (e.g., the local police officer talking to the parents, the job office offering the teenager employment), without presuming to know the exact outcome. They would simply reconvene after a couple of weeks to assess the impact or change observed in the case (Douglas et al., 2019b).

The wider structure benefited from this process of pragmatic experimentation. For an extended period, the Dutch model was kept outside the regular institutional design to allow for the definition of new processes and the rapid establishment of new connections. This arrangement was facilitated by the prevailing crisis atmosphere, which permitted more flexibility for informal arrangements. Over time, the multidisciplinary approaches became more institutionalized and integrated into existing structures (Douglas et al., 2019a).

A final crucial mechanism supporting the Aarhus Model was public *meaning-making* (e.g., Dückers et al., 2017). In the Netherlands, in particular, national, and local governments were relatively open about their efforts with target communities and the general public, even though the domain of counterterrorism and anti-radicalization would often be shrouded in secrecy in other countries. For instance, the Dutch national government launched a public national program to counter ISIS-related extremism in 2014, and the two ministers responsible were regularly held accountable for its progress in public accountability sessions in Parliament. Similarly, the mayors of affected cities would actively engage with the public, visiting mosques to discuss the challenges involved and appearing in local and national media to explain their concerns and choices. The Danish public meaning-making process was arguably more discreet, with officials preferring to keep the exact actions of the actors low-profile, although the Danish government took pride in the model's international prominence, which may have indirectly boosted their reputation at home.

Public meaning-making about the approach taken conveyed a twofold message. First, it emphasized that the government's response was the most sensible course of action in the given circumstances, arguing that brute force would have exacerbated problems, that multiple specialties were needed, and that individual cases might still go wrong. Second, it affirmed the moral imperative of the approach, emphasizing that liberal democracies such as Denmark and the Netherlands should not respond with oppression and the reduction of civil liberties, that people at risk should be steered from a violent path, and that taking a sensible, pragmatic resolution was in line with local and national 'logics of appropriateness' (see March and Olsen, 1989).

A POLICY SUCCESS? EVALUATING THE AARHUS MODEL

An Assessment Framework

Evaluating the success of a collaborative approach to counter-radicalization such as the Aarhus Model requires consideration of multiple dimensions (Page et al., 2015; Noordegraaf et al., 2017; cf., Douglas et al., 2022; De la Porte et al., 2022).

Effectiveness. The first perspective focuses on the model's effectiveness in achieving government goals in the face of the threat. This goal could be defined narrowly in terms of security, measuring success by the ability to dissuade individuals from committing acts of violence. A broader perspective would include the security or welfare of the individuals concerned. For instance, ISIS targeted minors to entice them to Syria, effectively brainwashing them

into becoming juvenile soldiers. Researchers also highlight that individuals experiencing psychiatric, personal, or economic problems are more susceptible to radicalization (Reiter et al., 2021). Providing such individuals with housing, employment, and social support could serve the dual purpose of eliminating the threat against society and enhancing their well-being.

Legality and legitimacy. The second perspective focuses on the legitimacy of the government's counter-radicalization model. A strict view would assess whether civil liberties, substantive rights, and relevant procedures are respected within the counter-radicalization process. A broader view would consider whether the approach is legitimate in the eyes of the multiple stakeholders involved, such as those involved in the Aarhus Model, and the wider set of constituent groups in society. Do they feel the approach reflects and protects their values?

Adaptability and endurance. A final perspective considers the adaptability and endurance of the model (Noordegraaf et al., 2017). Given the successive waves of political violence that have engulfed the world (anarchist, anti-colonial, socialist, and religious), it can take 20 years for a terrorist threat to subside (De Graaf and De Graaff, 2010). This requires that any government approach be sustained over a longer period. Furthermore, threats and modus operandi may morph over time. For example, the Al-Qaeda model of terrorism, relying on a formalized international network, required a radically different approach than the bottom-up, self-organization model utilized by ISIS (AIVD, 2014). Moreover, while the world focused on Islamic extremists, right-wing extremists have become increasingly active. Any counter-radicalization model should therefore be able to adapt to a changing threat environment.

Applying the Framework

Assessing the impact or success of the Aarhus Model is challenging due to the lack of clear comparative studies or counterfactuals. However, employing the three perspectives of effectiveness, legitimacy, and endurance allows for informed speculations.

From an *effectiveness* standpoint, proponents of the Aarhus Model point to the relatively low number of terrorist attacks in countries that have adopted it. However, both the Netherlands and Denmark have experienced terrorist attacks in the past decade, and hundreds of their citizens traveled to Syria to join ISIS. While the numbers were proportionally lower than those of comparable countries, explicitly attributing this to the Aarhus Model is difficult, as broader demographic, economic, logistic, and linguistic factors may also be at play.

It can be said with more confidence that the Aarhus Model facilitates more effective interventions in cases flagged by the state. Academic experts

observe that the multidisciplinary interventions employed align with the state-of-the-art understanding of radicalization processes (Noordegraaf et al., 2016). Practitioners report that the model's multidisciplinary nature provides a more comprehensive understanding of individuals and broader options for enacting appropriate interventions. The collaborative, interprofessional nature of the problem enhances the problem-solving capacity (Page et al., 2015) of the joint actors, increasing their ability to deal with different types of challenges. This does not imply that they can address all types of problems or prevent individuals from slipping through the cracks, but it does suggest that they can respond to a wide range of problem cases.

Assessing the model from the perspective of *legality and legitimacy* is more complex (Malmros, 2019). In theory, the model assumes that professionals comply with relevant laws and statutes. Information sharing between services is governed by sanctioned information-sharing agreements. Following the introduction of stricter EU privacy rules on government agencies sharing data about citizens, individuals are notified when they become subject of discussion. However, in practice, human rights groups in both Denmark and the Netherlands raise concerns that the agencies involved in the collaboration may still be sharing too much data. Moreover, in specific cases, individuals who became subject of the multidisciplinary discussions reported that they are unable to rid themselves of the stigma of having been 'an individual at risk of radicalization.'

Overall, the model generally enjoys considerable legitimacy among stakeholders. The different organizations involved see it as the best way to protect society while providing individuals with a way out. The interventions are not heavily dominated by the security perspective acting against the individual. For example, Douglas and colleagues (2019b) found in a review of the Arnhem approach that of roughly 600 actions interventions undertaken against the circa 60 individuals in the city, about one-third of the actions involved the police or the prosecutor, while two-thirds of the actions were about offering housing, job, psychological or financial help, and similar services.

Finally, from the perspective of *adaptability and endurance*, different observations can be made. In its current inception, following the 2013 rise of ISIS, the model has endured for the past 10 years. It has become more institutionalized without necessarily becoming more ossified. There is evidence of continuous learning. Different tools have been introduced (such as the Danish discussion tool for discussing different drivers for radicalization in a person's life), and different organizational formats have been solidified (permanently connecting the model to existing multidisciplinary processes in the Dutch cities). A major pivot has been towards considering other forms of extremism as well. The challenge may not so much be that the model does not work, but rather ensuring that the individuals within the process become educated and

aware of the particular manifestations and mechanisms of different types of extremism.

MOVING FORWARD: CURRENT AND EMERGENT CHALLENGES

Despite its successes, the Aarhus Model is not foolproof. No approach can guarantee absolute security against radicalization and terrorism. Hundreds of individuals from the Netherlands and Denmark still joined ISIS and traveled to Syria, including dozens of minors. Terrorist attacks did occur in these countries, albeit less severe than those in Paris and Brussels. Some of these attacks involved individuals who were on the watchlists of the multidisciplinary teams. Radicalization experts argue that the phenomenon is inherently complex, making it impossible to eliminate the risk of attacks entirely. However, this may not shield the Aarhus Model from public scrutiny and criticism in the event of attacks.

To mitigate this risk, officials involved in local anti-radicalization efforts have proactively framed the problem of radicalization as complex, intricate, and even intractable. In interviews, government reports, and parliamentary debates, ministers have emphasized the challenge's multifaceted nature and stressed that security will not come at the expense of liberty (Noordegraaf et al., 2016). This rhetoric has helped create a space for experimentation and failure, enabling officials to characterize individuals who elude the system as 'unavoidable tragedies amidst overall success' rather than outright failures.

The Reliance on Context

The Aarhus Model has been promoted as a replicable model by both Denmark and the European Union suitable for policy transfer across time and space (cf., Rose, 1993). Numerous workshops have been conducted in Africa, Asia, and North America to introduce the model to interested policymakers and officials. The EU has also subsidized third countries in developing similar programs. However, as highlighted in the section on origin stories, the Aarhus Model may be more reliant on the specific context of its origin countries than initially assumed.

While the model may be successfully transplanted from one Dutch city to another Dutch city, or between the Netherlands and Denmark, which share similar characteristics as high-trust, large government societies, it may face challenges in other contexts. For instance, local anti-radicalization efforts in the United Kingdom have a different dynamic. While the UK has also invested heavily in prevention and collaboration, its local municipalities have fewer resources than their Dutch or Danish counterparts (Noordegraaf et al.,

2016). Moreover, the Aarhus Model could encounter implementation challenges in Italy and Spain, where there is less trust in national agencies, and in non-OECD countries where a lack of state capacity or rule of law may hinder its effectiveness.

Equipping the Model for New Challenges

A critical concern is the long-term sustainability of the Aarhus Model. Ensuring adequate resources, retaining key personnel, and adapting the approach to evolving threats are essential for its continued success. The Dutch failure to provide long-term funding for their approach in the 2000s serves as a cautionary tale for the Danes. The Dutch still rely on annual project funding for local initiatives, distributed by the national ministry, even though the program has been running for almost 10 years.

The multidisciplinary meetings are also vulnerable to the loss of knowledge and interpersonal trust as the generation that built up the teams during the initial crisis of 2013 moved on to other jobs. In the Netherlands, the multidisciplinary approach has been embedded within the wider structure of the Safety and Care Houses, where representatives from security and social domains already meet to discuss multidisciplinary interventions for individuals dealing with domestic violence, erratic behavior, or gang violence. This appears to be a suitable home, maintaining the space for experimentation and sense-making without becoming overly rigid.

A further challenge will be equipping these collaborations to adapt to the unique challenges posed by emerging threats in the violent extremist spectrum. The far-right has made a comeback, and extremists for and against climate change action are also making their voices heard, in addition to incels and anti-establishment activists. How can these signals be recognized? What new partners need to be involved? And what interventions would be effective for these new groups of potentially violent individuals?

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The experience and narrative of the Aarhus Model hold several significant implications for the study of positive public administration. First, they deliver a message of both hope and caution for researchers and practitioners engaging with wicked problems. The Aarhus Model exemplifies how continuous, iterative engagement by local professionals with a problem and with each other can tackle large societal challenges in a step-by-step manner.

Simultaneously, the story of the Aarhus Model cautions against uncritical replication of policy approaches across diverse national contexts (cf., Baker and Walker, 2019). The Aarhus Model is deeply rooted in the values and

capabilities of the Dutch and Danish governmental systems. The application of the model in countries with varying levels of government capacity, community trust in state institutions, or generally lower observance of the rule-of-law necessitates a proactive exploration of what actually works within their specific contexts.

Second, the case of the Aarhus Model demonstrates how a pragmatic approach to wicked problems can provide concrete pointers that could be relevant beyond the field of radicalization. Complex and large problems do not demand grand master plans for their resolution. Rather, the Aarhus Model showcases how an ongoing process of iteration, leveraging the mechanisms of sense-making, experimentation, meaning-making and coordination can still bring about progress, one step at a time.

Finally, the story of the Aarhus Model highlights the value of delving deeper into the origins of seemingly well-known success stories. In the case of the Aarhus Model, there is no single flash of Nordic genius that marks the beginning of this success story, but rather a decade-long interaction between context and action, between multiple countries, and under different names, that has retroactively been collected under the name of the Aarhus Model. Unraveling this history does not diminish the creativity and initiative shown by the individuals involved, but rather teaches us that patience and the willingness to learn from others are equally crucial for fostering good governance, and especially so in contexts where it is all too easy to get things terribly wrong.

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Insight 4. Leveraging public–private partnerships for positive public administration in South Africa

Ndangwa Noyoo and Minenhle Matela

This insight explores how public–private partnerships (PPPs) in South Africa leverage the private sector to deliver public goods and services, ultimately improving public value. Defined as collaborative arrangements between government entities and private sector organizations, PPPs jointly plan, fund, and implement projects traditionally within the public domain (World Bank, 2020). These partnerships draw on the respective strengths of both sectors, combining the efficiency and innovation of the private sector with the public sector's responsibility for addressing societal needs (World Bank, 2020). PPPs offer insights into achieving positive public outcomes in countries like South Africa, grappling with challenges in governance, policymaking, and implementation. In examining South African PPPs, we are guided by Douglas and colleagues' (2021: 441) question, “Why is it that particular public policies, programs, organizations, networks, or partnerships manage to do much better than others to produce widely valued societal outcomes, and how might knowledge of this be used to advance institutional learning from positives?”

South Africa's public sector confronts institutional capacity limitations, skills deficits, and corruption. In addition, the public sector faces skill shortages due to factors such as low education levels among bureaucrats, high attrition rates of qualified individuals, an imbalance in skills supply and demand, and political interference through cadre deployment – where unqualified party functionaries secure public sector positions. The skills shortage in South Africa, a legacy of apartheid, contributes to the non-implementation of public policies and service delivery failures, leading to violent ‘service delivery protests’. PPPs can address skill deficits by investing in education and training for citizens in specialized fields, retaining highly skilled public servants through incentives, and shielding the public sector from political interference. This multifaceted approach aims to mitigate the challenges hindering effective public service delivery in South Africa.

Given these challenges, PPPs become instrumental in leveraging private sector skills, expertise, and resources to support public sector delivery (Walwyn and Nkolele, 2018). Done well, PPPs in South Africa can generate public value over and above what the public sector could do on its own. PPPs in South Africa show significant potential for improving socioeconomic development in communities. Luthuli (2022) underscores the centrality of community development in many PPP initiatives, particularly emphasizing the link to Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment. This commitment also aligns with corporate social investment principles. To support this agenda, the South African government created a PPP framework in the mid-2000s. Since then, 37 PPP projects valued at R90 billion (\$4.9 billion USD), have been completed. These projects are located across health, transport, tourism, water, sanitation, and office accommodation sectors (Wakelin, 2021).

The effectiveness of the PPP framework in supporting communities relies on several key features. First, the framework ensures selected projects align with the government's development strategy. Second, it emphasizes the generation of optimal economic returns for society without exposing the government to excessive fiscal risks. Additionally, the framework mandates consultation with stakeholders throughout project development and implementation. Moreover, it commits to providing fair compensation to those who are entitled to receive it. This multifaceted approach ensures both strategic alignment with national goals and inclusive, responsible project execution.

The first example of a well-functioning PPP in South Africa is the De Hoop PPP in the country's hospitality industry, which saw the opening of the De Hoop Nature Reserve in the Western Cape in 2007. The reserve is a stopover on the way from the Cape Winelands to Plettenberg Bay. It is a World Heritage site that offers whale and bird watching with more than 260 species of birds on site. An empirical study by Mnyani (2019) established that De Hoop PPP largely benefitted the poor economically because it boosted local employment and wages, local enterprise opportunities, and created collective income sources, fees, and revenue. It also enhanced non-financial livelihood impact, by ensuring capacity building and training and mitigating environmental impacts. Furthermore, construction work has largely been undertaken by local firms that equally employ local workers.

A PPP was necessary to achieve these positive socioeconomic impacts because there was sufficient pooling of skills, capacity, and finances to execute this project which could not solely be undertaken by either the public or private sector. This PPP was able to overcome some of the previously outlined deficits in South Africa's public sector context by drawing on the high-level skills which are located in the private sector, such as expertise in project management, new technologies and more efficient human resource allocation.

Another PPP is between South African Breweries (SAB) and the municipalities of Cape Town and Tshwane, which provides residents with increased access to water. This PPP has enabled Cape Town to receive an additional 4.67 million liters of water per day for residents – a total of 1.7 billion liters per annum. In Tshwane, SAB refurbished two water pump stations – Groenkloof and Kentron – which reduced the city's reliance on Rand Water and contributed an additional 7.5 million liters of water for use by residents every day. It saves the city R60,000 per day, or R23 million per year (Oxford, 2019). The procurement of new equipment from SAB increased the amount of water available to the residents of Cape Town. This would not have happened if the public sector had pursued this project alone as it has few skilled engineers and technicians who have either crossed over to the private sector or emigrated.

As in the case of De Hoop, the SAB PPP overcame the challenges found in South Africa's public sector by relying on the managerial, technical, and administrative expertise of the private sector. Again, as in the De Hoop example, the SAB PPP overcame the skills deficits of the country's public sector by tapping into high-levels skills of the private sector. Because of this, PPPs have proved to be good vehicles to transfer skills from the private to the public sector.

However, it needs to be noted that challenges for sound PPP processes still exist. For nearly 15 years the PPP regulatory framework remained unchanged. Despite the early success of the PPP model in South Africa, new project transactions declined by nearly 50 per cent over the past nine years. Hence, in 2019, the National Treasury commissioned a review of the entire PPP regulatory framework (National Treasury, 2021). The review identified key shortcomings in South Africa's PPP framework, including the absence of an overarching infrastructure policy framework that could integrate PPPs into the overall planning process for public investments. Also, there was no centralized approach to screening infrastructure investments for PPP suitability. Additionally, the review highlighted a lack of capacity at various government levels and noted the rigidity of existing PPP processes.

Despite this, the review acknowledged positive aspects in the legal and regulatory framework compared to international benchmarks (PMG, 2022). Recommendations include legislative changes to acts such as the Public Finance Management Act and the Municipal Finance Management Act, amendments to PPP project regulations, process streamlining, adherence to timelines, staff upskilling at provincial and municipal levels, and enhancing the PPP Unit in the National Treasury with regulatory and advisory functions for effective project monitoring and evaluation (PMG, 2022).

In conclusion, the success of PPPs in South Africa can be attributed to well-regulated and efficiently managed procurement processes that have consistently demonstrated transparency and effectiveness. This stands in stark

contrast to the corruption, tender rigging, and malfeasance often prevalent in South Africa's public sector procurement, particularly at the local government level. PPPs, characterized by rigorous follow-through and heightened accountability, prove more resilient in resisting political interference. Looking forwards, a crucial question is to what extent the framework's designers can learn and adjust so that PPPs can continue contributing public value in South Africa. The extent to which they incorporate the review's recommendations will help address this question.

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18. Power to the stakeholders: how co-production turned around a green energy blunder in Ontario, Canada

Matt Wilder

INTRODUCTION

In 2009, the Canadian province of Ontario launched an ambitious policy to significantly increase its production of wind and solar power. The policy featured an investment agreement, negotiated in secret, between the political executive and Samsung C&T of South Korea, the terms of which transferred billions of dollars to Samsung over a 20-year period. In exchange, Samsung would provide 2,500 megawatts of installed wind and solar capacity and establish four equipment manufacturing facilities in the province. The policy prompted immediate criticism from consumers, Samsung's competitors, and residents opposed to wind farms. Moreover, implementation was delayed by stalled negotiations between Samsung and local governments – notably, the autonomous Six Nations government – whose land was required to site the investment. In the end, the project was scaled back to 1,340 megawatts, and three of the four equipment manufacturing facilities set up under agreement closed within 10 years of establishment.

Although the investment agreement is widely considered as ill-conceived, the policy achieved its primary objective: wind and solar now account for 10 percent of Ontario's energy mix. This chapter explores how a poorly devised political mission was saved from failure. Research based on confidential interviews and document analysis suggests that bureaucratic brokerage of co-production arrangements was a critical factor contributing to the policy's contested success.

This case is highly relevant for the study of positive public administration because it sheds light on problems confronted in the execution of bold political missions, the likes of which are apparently necessary to address current crises (Mazzucato, 2021). Consistent with Ostrom's research program, this chapter takes a political economy approach to the study of public administration and

governance (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971; Ostrom, 2010). Viewed through a political economy lens, the case demonstrates that executives in the Canadian Westminster political system face comparatively few veto players capable of frustrating political missions (Lijphart, 2012; Savoie, 1999; Tsebelis, 2002; White, 1994). However, the same institutions permit executives to neglect civil society actors whose support may prove instrumental for policy success (Bradford, 2003). Thus, an institutional tension exists whereby advantages associated with executive-dominance of the political agenda are undermined by what Gary Miller and Andrew Whitford (2016) call “political moral hazard.”

This chapter argues that ancillary governance institutions are required to curb institutional pathologies toward short-sightedness. Importantly, these ancillary governance institutions need not detract from institutional comparative advantages associated with executive agenda-setting (cf., Hall and Soskice, 2001; Witt and Jackson, 2016). Rather, governance arrangements that leverage stakeholder resources and co-opt potential opponents may be established and administered during policy implementation without interfering with the ability of the political executive to set mission-oriented policy agendas (Herrmann, 2008; Ornston and Schulze-Cleven, 2015). However, ancillary institutions are not automatic (e.g., constitutionalized), but must rather be devised and sustained (Jones and Bachelor, 1993).

The rest of the chapter is divided into two main sections, one empirical and one theoretical. The empirical section provides an event analysis of Ontario’s green energy policy based on policy documents and interviews with government and stakeholder representatives. The theoretical section examines the case data through a political economy lens on positive public administration, whereby political agenda-setting and policy implementation are conceived as a two-stage game in which public entrepreneurs serve distinct initiation and coordination functions (cf., Grossman and Hart, 1986; Schneider et al., 1995). The model illustrates how risks associated with green transformations necessitate political coordination of producer networks during policy implementation. Thus, public entrepreneurship does not end with the initiation of political missions but rather continues to implementation (Fiorina and Shepsle, 1989). The concluding section discusses possible implications for governance of political missions.

ONTARIO’S GREEN ENERGY SAGA (2003–2018)

Ontario’s push for renewable energy began in 2003, shortly after the Liberal Party took power under the leadership of Dalton McGuinty. The government immediately announced plans to phase out coal-fired electricity generation by 2014, making Ontario the first jurisdiction in North America to wean itself

off coal. At the time, coal power comprised 25 percent (7,560 megawatts) of Ontario's energy mix. Notably, the bulk of the phase-out was initially accomplished by expanding natural gas and nuclear power generation (Winfield and Saherwala, 2022). Yet, by 2008, plans were in the works to introduce significant wind and solar generating capacity to the province, thereby further reducing reliance on electricity from fossil fuels.

Plans to develop renewable energy were coupled with economic objectives in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, which hit the automotive sector particularly hard. In response, the McGuinty Liberal government passed the Green Energy and Green Economy Act in 2009, which was followed by a Green Energy Investment Agreement between the Province of Ontario and Samsung C&T of South Korea. These two policies are the focus of this study.

Institutional Backdrop

McGuinty's green energy ambitions were facilitated by Canada's political institutions, which bestow considerable policymaking authority onto provincial premiers (Savoie, 1999; White, 1994). Canada's electoral system is based on the English Westminster model, according to which parliamentary seats are assigned by electoral district based on a single-member plurality formula. The leader of the party with a majority of seats in the legislature forms the executive council, otherwise known as Cabinet. Because a vote of non-confidence in the legislature can bring down the government, a convention of strong party discipline has evolved (Kam, 2009). Consequently, Cabinet sets the legislative agenda (Tsebelis, 2002).

Unlike the United Kingdom, Canada is a federation whose provinces are among the most powerful subnational governments in the world in terms of constitutional authority to regulate society and raise revenue. While the federal legislature is bicameral, provincial legislatures are unicameral and highly disciplined. Moreover, municipal governments in Canada are constitutionally "creatures of the provinces" and therefore subordinate to provincial governments. Thus, provincial premiers confront very few veto players capable of frustrating political ambitions in areas of provincial jurisdiction. Yet, as the following discussion illustrates, autonomous Indigenous governments constitute an important exception in cases where provincial designs encroach on the territorial sovereignty of Indigenous Nations. Canadian legislatures also feature an independent and non-partisan Office of the Auditor General, which has after-the-fact investigative powers to authoritatively report on perceived mismanagement of public money.

The Green Energy Act and the Samsung Deal

The Green Energy and Green Economy Act of 2009 – colloquially known as the Green Energy Act – was intended to simultaneously promote renewable power generation and equipment manufacturing in the province of Ontario. The primary instrument was a generous feed-in tariff rate offered to producers of wind and solar power, contingent on a local content requirement that a portion of equipment used for electricity generation was manufactured in Ontario. Policymakers hoped (and claimed) that incentives would attract green energy investment to the province, encourage realignment of the ailing southern Ontario industrial base toward green energy manufacturing and create 50,000 jobs.

Governance reforms contained in the Green Energy Act exemplify the concentration of authority typical of the Canadian political system. Specifically, the Act reversed two previous instances of devolution. One reversal replaced municipal regulations governing renewable energy projects with a centralized and expedited process administered by the provincial Ministry of Energy, thereby stripping local governments of their devolved power to veto renewable energy projects. The other reversal recentralized responsibility to develop and approve Ontario's Long-Term Energy Plan, which had previously been assigned to arm's-length entities, the Ontario Power Authority and Ontario Energy Board, in 2004. Recentralization of authority within the provincial executive was justified on the basis that it was necessary to execute a bold political mission in support of renewable energy, the centerpiece of which was the Green Energy Act.

Yet, five months after the passage of the Green Energy Act in May 2009, the government also announced that it had struck a \$7 billion investment deal with a "Korean consortium" consisting of Samsung C&T and South Korea's state-owned electricity utility, KEPCO. The Green Energy Investment Agreement – colloquially known as "the Samsung deal" – guaranteed Samsung 20-year power purchase agreements worth \$10.5 billion as well as economic development subsidies worth \$437 million. In exchange, Samsung agreed to install 2,500 megawatts of wind and solar capacity over five phases and create 900 full-time manufacturing jobs by setting up four equipment manufacturing plants in the province. The intention was for the manufacturing facilities to supply equipment to electricity producers seeking to fulfill local content requirements stipulated by the Green Energy Act.

The Samsung deal was highly controversial among electricity consumers, existing equipment manufacturers, power generators, system operators and even ministers within McGuinty's Cabinet. From the perspective of consumers and industry representatives, Samsung got a "sweetheart deal" that promised two decades of above-market electricity rates, exclusive economic develop-

ment subsidies and priority access to scarce space on the electricity transmission grid. Within government, agency heads and several members of Cabinet were upset at being kept in the dark about the impending deal prior to reading about it in *the Toronto Star* in September 2009.

According to interview respondents and internal government documents, Samsung approached the Office of the Premier in fall 2008, which promptly assigned responsibility for negotiating the deal to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, George Smitherman (Ontario Renewables and Energy Facilitation Branch, 2011). According to Smitherman, “I was an economic nationalist before Trump, and I had concluded that, if we were going to make a big play in Green Energy, it needed to have an element of industrial policy” (Smitherman, 2019: 137–138). Although many industry players believe Ontario had sufficient manufacturing capability to meet the local content requirements contained in the Green Energy Act, proponents of the Samsung deal argue that Samsung’s investment was a necessary complement to the Green Energy Act. As one supporter put it, “to suggest you’re going to roll out a model that has domestic content when we don’t already have the domestic supply looked a little weird [...] by having one player, a significant player with a big enough order book at their command, they would definitely have capacity and, it turns out, the mandate to help to make sure that our domestic content obligations were not impractical.”

Phase 1 of the project included plans to install wind and solar farms in Ontario’s Haldimand Tract, both on and adjacent to the sovereign territory of the Six Nations of the Grand River. Smitherman therefore introduced Samsung representatives to members of the Six Nations Elected Council, who then undertook siting talks and land surveys over the summer of 2009. Notably, Samsung and the Six Nations did not conclude a memorandum of understanding until January 2010, some two and a half months after the Green Energy Investment Agreement between Samsung and the government was approved by Cabinet.

The Cabinet meeting that confirmed the Samsung deal was tense by all accounts. Anonymous sources indicate contention was focused on three aspects of the policy: the feed-in tariff approach preferred by Energy and Infrastructure, the “scale of the arrangement with Samsung,” and “the process by which it was arrived at.” Objections notwithstanding, the Samsung deal is reported to have passed a vote in Cabinet with Premier McGuinty’s support. Smitherman left provincial politics shortly afterward to run as a mayoral candidate in Toronto’s 2010 municipal election.

Implementation Challenges

Although the Six Nations Elected Council and Samsung drafted a memorandum of understanding in January 2010 that signaled mutual interest in partnering on power generation projects, the parties broke off negotiations within a year, citing a failure to reach satisfactory terms (Montour, 2012). With Six Nations territory off the table, Samsung set about securing alternative siting arrangements with the support of government officials. Accordingly, the government-owned Ontario Realty Corporation began evicting tenant farmers from 2,000 hectares of government-owned Crown Land bordering the Six Nations territory so that it could be surveyed for project siting.

Elsewhere in Ontario, local politicians were Janus-faced toward Ontario's green energy policies. On one hand, local politicians competed fiercely in their attempts to entice the Korean consortium to set up its manufacturing plants in their communities, mobilizing local and regional economic development agencies in a bid to save and otherwise create jobs in a recessionary economic climate. On the other hand, the same local politicians proved responsive to NIMBY-ism ("not in my backyard"), which took the form of organized resident resistance to perceived externalities associated with generating facilities and transmission lines.

Although the Green Energy Act stripped local governments of their power to veto power generation projects, wind farms were met with counter-mobilization on the part of the nuclear industry and a citizen group called Wind Concerns Ontario. Opposition groups delayed breaking ground on generation projects by lobbying for health and environmental impact assessments (McRobert et al., 2016). Although the assessments ultimately found no cause for halting the projects outright, an electoral calculus was made in the interim to reinstate local governments' authority to veto power generation facilities. The Haldimand County Council then issued a moratorium on industrial wind development in March 2011.

With siting challenges threatening to sink the project, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Brad Duguid, urged the Six Nations Elected Council to resume negotiations with Samsung in October 2011 (Montour, 2012). However, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Council, which represents the traditional leadership of the Six Nations, opposed the negotiations. A cease-and-desist order issued to Samsung by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Council in November 2011 cast additional doubt over whether siting renewable energy projects on Six Nations territory would ever be feasible.

Delays on breaking ground led the government to revise the Green Energy Investment Agreement on two occasions. The first revision came in July 2011, after Samsung failed to meet its milestone for the first 1,000 megawatts of capacity. Although Samsung was granted a one-year extension to meet

the milestone, the government slashed the value of the contract by \$327 million. The second amendment came in June 2013 after Samsung failed to meet its Phase 3 and 4 construction deadlines and job creation requirements. Consequently, the Samsung deal was reduced to \$5.4 billion in exchange for 1,340 megawatts of capacity (compared to \$10.5 billion for 2,500 megawatts as originally agreed).

Realizing that it was significantly behind schedule and having neglected to develop its own green energy capabilities, Samsung attempted to sub-contract its obligations to third parties. As stated by a high-level official in a confidential interview, “Samsung was very clever [...] if you look across the supply chain, Samsung didn’t actually build anything; others took the risk and Samsung sat at the top of the pyramid while everybody else was doing the heavy lifting.” Yet, negotiations were initially hampered by what interviewees describe as Samsung’s aggressive negotiating style and top-down management. According to former Samsung employees hired to coordinate the investment, spending initially had to be approved by the headquarters in Seoul, which drastically slowed the pace at which projects could roll out.

By the end of 2013, the situation was further complicated by two consequential developments that had been roiling out of the limelight since 2011. One was the significant downgrading of Ontario’s projected demand for renewable energy, which was embodied in a revised Long-Term Energy Plan compiled with input from previously disenfranchised arm’s length agencies at the behest of the Auditor General (Ontario, 2013; Auditor General of Ontario, 2011). The other was a World Trade Organization (WTO) ruling that the local content provisions in the Green Energy Act were in contravention of international trade law. The WTO ruling, along with substantial reductions to Ontario’s projected electricity demand in its revised Long-Term Energy Plan, significantly curtailed the size of the domestic green energy market created by government policies.

Although such a fate was never certain, it was anticipated. As an anonymous senior bureaucrat from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade explained: “while you’re incubating a cluster there’s some policy justification for giving extra support, such as local content requirements – which everybody knew were illegal, that was no surprise; the question was when would they get knocked down and if we would be past the incubation phase and self-sustaining by then.” Arguably, the fact that the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade was not apprised of the manufacturing commitments contained in the Samsung deal until the eve of their announcement undermined the ministry’s capacity to incubate a green energy cluster when conditions were favorable. Nevertheless, as chronicled in the next section, officials from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, along with colleagues located elsewhere

in the provincial bureaucracy and arms-length agencies, were instrumental in coordinating investments in green energy manufacturing.

Bureaucratic Brokerage and Co-production

As explained by Ostrom (1996), co-production involves the combination of factors of production by actors situated within different organizations, whereby factors of production conventionally consist of land, labor and capital (i.e., equipment). Regarding labor, skills training and accreditation in North America is typically treated as a pseudo-public good provided by colleges and universities (Hall and Soskice, 2001). Accordingly, government was proactive in facilitating the supply of skilled labor required for Ontario's green transition. Specifically, the Ministry of Research and Innovation and Ontario Centres of Excellence "put a strong focus on alternative energies at Ontario's colleges and universities" in anticipation of induced demand created by the feed-in tariff and local content provisions in the Green Energy Act (Ontario Renewables and Energy Facilitation Branch, 2009). This focus complemented "green collar training" approved by the Ontario Power Authority at St. Clair College and the University of Windsor, as well as programs administered through the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines in partnership with Brookfield Power and Sault College. By contrast, government response to the undersupply of land and capital was belated and reactive, as it was assumed that supplying these factors of production would be Samsung's responsibility under the Green Energy Investment Agreement.

According to interview respondents, it became obvious early on that Samsung did not possess the capabilities to fulfill either its power generation or manufacturing obligations. Consequently, officials from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade were tasked with attracting manufacturing firms to the province with whom Samsung could partner. As stated by one senior official, "our ministry was not set up for cold calls in a brand-new industry [...] so I had my staff digging up 'top ten solar companies in the world' and that's literally how we started, with cold calls to people who had never even heard of our province let alone what we were doing." Eventually, investment subsidies were offered to Siemens, CS Wind, Celestica, and Canadian Solar to fulfill Samsung's commitment to set up four manufacturing facilities in the province. Meanwhile, officials from the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure coordinated negotiations between Samsung and major North American power generation and distribution partners, making KEPCO's participation in the project unnecessary.

Officials interviewed for this study attribute hiccups at the negotiation table to cultural differences regarding regulatory expectations and deference afforded to conglomerates. As summarized by one regulator, "in Korea, the

government and companies tend to have a lot of authority and they don't spend years engaging local communities, but that's not how it works in Canada." The sentiment was echoed by a project developer: "Samsung was kind of throwing its weight around, acting as if they didn't need to do what the government was telling them to do [...] I kept telling them the government will cancel the contract if you're not careful." Samsung's negotiations with industry partners were apparently characterized by similar bullishness: "when negotiating a deal with Siemens, the officials back in Korea kept telling us to go back and squeeze them for more [...] I advised them not to do that because it would sour the business relationship."

Government officials, meanwhile, showed little acquiescence. According to a regulator involved in transmission and distribution planning "government was holding the fire to Samsung's feet to make sure these things got built." As noted above, government made good on its promise to enforce the terms of the Green Energy Investment Agreement in July 2011 when it slashed Samsung's payment by \$327 million as penalty for the company's failure to meet its deadline to produce its first 1,000 megawatts. Government's incentive to closely monitor the terms of the Samsung deal was heightened by a 2011 value-for-money audit conducted by the Auditor General of Ontario, which found (among other missteps) that "no economic analysis or business case was done to determine whether the agreement with the consortium was economically prudent and cost-effective" (Auditor General of Ontario, 2011: 91).

Facing criticism from the Auditor General, several governance reforms were initiated during policy implementation that facilitated co-production among the large and growing list of involved parties. These ancillary governance institutions included a Clean Energy Task Force "to advise the Ministers of Energy and Economic Development and Innovation to help connect companies in the energy sector" as well as an inter-ministerial Renewable Energy Committee "to help monitor the progress of projects through the approvals process" (Ontario Renewables and Energy Facilitation Branch, 2013b). The latter committee was instrumental in reducing red tape hindering Samsung's ability to meet its timelines under the Green Energy Investment Agreement (Ontario Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, 2012). As mentioned above, after being shut out from earlier negotiations, the Ontario Power Authority reclaimed its responsibility to devise and submit the provincial Long-Term Energy Plan for approval by the Ontario Energy Board. Following the review of the Long-Term Energy Plan, these agencies, along with the Independent Electricity Systems Operator worked with government ministries and industry players to negotiate lower feed-in tariff rates, reduce surplus generation, and apprise affected stakeholders of proposed changes. These governance innovations and attendant re-negotiations were estimated to result in annual savings

between \$70 million and \$200 million (Auditor General of Ontario, 2013: 312).

Outside of government, members of Samsung's local development team secured greater decision making autonomy from corporate headquarters in an attempt to smooth the negotiation process with industry players whose assets were required to commence production. As a developer commenting on the cumbersome top-down approval process recalled, "I said, look, this is not efficient [...] I recommend that we put a budget together, then you review it, push back on whatever you want, but once it's approved, then I have the ability to spend any and all funds on that budget without coming to you unless there's a deviation from what was agreed [...] it took a long time, about six months, for Samsung to accept that concept."

Having failed to obtain cooperation from partners using an aggressive negotiating strategy, Samsung shifted to a more conciliatory stance. After resuming negotiations with Samsung in October 2011, the Six Nations Elected Council and Samsung drafted a preliminary term sheet in February 2012, which included a 20-year profit-sharing agreement worth \$48.2 million, a \$400,000 scholarship fund, and a jobs and training agreement (Six Nations Elected Council, 2012). Following a month-long community engagement process, which was reported to have generated 70 percent approval for wind and solar siting among residents of the Six Nations, Chief Bill Montour of the Six Nations Elected Council wrote the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Council seeking its approval for the Grand Renewable Energy Project (Montour, 2012). Although the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Council lifted its cease-and-desist order against Samsung's land surveyors in May 2012, the Council continued to oppose the project pending a separate Impact Benefit Agreement with Samsung, which was not finalized till late 2013 (Ontario Renewables and Energy Facilitation Branch, 2013a).

Meanwhile, in the face of resistance to projects outside Six Nations territory, Samsung negotiated over \$65 million in transfers to landholders and communities to solicit their cooperation on renewable energy projects (Haldimand County, 2018). Although Mayor Ken Hewitt supported the Haldimand County Council's 2011 moratorium on industrial wind farms, Hewitt became a vocal supporter of the Samsung project within a year (and even appeared in Samsung television commercials). Hewitt's change of heart coincided with the successful negotiation of a \$40 million Community Vibrancy Fund, to be paid out in \$2 million annual increments from Samsung and its generation partners (Pattern Energy, NextEra, and Capital Power) (Ontario Renewables and Energy Facilitation Branch, 2012). Although most attention was focused on compensation for accommodating wind farms, overcoming local resistance to transmission lines was also crucial for policy success. As pointed out by the Auditor General, failure to properly integrate renewable energy projects into

the main transmission grid resulted in wasted electricity, for which premium rates were nevertheless paid prior to renegotiation of feed-in tariff schedules after 2013 (Auditor General of Ontario, 2011).

Finally, as mentioned above, government reduced the size of the rent paid to Samsung by renegotiating the Green Energy Investment Agreement a second time in June 2013. The move was prompted by the bureaucracy in a memorandum to Cabinet advising the government to cancel the agreement outright if Samsung declined to renegotiate on the basis that Samsung “missed key commitments” (Ontario Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, 2013). Officials within the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure thus remained vigilant in monitoring and enforcing the terms of the contract. Importantly, this second renegotiation of the Samsung deal coincided with the preparation of yet another Auditor General report alleging government mismanagement of Ontario’s green transition (Auditor General of Ontario, 2013). Notably, the government’s terms included “increasing local engagement for all future renewable energy projects under the revised agreement” emphasizing that “the Korean Consortium will be required to obtain municipal council support resolutions for new renewable energy projects before moving forward” (Ontario Renewables and Energy Facilitation Branch, 2013a).

On the preceding point, one of the most striking features of this case is the executive’s about-face during policy implementation. Whereas agenda-setting was characterized by intentional efforts to centralize authority in the hands of the political executive, policy implementation was characterized by a reversal in the opposite direction: toward devolution, delegation, and stakeholder engagement necessary for successful co-production. The following section attempts to explain which of these governance attributes is responsible for the policy’s successes and which is responsible for its shortcomings. On one hand, the policy met its objective of introducing significantly more green energy to Ontario’s electricity system. On the other hand, installed capacity never reached the initial goal of 10,700 megawatts from wind and solar and the policy did not foster a thriving green energy manufacturing sector.¹ Indeed, three of the four manufacturing plants established under the Samsung deal closed within 10 years of establishment. The policy also drew much political ire. Arguably, avoidable mistakes contributed to the politicization of renewable energy. In the run up to the 2014 provincial election, the Progressive Conservative opposition sought to capture votes from the policy’s opponents by promising to scrap the Green Energy Act if elected. Although the Liberals won a majority in the 2014 election, their energy policy blunders made electricity prices nagging electoral liability. As damage control, the government introduced a 25 percent rate subsidy in April 2017, which it financed through borrowing. Nevertheless, the Progressive Conservatives won a majority in the 2018 election. As promised, the Progressive Conservatives rescinded the

Green Energy Act in 2019 on the basis that high feed-in tariff rates and associated electricity prices made Ontario industry economically uncompetitive. Penalties paid by the government for canceling procurement contracts were transferred to the public debt.

APPLYING THE CASE TO A MODEL OF POSITIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

This section analyzes the case of Ontario's green energy transition through a political economy lens on public administration inspired by the work of Elinor and Vincent Ostrom (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971). Consistent with the current research program on positive public administration, Elinor Ostrom's seminal work on co-production started off by identifying positive empirical examples of successful co-production from which she then extrapolated lessons by applying tools of political economy to explain policy success (Ostrom, 1996; cf., Douglas et al., 2021).

From a political economy perspective, actors' incentives to engage in certain behaviors are considered a function of their opportunity costs (i.e., whether they expect to be made better off relative to alternative courses of action available to them) (Milgrom and Roberts, 1992). Because co-production involves collective action that is costly to coordinate, demand exists for a "public entrepreneur" to facilitate solutions to coordination games played by stakeholders (Schneider et al., 1995). The following discussion integrates these three aspects of the political economy perspective – opportunity costs, public entrepreneurship, and coordination games – into a model of co-production capable of explaining Ontario's green energy transition.

Agenda-setting and Implementation as a Two-stage Game

As noted previously, agenda-setting powers in the Canadian political system are largely the prerogative of provincial Cabinets (Brownsey and Howlett, 2001; White, 1994). This is especially true in the energy domain, which falls foremostly within the provincial jurisdiction per the Canadian constitution. Accordingly, policy innovations that affect the provincial energy supply require at least tacit approval of the political executive.² In short, Cabinet sets the energy policy agenda (Tsebelis, 2002).

In the case of Ontario's green energy transition, Cabinet's policy agenda sought to mobilize a renewable energy industry. Government mobilization of industry was thought to be necessary because markets for sustainable technology are uncompetitive with conventional substitutes in the presence of unpriced externalities (Ontario Panel on the Role of Government, 2004: 48). Consequently, in a pure market context, industry is incentivized to pollute

in order to remain competitive. This is true even if the actors that comprise industry value environmental sustainability, due to wariness of free-riding and “hypocritical cooperation” under voluntary schemes (Heckathornn, 1998). As depicted in Figure 18.1, the game played between any given firm and its competitors is a prisoner’s dilemma.

		firm	
		don't pollute	pollute
competitors	don't pollute	2 2	3 -1
	pollute	-1 3	0 0

Source: Author.

Figure 18.1 Joint payoffs with unpriced externalities in the prisoner’s dilemma of green transitions

Figure 18.1 depicts a game matrix with joint payoffs for two players given two choices: pollute or don’t pollute. The payoff for any particular firm is listed in the top-right of each cell, while the payoff for the firm’s competitors is listed in the bottom-left. Payoffs are meaningful only in a relative sense (i.e., relative to other joint payoffs in the game matrix), whereby each player prefers a higher payoff for itself. An equilibrium exists when it is in no player’s interest to switch strategies. As shown in Figure 18.1, although it is in the collective interest to mutually refrain from polluting, the dominant strategy is to pollute; mutual pollution is the equilibrium (Hardin, 1982). Substantively, in the absence of market-correcting interventions, the possibility of free-riding on the compliance of others creates a situation that is not in the players’ best interest. Thus, although pollution is collectively costly, individual actors stand to gain from unpriced externalities. Environmental perseveration is therefore a common pool resource problem (Ostrom, 1990). Moreover, in the absence of effective enforcement, signaling cooperative intentions between players is merely “cheap talk” that does not change the payoffs of the game. Rather, credible signals from an actor capable of incentivizing compliance are required to break the polluting equilibrium by altering the opportunity costs of the players. Public entrepreneurs fulfill this this role, whereby entrepreneurship is defined as the act of moving production of goods and services to a socially preferred equilibrium (Casson, 1982; Schneider et al., 1995).

In the case of Ontario's green energy transition, incentives took the form of lucrative feed-in tariff contracts, economic development adders, and local content requirements, which complemented conventional hard law regulations on end-of-pipe emissions. The creation of a renewable energy market via public policy was thus an exercise in public entrepreneurship carried out by an entrepreneurial state (cf., Mazzucato, 2021; Schneider et al., 1995). Yet, as discussed later, entrepreneurs need not be government actors. Entrepreneurs must, however, satisfy a reputational criterion for being able to credibly commit to contracts that stipulate incentives for cooperation and sanctions for defection (Bianco and Bates, 1990; Ostrom, 1990). Given that the creation of markets for renewable energy requires some combination of powers monopolized by the state (i.e., regulatory powers and public finance), it is natural that entrepreneurship during agenda-setting involved government in this case.

The political executive apparently fulfilled the reputational requirement noted above, as evidenced by the mobilization of a green energy industry in Ontario. Analytically, industry actors were motivated by government action to move en masse to a new, socially optimal market equilibrium. However, the government later reneged on commitments made during agenda-setting by abandoning its local content requirements at the behest of the WTO and by reducing feed-in tariff rates by about 20 percent in 2013 (Ontario Renewables and Energy Facilitation Branch, 2013b). Although some government reversals were a consequence of Samsung's failure to meet its commitments, it turned out to be virtually impossible for Samsung to live up to its commitments without public coordination of co-production during implementation, which came mostly as an afterthought. Contracts established during agenda-setting were "incomplete" as they did not fully stipulate roles and responsibilities in the delivery of goods and services (cf., Klein, 2018). Thus, despite their air of credibility, signals sent to industry via the Green Energy Act and Green Energy Investment Agreement promised more than the executive could deliver. In drafting incomplete contracts, Cabinet fell prey to what Miller and Whitford (2016) call "political moral hazard" by neglecting due diligence during agenda-setting. As a result, government alienated stakeholders whose participation was required for policy success.

Bringing disenfranchised stakeholders on-side required bureaucratic brokerage of negotiations between owners of specific factors of production. From a political economy perspective, co-production during implementation is a second-level bargaining game over the distribution of benefits and burdens from co-production. Figure 18.2 models a game played between Samsung and its partners, the form of which is chicken: players may either demand concessions or concede to partners, with mutual concession corresponding with an equitable distribution of benefits. However, each player may extract rent (i.e., a higher payout than necessary) from their partners by playing

a demand strategy. In a one-shot negotiation game, the equilibrium solution is no solution at all: both parties play a bull-headed demand strategy, which results in the termination of negotiations. In the case at hand, Samsung's initial demands were not met with concessions by potential partners. Instead, the Six Nations Elected Council broke off negotiations and the Haldimand County Council issued a moratorium on industrial wind farms. It only was after government officials issued sanctions for failure to meet agreed-upon milestones that Samsung adopted a conciliatory stance toward its negotiation partners in subsequent iterations of the game, which were arranged by government actors. Again, public entrepreneurs were responsible for breaking the non-cooperative equilibrium in favor of the socially optimal outcome.

		Samsung	
		concede	demand
partners	concede	2 2	3 1
	demand	1 3	0 0

Source: Author.

Figure 18.2 Joint payoffs from distribution in chicken bargaining game

As to whether public entrepreneurship is strictly necessary for successful co-production, that depends on whether expected benefits from negotiation exceed players' opportunity costs, keeping in mind that negotiation entails additional transaction costs (Scharpf, 1997). In this case, the bureaucracy facilitated negotiations between Samsung and its partners by absorbing transaction costs. Indeed, a great deal of contractual minutiae remained unsettled after Cabinet signed the Samsung deal. A facilitator from the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure described the Ministry's role as follows: "If something's not in a signed contract, then it's open for discussion, so we would try to discuss things [...] there were often discussions about why we can't do this and why we can't do that [...] all kinds of staging things needed to be coordinated between government and all the parties." Notably, most actors in the nascent policy network were inexperienced, lacking the familiarity, trust, and information required for a self-governing and self-sustaining policy regime (cf., Jones and Bachelor, 1993). Many interview respondents from both government and industry credit the provincial bureaucracy with a high degree of patience and

professionalism, which complemented its tough headedness in holding industry players accountable for living up to their commitments.

The preceding discussion illustrates how the same executive-dominated institutions responsible for initiating a political mission undermined policy success during implementation. Thankfully, ancillary governance institutions were eventually devised that fostered successful co-production. As discussed in the conclusion, possible lessons for positive public administration center on how planners might inject greater foresight and proactiveness into the policy process by institutionalizing beneficial governance arrangements.

CONCLUSION

Ontario's green energy transition is an apt case for drawing lessons about positive public administration because it embodies a laudable political mission to "make markets" for sustainable energy (cf., Mazzucato, 2021). As a result of the policies surveyed in this chapter, Ontario became the first North American jurisdiction to launch a comprehensive feed-in tariff program and phase out coal-fired electricity. The haste with which the policy was rolled out was intentional, as being a first mover was crucial for meeting the province's industrial policy objectives. Yet, lack of foresight and proper planning resulted in many blunders, foremost among which was the failure to foster a durable green energy manufacturing sector in the province. Ironically, the same executive-dominated institutions that expedited agenda-setting undermined successful implementation by neglecting stakeholders whose support and participation was required for policy success. Although many stakeholders were won over thanks to bureaucratic brokerage during implementation, higher than necessary electricity prices served to alienate the electorate writ large, which eventually voted in a government that reversed the green energy commitments previously made.

Governance lessons were extrapolated with the help of a political economy perspective on positive public administration inspired by Elinor and Vincent Ostrom, whereby agenda-setting and implementation were modeled as a two-stage game (Ostrom and Ostrom, 1971). The model illustrated that green energy transitions require incentives to offset opportunity costs and overcome a commons dilemma. In this case, government mobilized industry actors by implementing generous feed-in tariff rates and subsidizing equipment manufacturing via economic development adders and local content requirements. Commitments made by the political executive apparently were sufficient to stimulate considerable investment in green energy. In particular, the special treatment afforded to Samsung C&T in the controversial Green Energy Investment Agreement proved to be more than sufficient to reorient Samsung's commercial operations toward green energy.

As explained in the institutional background section, the political executive in Ontario confronted few *de jure* veto players when setting its green energy agenda. So long as the Samsung deal resonated with the Premier, it would obtain approval in Cabinet over objections from other ministers. However, the contract struck between Samsung and the political executive remained “incomplete” in the absence of approval from *de facto* veto players whose assets were required to bring Samsung’s obligations to fruition. As it happened, Samsung lacked necessary factors of production to make good on its agreement with the province – specifically, land to site the investment and capital to establish power generation and equipment manufacturing facilities.

Collective action required for co-production posed a problem insofar as asset holders’ incentives were not aligned *ex ante* with the objectives of the Samsung deal. Potential industry partners were alienated by preferential treatment afforded to Samsung, while landholders perceived the costs of hosting generation facilities to outweigh benefits. Nevertheless, Samsung initially pursued a bullish strategy when negotiating the distribution of benefits from co-production. In analytical terms, Samsung attempted to exploit monopoly advantages bestowed to it by its contract with the government to force bargaining concessions from its partners. The latter were unreceptive, however, which created delays that threatened Samsung’s ability fulfill its obligations to the government. Fortunately, the government was incentivized by close scrutiny on the part of the Auditor General to exercise vigilance in enforcing the terms of the Samsung deal. Samsung therefore adopted a more conciliatory stance toward its partners in subsequent negotiations, which were organized and facilitated by the bureaucracy. In its capacity to enforce compliance with contractual obligations and absorb transaction costs of repeat negotiations, the bureaucracy successfully brokered co-production. Had it not, the policy would have failed.

Positive public administration is about the identification of successful policies from which transferable lessons may be drawn. Although Ontario’s green energy policies were not unequivocally successful, few are (Compton and ‘t Hart, 2019). Detailed event analysis permits analysts to distinguish between positive and negative elements of complex cases (see also Flinders, Chapter 3 in this volume), while concepts and tools from political economy have powerful heuristic value for simplifying complexity and extrapolating lessons. Taken together, the approach gives analytical substance to the call to integrate “micro, meso and macro conditions and the interplay between agent and institutional context” (Douglas et al., 2021: 443). For example, this chapter modeled policy preferences “at the micro level” as a function of actors’ assets and opportunity costs, implementation “at meso level” as coordination games played by actors whose assets were required for co-production, and

agenda-setting “at the macro level” as the distribution of veto players in the Canadian political system.

The analysis demonstrated that although there is virtue in expediency during agenda-setting, complex policies like this one benefit from consensus-building among stakeholders. It should go without saying that stakeholder buy-in is crucial when their assets are required for policy success. Yet, this case exemplifies that concentrated executive authority in liberal market economies is a double-edge sword. On the one hand, executive decision making is beneficial for expeditious implementation of bold political missions. On the other hand, the same institutions permit executives to neglect due diligence, make promises they cannot keep, and otherwise engage in “political moral hazard” by shifting unnecessary costs and risk onto society (cf., Miller and Whitford, 2016). Although Mazzucato (2021) convincingly argues that “socialization of risk” is a necessary component of daring political missions, a balance may be struck between stifling risk aversion and political recklessness.

This case makes plain that Auditor General oversight does not always effectively mitigate against political moral hazard, perhaps because it occurs after-the-fact. Curbing pathological tendencies associated with liberal institutions is instead a matter of proactively implementing ancillary mechanisms in support of co-production. Had the executive proactively fostered co-production from the outset, Ontario’s green energy transition would have been much less tumultuous. Although defenders of the status quo might argue that consensus-building is antithetical to liberal comparative institutional advantage, multi-stakeholder mobilization is often required for policy success because government typically lacks the means to directly deliver goods and services to citizens (Wilder, 2022; Howlett, 2000). Consequently, appropriate policy design is often belatedly and reactively articulated during implementation, if it is articulated at all.

As to whether there is an inevitable trade-off between expediency required for bold political missions and consultative policymaking at the agenda-setting stage, ancillary institutions need not detract from advantages of agenda-setting expediency if government maintains its absolute veto. There are many instances of “private self-coordination in the shadow of hierarchy” whereby government is an enforcer and enabler of last resort (Scharpf, 1997). Such arrangements are consistent with current governance literature on innovation and industrial policy, which makes a case for “agencification,” that is, delegated policymaking authority to arm’s length agencies and non-state actors (Azoulay et al., 2019; Breznitz and Ornston, 2013). The evidence compiled to date suggests that multi-stakeholder governance can and does work in Canada’s executive-dominated political system (Montpetit, 2016). At this point, social scientists and planners possess some broad guiding principles regarding how to successfully govern co-production, but further research

remains to be done regarding how fragmented “external economies” may be leveraged to solve pressing social, economic, and environmental problems in ways that are politically tenable and socially equitable.

NOTES

1. At the time of writing, Ontario’s electricity mix had approximately 8,000 megawatts of wind and solar capacity (5,000 MW wind and 3,000 MW solar).
2. As discussed in the concluding section, political executives can (and perhaps should) delegate authority to independent agencies as a means curbing “political moral hazard,” thereby increasing confidence in government’s ability to credibly commit to long-term objectives like environmental sustainability (Miller and Whitford, 2016). In such cases, agencies are considered to possess delegated agenda-setting authority in “the shadow of hierarchy” (Scharpf, 1997).

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19. Sensegiving in multicultural contexts: the role of cultural chameleonizing in the implementation of Mauritius's light rail transit system

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, scholars have begun studying positive examples of public governance (Douglas et al., 2021). By disclosing mechanisms that create public value (Moore, 1995, 2013), insights that transcend negativity in public administration studies can be of theoretical and practical relevance. Such insights can inform diverse public sector organizations delivering public services (Compton et al., 2022). Effective stakeholder involvement throughout the service delivery chain is usually considered an important factor in achieving positive outcomes for the public (Hartley and Fletcher, 2008). However, stakeholder involvement can be challenging as interests diverge enormously (Hartley and Fletcher, 2008). Moreover, the “public” throughout public value creation cannot be considered as one single actor when, in reality, it represents many different opinions (Moore, 2014). As underlined by Calhoun (1997: 84), we operate in a “sphere of publics” in the plural sense of the word.

In postcolonial country settings, the conceptualization of the “public” is even more complex. Many of these countries are characterized by multi-ethnic societies. European and North American societies are also becoming increasingly diverse due to worldwide immigration flows (Berry and Sam, 2014). This circumstance deserves attention when introducing public projects that aim to address, for example, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely SDG 11 on creating sustainable cities and communities. By equally addressing all involved cultural groups, project developers are better positioned to gain acceptance from relevant stakeholders (Dines et al., 2021).

Therefore, SDGs' successful co-achievement across the globe requires a constructive handling of multicultural configurations (Kaasila-Pakanen, 2015).

Sensegiving – the influencing of people's sensemaking in uncertain situations toward a preferred outcome (Maitlis and Christianson, 2014) – has been identified as a crucial communication strategy for achieving development goals (Hong et al., 2023; Kroeger et al., 2022). However, studies on sensegiving tactics, which can be applied by public managers striving for positive public outcomes (Ohemeng and Kamga, 2020; Robert and Ola, 2021), have usually implied a culturally neutral audience. Literature on multicultural communication, nevertheless, highlights that such settings require special attention (Brett et al., 2009; Day, 2007). Understanding how sensegiving succeeds in multicultural contexts is still underdeveloped. Thus, we study sensegiving in a multicultural context in the core societal makeup of an African case study as a positive feature in handling a public project initially met with contentious views.

We address this theoretical gap by studying the applied stakeholder management process used for implementation of Mauritius's recent Metro Express Project (MEP). The MEP is a pertinent case study not only due to its success in accelerating the use of greener public transport on the island but also because of the successful sensegiving approach by Metro Express Limited's (MEL) staff members in a country where “cultural diversity is part of [its] self-image” (Ng Tseung-Wong, 2018: 176). By abductively theorizing from this case based on a combination of different qualitative data (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2013; Yin, 2017), we identify the role of *cultural chameleoning* as a crucial strategy for dealing with multiculturalism when tackling SDGs through sensegiving practices. Our study provides insights on sensegiving in multicultural contexts, which are valuable for research focusing on mechanisms that can lead to positive public outcomes (see also Barboza-Wilkes and Le, Chapter 20 in this volume for a discussion of cultural competency in public service design and delivery).

THEORIZING SENSEGIVING AS A POLICY TOOL

Sensegiving is “the process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality” (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991: 442). Leaders (Corley and Gioia, 2004), managers (Rouleau, 2005), and other organizational stakeholders (Maitlis and Lawrence, 2007) strive to influence outcomes during moments of uncertainty by shaping involved actors' thoughts about a situation of concern. Sensegiving is a communicative process that involves storytelling (Humphreys et al., 2012), sharing a vision (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991), or visualizing (Höllerer et al., 2018). A one-way style of communication does not

characterize it. Instead, it carefully addresses the receivers' values (Bartunek et al., 1999) and language (Fiss and Zajac, 2006).

Sensegiving is crucial as it can influence an organization's strategy (McNulty and Pettigrew, 1999). Furthermore, sensegiving moderates the success of explaining a new idea to other actors (Hill and Levenhagen, 1995) or raising news media attention about a specific topic (Petkova et al., 2013). Sensegiving is essential for shaping organizational change processes (Balogun, 2003). It is helpful when aiming to introduce positive social change, that is, by institutionalizing corporate social initiatives (Sharma and Good, 2013). Additionally, when tackling grand challenges such as climate change or gender inequality, sensegiving is discussed as a crucial influencing factor (Kroeger et al., 2022).

Overall, sensegiving can be an important tool for public sector managers, aiming for positive outcomes within and beyond their organizations. Scholars studied how public managers referred to sensegiving when introducing a new management philosophy, characterized by flatter hierarchies in the Swedish police (Robert and Ola, 2021) and new performance management institutions in Ghana's public service (Ohemeng and Kamga, 2020). Public managers' sensegiving was identified to guide employees during experienced ambiguities, leading to higher job satisfaction (Backhaus et al., 2022); e.g., during the COVID-19 pandemic, as university leaders' sensegiving has shown (Yeomans and Bowman, 2021). When interacting with involved stakeholders, sensegiving is a relevant process (Krogstrup and Brix, 2019). In the permit-application process of wind farms in Norway, sensegiving was seen as an essential moderator (Corvellec and Risberg, 2007).

Due to the relevance of sensegiving tactics, several scholars studied the factors contributing to its success. As a communicative process, scholars underlined how metaphors and mental models are relevant for making sensegiving work (Hill and Levenhagen, 1995). Another study shows that successful sensegiving actors depend on legitimate power within an organization and a good understanding of its environment (Kraft et al., 2015). Strategies of justification, translation, or disciplining have been detected as mechanisms for good sensegiving (Rouleau, 2005). Others discuss the need for emotional arousal (Vuori and Virtaharju, 2012) and emotion work (Heaphy, 2017) to make sensegiving effective. Finally, dialogical dynamics that imply an ongoing dialogue between sensegiving change agents and affected sensemakers are seen as essential (Monin et al., 2013).

As rich as this literature on success factors for sensegiving is, most of these studies imply a cultural-neutral audience of sensemakers as their cultural background is not considered in particularity. However, when referring to literature on multicultural communication, it is evident that such contexts require additional strategies (Brett et al., 2009; Day, 2007). Multicultural con-

texts need special attention as stereotyping, cultural relativism, or experiences of cultural shocks might challenge mutual understanding (Hussain, 2019). Conflicts in multicultural contexts are more existent due to misunderstanding and mistrust among members of different cultural backgrounds (Appelbaum et al., 1998). Not surprisingly, recent studies show that cross-cultural differences can negatively affect the achievement of sensegiving (Bajaj et al., 2021; Hong et al., 2016).

Acknowledging the relevance of sensegiving for public organizations to advance positive outcomes and understanding that multicultural contexts merit special consideration, further research on this overlap is needed. Such insights are particularly important for public organizations when striving for positive change as they are increasingly confronted with a public of diverse backgrounds. Cities in Europe or Northern America are increasingly defined as multicultural places due to immigration movements (Qadeer, 2016; Wilson, 2011). African countries are characterized by a multicultural society resulting from former colonial practices of settling people and drawing partially arbitrary national borders (Englebert et al., 2002). Therefore, we raise the following research question: *How can sensegiving in multicultural contexts succeed during change processes aiming for positive public outcomes?*

CASE: SENSEGIVING IN THE MAURITIAN CONTEXT

To address this gap, we adopt a single case study approach suggested by Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (2017). By following Eisenhardt (1989), we choose an extreme case as it provides good opportunities to exploratively establish new theories by controlling extraneous variations while allowing the focus of attention on the variation of interest (Eisenhardt in Gehman et al., 2018: 288). They are extreme in showing an outcome of interest contrary to existing theoretical expectations (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Extreme cases highlight influential mechanisms that would otherwise be obscure, which is why their insights are particularly valuable when researching grand challenges (Eisenhardt et al., 2016). Our theory-building approach, therefore, follows along the principles of theoretical generalization (from case analysis into theory) and not along external generalization (from a sample into the population) (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2013; Yin, 2017).

We study the stakeholder management process during Mauritius's Metro Express Light Rail Transit (LRT) implementation. The MEP is a milestone in the Mauritian history of public transport as most of the population used to commute either by car, motorcycle, or bus (Enoch, 2003; Burrin, 2019; Mahadew et al., 2022). While commuting from the suburbs to the capital previously took more than an hour during rush hour, the same distance can now be travelled within 30 minutes. After a six-year-long planning phase

(between 2011 and 2017) and a five-year-long construction phase for the first and second part of the project (between 2017 and 2022), the MEP is considered a new pride of the island by addressing the “traffic burden, traffic safety and [encouraging the] use of public transport” (Thondoo et al., 2021).

The MEL, a registered company owned by the Government of Mauritius, was the primary entity responsible for implementing the project. Besides engineering and technical support, their task required stakeholder collaboration as multiple actors were involved during the entire planning and construction process. Stakeholders such as other public administration divisions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), residents, and shop owners participated throughout the development stages to share their views about the urban transport project.

The stakeholder management process of MEP’s implementation is an excellent example of studying sensegiving in a multicultural context. Throughout the development phases, MEL and its employees had to apply sensegiving practices as this public transport was new to the citizens and other stakeholders. Particularly during land acquisitions, which were required to build the train lines, MEL had to ensure that the project made sense for the stakeholders to convince them to hand over the land. The same principle applied when redefining traffic routes, creating new bus stations, relocating businesses, and so on. This sensegiving occurred in a multicultural context as Mauritius is a nation with citizens of diverse backgrounds. Before its colonization, the island had no indigenous inhabitants. “In fact, everyone who lives in Mauritius has originally come from somewhere else, whether through slavery, indenture, trade, or as French settlers” (Aumeerally, 2005: 307). The Mauritian population consists today of five main ethnic groups: Hindu-Indo-Mauritians, Muslim-Indo-Mauritians, Sino-Mauritians, Afro-Mauritians, and Franco-Mauritians.¹

Besides the challenges of facing a multicultural context, MEL’s stakeholder management approach can be understood as a successful sensegiving example; however, not from the beginning but throughout time. This becomes evident when screening the media coverage of the MEP before and during the construction phase. As Mauritius is considered a democratic country, and has a free press,² the media coverage about the MEP is a good indicator to understand whether the applied sensegiving approach can be seen as successful. It exposes whether Mauritian citizens could make sense of the new transport project and approve it or whether affected stakeholders raised their discontent.

The media analysis reveals that during the MEP’s initial stage, its conceptualization was initially met with pessimism. In 2017, the United Bus Service Employees Union (UBSEU) threatened to strike unless the government guaranteed that the new mode of transportation would not result in redundancies in the bus transport system (Putchay, 2017). The project’s construction costs, its

impact on existing infrastructures or lack of them, and the relocation of inhabitants affected by the rail's construction path were raised (Elix, 2017; *Financial Times*, 2017). Two major conflicts were reported in September 2017 during the early construction phase (Fakun and Jaddoo, 2017; *L'Express*, 2017). As encroaching houses on state land had to be demolished, affected inhabitants were unwilling to leave their settlements despite the government's pledges of compensation (Mahadew, 2020). One main reason for the emergence of this conflict was miscommunication (Fakun and Jaddoo, 2017). After this challenging start, similar reports did not occur later. Some minor protests were reported in early 2018 when several ancient trees were cut down (Antoine, 2018). In the meantime, more articles referred to MEL's exchanges with other stakeholders (Elix, 2019). Since 2020, more media articles have referred to the positive aspects of the MEP and underlined the Metro Express as a fast, clean, and environmentally friendly mode of transport (Defimedia, 2021).

According to the media screening, the Mauritian community steadily started to approve the MEP while concerns were decreasing. A journalist who followed the implementation closely agreed with this identified improvement in public perception. The journalist also confirmed that early conflicts can be traced back to a lack of communication by the officials at a time when MEL staff members were not yet involved. At a later stage, more stakeholder involvement could be observed. Hence, it seems that the MEL's stakeholder management process during the implementation phase proved important in altering the project's acceptance. Understanding this process helps to generate new insights into how prosperous sensegiving was conducted in a multicultural context.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

To explore the MEL's applied stakeholder management process during the implementation phase, we collected various data to triangulate the primary collected sources. First, we conducted four group interviews with MEL employees involved in the stakeholder management process. Besides the CEO, we interviewed engineers, place managers, and communication personnel. Per group, we interviewed two to five staff members. Interviews, held via a videotelephone platform, were conducted in English, and lasted between one and two hours. We asked questions about their applied stakeholder management approach during the implementation phase and focused on how MEL staff members dealt with a multicultural society throughout the process. All interviews were transcribed to be used for further analysis at a later stage of the study.

Furthermore, we studied MEL's social media platforms, which documented the applied stakeholder management approach in detail. In addition, we under-

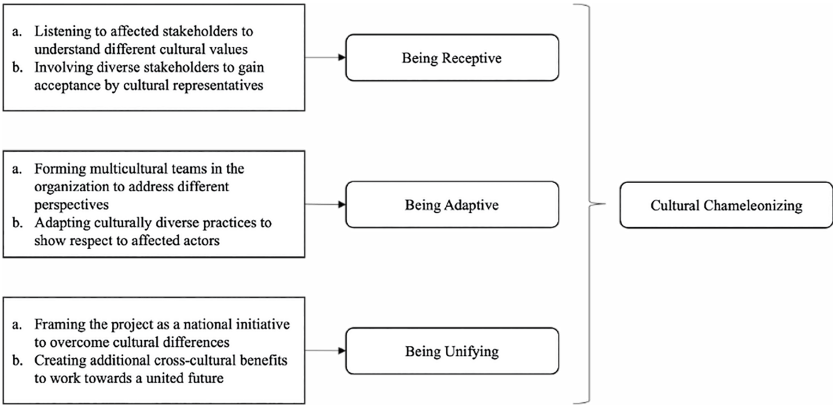
Table 19.1 Data table

Type of Data	Number gathered
Group interviews (1–2 hours) with 1–2 MEL staff members who were involved in the stakeholder management process during MEP's implementation (CEO, engineers, place managers, communication responsible)	4
Social media posts (LinkedIn & Facebook)	10
A three-hour field visit along the train line, in which two MEL staff members explained stakeholder management incidents and defined solutions per location	1
Interviews with external actors who were involved in or following MEP's implementation (minister, civil servant of a public administration department, journalist)	3
Existing literature on the implementation of MEP (<i>Le train renaît de ses cendres au pays du dodo</i> ; Burrun, 2019)	1

Source: Author.

took a field visit along the constructed train line with two MEL officials. At different locations, the officials explained in depth the negotiations conducted with stakeholders impacted by the project and the proposed solutions per case. Moreover, we interviewed a journalist who closely followed MEP's implementation and talked to two additional personnel from another public administration entity involved in the project. They contributed an external perspective. Finally, we referred to the existing literature on establishing the Metro Express, particularly the published book *Le train renaît de ses cendres au pays du dodo*, which describes the implementation closely (Burrun, 2019). Table 19.1 offers an overview of the collected data.

To analyze the collected data for theorization, we proceeded along several steps as proposed by Jarzabkowski and colleagues (2014), Ketokivi and Mantere (2010) as well as by Eisenhardt (1989), and Miles and Huberman (1994). We coded collected data into first- and second-order codes (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2013; Yin, 1994) while abductively comparing our findings with insights from sensegiving and multicultural communication research. We thus identified a core strategy for conducting sensegiving in multicultural contexts that we define as *cultural chameleonizing*, which consists of three components: (i) *being receptive*, (ii) *being adaptive*, and (iii) *being unifying* (see Figure 19.1)³. Hereafter, we discuss this strategy to establish a theoretical model on sensegiving in multicultural contexts.



Source: Author.

Figure 19.1 Components of cultural chameleonizing

FINDINGS: CULTURAL CHAMELEONIZING FOR SUCCESSFUL SENSEGIVING

The data analysis reveals the importance of cultural chameleonizing during sensegiving in multicultural contexts. We use and further explain with data exemplars the term chameleonizing as a comparison to a chameleon that responds to different color backgrounds. First, the MEL employees had to understand and accommodate the different cultural sensitivities at stake initially – hence, they proved themselves to be receptive. Second, they addressed these different cultural sensitivities accordingly – thus, they were adaptive. Finally, they formulated a coherent project appealing to all involved actors – thus, they reflected being unifying.

Being Receptive

As a central component of cultural chameleonizing, we identified the principle of being receptive. This means that sensegiving actors in a multicultural environment should *listen to affected stakeholders* to receive their different perspectives. This is important since sensegiving actors are unable to know all relevant cultural sensitivities during a major change process due to cultural differences. Simultaneously, sensegiving actors should *involve a variety of diverse stakeholders*. By doing so, they can gain acceptance from cultural representatives such as priests or relevant community members and understand

better the cultural sensitivities at stake. Sensegiving actors then better understand potential cultural hurdles that might hamper a project's implementation.

In the case of MEP's implementation, MEL employees created several opportunities for citizens to directly raise their concerns so they could better understand the reactions of residents and businesses. The officials organized hall meetings in municipalities. They engaged with relevant actors whom they deemed important representatives of key societal groups. Additionally, they walked along the route where the railways were supposed to be built. This allowed neighbors, shop owners, and other actors to directly interact with them and voice their complaints, concerns, or questions. As the CEO of MEL said:

Anytime we go and talk to the various target audience, we cannot be limited to just, for example, just go on TV or we just go to Metro News. We do Metro News and explain spontaneously what we are doing in terms of various progress of the project. But we also go whenever we have something difficult to talk about and go door to door so we can talk to the people.

Being receptive thus allowed the MEL officials to understand the characteristics of the encountered multiculturalism better and, upon this understanding, react accordingly.

Being Adaptive

A second component of cultural chameleonizing is being adaptive. Once sensegiving actors in multicultural contexts better understand the cultural sensitivities, they should try to address these particularities as well as possible. To do so, they can *form multicultural teams in their respective organizations*. Such an approach is helpful because an organization with members of different cultural backgrounds is more flexible in providing customized engagement approaches to a particular cultural community. Furthermore, sensegiving actors should be open-minded about *adapting to culturally diverse practices*, for example, by participating and responding to cultural rituals that could intervene in a change process. It shows respect toward affected stakeholders, whereby the sensegivers-sensemakers relationship can be improved, supporting sensegiving.

In the case of the MEP's implementation, MEL employees have shown such an adaptive approach in several circumstances. They did so as they were unaware of all the different cultural practices in their country. That is, before demolishing a house, they ensured that house owners had enough time to organize a ritual ceremony delivered by a priest for whom they asked. In other situations, they even participated in cultural practices desired by involved actors. For example, as one construction site required to fell a tree, the officials

welcomed without hesitation the idea and invitation to participate in a ceremonial ritual:

In one case, we had to move a tree. Yeah, I remember. We could not take them on board unless we accepted what they thought would be the proper way of taking over their land. So, we let them express themselves. And we learn from them. [...]. And then they brought a priest. They brought a priest to do a prayer before we actually could cut it.

Being adaptive supported the MEL officials in accommodating the requirements of a local cultural practice with a positive attitude that eventually facilitated the implementation of the metro line.

Being Unifying

As a third component of cultural chameleonizing, we recognized the communicative approach of being unifying. Sensegiving actors in multicultural contexts should find ways to formulate the project to appeal to different cultural communities (i.e., by *framing it as a national project*). This approach can be helpful as it steers affected stakeholders' focus away from potential cultural differences and focuses on a joint initiative. Sensegiving actors in such circumstances should likewise *ensure that a planned project involving change provides cross-cultural benefits* (i.e., by highlighting potential economic, social, and ecological advantages). It allows different cultural communities to recognize how the foreseen project can be mutually beneficial.

In the context of the MEP's implementation process, the staff members operated in an environment that favored multicultural stakeholders to feel equal. The officials framed the Metro Express as a national Mauritian project to project this sense of unity in an environment of equals. They did so by ensuring several benefits beyond the pure implementation of a train line, such as establishing a connected recreational park, adding parking locations, and other minor to bigger side projects. Accordingly, they continuously emphasized that the Metro Express is not only a transport project but a socioeconomic project, strengthening the national economy:

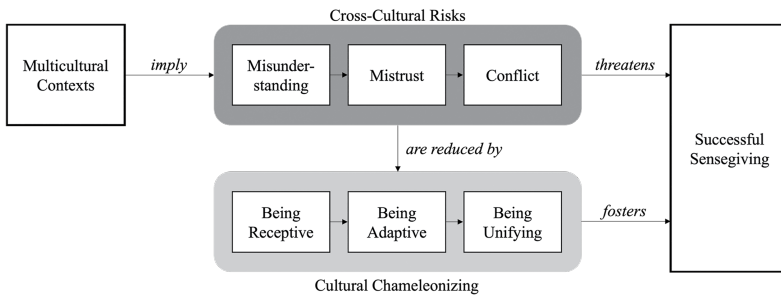
"So, when we go to those meetings, we tell the people you are here, you're working for the country. This project is a national project. We are defining a solution for the country!"

Being unifying was another way of acknowledging the diverse cultural identities involved in creating and implementing the project without favoring one group over another. Hence, by studying the MEP's implementation, we learned that cultural chameleonizing neither intends to favor any cultural group

nor strives to develop a “monocultural national ideal” (Ng Tseung-Wong and Verkuyten, 2015: 684). Instead, multiculturalism is employed discursively as a neutral force in rallying everyone behind the new project, irrespective of their cultural belonging. While some groups can use multiculturalism to gain higher societal status, others can perceive it as threatening a majority group’s identity (Devos and Banaji, 2005; Verkuyten and Martinovic, 2014). In the MEP’s case, we see that cultural chameleonizing does not disregard the multicultural flavors inherent in Mauritius’s society. Instead, it acknowledges a sense of operating among equals to unify a culturally diverse society in a national project.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, we wanted to discover *how sensegiving in multicultural contexts can succeed during change processes aiming for positive public outcomes*. By studying MEL employees’ stakeholder management process during the implementation of Mauritius’s Metro Express line, which required sensegiving practices in a multicultural country, we gained fresh insights regarding this question. Notably, we identified the role of *cultural chameleonizing* as a relevant moderator throughout this process as Figure 19.2 shows.



Source: Author.

Figure 19.2 Successful sensegiving in multicultural contexts

Literature on multicultural communication and multicultural teams reflects the importance of paying attention to cross-cultural contexts (Brett et al., 2009; Day, 2007). Individuals with different cultural backgrounds differ due to unequal working styles, varying expectations, and a lack of knowledge regarding other cultures (Sogancilar and Ors, 2018). Multicultural societies risk facing conflicts among cultural groups due to mutual misunderstanding and mistrust (Appelbaum et al., 1998). Such circumstances can threaten suc-

cessful applications of sensegiving (Bajaj et al., 2021; Hong et al., 2016), that is, during change processes toward positive public outcomes.

Our study identified that cultural chameleonizing through sensegiving can reduce cross-cultural risks during change processes by *being receptive*, *being adaptive*, and *being unifying*. By being receptive, sensegiving actors actively involve and listen to affected stakeholders. This is relevant as it can reduce the risk of potential misunderstandings. By engaging with culturally different stakeholders, sensegiving actors can better understand their perspectives and cultural sensitivities, which might influence a foreseen change process. By being adaptive, sensegiving actors try to be flexible in addressing cultural sensitivities by forming multicultural teams and adapting to culturally diverse practices. This shows respect toward the culturally different stakeholders, whereby the risk of mistrust can be diminished. Finally, sensegiving actors try to frame a foreseen change initiative as a national project by being unifying and aiming for cross-cultural benefits. This is useful as it can reduce the risks of cross-cultural conflicts if stakeholders recognize positive outcomes, irrespective of one's cultural background.

In our study's context, namely during the implementation phase, we identified the moderating effect of cultural chameleonizing. During the early stage, the MEL employees did not invest as much time engaging with the affected stakeholders, as they admitted. "At the beginning, we were very much in a rush and could not carefully communicate with the people as we did later" (staff member of MEL). Hence, a major conflict in line with the demolition of encroaching houses evolved. Miscommunication was mentioned by the affected community (Fakun and Jaddoo, 2017b), indicating that sensegiving was not sufficiently effective then. Such major conflicts could not be reported in later phases of MEP's implementation because the data analysis revealed that the project implementers took time to engage with affected stakeholders.

While our study provides insights into the moderating role of cultural chameleonizing on successful sensegiving in multicultural contexts, our theoretical model based on a single case study holds three limitations. First, the model was established based on a country context with a relatively harmonious multicultural tradition. Although such a multicultural balance needs to be steadily cared for, as negative examples from the past have shown (Eriksen, 2004), such change processes might be more challenging in country contexts with less harmonious histories. Where indigenous groups may generally feel more distrust toward state interventions due to darker colonial pasts, sensegiving practices probably require additional efforts (i.e., reconciliation practices might be additionally needed). A second limitation is time. The focus of our study was understanding success factors for sensegiving in the moment of MEP's implementation. However, affected sensemakers' opinions can change over time, primarily as major change projects such as establishing a train line

can raise new issues, requiring new sensegiving practices. A third limitation is our narrow focus of inquiry on MEL staff's sensegiving. From this focus, it cannot be generalized that all aspects of the MEP can be understood as positive. Certain controversies related to the MEP continue, such as its financing, immigrant workers' conditions, or uncertainties about diverse impact assessments' results. As these topics were not part of this study, we cannot make any judgment on these aspects of the MEP.

Our insights contribute to two literature streams: research about sensegiving and studies on positive public administration. While sensegiving scholars already identify several success factors crucial to making sensegiving work (Kraft et al., 2015; Rouleau, 2005), such studies usually imply a culturally neutral audience. We have not been aware of any research examining how sensegiving can succeed in multicultural contexts. By identifying the role of cultural chameleonizing, we discuss how this strategy can work as a mediator to ensure the effectiveness of sensegiving when dealing with actors of diverse cultural backgrounds. We understand cultural chameleonizing as an additional component of successful sensegiving, required in multicultural contexts.

Our study can inform the current debate on positive public administration, which stresses focusing on factors that can create positive public outcomes (Douglas et al., 2021). As public managers can apply sensegiving to achieve positive outcomes (Krogstrup and Brix, 2019; Robert and Ola, 2021), the identified moderator of cultural chameleonizing can be a crucial factor in achieving such goals. Although these established insights have been developed from an African context, they can also be relevant beyond this geographic area. Many European and North American cities and regions are now multicultural in their societal setup (Qadeer, 2016; Wilson, 2011). Accordingly, public sector organizations in these regions are increasingly dependent on multicultural sensitivity during stakeholder processes. Public managers can profit from our established insights, not by unquestioningly adopting the elaborated mechanisms but by learning from the experiences of others and listening to them (McDonald III et al., 2022; Fohim et al. 2023).

Our study ventured into the complex domain of sensegiving in multicultural contexts, shedding light on the intricate dynamics that come into play when public organizations embark on major change initiatives. Drawing on the case of the MEP's implementation in Mauritius, a multi-ethnic society, we introduce the concept of cultural chameleonizing as a strategic approach to sensegiving. Through its three components – being receptive, being adaptive, and being unifying – cultural chameleonizing serves as a framework for navigating the socio-cultural complexities in multicultural settings. By applying the principles of cultural chameleonizing, the MEL navigated the cultural terrain effectively and built a project that resonated with the broader multicultural Mauritian society. These insights enrich domains of sensegiving and

positive public administration. They guide those at the helm of public projects through the intricacies of cultural diversity, turning potential challenges into avenues for societal unity and project success. Cultural chameleonizing goes beyond merely being a managerial strategy; it is a clarion call for empathy, adaptability, and unity in our diversifying world, positioning it as an indispensable skill for the twenty-first-century public servant.

NOTES

1. For defining the communities, we refer to the Mauritian constitution – Schedule I, Paragraph 3 (4) – that defines the population as including a Hindu community, Muslim community, a Sino-Mauritian community, and the General Population. According to Statistics Mauritius (2020), General Population are people of European and African origins.
2. According to the Economist Democracy Index (2023), Mauritius ranked in 2022 as the 21st most democratic country across the globe and is considered as a full democracy, ranking higher than countries such as France (22nd), South Korea (24th), and the United States of America (30th).
3. Tables with related data exemplars can be accessed via this link: https://www.c4sp.org/publications_sensegiving.html.

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20. The role of cultural competency in crafting and delivering public services

Cynthia Barboza-Wilkes and Thai V. Le

INTRODUCTION: CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND POSITIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

We take on the challenge presented by Douglas and colleagues (2021) to contribute to the nascent positive public administration scholarship by focusing on the importance of cultural competency in crafting and delivering effective public services. The day-to-day functions of government are often overlooked for its seemingly mundane processes in ensuring the public's needs are met, whether through government intervention or public service delivery. But when we do take a closer look at what makes governments perform their frontline functions well, at the heart of it lies a workforce that is nimble and skilled to effectively meet the evolving and conflicting needs of a changing citizenry and public. We argue that cultural competency and more inclusive practices in decision making yield optimal service outcomes and interpersonal relationships in contexts where cultural differences may challenge the design and delivery of services.

In this chapter, we present cultural competency as a key mechanism that fosters positive conditions and perspectives among local government employees to effectively craft and deliver public services, namely social services, to an increasingly diverse population (see also Fohim et al., Chapter 19 in this volume for a discussion of 'cultural chameleonizing' in multicultural service delivery contexts). We discuss existing research and theories on cultural competency that begin to extrapolate how the ability to effectively engage and build relationships with diverse populations – internally and externally – is connected to positive outcomes for the public being served, the organization's priorities, and the workforce engaging with residents. Furthermore, in addressing Douglas and colleagues' (2021) question on why particular organizations manage to have more positive results in producing widely valued societal outcomes, we explore a case study on a local agency based in Los Angeles, California, that has been recognized nationally for its innovative and inclusive

practices to improve residents' quality of life and its exemplary leadership in public service in one of the most diverse regions in the United States.

DEFINING CULTURAL COMPETENCY

Cultural competency has been studied across disciplines and is often conceptualized as the combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of an individual or group (Table 20.1). The US Department of Health and Human Services (2002) defines cultural competency as “behaviors, attitudes, and policies that can come together on a continuum: that will ensure that a system agency, program or individual can function effectively and appropriately in diverse cultural interactions and settings.” Here, culture refers to the shared knowledge, traditions, and mental models created by groups of people that help them interpret and respond to the social world around them (Knox and Haupt, 2020). By extension, cultural competency refers to the ability to bridge between cultures. In organizations, cultural competency has largely been defined and operationalized as the KSAs necessary to function productively in cross-cultural settings (Rice, 2007). Betancourt and colleagues (2003) similarly define culturally competent public administration as a public service delivery system that “acknowledges and incorporates – at all levels – the importance of culture, assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance toward the dynamics that result from cultural differences, expansion of cultural knowledge, and adaptation of services to meet culturally unique needs” (quoted in Rice, 2007: 44).

CULTURAL COMPETENCY AS A MECHANISM FOR POSITIVE ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES

Cultural competency is an attribute that individuals and organizations can aim to replicate to strengthen interpersonal relationships in cross-cultural settings. Fostering positive relationships between public organizations and the communities they serve can help to deepen understanding, trust, and respect, all of which enhance governments' abilities to support the community. We conceptualize positivity in this context as a strengths-based approach to public engagement that contributes to a sense of success in improving the quality of life for residents, confidence in peers' quality of work, and ability to overcome abrupt challenges.

In the public service setting, we take cultural competency to mean the KSAs of local government employees and street-level bureaucrats to manage cultural differences effectively, whether with citizens or peers. Operationally, within an organization, cultural competency can be achieved “by integrating and transforming knowledge about individuals and groups into specific practices, standards, policies, and attitudes applied in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes” (in Rice, 2007: 42).

Table 20.1 Definitions of cultural competency

Rice (2007: 41–42)	“In cross-cultural situations, competence is the capacity to function within the context of culturally integrated patterns of human behavior defined by a group. Thus being competent in cross-cultural situations means learning new patterns of behavior and effectively applying them in appropriate settings.”
Brach and Fraserirector (2000: 183)	“Ongoing commitment or institutionalization of appropriate practices and policies for diverse populations.”
Cross et al. (1989, cited in Rice 2007: 192)	A “set of cultural behaviors and attitudes integrated into the practice methods of a system, agency, or its professionals that enables them to work effectively in cross cultural situations” also viewed as a developmental process.
Cox and Beale (1997: 3)	The ability to “effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities posed by the presence of socio-cultural diversity in a defined social system.”
Hurdle (2002: 183)	The “development of adequate professional skills to provide services to ethnic, racial, and cultural groups.”
Bush (2000: 177)	A “respect for, and understanding of, diverse ethnic and cultural groups, their histories, traditions, beliefs, and value systems.”
Knox and Haupt (2020: 12)	“[T]he process of developing knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) with a focus on the interaction of cultural backgrounds and the reflective outputs form an individual and/or organization to better serve their diverse demographic.”

Source: Author.

We argue cultural competency is key to developing and maintaining high-quality connections (HQCs) with both peers and the public. In fostering positive public administration, therefore, local agencies need to equip employees with the tools and resources to effectively engage with citizens and collaborate with peers despite cultural differences. Empirical evidence suggests that HQCs at work improve individual functioning, enhance coordination, help proactively detect mistakes, and increase levels of psychological safety and trust in groups (Stephens et al., 2011). Carmeli and colleagues (2009, 2015) have shown that HQCs and respectful engagement predict learning behaviors in organizations. More specifically, when trust and psychological safety are established between people on the job, employees are more likely to seek out new information, test assumptions, and improve work processes through collective reflection and action (Carmeli et al., 2009). HQCs allow for members to exchange more variable information to assist in conceptualizing and creatively solving problems in new ways that improve work processes, improve work outcomes, and increase capacity. HQCs also provide participants with experiences of feeling valued and connected in ways that build resilience and encourage experimentation (Stephens et al., 2011; Carmeli et al., 2009, 2015).

Benefits for the Community

When employees in an organization have the KSAs to approach their work with cultural competency, they are better equipped to build on the strengths and perspectives of diverse cultures to establish policies, programs, and processes that are more appropriate and valuable to the public (Rice, 2007). Previous work in public administration identifies multiple reasons why cultural competency is important in creating real value for the public including how cultural competency (1) increases public agencies' understanding of the cultural context of public service encounters, (2) enhances public services for minoritized populations in culturally appropriate ways, (3) improves public agencies' legitimacy and relevancy among populations in most need of public services, and (4) develops public service employees' interpersonal awareness and skills when engaging with residents and peers (Ding et al., 2021; Nabatchi, 2012, 2014; Rice, 2015). In essence, cultural competency equips public employees to build HQCs, and by establishing safety and trust in those relationships, public servants gain knowledge and awareness of the needs and wants of a broader and more diverse community.

Increased representation and cultural competency are argued to help employees identify and meet nuanced public values (Nabatchi, 2012, 2018; Nabatchi and Amsler, 2014). Research has provided evidence that race/ethnicity matters for the efficacy and legitimacy of public services (Riccucci and Van Ryzin, 2017). Theories of representative bureaucracy suggest a diverse public work-

force representative of the public being served is key to effective and inclusive public engagement, and we argue cultural competency is the missing link between passive and active representation (Bailey, 2010; Fay et al., 2020).

Passive representation denotes the presence of different social groups (e.g., race/ethnicity) within a public organization proportional to the public it represents (Van Ryzin, 2021). Simply having more diverse employees does not necessarily guarantee those employees will be able to effectively advocate for the social groups they represent, especially if functioning within an organization that lacks appropriate channels and tools for employees to effectively serve their communities (e.g., inclusive decision making processes). Their presence alone may simply be *symbolic representation*, which can evoke positive feelings from the public and shape their perception of public organizations, but passive and symbolic representation alone are unlikely to yield appropriate public services in its crafting and delivery (Van Ryzin, 2021; Riccucci and Van Ryzin, 2017). Improved outcomes for a diverse community are instead achieved through active representation and administrative discretion, where bureaucrats take actions to benefit disadvantaged groups (Riccucci and Van Ryzin, 2017).

By contrast, *active representation* is when public employees work to advance the interests of those within a similar or certain social group and may employ discretion and advocacy for the client. Being a member of a social group brings some understanding of the needs of a broader community, but a single individual's lived experience alone is not enough to effectively advocate for the diverse and heterogeneous needs within those communities. Cultural competency as a set of KSAs comes in to bridge the gap between the individual employees' lived experience and their ability to relate and work through the complexities within and between social groups. The community the individual employee represents is much broader and more culturally nuanced than their own identity, and effectively engaging in active representation requires cultural competency to connect to needs of the community.

Importantly, a culturally competent organization practices inclusive decision making by creating the space for employees to advocate for the needs of the community, and processes to systematically integrate those diverse perspectives in practice. Beyond the organization, cultural competency plays an important role in increasing opportunities for co-production through better information exchange (Li et al., 2017). Representative bureaucracy is important to understand because the presence and active participation of members of different social groups can have a large effect on policy discussions, ranging from what policy is discussed, whose perspectives are incorporated, and how policy is implemented.

Benefits for the Employees

Conceptualizing diversity within organizations as a positive asset frames differences between employees as essential to establishing a sense of trust and safety among coworkers, which in turn creates the necessary conditions for organizational learning and innovation when confronted with complex problems (Ramarajan and Thomas, 2011). Increased cultural competency as a skill among employees creates a workplace environment that is positive for diversity (Nishii, 2013; Ramarajan and Thomas, 2011). When employees and their peers have the ability to navigate relationships that span across interpersonal and cultural differences, organizations can promote more integration and learning over time conducive for effective collaboration (Ramarajan and Thomas, 2011). Cultural competency establishes the necessary conditions for developing an inclusive workplace climate. Inclusive environments are characterized by a collective learning orientation and commitment to integrating diverse cultural identities for their insight and skill in a way that buffers the challenges associated with social differences (e.g., high levels of conflict and turnover) (Nishii, 2013). Instead, inclusive environments make it possible to leverage the potential benefits of multiple perspectives (Nishii, 2013; Ely and Thomas, 2001) and foster necessary social relationships and trust at work that sustains an overall happier, more satisfying, and healthier life (Waldinger and Schulz 2022).

Cultural competency has been found to be a key mechanism in fostering cross-cultural emotional intelligence, a necessary element to “find success at work and in personal relationships in an increasingly interdependent world [...] coping with diversity and functioning in new cultural settings” (Ang and Dyne, 2008: 4). As the population becomes more diverse, cross-cultural emotional intelligence is increasingly important in roles that require emotional labor when consistently interacting with the public (Levitats, 2023). Employees who are engaged in emotionally taxing interactions with residents and peers are vulnerable to burnout when not equipped with sophisticated emotion regulation habits and strategies (Le and Barboza-Wilkes, 2022; Grandey et al., 2019).

When employees have high emotional intelligence, they can select from a wider set of emotion regulation techniques to process emotions that come from difficult experiences to avoid burnout; whereas employees with limited emotional intelligence – or working in conditions that do not allow healthy emotion regulation – may resort to forms of emotion dysregulation (e.g., suppressing and inauthentically expressing emotions) found to exacerbate burnout (Grandey et al., 2013; Le and Barboza-Wilkes, 2022; Levitats, 2023). Furthermore, cross-cultural emotional intelligence positively shapes effective social performance required to sustain a healthy and engaged public workforce. Such performance includes building relationships with clients, interpersonal interactions, organizational cohesiveness and value alignment, prosocial behaviors and

attitudes, and leadership abilities (Levitats, 2023; Weng et al., 2011; Lopes et al., 2006; O'Leary et al., 2012).

In addition, cultural competency provides employees and public managers the necessary KSAs to make fair assessments of employees' work. Borrego and Johnson (2012) posit that cultural competency is a key mechanism in justly assessing the quality of work being done and providing appropriate feedback, necessary components in building reputation and credibility in the organization. Reputation and credibility are important for employees as it "determines the confidence your supervisor and others have in your work" (Borrego and Johnson 2012: 184). Cultural competency helps to facilitate better relationships with other employees, which allows greater trust in each other's work but also more comfort and safety in providing and receiving constructive feedback to meet organizational goals and to better serve the public. This trust among peers and from managers is particularly important when highlighting the need to equitably develop and promote a diverse and multicultural leadership. In preparing cohorts of leaders in an organization who are representative of the public and who have historically faced inequitable challenges in promotion (i.e., glass ceiling), fostering individual and organizational cultural competency will facilitate the development of a network of supportive and inclusive mentors, leaders, and peers. This can contribute to career success and help employees learn and advance in career pathways unknown to them before (Borrego and Johnson, 2012).

Lastly, cultural competency is key for overcoming adversity. The culturally competent organization is more flexible, adaptable, creative, and innovative, making it better at responding to unanticipated challenges (Borrego and Johnson, 2012). By promoting understanding and effective communication, culturally-competent organizations can identify better solutions to complex problems in collaboration with the community. The interconnected relationships between employees and the community can be a source of tension and conflict, and a forum for generating creative ideas by embracing and building upon differences. By establishing safety and trust, culturally competent employees can develop a network of HQCs within the organization and with the broader community, and that network of relationships can help to identify innovative and culturally appropriate solutions to complex problems.

HOW DOES CULTURAL COMPETENCY MATTER? A CASE STUDY

To our knowledge, studies that measure cultural competency and how it has impacted public service outcomes are scarce, reflective of Rice's (2007: 43–44) comment that "cultural competency in public administration/public service delivery is evolving very slowly and, therefore, the concept has yet to be clearly accepted and understood by the community of public administration/public

service delivery scholars and administrators.” Scholars, like Rice (2007, 2015), have developed performance measures for cultural competency in public organizations, but those measures are not empirically linked to service outcomes.

In an attempt to fill the gap, we present a case study to offer an initial empirical analysis on cultural competency within public administration. We focus on a local government agency operating in the County of Los Angeles, one of the most diverse regions in the United States. We examine how employees’ perceptions of cultural competency and inclusive decision making in the organization shape their view on public service outcomes, namely the agency’s success in improving residents’ quality of life, confidence in peers’ quality of work, and their ability to overcome abrupt challenges (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic) to manage cultural differences with peers and residents.

Background

In 2020, the County of Los Angeles was home to more than 10 million people, of whom approximately 48 percent identified as Hispanic or Latinx, 26 percent non-Hispanic white, 15 percent non-Hispanic Asian American, 8 percent non-Hispanic Black, 3 percent non-Hispanic Mixed/Other, 0.2 percent Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, and 0.2 percent American Indian and Alaskan Native (US Census Bureau, 2020). We analyze secondary survey data on the local agency that provides a wide range of public services (e.g., cash assistance, homelessness services, and food and nutrition programs). This agency has been recognized by the National Association of Counties for its innovative and inclusive practices to improve residents’ quality of life and its exemplary leadership in public service (Bolden, 2021). We use this case study to demonstrate how local agencies, especially those operating in increasingly diverse regions, can foster positive public outcomes by equipping their employees with the tools and resources to manage cultural differences and thereby gain the confidence to effectively engage with residents and collaborate with peers.

Although in the absence of comprehensive data on the public’s assessment of their engagement with public service employees, the data we do have is vulnerable to self-response and positivity bias, we nevertheless believe that this case study can serve as a useful empirical starting point for exploring the positive outcomes of cultural competency within public organizations. We measure positivity as participants’ confidence in their department’s success in serving residents, in peers’ quality of work, and overcoming abrupt challenges to engage with residents and peers of culturally diverse backgrounds. One of the main driving forces leading to these positive perspectives on agency accomplishments is participants’ self-efficacy in engaging with people of different cultural backgrounds and perceptions on inclusive practices in decision making. We argue cultural competence and more inclusive practices in decision making yield par-

ticularly positive outcomes when cultural differences and difficult interpersonal communication may challenge how public services are crafted and delivered.

Methods and Data

We use a series of ordered logit models to isolate the impact of perceived cultural competence on perceived organizational outcomes, including respondents' perception of departmental success in serving residents, confidence in peers' quality of work, and ability to overcome challenges in managing cultural differences. We control for relevant factors like social support,¹ self-efficacy in overall work,² years in the department, team within the organization, and socio-demographic factors (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, age, education), which have been found to have a statistical relationship to perceived organizational success (Bandura, 1977; Grandey et al., 2013; Grandey and Melloy, 2017; Nishii, 2010; Ramarajan and Thomas, 2011; Wood and Bandura, 1989). We additionally control for perceived importance of cultural competency in succeeding in one's role, perceived importance of building relationships to succeed in one's role, and perceived importance in building relationships when engaging with residents. By factoring in these variables, we are able to account for differences in relational job design and responsibilities, support of cultural competency, availability of tools and resources to effectively meet work expectations, and social differences within the organization's structure.

The data relies on self-reported survey responses from December 2020; thus, the results are based on perceptions rather than objective measures on experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, such perceptions provide important insights on how employees' confidence and self-efficacy to manage cultural differences are associated with positive attitudes and perceptions about departmental outcomes and internal processes, which in turn can shape how employees engage in their work, residents' problems, and collaborations with peers. Positive attitudes about the department, peers, and self will moderate positive outcomes, such as overall job satisfaction, self-efficacy in their work, burnout, and turnover intention (Maslach et al., 2008).

Findings

Of the approximately 3,500 participants who took the survey, more than 1,900 respondents provided complete information for the survey items included in the statistical models predicting participants' perceptions of how successful the department is in serving residents and whether they agree peers are committed to doing quality work. Nearly 1,800 participants were included in our statistical model predicting how participants perceive working remotely impacted managing cultural differences with others. Of the sample, approximately 45 percent

agreed that they feel adequately and properly trained to interact with others from different cultural backgrounds, whereas 33 percent strongly agreed, 15 percent reported neutral, 5 percent disagreed, and 2 percent strongly disagreed. Approximately 28 percent of the sample agreed that department leadership seeks input and assistance in decision making from people of different cultural and experiential backgrounds, compared to 18 percent who strongly agreed, 30 percent reported neutral, 14 percent disagreed, and 9 percent strongly disagreed.

Extrapolating the relationship of perceived cultural competency, the results from the multivariate statistical models indicate that the stronger agreement a participant has that they are adequately and properly trained to interact with others from different cultural backgrounds (trained in cultural competency) is statistically associated with stronger feelings that the department is successful in improving residents' quality of life through the department's services, stronger confidence in peers' quality of work, and reduced challenges in engaging remotely with residents and peers of different cultural backgrounds. More specifically, a one-unit increase on the agreement scale that the participant is trained on cultural competency (e.g., agree to strongly agree) is associated³ with 20.3 percent greater odds of reporting the department is successful in improving residents' quality of life through the department's services – versus the combined odds of reporting unsuccessful, somewhat unsuccessful, and neutral. Also it is associated with 29.7 percent greater odds of agreeing that peers are committed to doing quality work, and 21.6 percent lower odds of agreeing that working remotely makes it more difficult to manage cultural differences with others (Table 20.2).

We also find that stronger agreement that department leadership seeks input and assistance in decision making from people of different cultural and experiential backgrounds (inclusive decision making) is statistically associated with a greater sense of success in improving residents' lives and confidence in peers' quality of work, but higher odds of reporting challenges in managing cultural differences with others on the job. More specifically, a one-unit increase on the agreement scale that decision making is inclusive is associated with 27.4 percent greater odds of reporting the department is successful in improving residents' quality of life through the department's services, 47.3 percent greater odds of agreeing that peers are committed to doing quality work, and 1.7 percent greater odds of agreeing that working remotely makes it more difficult to manage cultural differences with others (Table 20.2).

Our findings from this case study suggest that participants (i.e., local government employees tasked with providing a diverse population with important public services) have greater perceptions of accomplishments and trust in peers' quality of work when they feel adequately equipped and trained to interact with others from different cultural backgrounds and when they perceive leadership is actively engaged in decision making inclusive of diverse backgrounds.

Supporting the arguments in previous theoretical work (e.g., Ang and Dyne, 2008; Borrego and Johnson, 2012; Ding et al., 2021; Levitats, 2023; Nabatchi, 2012, 2014; Rice, 2015), this case study shows how cultural competency within interpersonal communication and decision making is importantly intertwined with employees' abilities and perceptions of how well they and the organization are able to engage with diverse residents in addition to building trust among peers.

Interestingly, though having more confidence in being trained to engage with others from different cultural backgrounds is associated with greater self-efficacy in managing cultural differences in (remote) work, higher perceptions of inclusive decision making has a negative relationship. We suspect that abrupt transitions to working remotely may challenge inclusive decision making practices originally developed for in-person contexts. Particularly in video conferencing scenarios, the window into the home environment of employees may feel intrusive in ways that contribute to self-censoring or other behaviors that make it difficult to connect with others. Additionally, many organizations during COVID-19 transitioned to remote contexts abruptly, without much training to support how the work and typical engagements might need to change to adapt to the virtual context. This combination of abrupt changes in context, increased blurring of work-home boundaries, and lack of requisite training and support to manage the transition are all likely to be related to perceived challenges navigating cultural differences during decision making processes while in a remote setting.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

We set out to understand why some streams of government intervention and public service delivery manage to do much better than others in producing widely valued societal outcomes. Improving cultural competency among local government employees allows for more positive outcomes when engaging with residents and peers with different cultural backgrounds. Without the appropriate tools and training, local government employees may face challenges, tension, and animosity with residents and peers. Beyond cultural competency and inclusive decision making, our statistical models also indicate the importance of self-efficacy and social support in shaping positive outcomes.

Working across cultures in local government has been shown to be challenging (Barboza-Wilkes et al., 2022). Embracing cultural competency comes with many benefits (Rice, 2007), including more relevant and targeted policies and services (Geron, 2002; Boyle and Springer, 2001), more equitable distribution of resources (Knox and Haupt, 2020), more confident employees who feel better prepared to do their jobs (Suzuki et al., 2001), and higher-quality information that builds from insights into minority cultures' beliefs, habits, and value systems

Table 20.2 *Multivariate results*

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Confidence in department's success in serving residents	Confidence in peers' quality of work	Challenges in managing cultural differences remotely
Cultural competence	1.203** (0.086)	1.297*** (0.087)	0.784*** (0.053)
Inclusive decision making	1.274*** (0.075)	1.473*** (0.091)	1.157* (0.070)
Cultural competency is important to succeed in my role	1.060 (0.075)	1.042 (0.069)	1.147* (0.072)
Building relationships is important to succeed in role	1.323** (0.123)	1.172† (0.110)	0.912 (0.073)
Building relationships is important when working with residents	0.894 (0.077)	1.074 (0.092)	1.123 (0.085)
Self-efficacy factor score	1.754*** (0.141)	1.444*** (0.121)	1.078 (0.084)
Social support factor score	1.221** (0.087)	1.968*** (0.158)	1.229** (0.091)
Observations	1913	1925	1795

Notes: Coefficients are presented as odd ratios; standard errors in parentheses; Bureau not included in table; see Table 20A.1 in Appendix for variable description. A table that includes the comprehensive list of control variables in the models is available in the Appendix (see Table 20A.2).
† $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.
Source: Author.

(Rice, 2007). While prior research shows that public employees who feel their own social group is well represented in the workforce are more confident working across cultural boundaries (Barboza-Wilkes et al., 2022), we add that beyond representation alone, cultural competency and inclusive decision making processes are essential for the public workforce to reflect the voices and needs of the residents they serve. When employees feel equipped to work across cultural boundaries, they tend to have confidence in (1) their organization's ability to successfully engage and serve residents, (2) their peers' quality of work, and (3) their own ability to overcome abrupt challenges with residents and peers.

These findings imply that equipped with proper cultural competency tools, perspectives, and buy-in, public employees can create psychological safety and HQCs with residents and colleagues of different backgrounds and lived experiences. Public administration scholars and practitioners should collaborate on best practices to train and equip public sector employees with the cultural competency needed to engage and serve the increasingly diverse population. Importantly, social groups are not static. The values and needs of groups evolve over time, thus so should the way public agencies engage those groups. Cultural competency is an ongoing practice of learning and evolving to meet individuals where they are and adapt the way public employees engage with them to respectfully work through any differences toward more culturally competent crafting and delivering of services.

Cultural competency should not be an afterthought or an optional training that is done once a year. It should be intentionally and consistently designed into the onboarding and ongoing training process. The benefits of integrating cultural competency into public organizations is going to be most obvious in diverse metropolitan workforces that serve diverse populations living in close proximity. However, the rural contexts where the demographics of the workforce and the public might currently appear more homogenous might actually be where cultural competency is especially important. For example, as rural areas in the United States are losing population, they are facing threats of a shrinking workforce and tax base (Johnson, 2022). Despite this population trend, rural areas have actually experienced increased racial and ethnic diversity over the last decade (Johnson and Lichter, 2022). For rural areas and other municipalities experiencing a declining population, to mitigate the economic and social consequences of a shrinking workforce (e.g., budget deficits, aging workforce, and pressures on local businesses) localities must learn and implement strategies, including in their public service delivery, to attract, maintain, and integrate diverse populations.

While our case study is limited in its ability to speak to this rural context, we recommend future empirical work to explore the benefits to employee wellbeing and service delivery associated with the integration of cultural competency throughout public organizations. Cultural competency should be conceptualized

as a key skill within the organization that is measured and linked to organizational health and performance metrics. Our findings suggest that public administrators should integrate cultural competency into department goals, objectives, and values, providing actionable steps and accountability in inclusive decision making. Self-assessment tools for cultural competency, like those outlined by Rice (2007), are a great first step towards evaluating where cultural competency can be improved in service of meeting broader goals of empowering the workforce and serving the community. Public agencies should also develop spaces and opportunities for employees to discuss and reflect on issues they face when engaging with residents and peers, then allowing employees an avenue to co-design training and resources to overcome those challenges. The practice of skillfully broaching cultural differences with respect can thus have positive outcomes for individual employees, organizations, and the public alike.

Whether the intent is to build upon existing cultural competency strengths or address deficits in employee KSAs, we recommend conducting an organizational assessment to help determine (1) the extent to which an agency provides culturally appropriate and culturally responsive services, and (2) the skill of employees and groups to navigate cultural differences internally amongst colleagues. Any thorough assessment should involve organizational leadership and staff, and focal areas might include evaluation of mission statements, organizational culture, recruitment and hiring processes, training and development programs, and policy and procedural manuals (Rice, 2007). Each of these areas should be assessed based on how well they support multiculturalism and diversity, so that organizational efforts ultimately include and engage individuals across social identity groups. To complement self-reported assessments of cultural competency, future work should aim to gauge residents' overall experience and satisfaction with public services and employees, including whether they felt their interactions were positive despite cultural differences.

Looking forward, public administration scholars should continue to explore the important role of cultural competency in serving an increasingly diverse population. Cultural competency is a commitment to a developmental process that will inevitably evolve over time. While we have focused predominantly on race and ethnicity, equity research in public administration recognizes that cultural competency and employee outcomes extend to other markers of differences like age, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, among others (Barboza-Wilkes et al., 2022). Future work on cultural competency should use an applied intersectionality lens to examine how the KSAs may be understood and learned differently at the intersection of identities like race/ethnicity and gender. Cultural competency is a continuous practice rather than an outcome and should be evaluated across a wide range of identity group dimensions. Such analyses will provide practitioners important insight on how to best train and champion cultural competency among a diverse public sector workforce.

NOTES

1. Social support is measured as a factor (Eigenvalue = 3.05) comprised of five survey items on a 5-point (strongly disagree to strongly agree) Likert scale: “In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work,” “My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person,” “There is someone at work who encourages my development,” “At work, my opinions seem to count,” and “Someone at work has talked to me about my progress in the last six months.”
2. Self-efficacy is measured as a factor (Eigenvalue = 1.52) comprised of three survey items on a 5-point (strongly disagree to strongly agree) Likert scale: “I know what is expected of me at work,” “I have the materials and equipment to do my work right,” and “At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.”
3. Throughout, we use the term association to indicate statistically significant (linear and non-linear) relationships between two variables when statistically controlling for multiple characteristics.

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APPENDIX 20

Table 20A.1 Variable descriptions

Variable label	Variable description
Cultural competence	On a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree): "I feel adequately and properly trained to interact with others from different cultural backgrounds."
Inclusive decision making	On a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree): "Department leadership seeks input and assistance in decision making from people of different cultural and experiential backgrounds."
CC – to succeed in role	On a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree): "Cultural Competence is important for me to succeed in my role."
BR – to succeed in role	On a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree): "Building relationships is important for me to succeed in my role."
BR – working with residents	On a 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree): "Building relationships is important for me when working with residents."
Self-efficacy factor score	Self-efficacy is measured as a factor (Eigenvalue = 1.52) comprised of three survey items on a 5-point (strongly disagree to strongly agree) Likert scale: "[I know what is expected of me at work," "I have the materials and equipment to do my work right," and "At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day."
Social support factor score	Social support is measured as a factor (Eigenvalue = 3.05) comprised of five survey items on a 5-point (strongly disagree to strongly agree) Likert scale: "In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work," "My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person," "There is someone at work who encourages my development," "At work, my opinions seem to count," and "Someone at work has talked to me about my progress in the last six months."

Source: Author.

Table 20A.2 Multivariate results

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Confidence in department's success in serving residents	Confidence in peers' quality of work	Challenges in managing cultural differences remotely
Cultural competence	1.203** (0.086)	1.297*** (0.087)	0.784*** (0.053)
Inclusive decision making	1.274*** (0.075)	1.473*** (0.091)	1.157* (0.070)
CC – to succeed in role	1.060 (0.075)	1.042 (0.069)	1.147* (0.072)
BR – to succeed in role	1.323** (0.123)	1.172† (0.110)	0.912 (0.073)
BR – working with residents	0.894 (0.077)	1.074 (0.092)	1.123 (0.085)
Self-efficacy factor score	1.754*** (0.141)	1.444*** (0.121)	1.078 (0.084)
Social support factor score	1.221** (0.087)	1.968*** (0.158)	1.229** (0.091)
Gender (Compared to Man/Male)			
Woman	0.952 (0.097)	0.688*** (0.066)	0.794* (0.081)
Non-binary/Other	1.837 (1.723)	0.180* (0.154)	1.771 (1.570)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	Confidence in department's success in serving residents	Confidence in peers' quality of work	Challenges in managing cultural differences remotely
<i>Race/Ethnicity (compared to White)</i>			
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.730 (0.409)	3.295 (4.342)	0.216 [†] (0.180)
Asian	0.876 (0.141)	0.865 (0.123)	1.297 [†] (0.200)
Black	0.862 (0.161)	1.250 (0.199)	0.577 ^{**} (0.100)
Hispanic/Latine	0.920 (0.137)	0.682 ^{**} (0.092)	0.613 ^{***} (0.087)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.478 (0.230)	0.363 (0.232)	0.531 (0.333)
Mixed/Other	1.050 (0.291)	0.898 (0.191)	0.640 [†] (0.153)
<i>Generation (compared to Generation X)</i>			
Baby Boomer	1.361 [*] (0.171)	0.999 (0.109)	1.106 (0.123)
Millennials	1.177 (0.156)	0.719 [*] (0.097)	0.604 ^{***} (0.081)
Generation Z	1.196 (0.249)	1.126 (0.238)	0.704 [†] (0.131)
<i>Educational attainment (compared to bachelor's degree)</i>			

(1)	(2)	(3)
Confidence in department's success in serving residents	Confidence in peers' quality of work	Challenges in managing cultural differences remotely
HS/GED	0.871 (0.214)	1.780** (0.369)
Some college	0.886 (0.100)	1.141 (0.130)
Post-graduate degree	1.133 (0.143)	0.839 (0.104)
<i>Years in the Department (compared to less than 1 year)</i>		
1–3 years	0.766 (0.214)	0.677 (0.185)
4–10 years	0.515** (0.104)	0.440*** (0.090)
11–20 years	0.570** (0.118)	0.572** (0.120)
21–30 years	0.629* (0.137)	0.684† (0.150)
More than 30 years	0.606† (0.172)	0.781 (0.212)
Observations	1913	1795

Notes: Coefficients are presented as odd ratios; standard errors in parentheses; Bureau not included in table; see Table 20A.1 in Appendix for variable description.
† $p < .1$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.
Source: Author.

21. The party politics of policy endurance: parliamentary settlements in Norway, 1980–2021

Jostein Askim, Bjørn Mo Forum and Bent Sofus Tranøy

INTRODUCTION

Important discourses of positivity in practices of public governance tend to focus on the executive branch, i.e., the performance of public organizations (Douglas et al., 2021: 444). This chapter moves the scope of positive public administration by connecting it to legislative performance and the role of party politics. It studies parliamentary settlements, defined here as *single-issue oversized majorities formed to engineer reforms that can endure a change of government*. When successful, this legislative praxis maximizes the ability to achieve lasting compromises, and thus ostensibly secure the endurance of public interest reforms. It can therefore be considered a praxis wherein political parties engage in collective action and the production of a common good (Ostrom, 2000).

Norwegian governments have for decades used parliamentary settlements (*stortingsforlik*) to reach across-the-aisle compromises on economic issues of structural importance, contested ethical issues, and responses to societal crises (Grønlie, 2017). In enabling robust policy responses to fundamental reform challenges such as tax and pension reforms, the settlement praxis has increased predictability and stabilized the planning horizon for citizens and businesses. It has also enabled civil servants to incrementally improve public policies, instead of having to prepare to tear up the script after a change of government. In deep policy controversies (Schon and Rein, 1993), for example on religious and immigration matters, the settlement praxis of engineering political compromise has moreover served to take the sting out of potentially debilitating conflicts and facilitated a more inclusive society. In times of national crisis – the Covid-19 pandemic and in response to major security threats – parliamentary settlements have helped shore up support for government crisis man-

agement strategies and have harnessed action from the citizenry. One could argue, therefore, that parliamentary settlements have enabled successful public governance: a careful process that has produced policies that have proven to be both programmatically and politically effective (cf., De la Porte et al., 2022).

“Parliamentary settlement” is not an established scientific construct. It is an attempt to capture an informal institution in Norwegian legislative politics. That said, Norwegian political actors frequently speak of and take pride in parliamentary settlements. As one illustration, two-time Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik wrote in his autobiography:

in certain major matters of far-reaching importance for the future [...] experience has shown that it has been necessary and desirable to build broad settlements between the Labour Party, the centrist parties, and the Conservative Party for the solutions to be politically sustainable under changing governments. (Bondevik, 2006: 193–194; authors’ translation)

The chapter describes Norway’s parliamentary settlement praxis as it has evolved over more than 40 years, between 1980 and 2021. We study the content and frequency of parliamentary settlements under governments of varying colors and parliamentary strength. We also investigate how invested political parties are in parliamentary settlements, by asking if settlement parties vote unequivocally in favor of the compromise solution, or if they signal their primary policies to the electorate. The answer has implications for how effectively parliamentary settlements silence partisan debates and “depoliticize” the problems at hand.

We also study whether parliamentary settlements do in fact produce reforms that “stick” – that is, endure over time, surviving changes of government – or if the compromises are short-lived and prone to be reversed or amended into oblivion (cf., Patashnik, 2003; Luetjens, 2023). The answer has implications for whether parliamentary settlements should be considered an instrumental or a symbolic practice. We also discuss if the parliamentary settlement praxis itself is sustained or if it is buckling under the international trend of norms of compromise losing ground to short-termist, winner-take-all political expediency (Aucoin, 2012).

Before systematically studying parliamentary settlements, the chapter situates this institution in relation to existing scholarship on legislative agreements and compromises in democratic systems. Additionally, as an empirical overture, parliamentary settlements are situated in relation to voting patterns and cross-bloc alignment in Norway’s parliament. In the concluding section, the chapter assesses the balance of advantages and disadvantages of parliamentary settlements from a democratic perspective.

THINKING ABOUT PARLIAMENTARY SETTLEMENTS

Parliamentary settlements are a specific type of legislative agreement, that is, politically binding agreements to vote together on a particular bill or legislative package. Variants of legislative agreements exist in numerous contexts, for example, in the USA (Krehbiel, 1986), Denmark (Christiansen, 2008; Klemmensen, 2005), the Netherlands (Green-Pedersen, 2003) and the EU (Blauberger and Weiss, 2013).

In the parliamentary settlement variant, political parties compromise by deviating from their respective positions on a singular issue, with the governing parties deviating further than what would be necessary to achieve a simple majority. Their being limited to singular issues means that parliamentary settlements are distinct from vote-trading legislative agreements, wherein parties trade support on different issues, thus constructing a political connection between substantially unrelated proposals (Shepsle and Weingast, 1981).

Building on the definition above, the basic claim made in this chapter is that Norwegian parties compromise and make parliamentary settlements to construct cross-aisle oversized majorities to enhance the endurance of socially valuable outcomes. The four key terms here – cross-aisle oversized majorities; compromise; socially valuable outcomes; and endurance – invite us to engage with different literatures.

As a starting point, consider that legislative scholarship has established that oversized majorities and cross-partisan voting are rare; governing parties are incentivized to minimize the number of votes needed to secure the passage of legislative proposals. Reducing the number of interests that need to be accommodated gives the government greater control over policy and over the perks that can be had once in office (Riker, 1962). Furthermore, political parties usually seek to create voting coalitions with parties that have similar policy preferences (Hix and Noury, 2016: 249). Negotiating ad hoc issue-specific coalitions with the opposition has transaction costs, and it can damage the government's prospects of keeping their governing coalition together (De Swaan, 1973).

Comparative studies also show that government and opposition parties are more likely to vote together under minority cabinets and when the ideology of the cabinet is centrist (Louwerse et al., 2017; Hix and Noury, 2016). The political business cycle (Nordhaus, 1975) can also affect the frequency of cross-bloc voting (Alesina et al., 1992). Proximity to elections increases the opposition's incentive to highlight the shortfalls of the government's proposals, rather than sharing responsibility for them, especially when governments are electorally vulnerable (Schultz, 1995; Immergut and Abou-Chadi, 2014).

Parliamentary settlements are thus a relatively rare phenomenon in legislative politics, one designed not only to secure enactment but also to give the policy an optimal chance of surviving a change in government. To lengthen the odds of future policy reversals, a compromise of this sort should include the party most likely to hold the prime minister position at the next changing of the guard, typically the largest party on the opposite bloc. To effectively fortify against reversals, a cross-bloc political compromise should be explicit and publicly known to ‘lock in’ the party elites and hedge against possible cheating. Sometimes compromises like parliamentary settlements are reached in the pre-legislative phase during parliamentary committee proceedings and mentioned explicitly in committee protocols (Grønlie, 2017); other times, and in Denmark predominantly so, cross-bloc compromises are reached in informal meetings between government ministers and opposition legislators (Christiansen and Jensen, 2021).

Political parties engaging in cross-aisle compromise is not only a matter of strategic aims; institutions, values, and culture are also in play. Consociational democracy and corporatism are keywords for scholarly literatures that highlight this. Consociationalism describes political governance geared toward securing compromise and stability across ethnic and religious divides (Daalder, 1974; Lijphart, 1984); corporatism describes the regulation of class conflict (Schmitter, 1974; Katzenstein, 1985). Both literatures emphasize the prioritizing of stability over flexibility and adjustment: Consociationalism secures stability through proportional representation and rigid constitutions; corporatism through veto-conferring mechanisms. Both literatures also emphasize the role of elites, specifically elites being able to share power and compromise on what are, and how to reach, overarching societal goals.

Consider, moreover, regulation theory – a literature that focuses squarely on the attainment and endurance of socially valuable outcomes (Majone, 1997; Miller, 2000; Flinders and Buller, 2006). Its key question is how regulation can strike a balance between the public interest and the interests of the private sector in the provision of public goods (Christensen, 2010: 1). That a policy distributes benefits to some broad constituency is part of Patashnik’s (2003) definition of the public interest; other definitions typically include terms like the general interest, socially valuable outcomes, and rational execution of government duties.

Regulation theory’s concern for longevity stems from the notion that the public interest is a precarious thing. The public choice assumption is that regulatory policy will be exposed to distributive struggles where concentrated producer interests, through lobbying, trump dispersed consumer interests, resulting in “regulatory capture” (Stigler, 1971). This pessimism about what can be achieved through regulation makes “reforms that stick” an interesting concept. The “stick” literature investigates the fate of general interest reforms

in the face of evolving alliances, structures, and perceptions (Patashnik, 2003; Luetjens, 2023).

Credible commitment theory shifts the attention away from lobbying and regulatory agencies to the democratic arena and the short termism of elected officials – politicians who are willing to sacrifice good (regulatory) policy for electoral gains (Christensen, 2010). To solve the problem of short-termism, credible commitment theory proposes to either create strong decision rules or delegate decision making authority to autonomous agencies with clear mandates and professional expertise. Hence, there is an ambiguity to the way politicians are viewed. In day-to-day politics they are assumed to be short-termist, but at the same time, they are assumed to be able to tie themselves to the mast and conduct meta-policy that is aligned with the long-term public interest.

This conditional view of democratically elected agents' ability to take a long-term view dovetails with our own research interest and underlying assumption: Politicians and political parties have the ability to discriminate between, on the one hand, the mass of issues which are appropriately fought out on the minimum-winner arena following ordinary government-opposition voting dynamics, and on the other hand, the small subset of issues that deserve broad, cross-aisle compromises. The parliamentary settlement institution facilitates the latter; parliamentary settlements are, as we have already indicated, typically made over issues where predictability for business, citizens (and technocrats) is deemed to be crucial, and on issues where it is particularly important to avoid debilitating conflicts.

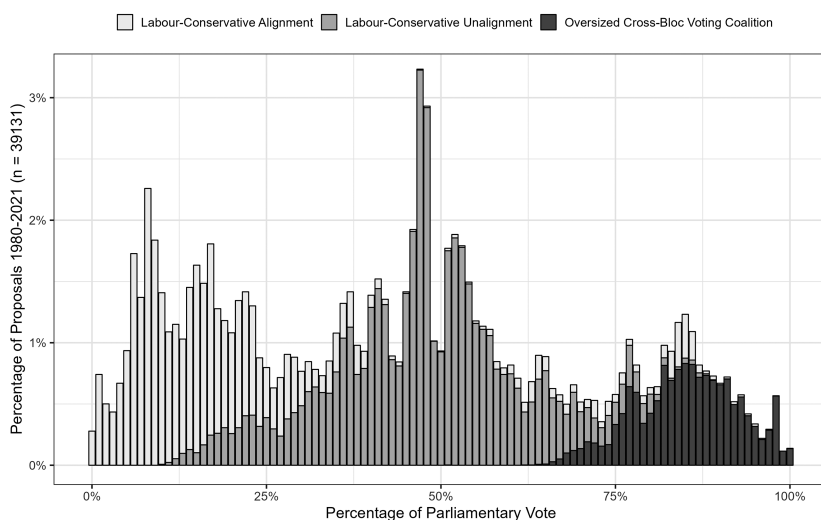
OBSERVING PARLIAMENTARY SETTLEMENTS

We start by reviewing the voting patterns in the Norwegian parliament. For context, note that Norway's political system is characterized by negative parliamentarism, no power of dissolution (fixed elections every four years), and a proportional election system that results in a comparatively high number of effective parties. Multiparty and minority cabinets are frequent, and the left–right axis dominates government formation. Party discipline is strong; the members of parliament almost invariably vote in accordance with the party line and governing parties can generally rely on their MPs supporting the government's legislative proposals (Heidar, 2005). The parliament has only one chamber. To pass, legislative proposals must receive the support of a simple majority of present MPs; constitutional amendments require a two-thirds absolute majority.

Most proposals are put before parliament by the government; for example, budget proposals and proposals for new or amended laws. Individual MPs can also make proposals; for example, moving motions criticizing the government

or asking the government to follow a particular course of action. Such proposals are often voted down.

Figure 21.1 provides an overview of the 39,131 proposals the Norwegian parliament processed by roll call votes over the 40-year period from the 1980–81 to the 2020–21 session.¹ The proposals are ordered by the percentage of the parliamentary votes received, with the ones receiving few votes to the left and those receiving many votes to the right. The distribution in s 21.1 has two peaks: one at 5–15 percent of the vote, typically proposals supported by a single party, and one at 40–60 percent, which are minimal-losing and minimal-winning voting coalitions.



Notes: Gray marks cases of Labour-Conservative disagreement (Labour’s median MP voted for and the Conservative’s median MP voted against a proposal or vice-versa). White marks cases where the two parties (i.e., their median MPs) were aligned for or against a proposal. Black marks cases of voting coalitions that included Labour, the Conservatives, and any other parties in government and that would have been passed even if the main opposition party (the Conservatives or Labour) voted against the proposal (thus “oversized”).

Source: Author.

Figure 21.1 Parliamentary proposals by the percentage of the votes received (1980–2021)

Cross-bloc Voting Coalitions

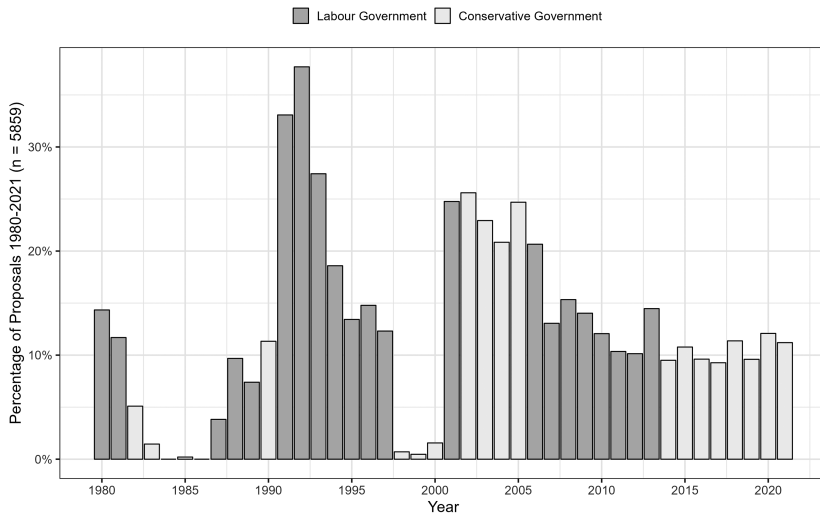
To study cross-bloc alignment in legislative voting in Norway, we investigate alignment between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party. These parties have dominated their respective blocs of the political system since the 1930s and have never been in government together; they have alternated in holding office and invariably been each other's leading opposition in the parliament. With reference to Figure 21.1, the Labour Party and the Conservative Party were aligned in 51 percent of proposals; they agreed to reject a proposal more often than they agreed to support a proposal. Nonetheless, in as many as 19 percent of the proposals that were passed by roll call vote between 1980 and 2021, the main opposition party voted with the government. Labour-Conservative alignments cluster at the tail ends of the distribution in Figure 21.1. Proposals with support just above the 50 percent threshold are mostly gray, reflecting that minimum-winning voting coalitions, unsurprisingly, usually do not contain the opposition.

Cross-bloc voting coalitions do occur, though, and they come in two versions. The least common type, making up one fifth of all cross-bloc voting coalitions ($n=1,445$), are cross-bloc *minimum-winning* voting coalitions, that is, proposals that would *not* have been passed without the votes of the main opposition party. The more common version, making up the remaining four fifths of the cases ($n=5,859$), are proposals that would have been passed also *without* the main opposition party's votes (marked black). These are cross-bloc *oversized* voting coalitions, which we will now examine more closely. Later, we use enriched data to identify the subset of cross-bloc oversized voting coalitions that are *parliamentary settlements*, that is, cases where co-voting is the result of a compromise, not just agreement from the start.

Oversized Cross-bloc Voting Coalitions

Figure 21.2 organizes the cross-bloc oversized majority votes by year and government, showing their percentage share of the number of proposals voted over by parliament. Oversized cross-bloc majority voting coalitions peaked in the early 1990s under a minority Labour government. Between 2001 and 2021, a period with coalition governments with strong parliamentary support, we see a gradual decline in the frequency of oversized cross-bloc majority voting coalitions.

The likelihood of oversized cross-bloc majority voting coalitions is affected by the government's parliamentary strength and party composition. Analysis of variance using a simple regression model (not reported) shows that cross-bloc oversized voting is 8 percent more likely ($p < 0.001$) under minority governments compared to majority governments (consistent with Louwerse et



Source: Author.

Figure 21.2 *Cross-bloc oversized voting coalitions (n=5859) as percentage of proposals voted on (n=39131) by year and government*

al., 2017; Hix and Noury, 2016) and 11 percent more likely ($p < 0.001$) under Labour-led compared to Conservative governments. This suggests that the conservatives agree more often with proposals from the social democrats than the other way round. The model only shows a slight difference of 1.5 percent in the likelihood of cross-bloc oversized voting coalitions between single-party and coalition governments ($p < 0.1$).

The policy areas where cross-bloc oversized majority voting occurs most frequently are politically and economically salient areas that are frequently on the parliament's agenda but not particularly divisive between the right and the left in Norway; for example, international affairs and defense policy. At the low end of frequency, are education policy and health policy, which are more divisive along the left-right divide.

MECHANISMS FOR PARLIAMENTARY SETTLEMENTS

Recall that parliamentary settlements are single-issue oversized majorities formed with a specific intention, namely *to engineer reforms that can endure*

a change of government. Most cross-bloc oversized majority votes do not satisfy this part of the definition of parliamentary settlements; they involve the government and the opposition voting together because they agreed from the start, not because they bargained and compromised to forestall future policy reversals. It therefore requires information beyond voting data to identify the subset of cross-bloc oversized voting coalitions that qualify as parliamentary settlements.

As our ambition is to capture an unregulated but nevertheless institutionalized practice in Norwegian legislative decision making, it is important that the political parties and MPs consider a cross-bloc voting coalition to be a parliamentary settlement. They publicize this kind of political agreement in parliamentary committee protocols, in speeches in the parliamentary debate, or through press releases or media interviews. The government and the opposition thereby signal that the issue in question is of national importance, that they have negotiated, and that a compromise has been reached that should endure even a change of government.

Following up a methodology used in a previous study (Grønlie, 2017), we surveyed administrative officers from the Norwegian parliament, including ones working for parliamentary committees, asking them to identify parliamentary settlements. In addition, we searched in online archives of parliamentary committee protocols and government white papers, memoirs from political leaders, and media archives for mentions of “settlements” (or synonyms).²

To reliably delineate the parliamentary settlement phenomenon, we cross-checked all candidate cases identified based on the qualitative data against our list of cases of oversized cross-bloc voting coalitions ($n=5,859$). To avoid incorporating cases of vote trading, we eliminated all compound proposals, like budget agreements, leaving only single-issue proposals. The result is 21 cases of parliamentary settlements between 1980 and 2021.

To summarize, our method of funneling parliamentary settlements out from other cases of compromises resulted in our identifying cases with the following characteristics: they were passed with the votes (of the median MP) from the Conservatives and Labour and any other parties that were part of the government; they would have been passed even if the main opposition party (the Conservatives or Labour)³ voted against the proposal; they were considered as parliamentary settlements by the political parties and communicated as such to the public; and they were constrained to a single issue. Table 21.1 provides an overview of the 21 instances of parliamentary settlements we ended up identifying.

Table 21.1 *Parliamentary settlements in Norway, 1980–2021*

Year	Name	Substance	Policy area (CAP)	Minority remarks by main opposition party (% of all remarks)	Minority proposals by main opposition party	Percentage of parliament that voted for the settlement proposals	PM party and Government type (Coal.=Coalition, SP=Single party, Maj.=majority, Min.=minority)	Continued or reversed by the next government
1984	Defense and security policy	Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, nuclear free zone in the Nordics, NATO deployment of medium-range ballistic missiles in Norway	Defense	1 (33%)	1	100%	Cons. (Coal., Maj.)	Continued
1984	Statoil	Revising the organization of the Norwegian state's involvement in the petroleum sector by establishing the state's Direct Financial Interest as a separate entity from the state-owned company Statoil	Energy	8 (100%)	0	100%	Cons. (Coal., Maj.)	Not mentioned
1987	Tax reform I	Incremental reduction in rent tax deduction, and lowering of the tax rate in the highest tax bracket	Macroeconomics	58 (31%)	0	100%	Labour (SP, Min.)	Primarily continued
1990	The Oil Fund	Establishing fund for state earnings from the petroleum sector, rules on fund management and spending	Macroeconomics	0	0	95%	Cons. (Coal., Min.)	Not mentioned

Year	Name	Substance	Policy area (CAP)	Minority remarks by main opposition party (% of all remarks)	Minority proposals by main opposition party	Percentage of parliament that voted for the settlement proposals	PM party and Government Type (Coal = Coalition, SP = Single party, Maj. = majority, Min. = minority)	Continued or reversed by the next government
1991	Tax reform II	Lower tax rates, removal or reduction of multiple tax deduction mechanisms, dual system for income tax (capital and employment income)	Macroeconomics	461 (45%)	4	90%	Labour (SP Min.)	Primarily continued
2001	Petroleum	Partial privatization of Statoil	Energy	0	0	75%	Labour (SP Min.)	Continued
2003	Kindergarten	Kindergarten for all children, equal treatment of public and private kindergartens, price cap on kindergarten fees	Social Welfare	2 (50%)	1	100%	Cons. (Coal., Min.)	Not mentioned
2003	Supervisory agencies	Relocation (decentralization) of eight state supervisory agencies	Government Operations	34 (46%)	0	77%	Cons. (Coal., Min.)	Primarily continued
2004	Education reform	Compromise on the use of the "new Norwegian" written standard in primary education	Education	85 (37%)	6	81%	Cons. (Coal., Min.)	Continued
2004	Predatory animals I	Established zones and stock limits for wolf, bear, lynx, and wolverine	Environment	1 (2%)	0	87%	Cons. (Coal., Min.)	Continued

Year	Name	Substance	Policy area (CAP)	Minority remarks by main opposition party (% of all remarks)	Minority proposals by main opposition party	Percentage of parliament that voted for the settlement proposals	PM party and Government Type (Coal=Coalition, SP=Single party, Maj=majority, Min=minority)	Continued or reversed by the next government
2007	Pension reform	Principles for an economically sustainable pension system, flexible pension age	Social Welfare	8 (7%)	0	77%	Labour (Coal., Maj.)	Continued
2008	Climate policy I	Pollution reduction targets and attribution of costs before 2020	Environment	4 (5%)	0	100%	Labour (Coal., Maj.)	Continued
2008	Purpose of public education	Changed the public education law to be religion neutral, while keeping Christian cultural aspects	Education	0	0	100%	Labour (Coal., Maj.)	Primarily continued
2008	Separation of Church and state	Constitutional change reorganizing the Norwegian Church as an organization outside of the Norwegian government administration	Civil Rights	14 (18%)	1	100%	Labour (Coal., Maj.)	Continued
2011	Predatory animals II	Changes to bear stock limits, clarifications of parts of the 2004 settlement, continuation	Environment	NA	0	100%	Labour (Coal., Maj.)	Continued
2012	Climate policy II	Pollution reduction targets, goals, and attribution of costs before 2020, long term targets, continuation of 2008 settlement	Environment	0	0	88%	Labour (Coal., Maj.)	Continued

Year	Name	Substance	Policy area (CAP)	Minority remarks by main opposition party (% of all remarks)	Minority proposals by main opposition party	Percentage of parliament that voted for the settlement proposals	PM party and Government Type (Coal = Coalition, SP = Single party, Maj = majority, Min = minority)	Continued or reversed by the next government
2015	Police reform	Reduction in number of police districts, increased focus on core tasks	Law and Crime	131 (64%)	12	78%	Cons. (Coal., Min.)	Primarily reversed
2016	Tax reform III	Lower wealth tax, lower minimum income and corporate tax, introduction of a financial activity tax, transparency of corporate ownership register	Macroeconomics	5 (7%)	0	98%	Cons. (Coal., Min.)	Primarily continued
2016	Integration reform	Better cooperation and clearer lines between immigration sector institutions and local actors, better communication of rights and responsibilities to migrants	Immigration	NA	0	99%	Cons. (Coal., Min.)	Not mentioned

Year	Name	Substance	Policy area (CAP)	Minority remarks by main opposition party (% of all remarks)	Minority proposals by main opposition party	Percentage of parliament that voted for the settlement proposals	PM party and Government Type (Coal.=Coalition, SP=Single party, Maj.=majority, Min.=minority)	Continued or reversed by the next government
2016	Predatory animals III	Changes to wolf zones, and wolf stock limit (lower limit and less area), continuation	Environment	0	0	93%	Cons. (Coal., Min.)	Primarily continued
2020	Petroleum tax breaks	Changes in the petroleum tax law, tax breaks for 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19 pandemic impacts on sector	Macroeconomics	1 (3%)	3	92%	Cons. (Coal., Min.)	Not mentioned

Source: Authors.

WHERE DO SETTLEMENTS ORIGINATE AND WHAT TOPICS DO THEY COVER?

In most cases, the proposals were introduced to the parliament by the government – through a white paper (n=13), a draft resolution (n=1), or a bill (n=5). These settlements were reached through deliberation in standing parliamentary committees. In two cases (predatory animals 2011; integration reform 2016), the proposals were introduced by individual MPs, with compromises having been negotiated outside the parliamentary institutions prior to the proposals' introduction in the parliament.

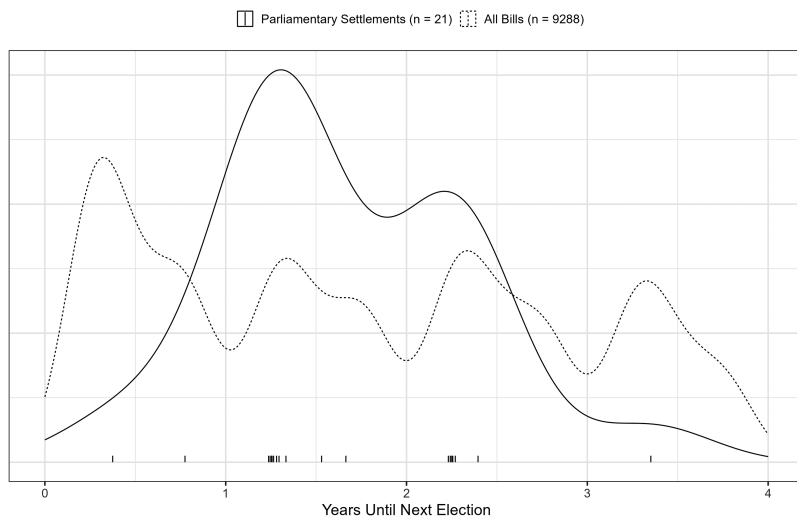
The settlements cover a range of different Comparative Agendas Project (CAP) major topics (Baumgartner et al., 2019), but many concern environmental policy (n=5) and macroeconomics (n=5). It appears that Norway's political system has developed a tradition for making settlements on particularly contested or salient issues within these broader policy areas. Examples of environmental policy are the three settlements on the management of the population of predatory animals and two on managing climate change; similarly, the macroeconomic topic encompasses a series of reforms to the tax system. Furthermore, government involvement in the petroleum sector is highly salient in Norway, hence there have been four settlements covering the energy supply and/or macroeconomic dimensions of petroleum policy.

Two of the parliamentary settlements are related to the government handling of a temporary crisis, namely the 2016 integration reform, which was related to the Syrian refugee crisis, and the 2020 petroleum tax relief, which incentivized petroleum investments during the Covid-19 pandemic.

WHEN IN POLITICAL TIME ARE SETTLEMENTS NEGOTIATED?

Office-seeking behavior increases with proximity to an election (Alesina et al., 1992). It has been observed that parties change both their fiscal (Fortunato and Loftis, 2018) and policymaking behavior (Schultz, 1995), even when the legislature has staggered membership renewal (Willumsen et al., 2018). As parliamentary settlements constitute policy seeking and not office-seeking behavior, it is no surprise that 90 percent were made with more than one year left until the next election. Figure 21.3 juxtaposes the timing of settlements and all other parliamentary bills within Norway's fixed four-year parliamentary electoral cycle. While ordinary bills peak during the last year of the electoral cycle, settlements peak earlier (mean = 1.67 years until election).

Norway is one of few parliamentary democracies where elections happen at strictly fixed intervals without the possibility of any actor to call early elec-



Notes: Vertical lines on the x-axis denote the exact timing of observed settlements; the density curve shows a kernel smoothed estimate of the proportion of observed settlements ($n=21$) and all bills ($n=9288$) within a time interval on the x-axis.

Source: Author.

Figure 21.3 *Density curve of the time left until the next election (in years) when parliamentary settlements are made (solid line) and when all bills are voted on (dotted line)*

tions (Fortunato and Loftis, 2018). Therefore, the parties know exactly when the next election will take place. This enables the parliamentary settlement, visible in Figure 21.3, as the threshold for cross-bloc cooperation is lower when elections are further away. Conversely, this threshold should be higher in parliamentary systems where opposition parties need to adapt their behavior to the possibility of early or snap elections called by the government when they have an electoral advantage.

This speaks to Louwerse and colleagues' (2017) observation that there is less government-opposition voting in countries with party-bloc alternating government change after elections. We suggest that whereas an entrenched party-bloc system makes cross-the-aisle agreements, such as parliamentary settlements, more difficult to achieve, this obstacle can be overcome when elections are further away and their timing is more certain. However, as the looming shadow of elections draw closer, the party-bloc divide becomes more

salient, polarizing decision making, thus darkening the outlook towards new parliamentary settlements.

Settlements by Type of Government

Conservative-led governments have achieved more parliamentary settlements with their main rival ($n=12$) than Labour-led governments have ($n=9$). While governing, the conservatives have averaged one settlement every 1.7 years and Labour one every 2.7 years. Recall that this differs from cross-bloc voting more generally, which is predominantly driven simply by agreement from the start; cross-bloc voting occurs about twice as often under Labour governments as under conservative governments. We cannot on current evidence explain this discrepancy. It is possible that the conservatives are more willing and able than Labour to negotiate cross-bloc compromises.

The two most extreme parties along the left–right axis, the Socialist Left Party and the Progress Party, have each participated in fewer than half of the settlements. Both participate most frequently when the government is politically “close,” but the Socialists have participated in settlements under a conservative government (e.g., the kindergarten settlement), just as the Progressives have participated in settlements under a Labour government (e.g., the separation of Church and state settlement).

Majority governments have achieved more settlements while governing (one every 1.4 years) than minority governments have (one every 2.3 years). The transaction costs of negotiating settlements are likely highest for minority governments, which will have to reach compromises with more opposition parties than a majority government to achieve a settlement.

HOW COMMITTED ARE THE POLITICAL PARTIES?

As discussed in the next main section, the ultimate test of how invested the main opposition party is in a parliamentary settlement, is whether it continues or reverses the policy after a change of government. However, a party can also signal its level of dedication in the legislative stage: Do settlement parties vote unequivocally in favor of the settlement, or do they vote “disloyally” first, to signal their primary policies to the electorate, and only subsidiarily for the compromise solution? Strictly joint proposals by all settlement parties are most common, occurring in two thirds of the 21 settlements. In the remaining third of the cases, the main opposition party only voted for the settlement proposal after having signaled a deviating primary policy by having minority propositions put forward and then rejected by vote. Labour did this five times and the Conservatives twice while in opposition.

Settlement partners can also signal reluctance about the settlement solution more subtly, by writing minority remarks in the protocols from the parliamentary committees where settlements are negotiated. This is a common practice; it is something opposition parties did on three fourths of the 21 settlements. The outlier observations are the 1991 tax reform, where the Conservative Party made 461 minority remarks and the 2015 police reform, where the Labour Party made 131 remarks in the committee. Only in about one quarter of the settlements that passed through a committee did the main opposition party refrain from making minority remarks, thus signaling unconditional dedication to the parliamentary settlement. Overall, the Labour Party has produced a larger portion of the opposition's minority remarks to settlements (mean = 31 percent) than the Conservative Party (mean = 13 percent). Moreover, when in opposition the Labour Party only refrained from making minority remarks in two out of eleven (the oil fund and predatory animals III) committee-processed settlements (18 percent), while the Conservative Party had no remarks outside those of the majority in three out of eight (petroleum, purpose of education, climate policy II) committee-processed settlements when they were in opposition (37.5 percent).

ARE SETTLEMENTS ON THE RISE OR IN DECLINE?

That the total number of settlements between 1980 and 2021 is 21 means that, on average, they have occurred about once every two years. Yet, more settlements have occurred in the second half of the observation period, that is, between 2000 and 2021, than between 1980 and 1999 (75 percent and 25 percent, respectively). That pattern belies the oft-voiced impression that partisan polarization has increased during this period. Upon closer inspection and with provisos due to the small number of observations, one can argue that the settlement institution has in fact been in decline from about the time of the 2015 police reform (which was later primarily reversed). The settlements that have been reached since then have in a sense been low-hanging fruit; they have concerned government responses to temporary crises and the continuation of a settlement on predatory animals policy that had originally been negotiated by earlier governments. An aborted attempt in 2021 to negotiate a third instalment of the series of climate policy settlements that was deemed a “political bellyflop” by the leader of the Green Party supports this interpretation (Fjeld et al., 2021).

We cannot on this basis say with certainty that the parliamentary settlement practice is in decline. If it is, though, it would not be entirely surprising. An established and broadly valued informal consensus institution such as parliamentary settlements might well be a promising enabler of successful public policy. Still, its sustainability might be counteracted by meso conditions like

a new political culture and micro conditions like new political parties and leaders (Douglas et al., 2021: 443). Across democratic systems, the imperatives associated with norms and traditions of compromise appear to be losing ground to the imperatives associated with a volatile electorate and a polarized party-political culture, wherein short-term electoral wins and gains are valued higher than successful public policy (Aucoin, 2012).

PARLIAMENTARY SETTLEMENTS AND POLICY ENDURANCE

As noted earlier, parliamentary settlements are reforms engineered to endure beyond changes of government. That is, their relative endurance is a pivotal success measure above and beyond their immediate programmatic and political impacts (cf., DelaPorte et al., 2022). So, do parliamentary settlements in fact produce policies and reforms that “stick” or are the compromises short-lived, reversed after a change of government? Investigating policy reversals is complicated, with subjectivity involved in deciding on the time frame, the level of change that amounts to a reversal, and the choice of data sources. For the purposes of this chapter, we analyzed the contents of government platforms and prime ministers’ inaugural addresses in parliament; if either state support for a settlement passed under the previous government, we consider it “continued” and in the opposite case, we consider it “reversed.” If the statements are ambiguous, we consider the settlements “primarily continued” or “primarily reversed,” depending on the exact wording, consulting with academic and field experts when necessary.

There were five cases where a settlement was not mentioned in either government platforms or the prime ministers’ inaugural addresses. Our interpretation is that these have also been continued. Otherwise, the government, which is after all led by a party that recently voted for the settlement, would have seen reason to say otherwise.

Using this approach, we judged nine of the 21 settlements to have been continued by the subsequent government, six primarily continued, one primarily reversed, and none entirely reversed. The overall picture is thus that settlements “stick” in the sense that they at least make it over the first critical hurdle, which is a change of government.

The only case of a settlement being “primarily reversed” was the 2015 police reform. This reform was deeply contested at the time of legislation as the minority Conservative government only managed to secure the support of the Labour Party in addition to its usual centrist collaboration partners. Despite eventually voting for the proposal, Labour, as the major opposition party, signaled reluctance about the reform by making numerous critical remarks in

the committee proceedings and by putting alternative policies to vote in the parliament.

Generally, what happens at the legislative stage appears to be a strong predictor of the endurance of a policy decided through a parliamentary settlement. In only three of the 20 enduring settlements, did the main opposition party put an alternative proposal to the vote; 14 had strictly joint proposals by all settlement partners. In the outlier case of the reversal of the 2015 police reform settlement, which the Centre Party voted against, the reversal was made by a minority Labour/Centre Party government that came to power in 2021. The Centre Party had voted against the settlement in 2015, as had the government's collaboration partner, the Socialist Party. This accentuates that: whereas parliamentary settlements are positive institutions that create robust, government turnover enduring policy, they are only as sticky as their negotiated legislative foundations.

CONCLUSION: WHAT TO MAKE OF PARLIAMENTARY SETTLEMENTS?

Our analysis identified 21 settlements over four decades. That the overwhelming majority of these settlements have “stuck” over time is notable because the issues in question were highly contested public interest reforms. Pension and tax reforms, for example, have been the subject of several parliamentary settlements despite their being inherently disputed along the left-right axis. They are also topics where all parts of the political landscape have emphasized the need for predictability for citizens and businesses and the fiscal position of the state. The 1987 and 1991 tax reform settlements are cases in point. The initial settlement cut through the Gordian knot of reducing tax breaks on interest payments which leading politicians had sought to reduce since the late 1970s (Tranøy, 2000). By 1991, the main principles of broadening the tax base and reducing rates were established, becoming mainstays of Norway's tax system ever since.

Other parliamentary settlements relate to the governance challenges presented by the need to secure the state's claims to revenues from the production of oil and gas and to handle the resulting windfall profits. Institutionalizing Statoil and “The State's Direct Financial Interest” were major reforms negotiated through settlements, as was setting up the widely lauded oil fund institution as an account in the Central Bank in 1990 to avoid overheating Norway's economy (Øvald and Tranøy, 2022).

Examples of settlements over contested ethical issues are the separation of Church and state and the reform that secularized the object clause of primary education, both from 2008. The 2003 kindergarten reform secured full kindergarten coverage in response to long-standing demands from feminists

and other equal rights advocates. It was also of great economic importance seeing as it facilitated Norway achieving one of the highest rates of female labor force participation in the Western world (World Bank, 2023). Finally, settlements concerning security policy and pandemic management bookend the 1980–2021 chronology.

Our contention is that the parliamentary settlement institution has been crucial for producing widely valued, but not uncontested, societal outcomes in Norway. But how can we more generally assess the legitimacy of the institution of settlements? One argument is that they increase democratic legitimacy by including the opposition also when not necessary on policy with wide economic and/or value implications for all citizens. Thus, it can be seen as a way of limiting the democratic dilemma of the tyranny of the majority. The settlement praxis can also be a way of securing support and trust for state institutions that involve increased government involvement and intrusion in the life of the citizens (i.e., tax, pension, and public education reforms). These are issue areas that impact the life conditions of all current and future citizens, thus requiring increased democratic legitimacy. In parliamentary settlements this is secured by including opposition parties in the political process when producing wide-ranging policy reforms on issues such as tax, pensions, and education. Arguably this produces societal outcomes that may not be seen as the ideal solution for a slim majority of elected representatives, but rather as an acceptable solution for a larger majority. Hence, the settlement institution, aided by the temporal security of fixed election timing and the resort to oversized majorities that this implies, enables the political system to overcome cycles of competitive politics for short-term decision making and resource allocation.

A possible counter argument concerns the transparency of democratic politics. Some might consider parliamentary settlements a version of backroom politics, that is, elites making secret deals, thus muddying the water for outside observers, and making it difficult for voters to hold politicians accountable by effectively attributing blame and credit for successful and failed policies. In our view, though, the connection to backroom politics is misguided. Practically all parliamentary settlements were negotiated in parliamentary committees, and all were voted over in the plenary. Public protocols thus provide outsider observers and the posterity with accounts of the arguments representatives and parties put forward, including minority remarks and alternative proposals. Regarding accountability the picture is less clear. The more all-compassing the political compromise, the harder it is for citizens to use their votes to reward outcomes they are happy with and punish outcomes they are unhappy with. This concern over accountability is not, however, sufficiently weighty to change our overall conclusion that the institution of parliamentary settlements do indeed contribute to the Norwegian polity's ability to secure "procedurally

and distributively fair processes of tackling societal conflicts; and robust and resilient ways of coping with threats and risks” (Douglas et al., 2021: 442).

NOTES

1. The number of proposals processed by roll call votes per year varies between 258 and 2,786, with numbers increasing over time due to procedural changes in the late 1980s regarding voting over proposals from MPs and in 1997 regarding voting over budget proposals (Sikt, 2022). Proposals do not equal bills; several proposals are often voted over for singular bills, with initial proposals being rejected before one or multiple proposals receive support from a majority. The 39,131 proposals in Figure 21.1 are nested within 9,288 bills. Note that in displaying only roll call votes, Figure 21.1 hides the fact that unanimous agreement is the single most common outcome, occurring in about one in four decisions in the legislature. From 2010 to 2021 the parliament passed 5,807 of 24,255 proposals (24 percent) by unanimity. Instead of being put to a vote in the plenary, unanimity proposals are either settled in the committees and simply tabled in the plenary chamber, or they are trivial proposals that must be decided in the plenary for procedural reasons.
2. The term settlement (“forlik”) was first used in the 2001 agreement on state involvement in the petroleum sector and state ownership in Statoil. Since then, “settlement” is the term politicians use to describe most cases that satisfy our criteria for parliamentary settlements. In the 1980s and 1990s, politicians referred to cases that fit our criteria as “broad agreements” or “compromise agreements.”
3. For the 1997–2000 Bondevik I government where both the Conservative Party and the Labour Party were out of government, we consider whether the vote would have passed without either one of these parties voting for the proposals.

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22. From brown to green: repurposing public procurement

Ana-Maria Dimand and Milena I. Neshkova

INTRODUCTION

In many democracies, the efforts to strengthen transparency, accountability, and corruption control have shifted public attention to bureaucratic shortcomings and produced, as a side effect, more negativity bias toward the government. Focusing on government failures (Light, 2014), disasters (Gray and 't Hart, 1998), and fiascos (Bovens and 't Hart, 1996) has fed the narrative of government inefficiency and inability to meet public expectations (Douglas et al., 2021). Public procurement has been the poster child of negativity bias. The media and pundits have been quick to emphasize its failures and missteps. Still, its potential for creating public value has largely been overlooked despite growing recognition of its strategic importance among researchers and policy-makers (Flynn and Harris, 2022).

This chapter makes a case for environment-friendly purchasing as an example of governments doing the right thing and producing valued societal outcomes. The use of environmental criteria for goods and services governments buy is referred to as green public procurement (GPP). Here, we focus on the GPP use by local governments in the United States. Buying green exemplifies an 'in-action' positive public administration (PPA) because sustainable products require less energy and generate fewer emissions. Given the sheer number of U.S. local governments, if more of them prioritize buying environmentally friendly products, the cumulative effect can be a substantial reduction in the carbon footprint on a global scale.

Currently, no legislative or regulatory requirement exists for municipalities to buy green, nor can they capture direct benefits from it because it is a positive externality spreading beyond the city or county limits. Green goods and services presently come at a price premium compared to traditional brown ones produced with no regard for the environment, and changing government operation routines comes with high transaction costs. Given the hassle of

engaging with GPP, why do local governments do it? This chapter explores what motivates public officials to buy green.

Governments procure virtually everything – from stationery and police cars to massive infrastructure projects. Public procurement is an essential economic function of governments to sustain their day-to-day operations and provide services to the public. As a term, it refers to direct purchases but also to commissioning public works and outsourcing the production and provision of public goods and services. Contracting is the core of public procurement – rather than producing everything in-house, governments turn to third parties (businesses, nonprofits, or other public organizations) to supply the goods and services on their behalf.

Given the ubiquitous nature of public services, the government is the largest buyer on the market (Hafsa et al., 2022). They can leverage this massive purchasing power to affect both demand and supply. In this sense, what the government buys or does not buy can be a powerful policy instrument. By incorporating environmental criteria into their purchasing decisions, such as energy efficiency, low carbon footprint, recycled content, water conservation, sustainable sourcing, and renewable resources, governments can create market demand for sustainable products, encourage innovation and green entrepreneurship, and promote a circular economy (Dimand, 2022). This, in turn, can lead to broader benefits, such as reduced greenhouse gas emissions, improved air and water quality, enhanced biodiversity, and better working conditions (Adam et al., 2021). GPP can also help governments comply with international and national environmental regulations and commitments, such as the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals, and demonstrate their commitment to sustainability.

In line with the broader PPA agenda outlined in this book, our chapter conceptualizes positivity as the adoption and implementation of an approach to buying goods and services that moves away from efficiency as a central goal and seeks to advance social and environmental sustainability. GPP is a policy that creates public value by safeguarding the environment and promoting intergenerational equity (Dimand and Neshkova, 2023). When governments buy green, they facilitate the intertemporal allocation of shared resources, such as clean air and clean water, which might otherwise be overconsumed or depleted. In this sense, GPP generates long-term advantages, as it reduces the negative externalities from brown production. Still, in the short run, public organizations can reap important signaling benefits from taking the lead in green purchasing and setting an example for businesses and individuals.

The rest of the chapter proceeds as follows. Next, we discuss the transition from brown to green public procurement and how environment-friendly purchasing creates public value. We then explore under what circumstances local governments are more likely to buy green by drawing on data from a national

survey and semi-structured interviews with government officials involved in procurement. We conclude by emphasizing the future orientation of GPP policies and how they advance the PPA agenda.

SHIFTING PRIORITIES OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Relying on private or nonprofit providers to produce and deliver public goods and services on behalf of the government has been premised on the assumption that they can do that more efficiently than the government. Yet, outsourcing goods and services does not automatically generate greater public value than producing them in-house. While governments outsourced large public works for centuries (Patrucco et al., 2023), the practice has become the norm under the New Public Management (NPM) movement in the 1980s. Some local governments, like Weston, Florida, have contracted virtually all their services and kept just a few employees on payroll to manage the contracts (Praeger, 2008). The phenomenon has been termed “hybrid government,” as the delivery of public goods and services involves multiple parties working across the sector lines (Christensen and Lægreid, 2011).

The call of NPM proponents to run the government like a business has spurred the creation of multiple quasi-markets for public goods and services as an alternative to inefficient bureaucratic supply. Yet, the pursuit of efficiency has proven challenging. Markets for public goods and services have remained incomplete, plagued with limited competition, imperfect information, and preference substitution between the government’s intentions as a provider and consumers’ choices on how to use the goods and services (Brunjes, 2022, Lowery, 1998). School vouchers in the U.S.A. provide an example of the latter by showing how government preference for quality education gets substituted by parents’ preference for religious and racial segregation (Smith and Meier, 1995). Despite its widespread use, the jury is still out on whether outsourcing the production and delivery of public goods and services to third parties generates cost savings for the government (Alford and O’Flynn, 2012; Petersen et al., 2018). Here, we do not seek to reopen the debate on the advantages and disadvantages of outsourcing. Instead, we acknowledge it as a present practice and discuss how it can be leveraged to create public value.

Viewed in the past as a simply transactional process, public procurement has now been considered a policy tool for pursuing broader sustainability goals (Dimand and Neshkova, 2023; Trammell et al., 2020). Procurement officials are seen as strategic players who provide added value to the organization (Pitzer and Thai, 2009). While efficiency remains an important goal of the public sector, there is a clear shift toward value-loaded purchasing and away from the traditional procurement practice of seeking the lowest-cost bidder. In the case of GPP, this value is realized through buying public goods and

services with the smallest possible environmental impact throughout a product life cycle (Bouwer et al., 2005).

Buying green has been gaining traction worldwide. In 2014, the European Union (EU) instituted a procurement reform that emphasized sustainable growth and encouraged its member states to take environmental considerations into account when procuring goods and services (Pouikli, 2021). Japan, Australia, Italy, Mexico, South Korea, and Spain have also implemented GPP initiatives (Sustainability-Innovation, Arizona State University, n.d.). Moreover, GPP aligns with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 12 (out of 17) calls for "sustainable consumption and production patterns." Green procurement is reflected under target 12.7, which seeks to "promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities." Since 2005, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has advanced sustainable public procurement (UNEP, n.d.). These global efforts reflect a growing recognition of the role of public procurement in addressing environmental challenges.

In the U.S.A., federal agencies are required to use environmentally sustainable and socially responsible procurement practices (acquisitions.gov, 2023), but not the lower levels of government. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recently developed comprehensive procurement guidelines that set minimum recycled content requirements for specific products and encouraged departments to consider products that meet these requirements (EPA, 2022). While GPP policies are only mandatory for the federal government, local governments can follow suit. Several states, including California (Brown, 2012) and New York (Office of General Services, n.d.), have passed laws or issued executive orders promoting green purchasing for their local governments.

GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AS A VALUE-BASED POLICY

If local governments act as rational, self-interested, efficiency-oriented agents, they might not engage in GPP for several reasons. First, the government cannot internalize all the benefits of buying green but incurs all the costs. This is because the value produced by the positive externalities from environmental protection and energy efficiency cannot be directly captured by one government, as they benefit everyone. Second, green products are typically more expensive than brown products, so the government needs to allocate more resources to purchase environmentally friendly products. Third, some benefits of buying green will occur in the future and are beyond the horizon of those currently in power. Thus, if the government is primarily motivated by efficiency objectives and running like a business, as encouraged under the NPM doctrine, it should not invest in GPP. The same applies to local decision-makers

focused on solving problems that would bring them immediate returns at the ballot box – they would rather pass the buck on dealing with environmental decay to future governments. Moreover, politicians are well aware that their stances on environmental issues rarely decide electoral outcomes in the U.S.A. (Ringquist et al., 2013).

While these are compelling reasons, they should not be impediments to pursuing GPP. Here is why. First, although a local government cannot entirely capture the benefits of buying green, as they spread beyond the locality and its residents, governments have always subsidized positive externalities because of their potential to improve overall social welfare (Weimer and Vining, 2017). Classic examples include vaccinations and education. In the area of environmental protection, the federal government has provided various incentive mechanisms, such as tax credits, grants, and loan programs, to support renewable energy projects and induce more sustainable behaviors at lower government levels. The Renewable Electricity Production Tax Credit and Residential Energy Credit are some examples. Most states also offer financial incentives to promote renewable energy production and adoption (EIA, 2022).

Second, although green products and services come at a price premium in the short run, they are less costly in the long run (Klinger and Schooner, 2023). Brown products are still cheaper in the marketplace because their price does not account for the cost of pollution, which results in their current under-valuation. GPP uses a life-cycle cost method to assess the value of products the government purchases, which accounts for energy use, maintenance, and disposal costs. In other words, the pricing mechanism used in green procurement internalizes the costs of negative externalities, such as pollution. As such, it reflects a more accurate and fair valuation of government acquisitions, as buying brown and gray products, in essence, just passes on these costs to future generations. In contrast to traditional procurement, which prioritizes cost efficiency and short-term savings, GPP accounts for the long-term impact of procurement decisions on the environment by paying the life-cycle costs of products.

Third, markets are often myopic, as consumers tend to prioritize current consumption over future consumption. Without government intervention and policies in place, current generations might overuse free goods and eventually deplete them (Solow, 1974; Westin, 1992). In the case of the environment, this means excessive pollution, biodiversity loss, and land clearing, to name a few. To sum up, GPP addresses the current market failure resulting from the years of ecological neglect and improves intergenerational fairness by preserving open access resources for future generations and alleviating future governments from dealing with even more extensive negative externalities.

While some governments pursue GPP out of a genuine commitment to environmental sustainability, others may seek to score quick political points.

A growing concern is that public agencies might engage in green initiatives, but only superficially, to gain political recognition without addressing substantive issues, a practice scholars call greenwashing. Greenwashing occurs when an organization claims environment-friendly activities but does little or nothing in practice (Mendez and Atkinson, 2021). In other words, the agencies adopt the buzzwords of the day while keeping poor environmental performance in reality. Such behaviors can damage an organization's reputation in the long run (De Jong et al., 2020), as the public will eventually discover and disapprove of greenwashing (Berrone et al., 2017).

PRIOR RESEARCH ON ENVIRONMENT-FRIENDLY PURCHASING

Academic interest in green purchasing has burgeoned recently (Behravesch et al., 2022; Cheng et al., 2018; Dimand, 2022; Dimand and Cheng, 2022; Rodriguez-Plesa et al., 2022). Scholars have identified best practices, including setting clear environmental criteria, engaging suppliers early in the process, and providing training and support to procurement staff (Cheng et al., 2018). Prior research has also addressed the barriers to GPP, such as financial issues and lack of awareness or political commitment (Brammer and Walker, 2011; Dimand, 2022; Preuss, 2007; Walker and Brammer, 2009). Besides generating long-term environmental benefits, GPP has been found to produce also immediate ones by stimulating firm innovation (Testa et al., 2016). When small and medium-sized businesses win government contracts with environmental criteria, this increases the likelihood of launching environmentally friendly products by an average of 20 percent (Krieger and Zipperer, 2022).

Yet, skepticism is also present. For instance, Lundberg and colleagues (2016) question the effectiveness of sustainable purchasing by arguing that the overall impact depends on the price sensitivity of consumers in both green and traditional markets. While these scholars perceive assessing the GPP impact on the environment as an empirical challenge, others have established a clear positive effect. Total CO₂ emissions dropped sharply in the Netherlands after introducing a new GPP tool – the CO₂ Performance Ladder (Rietbergen and Blok, 2013). The Ladder is a certification scheme for energy and CO₂ management utilized by multiple Dutch public authorities. Such a certification provides a company with a competitive edge in contract bids. Rietbergen and Blok (2013) report that over 190 companies have obtained the certification, contributing to a reduction of 1.7 million tons of CO₂ emissions, equivalent to nearly one percent of the Netherlands' national greenhouse gas emissions.

While prior research has provided valuable insights into GPP adoption and implementation, as well as its benefits and challenges (Cheng et al., 2018; Dimand et al., 2023), it mainly has focused on EU countries. Yet, local gov-

ernments in the United States and what motivates them to engage in buying green have received limited attention (though see Dimand, 2022; Dimand and Cheng, 2023; Smith and Terman, 2016; Terman and Smith, 2018).

DECENTRALIZATION, DISCRETION, AND THE PRACTICE OF GREEN PROCUREMENT

As the U.S. government is highly decentralized, with various public and quasi-public agencies (including public utilities, transportation authorities, colleges, and universities), so is its procurement authority. While government purchasing must comply with various regulations because it uses taxpayer dollars, procurement offices typically possess broad discretion to establish general purchasing policies and decide how to respond to a particular need, including selecting the provider and contract type (Pitzer and Thai, 2009). For example, the authority of procurement officers includes drafting calls for tenders, evaluating formal proposals, negotiating with potential contractors, preparing final contracts, and ensuring compliance with signed agreements (Hall et al., 2016). Such vast discretion in establishing policies and choosing vendors makes procurement officials essential enablers of green purchasing. Their decisions and actions directly impact the effectiveness of GPP, as they are the ones who integrate environmental considerations into the procurement process. Therefore, their commitment to buying green can significantly influence a public organization's purchasing practice.

Environmental requirements can be incorporated into each stage of the procurement process. The process begins with an evaluation of interested firms, continues by selecting a contractor, and finishes by drafting the technical specification and signing the contractual agreement. Procurement officials can apply green criteria when evaluating possible contractors and use it as a decisive factor in awarding the contract. Specifically, they can assess the vendor's green credentials (e.g., their use of recycled materials and sustainable supply chains), require proof of technical equipment and facilities or inquire whether employees undergo environmental training. Finally, green clauses can go into the technical specification and formal contract signed by both parties. These can include eco-labels, a valuation based on life-cycle cost, a certain percentage of recycled materials, and strict usage of renewable energy (Bolton, 2008; Dimand, 2022).

WHAT MOTIVATES GOVERNMENTS TO BUY GREEN: EVIDENCE FROM THE U.S. LOCAL LEVEL

As we discussed earlier, GPP is part of a class of sustainability policies seeking to reduce environmental footprint. The public sector is the largest buyer in the

market (Hafsa et al., 2022), with federal, state, and local governments spending trillions of dollars annually on purchasing goods and services. Governments could use this purchasing power to signal a demand for green products and responsible supply chains and to create markets for them. Yet, while multiple governments have adopted the practice, many still use the traditional brown procurement.

Data and Sample Selection

To shed light on the motives to pursue GPP, we analyze data collected through a national survey on procurement practices of local governments in 2018 and semi-structured interviews with local officials from Florida conducted in 2019. The survey questionnaire was distributed by NIGP: The Institute for Public Procurement to its members nationwide.¹ After a pre-test, beginning in November 2018, the survey was sent to 1,983 local governments, 436 of which returned it, resulting in a nominal response rate of 22 percent. Besides closed-ended questions, the survey instrument included two open-ended questions about the factors that enable and hinder the pursuit of GPP. Respondents were asked to rank the factors in order of importance.

The interviews were conducted in two Florida municipalities (hereby Case Study A and Case Study B), selected based on information obtained from the survey. The Sunshine State makes an interesting case study to analyze GPP practices, as it is one of the most at-risk states in terms of the environment (Kapucu et al., 2021). Florida has been affected by a major hurricane almost every year. Rising sea levels have put a strain on local resources and infrastructure. Many local governments have turned to sustainable procurement to reduce environmental impact and build resilience against future disasters. While the state is not necessarily unique in its pursuit of GPP, its experience in launching sustainable initiatives in response to environmental challenges offers valuable insights into the processes at the local level. The interviews were performed in each location, recorded with participants' permission, and transcribed verbatim.

Case Study A features a city in South Florida with a council-manager form of government and a decentralized procurement process. The city's Procurement Division operates under the Finance Department and reports directly to the city manager. Environmental issues are handled by a Planning and Sustainability department reporting to the city manager. The city spends approximately \$7.7 million annually on procuring goods and services. Interviews were conducted with the chief financial officer, chief procurement officer, central services specialist, and a sustainability specialist.

Case Study B comes from a city in Central Florida, which follows a mayor-council form of government with a hybrid procurement process.

Specifically, the central procurement department exercises oversight functions, yet lower-level units have the authority to make procurement decisions. The city's Procurement Division is part of the Financial Services Department, led by the Chief Financial Officer, who reports directly to the mayor. There is also a sustainability office reporting to the mayor. The city spends around \$200 million annually on procurement. Interviews were conducted with the chief procurement officer, a procurement executive, a contract administrator, and a sustainability specialist.

Insights From Green Procurement Practices

We begin with the insights generated from the nationwide survey. Our data show that engagement in GPP varies greatly among U.S. local governments. Among the local units that responded about their GPP practices, 242 utilized environmental criteria to some extent in their purchasing decisions, while 62 performed traditional brown procurement and did not use any.

Interestingly, many governments reported using environmental requirements when purchasing goods and services without having a formal GPP policy passed by their legislative bodies. Of the 304 responding governments, 158 used some environment-friendly requirements despite the lack of an official policy. In these cases, the implementation of sustainable initiatives has preceded their adoption and was spearheaded by procurement officials. While the traditional policymaking process assumes that policy adoption occurs first, our data reveal more variation on the ground. This finding points to the value-based nature of GPP policies, as procurement officials might pursue them based on their own judgment of what is right to do for their communities.

The three top facilitators of GPP, as explained by participants in our national survey, are management support, external pressures, and organizational capacity. Among the 140 responses to the open-ended question about enabling factors:

- Twenty percent of respondents underscore the role of management support and how having supportive political, administrative, and procurement leadership makes all the difference in advancing GPP at the local level. The survey participants also indicate that management support has to be reflected in the organization's budget. Earmarking financial resources for GPP initiatives signals a tangible commitment toward environmental sustainability and endorses procurement officials' implementation efforts. Further, the respondents emphasized the need for managerial support to be ingrained within the organizational culture. This means fostering a culture that values and rewards environmental responsibility rather than the traditional approach of going after the lowest bidder.

- Twelve percent note the role of external pressures from various stakeholders (e.g., student-led groups, residents, vendors, advisory boards, environmental advocacy groups, and other nonprofit organizations) on local government to align their procurement practices with environmental sustainability goals. While student-led groups and residents can drive the demand for more environmentally responsible purchasing, vendors and advisory boards may provide valuable insights about the specific green standards.
- Thirteen percent indicate the importance of organizational capacity to facilitate the inclusion of environmental considerations in procurement practices at the local level. Participants list having dedicated staff, offering education and training, allocating financial resources, ensuring time for implementing innovative initiatives, access to best practices, and human resource capacity for drafting environment-friendly specifications and overseeing its implementation.

Data from the interviews further support the findings derived from the survey, as the interviewees discussed various pressures they incurred and what motivated them to innovate and pursue changes. The most common themes in the semi-structured interviews were “Having a committed leader” and “Doing what is right.”

[I]t is really driven by the mayor who is saying this is what we need to do, and this is the way the world is going. [...] I think what the city is doing is recognizing what is needed and what is necessary, so they are not waiting for an external force to say why are you not doing this. We are developing and being creative and innovative in our thinking. [...] I think we are on the forefront of doing things correctly. (Assistant Chief Procurement Officer, Case Study B)

There is a strong emphasis from the mayor. Very strong. (Chief Procurement Officer, Case Study B)

It came from the elected officials, mainly the mayor. (Chief Procurement Officer, Case Study A)

As seen in both cities, the mayors spearheaded the adoption of GPP. Even more, in Case Study A, the political leadership committed to a sustainability agenda by passing a resolution to achieve 100 percent renewable reliance by 2030. The mayor played a key role in transforming the purchase of municipal vehicles into a green procurement activity by focusing on hybrid automobiles.

Interviewees also emphasized the internal commitment, mostly the need for an organizational culture that reinforces sustainability values. Such culture is usually instilled by the city’s leadership and reflected in the procedures,

including formal strategic plans. Thus, a third central theme in the interviews was “Having a supportive organizational culture.”

I think there is a culture within the city to support the [environmental] Program. (Chief Procurement Officer, Case Study B)

In Case Study B, pressure from residents also prompted the city to consider more sustainable policies after environmental pollutants were discovered during local cleanups. The residents demanded that the city regulate the contaminants. While a local government does not have the legal authority to regulate environmental pollutants, it could transform its purchasing behavior by including environmental requirements for the goods and services supplied by third parties. That is exactly what the government in Case Study B did. Nonprofit organizations managed to influence the city’s sustainability agenda as they represent the interests of their members, who are also community residents.

We have a coalition here in our community called [...] coalition, and it’s a group not just of environmental groups but also social justice, civil rights groups, faith-based groups, interface council and others who have been organizing themselves around these goals, not just the 100 percent renewable but the foams, bag ban and a number of other things. So nonprofits have a major role that they play, they represent a number of our constituents, who are members of those organizations. We certainly don’t take it lightly, when they come and ask us to consider something and explore it further. (Sustainability Official, Case Study B)

By contrast, residents and nonprofit organizations in Case Study A did not directly influence the procurement practice because there was no direct line of communication between them. The community members spoke to the elected officials rather than those making the purchasing decisions.

Finally, our interview data shows that the federal government is a trend-setter for local governments. In Case Study B, the city considered the federal policies as an example to follow and an inspiration to adopt their own green policies:

[...] using this whole GSA (General Services Administration) website [...] to help the city to develop our internal policy. (Sustainability Official, Case Study B)

Taken together, our findings reveal that the switch from brown to green procurement requires both political will and administrative capacity. As elected officials set the policy direction and allocate funds for new practices like GPP, procurement officers must possess the technical knowledge and skills necessary to implement them. GPP guidelines are often developed by a team of experts, procurement officers, and stakeholders, but their adoption depends on elected officials. Furthermore, even after their adoption, procurement officers

may face challenges, implementing the policies if the government of the day is ideologically opposed to them (Hall et al., 2016). In this sense, political commitment is essential for GPP implementation (Walker and Brammer, 2009). In some instances, state legislation can explicitly prohibit the use of environmental and social criteria in the award of contracts and, thus, prevent state and local entities from using GPP, as Idaho recently did (Idaho Code, 2023 [67–2347]).

Both elected and administrative actors can spearhead the pursuit of buying green, albeit for different reasons (Dimand and Neshkova, 2023). Seeking to secure reelection or a new office, politicians may champion green initiatives to respond to pressing issues, such as sea level rise or environmental pollutants. For administrators, who are typically experts in their respective fields, green purchasing brings new knowledge and experience to the table. It enables them to design and implement progressive policies that are evidence-based and managerially sound. Unlike politicians, administrators do not seek reelection and quick points to win the support of voters, which allows them to think about the long-term stability and integrity of government processes and practices. In a sense, administrative actors may pursue GPP because it aligns with their professional norms, helps build their reputation, and boosts their career advancement.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The upshot of this chapter is that public procurement has been repurposed from an administrative tool to address inefficient bureaucratic supply to a value-driven policy that advances a broader agenda. GPP seeks to correct negative externalities from pollution and protects the interest of future generations, including their right to a clean environment. While local governments cannot capture direct benefits from green purchasing because it is a positive externality with a rather global reach, many public agencies pursue it as the right thing to do.

Survey and interview data suggest that elected officials often lead the adoption of GPP policies. Given the demand from their constituency, civil society organizations, and suppliers, such initiatives offer them electoral advantages. In both cities, mayors led the adoption of GPP as part of a broader sustainable agenda. Leadership support was a central theme in the survey responses and interviews. A better understanding of what drives political will at the local level could be instrumental in “packaging” environmental initiatives as opportunities for policymakers to increase their constituent support and garner positive media coverage.

We also find that many governments implement environmental requirements without having a formal GPP policy in place. This result underscores the role of administrative actors in spreading innovation through their professional

cycles. While administrators do not respond to electoral pressures, they often pursue novel and progressive practices to further their professional reputations and advance their careers. This finding emphasizes the need to promote awareness and educate procurement professionals about the future-oriented benefits of sustainable purchasing. Given that GPP is a value-based innovation, its pursuit is a conflation of normative motives (doing what is best for the environment and ensuring intergenerational equity), instrumental motives (building organizational capacity and offering better services to residents), and personal motives (growing professional expertise and reputation).

Further, the evidence shows that community groups can influence the adoption of environment-friendly purchasing when they are aware of its potential to mitigate climate change. This finding emphasizes the importance of educating citizens on how GPP improves over traditional purchasing that contributed to extensive pollution by seeking the cheapest products on the market. Interview data were consistent with the survey results about the role of external stakeholders, such as student-led groups, residents, vendors, advisory boards, environmental interest groups, nonprofit organizations, and the federal government in driving sustainable procurement practices at the local level. Understanding stakeholders' preferences is a must for both political and bureaucratic actors. For politicians, accurately gauging the demands of various stakeholders within the community means winning their support at the ballot station. From a bureaucratic standpoint, investing in relationship-building and navigating the diverse perspectives of external stakeholders enhances legitimacy when developing and implementing sustainability-oriented procurement practices.

Our findings also accentuate the role of organizational culture in the pursuit of GPP. As Behravesch and colleagues (2022) contend, leaders set the tone for organizational culture. Leadership support, whether from top executives or mid-level managers, is vital when organizations pursue long-term goals. In the case of GPP, leaders can be agents of change by creating a culture that fosters sustainability and working to institutionalize green purchasing in the everyday practice of their governments. As depicted in our Case Study A, the political leadership spearheaded a resolution to achieve 100 percent renewable reliance by 2030. The mayor's initiative to shift away from fossil-fuel vehicles and invest in hybrid cars is an example of transforming both the procurement practice and organizational culture.

We conclude by highlighting how pursuing GPP by local governments adds to the positive public administration agenda. First, being a future-oriented policy, green purchasing aligns with the principle of intergenerational equity. By promoting sustainable production of goods and services, GPP could enhance the intertemporal allocation of shared resources, such as clean air and wilderness to name a few, ensuring that those coming after us will have access to them. Second, GPP utilizes a more accurate and fair valuation of

government purchases reflecting product life-cycle costs. Currently, green products and services come at a premium compared to brown products because the latter's price does not incorporate the actual cost of pollution and other externalities (Dimand and Neshkova, 2023). Costs not absorbed by present generations will be transferred to future generations and their governments. Over time, the ecological decay caused by neglecting these costs will exacerbate existing externalities. In this sense, green products and services are more cost-effective in the long run, sparing future generations from paying debts they have not incurred.

NOTE

1. NIGP is a nonprofit organization aiming to advance the public procurement profession through education and research programs, providing professional assistance, delivering technical services, and leading advocacy initiatives. Its 2023 membership includes over 2,600 agencies and 17,300 procurement officers.

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23. All together now: sustainable solid waste management through interlocal collaboration in Mexico

Alejandra Medina and José Sánchez

INTRODUCTION

The Southeast Intermunicipal Solid Waste Management System (SIMAR, its acronym in Spanish) is an intermunicipal system among ten municipalities located on the border of Jalisco and Michoacán, two states in Mexico. In addition to the effective management of solid waste, SIMAR's mission is to promote sustainable development in the region. This chapter showcases SIMAR as an example of positive public administration (PPA). Specifically, the chapter analyzes the political and institutional challenges that collaborative regimes like SIMAR face and demonstrates how a broad understanding of sustainability can lead to a successful cross-boundary collaboration.

To identify the factors that led to and sustained successful collaboration in SIMAR, we drew on archival data and semi-structured interviews with members and collaborators of SIMAR. The use of archival and primary data allowed us to examine members' perceptions about SIMAR's success. We find several aspects of positivity from a PPA perspective, including (1) how municipalities overcame institutional design challenges that hinder cross-boundary collaboration, (2) a sustained collaborative effort to provide waste management services that comply with environmental policies, and (3) a shared definition of the system's sustainability, based on the installed capacity and the population served. In the remainder of this chapter, we first provide some background for the SIMAR case, including information about local governments in Mexico, as well as the creation, operation, and governance structure of SIMAR. We then draw on theory to explain the success of SIMAR. Finally, we explain how positivity is conceptualized and operationalized in this case and provide some insights that could be implemented by other public managers and practitioners.

RESEARCH CONTEXT: SIMAR AS A SUCCESSFUL EXAMPLE OF INTERMUNICIPAL COLLABORATION

In this section, we describe the institutional and political design of local governments in Mexico. We also explain the creation of SIMAR and its day-to-day operations and governance structure.

Local Governments in Mexico

Mexico has a hierarchically structured federal system with 32 state-level governments and 2,446 municipalities. No intermediate level between state and local governments exists. The responsibilities and faculties of municipalities are established in Article 115 of the Mexican Constitution (CPEUM, 2022). One of their main responsibilities is service provision. Among the main service areas listed in the Constitution are water provision, public lighting, waste management, street and roads, public safety, and cemeteries. Local governments in Mexico rely heavily on federal- and state-level funds for the production and delivery of these services, although they confer with the federal government on the collection of sales and income taxes (Carrera, 2010) and can generate their own revenue through property taxes and service fees (CEFP, 2022).

The Mexican Constitution (CPEUM, 2022) authorizes municipalities to assume responsibility for the provision of additional services if their fiscal and administrative capacity allows them. They also can coordinate and engage in intergovernmental relations with other local governments and state governments. However, fiscal decentralization attempts have not changed municipalities' financial dependence on the state and federal levels. Moreover, virtually all local governments in Mexico hold partisan elections, hindering the likelihood of collaboration for complex local challenges.

Despite several decentralization reforms that have attempted to increase municipalities' autonomy, the Mexican federal system remains highly centralized. This is evident in the percentage of revenue sources at the local level. On average, almost 80 percent of total local revenue comes from federal- and state-level transfers. However, in some municipalities, the percentage of these transfers is higher than 90 percent (CEFP, 2022). The high reliance on federal transfers has disincentivized local governments to seek their own revenue and decreased the quality of public services (Cabrero, 2010).

Mexican municipalities are governed by a mayor and a city council. Municipal elections are partisan and at large, and the duration of a mayoral administration is three years. Reelection in the state of Jalisco (where SIMAR is located) was not allowed until a recent reform in 2017. Differences in political affiliation, short terms, and the high fiscal dependence on federal transfers

have been identified as factors that hinder intermunicipal collaboration in Mexico (Meza et al., 2019). Collaboration and contracting out services can result in cost-saving schemes, particularly when economies of scale can be achieved (Aldag et al., 2020). However, the institutional design of Mexican local governments – characterized by a high fiscal dependence and short time horizons – discourages attempts to find more efficient arrangements through interlocal collaboration, even if the Constitution generally allows these dynamics. Despite these challenges, SIMAR is an example of collaborative success.

Creation, Operation and Structure of SIMAR

Developing countries face specific challenges in terms of integral solid waste management. Fast urbanization dynamics in these countries generally entail urban growth that lacks planning to ensure effective and efficient provision of services (Calva-Alejo and Rojas-Caldelas, 2014). A large number of informal settlements surrounding large cities are located on land whose topography makes services more expensive and difficult to provide (Martínez and Merary, 2015). In Mexico, the combination of these factors with a lack of waste management infrastructure and low professionalization at the local level results in municipalities being unable to provide waste management services effectively (Cervantes and Castellanos, 2022). Proof of these challenges materializes in the high number of illegal landfills, particularly in densely populated metropolitan regions (Martínez and Merary, 2015).

Small- and medium-sized municipalities face different challenges that lead to similar consequences. Their administrative and financial capacity generally prevents them from developing the urban infrastructure required to provide waste management services that comply with state- and federal-level regulations. Besides having a fleet of trucks and personnel to collect waste, developing landfills with long-term capacity and compliant with environmental regulations are expenses that small jurisdictions cannot afford. As a consequence, in-house production of waste management in a large number of Mexican municipalities results in low quality of garbage collection at the household level and the proliferation of illegal landfills (Cervantes and Castellanos, 2022). Single purpose intermunicipal systems are a potentially effective mechanism to comply with the regulatory framework and achieve economies of scale.

In 2008, five municipalities of the state of Jalisco created SIMAR. By 2022, SIMAR included ten local governments from the states of Jalisco and Michoacán, serving a population of 96,000 residents within an area of 3,300 km² (2,050 square miles) (SIMAR, 2021). Agriculture and cattle are the main economic sectors in the ten municipalities that form SIMAR. The municipality with the largest population in the system is Tizapán el Alto, with 22,758

Table 23.1 Member municipalities of SIMAR

Municipality, state	2020 population	Political party affiliation
Concepción de Buenos Aires, Jalisco	6,320	PES
Manzanilla de la Paz, Jalisco	4,099	Fuerza por México
Mazamitla, Jalisco	14,043	Hagamos
Quitupan, Jalisco	7,734	PAN
Santa María del Oro, Jalisco	1,815	PRI
Teocuitatlán de Corona, Jalisco	11,039	PVEM
Tizapán el Alto, Jalisco	22,758	MC
Tuxcueca, Jalisco	6,702	PVEM
Valle de Juárez, Jalisco	6,151	PAN
Marcos Castellanos, Michoacán	13,983	PAN

Source: Authors' elaboration with data from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2020).

inhabitants, while the smallest local government in terms of population is Santa María del Oro, with 1,815 inhabitants (INEGI, 2020). Considering these demographics, most of SIMAR's municipalities lack the population to achieve economies of scale when providing waste management services. Table 23.1 shows the population of the municipalities that form SIMAR, as well as the six political parties of the current mayors of the member municipalities.

In 2008, the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Environment (SEMADES) of the state of Jalisco identified several regions where intermunicipal waste management services could be provided and created a regional grant to incentivize cooperation at the local level (Venegas, 2012). The only proposal submitted to the grant was the Southeast Intermunicipal Solid Waste Management System. Eight municipalities formed the initial group that received a grant of 8.5 million pesos (approximately \$450,000) to create the system's infrastructure. SIMAR was formally created in 2009 as a new joint entity through an intergovernmental agreement by the nine municipalities in Jalisco (Concepción de Buenos Aires, Manzanilla de la Paz, Mazamitla, Quitupan, Santa María del Oro, Teocuitatlán de Corona, Tizapán el Alto, Tuxcueca, Valle de Juárez) and one municipality in Michoacán (Marcos Castellanos), turning the intermunicipal system into an interstate system (SIMAR, 2009). SIMAR was created to reduce the costs of managing an intermunicipal landfill, achieving economies of scale. It also was intended to create a shared infrastructure that complied with environmental regulations and promoted environmental sustainability.

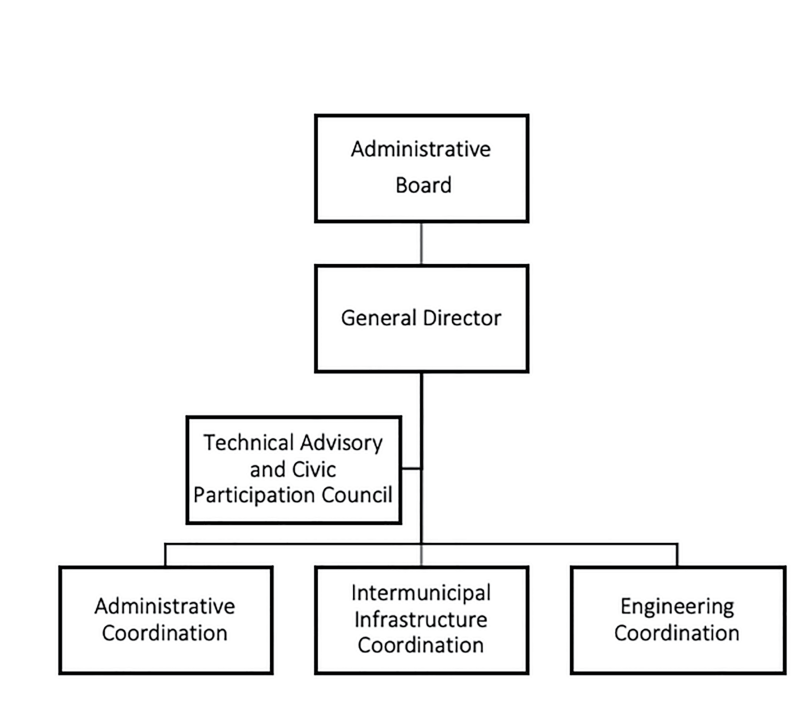
Alongside the grant that allowed the system to build an intermunicipal infrastructure, an additional grant from the Federal Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) allowed the member municipalities to conduct a regional diagnostic including yearly waste generation per municipality, collection coverage, identification of strategic locations for a transfer center, and the conditions of the municipal waste collection fleets. The member municipalities used the remaining funds from the federal grant to identify the best institutional and legal mechanisms to create the system and to create an executive plan (SIMAR, 2011; Garcia et al., 2012).

SIMAR has a fleet of vehicles that collect waste from every household. These vehicles are operated by personnel of each municipality and deposit solid waste in the transfer center. The operative and administrative expenses of the system are covered by all the member municipalities. The fee covered by every local government is calculated based on the yearly tons deposited in the transfer center and, later on, in the sanitary landfill (SIMAR, 2021).

One intermunicipal transfer center and four smaller collection centers are distributed across the municipalities in SIMAR. The solid waste collected in the smaller centers is later deposited in the transfer center, where recyclable solid waste is separated and sent to the intermunicipal plant of recyclable waste. The rest is conducted in the intermunicipal sanitary landfill, located in Mazamitla. The landfill has a total capacity of 27,378 yearly tons (SIMAR, 2021).

As a decentralized public entity, SIMAR has its own personnel, equipment, mission, vision, procedures, policies, and facilities. The funds for its operation are provided by all ten members of the system. Each municipality pays an annual fixed fee for the operation of the system and the maintenance of the infrastructure. Each local government is responsible for household solid waste collection. An appointed General Director leads SIMAR. The governance model of the system confers all operation decisions to the general director, who oversees three operative branches: administrative coordination, intermunicipal infrastructure coordination, and engineering coordination. The General Director holds a meeting with the Administrative Board every six months to evaluate the performance of the system, discuss the next steps for its development, and address the central challenges of its operation. The Administrative Board can hire, maintain, or fire the General Director based on the annual reports of activities presented to the council. The General Director, responsible for the entire operation of the system, is accountable to the Administrative Board. This board is formed by the ten mayors who are members of the system and a representative of SEMADES. Figure 23.1 shows the structure of the system.

Given the challenging context, what factors enabled and sustained collaboration across the years for solid waste management in SIMAR? To answer



Source: Author.

Figure 23.1 The governance structure of SIMAR

this question, we draw on archival data and qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with members and collaborators of SIMAR. The use of archival and primary data allowed us to examine (i) members’ perceptions about SIMAR’s success, (ii) objective and perceptual conceptualizations of positive outcomes, (iii) the importance assigned to shared values and culture within SIMAR, (iv) how members deal with the challenges that could potentially hinder cross-boundary interlocal collaboration, and (v) the main factors that lead to effective collaboration across time.

EXPLAINING THE SUCCESS OF SIMAR

To aid our analysis and help explain the mechanisms through which positive outcomes are achieved in SIMAR, we draw on two frameworks – Ostrom (2010) and Emerson and Nabatchi (2015). The variables in these two frameworks complement each other and are useful for understanding why inter-municipal regimes like SIMAR can occur despite political and institutional

barriers. Similarly, these frameworks are also helpful in identifying drivers for collaboration among actors that need to cooperate at more than one point in time (Ostrom, 1990, 1998; Emerson et al., 2012; Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). We briefly explain the frameworks below and then use them to illustrate how SIMAR overcame various social dilemmas on its path to success.

First, Ostrom's (2010) framework provides a theoretical lens for understanding drivers of collaboration at the individual and group levels. It is particularly relevant in contexts where actors can overcome social dilemmas without any rules imposed from the outside. Ostrom (2010) suggests that to understand the effects of collaboration on solving social dilemmas, it is important to consider behavioral variables like trust, reciprocity, and reputation, as well as structural variables that affect human behavior such as the number of participants involved, the heterogeneity of participants, the relationships among participants, whether the benefits of collaboration are shared or subtractive, and whether there is face-to-face communication, a history of collaboration, and voluntary collaboration (Ostrom, 2010: 157). This framework is useful for analyzing SIMAR's positive outcomes because actors need to learn how to collaborate across time within a context of political tension and need to trust each other regardless of institutional constraints. In this study, we focus on reciprocity, trust, reputation, face-to-face communication, and the results of past collaboration.

Second, we use the integrative framework for collaborative governance (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). Emerson and Nabatchi propose that collaboration dynamics, including principled engagement, shared motivation, and joint capacity for action, are useful for understanding the factors that lead to and sustain collaboration among actors with different interests and characteristics. Principled engagement entails the recognition of differences among participants and the identification of possible approaches that could lead to achieving a successful collaboration. This is associated with a learning process that is beneficial for all the participants. Shared motivation enables cooperation and is activated by behaviors like trust, reciprocity, and commitment. In turn, sharing a common goal and motivation opens the path to building joint capacity for action, for example, through the adoption of formal and informal rules like protocols or agreements. Through collaboration dynamics, participants can adopt specific decisions and take actions that increase the likelihood of successful collaboration (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). This framework is a helpful analytical tool to understand some of the mechanisms behind SIMAR's success for both achieving outcomes and avoiding undesirable results. For instance, regardless of the contextual factors that could potentially decrease the likelihood of collaboration such as the municipalities' leadership political affiliation and personnel turnover, actors have been able to overcome

these challenges and create some shared values and collaborative culture that fosters collaboration and positive outcomes across time.

Overcoming Social Dilemmas Through Collaborative Dynamics

According to Elinor Ostrom (1998), social dilemmas occur when individuals face situations in which the maximization of their own interests leaves all participants in the worst of their feasible alternatives. These types of social dilemmas are also known as collective public good problems (Olson, 1965) or free-rider problems (Ostrom, 1998). The conflict appears when there is a struggle between individual and group rationality, so the purpose of collective action is to find a way to avoid the worst scenario for everyone and try to find an optimal solution for the members of the group (Ostrom, 1998). Similarly, Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) state that actors engaged in a collaborative governance regime (CGR) acknowledge that their own resources and attributes are not enough to achieve the goal of the CGR, and that is why collaboration with other participants is needed. Once they clarify their interests, discuss alternatives, and have common and shared motivations, they need to jointly collaborate to achieve the outcome of the CGR and solve the collective public good problem.

SIMAR's members represent distinct municipalities that differ in terms of resources, administrative capacity, and political affiliation, among other factors. According to the CGR framework (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015), actors need to satisfy their own interests and believe in common values for a collaboration to succeed. Despite heterogeneity among the participants, the actors recognized that they do not have the infrastructure and the capacity to effectively manage solid waste residuals individually (SIMAR, 2021). This worked as a startup condition for the creation of the collaborative regime. In this regard, SIMAR is an example of a group of heterogeneous members that use those differences to overcome social dilemmas. More specifically, they recognize that interlocal collaboration is needed to jointly produce the public service and avoid negative environmental consequences. For instance, one interviewee stated that small and medium-sized municipalities cannot afford to create waste management infrastructure to produce the service individually. According to this interviewee, SIMAR is the mechanism to effectively produce waste management as a public service and to comply with state- and federal-level regulations. This is also one of the reasons that explains the permanence of members in the system across time.

Similar to Ostrom's framework, Emerson and Nabatchi (2015) acknowledge the importance of contextual factors to understand how collaboration emerges but also focus on understanding how collaborative behaviors evolve across actors' interactions. Each of the members brings to the collaborative

regime their own set of political, economic, cultural, and social rules (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). Once the CGR arises, the focus shifts from the drivers for collaboration to how shared motivation enables collaboration.

Both frameworks suggest that one possible solution for repeated social dilemmas is the creation of reciprocity norms. According to Ostrom (1998), reputation and trust are strategies that can be used to promote reciprocity and engage in productive social relations even if these relations are social dilemmas. Emmerson and colleagues (2012) suggest that shared motivations and interpersonal norms like reciprocity and trust are useful behaviors that activate collaborative processes. The main actors in this case study are the mayors of the ten municipalities that are members of SIMAR and the SIMAR executive director. This regime works around the values of trust, reciprocity, and cooperative behaviors, essential factors in solving social dilemmas (Ostrom, 2010; Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015).

Despite institutional challenges, SIMAR members learned how to trust each other, collaborate, and avoid undesirable results. They have jointly collaborated to reach economic optimization respecting the needs and contexts of each of the municipality members of SIMAR (SIMAR, 2021). Moreover, trust has been maintained in members' interactions due to the professionalization and continuity of the system's workforce. One participant stated that the political trajectories of SIMAR members have a certain weight within interlocal arrangements. Public management expertise is more important than partisanship given the technical nature of waste management as a public service. This can be considered an example of how expertise and effective managerial practices activate norms of trust, reputation, and reciprocity.

Trust and reciprocity do not emerge automatically, but rather are activated by shared motivation in collaboration (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). One interviewee mentioned that trust among all the participants of SIMAR is not a necessary condition when the system is created: "[...] [m]ayors don't need to trust the director of the system, and the director does not need to trust the mayors. It is all about respect and credibility given the results you produce because there is money involved in this. It is all about communication and respect that is earned through results."

Olson (1965) suggests that heterogeneity among actors not only in terms of their attributes but also of the resources they bring to the group can decrease the probability of collaboration. However, Ostrom (2010) also states that even if heterogeneity among actors in social dilemmas associated with common pool resources can decrease collaboration, if the social dilemma is within the context of public problems heterogeneity could foster collaboration. Thus Ostrom (2010) recommends that factors associated with collaboration need to be tested in different contexts because understanding the context is essential for analyzing collective action and collaborative behaviors. The different political

and economic contexts where SIMAR's members are embedded could hinder collaboration. For example, several institutional constraints emerge from the fact that participants are affiliated with different political parties and the municipalities have different demographics and resources. However, during the last 14 years, these actors have been able to build trust and cooperative behaviors that positively impact the outcomes of this regime. For instance, one participant mentioned that the main reason for SIMAR's success is its strategic planning in the short, mid, and long term. Since the creation of the system, the members agreed on a clear set of goals, the financial resources needed to fulfill said goals, and their own responsibilities for accomplishing these goals. The positive outcomes produced by the system also fostered credibility in the system and enhanced the motivations for continuing to work together.

One common issue related to the challenges in overcoming social dilemmas is the size of the groups. Olson (1965) states that the size of a group can affect the provision of public goods. According to the author, most groups have difficulties in providing optimal amounts of collective goods without having selective incentives. This affects primarily the big groups because it is more difficult to achieve an optimal solution through a bargaining process. For an individual, the natural incentives for contributing to the provision of the public good are minimal because he will also have a minimum share of the gains. Ostrom (2010) states that free-riding behaviors are more common in large groups because an individual's lack of cooperation will not be noticed and the probability of the public good still being provided is high.

For instance, SIMAR's design considers that the number of members should be limited to continue providing effective outcomes in terms of solid waste management. This is mainly because working in large groups decreases the probability of positive outcomes (Olson, 1965) and the coordination of internal strategies involves higher transaction costs (Ostrom, 2010). In this sense, SIMAR members believe that a limited membership leads to better governance and efficient management outcomes. For instance, an interviewee mentioned that currently, the system is working on the creation of a new cell in the landfill to ensure that the system can serve the current members in the next ten years. This expansion does not consider the integration of new members.

Other types of collaboration dynamics like shared values and meanings among regime participants can be found in the twelve core principles adopted by SIMAR's members. These principles set the rules to achieve intermunicipal collaboration, self-sufficiency, sustainable waste management, preventive measures for more effective sustainable waste management, awareness, citizen engagement, and alignment among policies, among others (SIMAR, 2021). By joining SIMAR, members agree, adopt, and comply with these principles. The members also share some common values like integrity, service, environmental protection, respect, and transparency (SIMAR, 2021). Cultural norms

and shared values can decrease the cost of collective action (Congleton, 2015). In these cases, individuals will follow the rules of the organization ethically because they believe in following those rules; they see their interests reflected in those rules, so they do not need external or internal incentives and sanctions to collaborate. In the case of SIMAR, actors believing in common values facilitate rule-following without the need for external rules requiring them to collaborate. However, there might be external incentives that motivate collaboration, like recognition from external actors.

The CGR framework also states that for the members to have some capacity for joint action they need to create processes and institutional arrangements, and the collaborative regime needs to promote the figure of leadership, resource, and knowledge sharing (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). An example of institutional arrangements adopted by the members of SIMAR is the vast set of guidelines, procedures, protocols, and regulations that specify the rules for sustainable waste management in the region. The combination of these factors facilitates the possibility of jointly collaborating to achieve a shared goal. In the case of SIMAR, its own internal structure is beneficial for the success of the collaboration because the participants agreed to create the figure of an executive director that steers the processes within the CGR and the interests at the regime level. This director works as a facilitator or mediator (Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015) who not only manages the collaboration dynamics but also brings their own expertise to the group.

Regarding the importance of leadership, one interviewee mentioned that SIMAR does not necessarily require a technical profile like an engineer with expertise in waste management. Instead, the system benefits from managerial profiles of directors with expertise in legal frameworks, grant applications, and leadership skills. The logic behind success is to create leaders that can push the agenda of intermunicipal cooperation in the region. Finally, the leader also assists with other essential factors for a successful collaboration like promoting the process of knowledge and resource sharing. Each participant brings different resources to the CGR, thus the challenge is to manage those differences and allocate the resources in a way that leads to the achievement of the common goals and principles of SIMAR. One example of resource sharing is that SIMAR, as a collaborative regime, owns a fleet of trucks used for waste collection across its jurisdiction but the trucks are operated by, managed, and funded by the municipalities.

CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT OF POSITIVITY

The success of SIMAR can be analyzed in terms of who perceives said positive results, whether it is the municipalities in the system and their communities,

their level of compliance with state and federal regulations, or the region the system covers in terms of its environmental condition. Moreover, sustainability can be understood as a wider concept than the traditional one related to promoting human development whose pace and dynamics correspond to the ecological capacity of the planet (Baker, 2015). In this case, the term can be related also to the joint production of public services whose pace and dynamics correspond to the installed capacity of the system. It is important to explore how SIMAR's outputs and outcomes can be considered positive and how this positivity is understood across these different stakeholders. In this section, we describe how actors conceptualize and operationalize SIMAR's outcomes and how these are related to positive and democratic governance.

Municipalities in the System

The most immediate stakeholders are each of the municipalities in SIMAR and their constituencies. One of the main goals of the system is to enable local governments to achieve economies of scale. Based on the initial diagnostic, the intermunicipal system creates economies of scale in four areas: (1) landfill construction, (2) landfill operation, (3) land, and (4) equipment. The construction of ten individual landfills has an approximate total cost of \$2.15 million, compared to the cost of the intermunicipal landfill, \$554,000 (García et al., 2012; Venegas, 2012). Similar saving schemes can be listed for the remaining areas, but perhaps an additional benefit of the intermunicipal system is having only one large landfill instead of ten individual ones. According to the interview data, having only one landfill in the region does not only reduce costs but has environmental implications as well. Given that small local governments do not have the capacity to create landfills that comply with state- and federal-level regulations, the alternative to a centralized landfill is individual illegal landfills that fail to comply with environmental regulations. The intermunicipal landfill allowed SIMAR's participants to close seven individual landfills and several informal dumping sites across the region.

Although this cannot be translated easily into monetary savings, according to the annual reports of SIMAR, it is one of the most critical strengths of the system, considering that the location of landfills is generally a highly contentious topic in any municipality. The Mazamitla location was identified as the most strategic space for the intermunicipal landfill, and the municipality pays a considerably lower yearly fee for waste management for hosting the intermunicipal landfill (SIMAR, 2011; Bernache, 2015). An interviewee mentioned that while citizens, in general, oppose the idea of hosting the regional landfill that serves their community and other nine jurisdictions, the local government benefits from the lowest waste management fee in the system and can redistribute those financial resources to other priorities.

Compliance with State and Federal Regulations

The high dependence of municipalities on federal- and state-level funds has an effect not only in limited coverage or low service quality. Weak operative capacity for waste management results in low compliance with federal environmental and sanitary regulations regarding specific types of solid waste. Joining SIMAR has allowed the member municipalities to comply with federal and state-level regulations. The system operates not only by collecting urban solid waste and disposing of it in an intermunicipal landfill. Intermediate steps in this process include separating recyclable waste, and three subprograms focused on the collection and disposal of batteries, tires, and hazardous waste (Bernache, 2015). A participant mentioned that waste management is primarily an urban infrastructure topic and secondly an environmental one. The members of SIMAR understand the system as a mechanism to lower costs in producing and providing the public service. However, the members also recognize that waste management services are connected to environmental policy due to the positive environmental impacts that effective waste management services produce.

Mexican municipalities can enact local regulations in terms of environmental policy, as long as they are aligned with state and federal policies. SIMAR's operation has been certified and approved by the state of Jalisco Environmental Ministry and the Federal Environmental Ministry (SIMAR, 2021). Besides these formal regulations, SIMAR has complied with the Voluntary Environmental Compliance program, implemented by the government of the state of Jalisco (SEMADET, 2023). Given that a considerable number of local governments in the country are falling behind in complying with environmental regulations, some of these are mandatory while some others are implemented as voluntary programs of self-regulation. In 2018, SIMAR obtained a certification from this state-level voluntary program aimed at reducing industrial and urban pollution (SEMADET, 2023).

The positive results in terms of compliance can be better understood in the Mexican national context. Waste separation and recycling are still incipient practices, considering that in 2017 only 9.63 percent of the solid waste generated nationally was recycled, less than half of the 24 percent that represents the average of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (SEMARNAT, 2017). Although the location of sanitary landfills and illegal dumpsites is a highly controversial issue in any community, it is a critical issue at the national scale as well. Mexico City is a clear example of the size of this problem: in 2021, the total number of illegal dumpsites in the city was 1,089 (SEDEMA, 2021). Considering the scale differences, the fact that the operation of SIMAR allowed its member municipalities to close the

majority of the illegal dumpsites within their coverage area is salient considering the increasing trend of informal dumpsites in the country (SIMAR, 2021).

Positive Impact on the Region

While the continuity of a public program or agency is not necessarily proof of positive results, the institutional fragility of Mexican local governments (Arellano et al., 2011) makes the continuity of any policy highly challenging, even if it shows positive results. The short horizon of mayoral administrations and highly politicized elections deter local governments to professionalize their workforce and create organizational learning that could allow them to operate more efficiently and provide better public services.

In this regard, SIMAR's executive director and the different members who have formed the Administrative Council have made considerable efforts to institutionalize the system in the region. While they acknowledge that cost-saving schemes can be a strong factor in anchoring the system and retaining its members, the volatility of elected and non-elected officers at the local level can endanger its permanence. As part of the positive results in terms of institutionalization, SIMAR publishes annual reports of activities and has published manuals of operations for all the stages of its operations, from the process of identification of different types of solid waste in the collection stage in each municipality to the operation of the transfer center unit, and the operation of the landfill. These detailed manuals are available to the public and represent the institutional repository that allows the system to achieve an adequate level of professionalization in its operation.

Other examples reflect the efforts of SIMAR as a CGR to jointly overcome these institutional challenges that hinder intermunicipal collaboration. For instance, in 2021 SIMAR issued guidance for the public servants working in the municipalities of SIMAR. The purpose of this guidance is to assist the newly elected or appointed public servants with the implementation of SIMAR protocols. Since most municipalities change administrations every three years, a new administration comes along with new staff members. According to an interviewee, sometimes this affects the institutional knowledge and expertise that public servants acquire during their years working with SIMAR. It also delays the operation of SIMAR's protocols and the effective management of waste residuals due to the lack of knowledge and experience with SIMAR's processes and intermunicipal collaboration (SIMAR, 2021). Positive public administration entails that the way for positive outcomes to be significant is through effective governance over time (Douglas et al., 2021). In this regard, we consider the publication of this guidance for the incoming public servants to be a very useful resource to retain organizational knowledge as much as

possible. Also, the public servants new to SIMAR processes can easily learn the protocols and processes created under this CGR.

Moreover, external recognition of SIMAR can be considered a positive outcome. SIMAR has received several national and international awards. It received the 2011 and 2013 Local Government and Management Award from the Center for Research and Teaching in Economics of Mexico. Spain's Technical Association for Waste and Environmental Management gave it awards in 2012, 2014, and 2016, and in 2016, it received the ICLEI Sustainable Local Government Award (SIMAR, 2021). Interview data highlights that participating in international awards opens the door for networking and information sharing. When mayors and collaborators of SIMAR attend these international venues, they network with their counterparts from other countries. One interviewee shared that for SIMAR members, this becomes a management mechanism more than just an appraisal of their work. These interactions benefit their political capital and allow them to understand the long-term benefits of interlocal systems by listening to their peers' experiences. This recognition of SIMAR's success at the international level can be associated with one of the core themes of PPA: "highly valued public policies, organizations, and partnerships" (Douglas et al., 2021: 446).

The internationalization of the system is one of the reasons for the regime's success. Members perceive that they are part of a larger community that will sanction them if they undermine the collective goals of the system. As one interviewee noted, "When you connect the members of the system to the international community, they are concerned to be criticized due to their lack of compliance or their intentions to defect the intermunicipal association."

As mentioned before, one of the purposes of the PPA movement is to promote learning cycles from the successful experiences of well performing public organizations (Douglas et al., 2021). The visibility granted by these awards has allowed the officers in the system to share their experience with other local governments nationally and internationally, particularly in institutional contexts where continuity at the local level is challenging. After the first years of operation of SIMAR, a system with similar operations was formed by the municipalities of Zapotlán, Amacueca, and Gómez Farías (Gobierno del Estado de Jalisco, 2013). This demonstrates that the best practices of SIMAR can be diffused within the state of Jalisco and perhaps elsewhere.

One element of PPA is "learning how to learn from what works in public policy" (Douglas et al., 2021: 444). Effective policy diffusion does not rely on blindly implementing successful experiences from other organizations that share similar contexts. Rather, it entails identifying which aspects of a policy can be adapted in a way that best suits the organization's unique circumstances and characteristics (Shipan and Volden, 2012). Over the years, SIMAR has shared its experiences and best practices for sustainable waste manage-

ment with other local governments in Mexico, as well as with mayors and public servants from several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, SIMAR was part of a binational cooperation project focused on information sharing with the French municipality of Tarbes-Lourdes-Pyrénées (AMEXCID, 2018). SIMAR also has signed collaboration agreements for information and best practices sharing with local governments from France and China.

Another achievement of SIMAR is the bottom-up approach to creating a legal framework for intermunicipal associations in the state of Jalisco. According to an interviewee, this is the result of a cooperative agreement between SIMAR and a similar system in France to share information regarding challenges and successful strategies to sustain collective efforts in waste management. As a result of these visits, SIMAR's administrative board worked on a state-level bill that provides clear foundations on how to enable intermunicipal cooperation and how to sustain it through state-level grants setting clear responsibilities of local and state governments. To date, Jalisco is the only state in Mexico that has enacted a bill regarding intermunicipal cooperation. The law includes definitions, the scope of associations, responsibilities, types of services, goals of collaborative arrangements, types or modes of intermunicipal systems, and a standardized procedure to create and formalize intermunicipal associations. It is an example of the creation of mechanisms necessary to sustain robust governance over time (Douglas et al., 2021).

Finally, another positive outcome is associated with the learning process and civic engagement. SIMAR also is interested in advancing civic engagement and participation in the region with the creation of an intermunicipal center for environmental education. The regime is currently working on the operation of this center to enable collaboration for the prevention and appropriate selection of solid waste between SIMAR's participants and members from the community, private, and academic sectors (SIMAR, 2021).

An interviewee stated that citizens were originally opposed to the creation of a landfill because their experience with solid waste management is the illegal landfills and trash incineration. The participant shared that an impactor factor that led to the success of SIMAR is the socialization of the project to have the community's support. SIMAR earned the trust of citizens by showing immediate positive results like ensuring that collection trucks showed up as scheduled and that household garbage was being collected. Socialization of the project also contributes to changing misconceptions about waste management. An interviewee stated that many believe that the population's lack of engagement in garbage separation is due to cultural factors, however, through socialization, the community is coming to believe that "garbage separation is not a cultural theme, but a matter of responsibility." This is an example of how trust flows in the regime, not only among the members but also between the regime and

the community. Once the community trusts the system, they engage in the co-production of the public service by separating the garbage and keeping the streets clean. According to the interviewee, the effective production of the service “earns back the trust in public authority.”

Sustaining Collaboration Across Time

Collaboration is a dynamic rather than a static process (Chen and Sullivan, 2022). Similarly, CGRs change and evolve across time as the actors’ resources, preferences, and behaviors change, but also as the contextual factors that contribute to the creation of the CGR change (Ulibarri et al., 2020). One additional aspect worthy of highlighting is that to continue being efficient the system needed to limit the number of members. Although common wisdom could point toward including more members to take advantage of economies of scale, the administrative council periodically discusses its annual operative reports to measure the system’s capacity. It seems likely that, for SIMAR to maintain the quality level of waste disposal and follow the planned evolution of the intermunicipal landfill, the administrative board has declined requests to join the regime. The system currently has the population and amount of solid waste required to achieve economies of scale. While new members would contribute financially through yearly fee payments, their waste management would put pressure on the intermunicipal landfill and force new cells to be open before its planned evolution. The system, in this sense, is efficient when it offers the benefits of economies of scale without compromising service levels for all the member local governments.

Regarding the continuity of the system, one interviewee said: “[i]ntermunicipal systems have a territorial limitation. [...] SIMAR does not have the capacity to add more municipalities. Why? Because cost-benefit analyses can show if their integration is feasible or if the best solution is for them to create a new intermunicipal organism.” Other participants mentioned that some municipalities in the region have expressed their interest in joining the system. However, cost-benefit analyses show that, given the geographical distance between the system’s infrastructure and the potential new members, the costs of delivering waste management services through the system would be higher than the in-house production alternative. Additionally, their size in terms of population and waste production makes them very different from the current members of SIMAR. Therefore, including them in the system would saturate the existing facilities. This exemplifies how important it is to acknowledge the capacity limit of CGRs like SIMAR to produce positive outcomes and sustain collaboration across time.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

SIMAR is a case of PPA because it shows how actors from different backgrounds and contexts can overcome some of the social dilemmas they face and achieve collaboration despite institutional design constraints and political tension. Actors from different political and institutional backgrounds and with different resources and service capacity manage to learn from their differences and find ways to foster and maintain collaboration across time. From the governance point of view, we think that the internal functioning of SIMAR and the shared rules and values create mechanisms that lead to positive outcomes.

The case of SIMAR highlights important implications for PPA, such as schemes of “learning to learn from what works in public settings” and examples of how to sustain robust governance over time (Douglas et al., 2021: 446). The members of SIMAR have learned that there are benefits of information sharing at the individual and community level. They engage with other municipalities and other systems by providing training and advice. Information-sharing with other systems addresses topics related to seeking state- and federal-level grants, but also managerial training offered to the directors of other systems aimed to institutionalize the role of the head of these systems as a manager capable of navigating through dynamic political turnover in their regions.

There is an overall collective benefit of interlocal cooperation. Beyond policy diffusion, members understand that there are benefits at the community level because the larger the number of intermunicipal systems similar to SIMAR, the better the institutionalization of these interlocal dynamics regardless of local and state-level political turnover. The best scenario is not being the only good practice around, but generating similar practices that can show the benefits of interlocal cooperation.

As pointed out by advocates of PPA, success is a multidimensional and complex concept (Douglas et al., 2021). SIMAR is an interlocal system that groups municipalities from two different states. The actors in this regime are aware that interlocal collaboration can be complex in terms of complying with accountability procedures conducted by the authorities of two different states. However, they have learned that the better unified the administrative structures at the local, state, and federal levels, in terms of administrative and operative procedures to manage waste, the better the chances of getting state- and federal-level funding.

Actors working in collaborative contexts with similar social dilemmas like the ones SIMAR’s members face can learn from this experience and identify collaboration tools they can implement if they have similar political and institutional contexts, or they can innovate and adjust these tools to fit their own needs. Institutional challenges like the ones presented in this case can be found

in other countries. We considered that learning about SIMAR's experience and how they overcame challenges could be helpful to other local governments in addressing cross-boundary problems. Earning back citizens' trust can be considered another dimension of SIMAR's success. As pointed out by an interviewee: "[w]ell-organized services can be produced by public agencies."

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