Societies cannot survive and thrive if they are not governed well. The public’s business – e.g. security and safety; health and well-being – needs to be managed effectively. Achieving this in the current era of connectivity, transparency, accountability and assertive, skeptical and empowered citizens deeply challenges the institutions of government, which were largely designed for a drastically different era. We urgently need to learn how we can govern societies successfully under the new circumstances.

However, in both the popular and academic discourse, the focus is on the frailty and fallibility of our government institutions. We excel in explaining how policies fail, reforms falter, public money is wasted, public leaders are distrusted, and public institutions eroded. So much so that robust knowledge about the practices that produce good governance is hard to come by. And yet good governance is all around us, allowing us to learn from successes as well.

This proposal seeks to address the imbalance. It offers a constructive, yet rigorous and systematic investigation of ‘success’ in 21st century governance. An innovative combination of theoretical perspectives, comparative approaches, and mixed methods is developed to answer five questions:

1. How is success in public governance defined and assessed by those who engage in it and those who experience it?
2. Why are some public policies enduringly successful?
3. Why are some public organizations enduringly successful?
4. Why are some interactive, collaborative governance initiatives enduringly successful?
5. How do these successful examples jointly contribute towards understanding the principles of a theory for governance success?

The inquiry will increase our insight into the pivotal yet ill-understood phenomenon of governance that ‘works’. It will enrich the field with new methodologies, provoking the discipline to reconsider the emphasis on failure and undertake the systematic study of success.
Section a: Extended synopsis of the scientific proposal

Relevance and aim
During the first decade and a half of the 21st century, even the long-peaceful, prosperous and stable democracies of Western Europe have been deeply challenged by deep and fast changes in their operating environment, i.e. through globalization, technological innovation, recession and fiscal crisis, new geostrategic turbulence, the internet revolution, and the pervasiveness of ‘wicked problems’ in their societies.

These challenges have undermined the effectiveness and legitimacy (Scharpf, 1999) of the hitherto predominant governance paradigm of New Public Management, with its trademark emphasis on values such as economy and efficiency; its rational actor model of citizens, corporations and institutions; and its neoliberal preference for market-based approaches to solving public problems (Hood and Peters, 2004; Levy, 2010). Considerable segments of society appear to have ‘switched off’ from the political mainstream, and veer towards forms of populist ‘anti-politics’ (Hay, 2007).

There is clearly an urgent need for new guidance on governing today’s turbulent network societies to inspire a next generation of political and public sector reforms and innovations, and for new inspiring narratives to legitimize them. Scholars have taken up the challenge (Peters, 2001; Dror, 2014), spawning new constructs such as Digital-Era Governance (Dunleavy et al, 2005), Public Value Management (Stoker, 2006), New Public Governance (Osborne, 2010) and Interactive Governance (Torfing et al, 2012). These efforts open up new perspectives on what type of governance may actually work in our present circumstances.

However, in the empirical mainstream of public policy and public management studies, the bulk of research effort and journal space is still devoted to documenting the unintended consequences, paradoxes, shortcomings and failures of public planning, programs, projects, bureaucracies and reforms (Hall, 1982; ‘t Hart, 1994; Bovens and ‘t Hart, 1996, Gray and ‘t Hart, 1998; Flyvbjerg et al, 2003; Gauld and Goldfinch, 2012; Crewe and King, 2013; Coelho et al., 2015; Opperman and Spencer, forthcoming). Surely, there is much to learn from post-mortems of policy, political and organizational failures. But learning to avoid failure is at best only half of what is needed to develop and institutionalize modes of governing that are better adapted to today’s societies.

Scholars of public governance should rethink their propensity towards investigating governance failure. They should be prepared to also purposefully conceptualize, seek out, study, explain and learn from governance success. Misgivings that are sometimes uttered about this being somehow ‘unscientific’, ‘uncritical’ and ‘something that consultants but not scholars do’ are in my view entirely misplaced. Studying ‘what works’, e.g. through controlled experiments, is common in many other disciplines, but only in its infancy in the field of public administration.

It should and can be done systematically and rigorously. This proposal hopes to move the field towards such a trajectory. It articulates an intellectual agenda that excites me and that I hope to spend the next phase of my research career on, along with a dedicated team of young researchers. If we are successful in this endeavour, it will provoke our fellow students of governance into rethinking both the ‘slant’ and the theory and methodology guiding the overwhelming majority of current research on policy evaluation, public sector performance, and governance quality.

Theoretical suppositions
Four theoretical suppositions underpin this proposal. The first supposition is that the currently dominant performance measurement, ‘league table’ approach to evaluating governance relies on rather ‘thin’ conceptions of performance and legitimacy. These need to be complemented and contrasted with the findings of studies that employ methods of assessment that are able to tap into the much ‘thicker’, contingent and constructed ways in which people form judgments about governance arrangements such as policies, agencies, or networks (Bevir and Rhodes, 2006; 2010).

The second supposition is about the dimensions on which people assess the success or otherwise of public governance arrangements. We postulate that success requires a two-dimensional assessment: (a) the instrumental dimension of performance - delivering smart processes and outcomes that dominant coalitions and/or democratic accountability forums regard as desirable; (b) the affective dimension of legitimacy – being seen to deliver desirable outcomes through institutions that are valued and practices that are considered appropriate (March and Olsen, 1989). Table 1 combines these two different dimensions of success.
Table 1. Assessing the performance and legitimacy of policies, organizations and networks

The third supposition is that the success of governance arrangements should be understood not as a snapshot but as a film. The performance and legitimacy of a policy, organization or network are to be assessed in terms of how they endure over time. Late 20th century popular studies of corporate and governmental successes that generated much of the drive for e.g. New Public Management rested upon case studies of organizations and programs that had the character of snap shots. Later it transpired that many of these success cases had a very limited shelf life, and thus formed a fickle basis for theory-building. We need methodologies to assess and explain success that take into account the notion of endurance (e.g. in terms of robustness, resilience, adaptive capacity).

The fourth supposition is that successful 21st century governance rests to an important degree on astute metagovernance. In a turbulent network society, success can no longer be achieved through ‘silver bullet’ interventions to fix a policy, agency, or network. Even simple interventions will affect multiple stakeholders and have knock-on effects on other outcomes. We therefore do not expect to find easy solutions which can be copy-pasted across domains and put all worries to bed. We do expect that enduring performance and legitimacy depends on the purposeful design and management of governance arrangements, called metagovernance, guiding the way in which governance is set up, run, and adapted over time (Kooiman, 2003; Sorensen and Torfing, 2009).

Research questions and research ambitions

The research program examines five interrelated questions:

1. How is success in public governance defined and assessed by those who engage in it and those who observe and experience it?
2. How and why are public policies and public reforms enduringly successful?
3. How and why are public organizations enduringly successful?
4. How and why are interactive, collaborative governance initiatives enduringly successful?
5. How do the lessons from these successful policies, organizations and networks jointly contribute towards understanding the principles of a theory for public governance success?

By investigating these questions, we hope to:

- Move beyond simplistic ‘best-practice’ and ‘performance indicators’ snapshot accounts of successful governance by looking at performance, legitimacy and endurance of policies, agencies and networks
- Develop a systematic understanding of the social mechanisms by which governance success is being assessed and create the methodological tools to capture these mechanisms
- Use these insights to theorize about metagovernance principles and practices that underpin successful governance in a turbulent network society
Inspire other researchers to incorporate the scientific study of success in their work

Theoretical and methodological innovations

To answer these questions and fulfill these ambitions, this program takes several innovative steps. Firstly, the program draws on, combines and innovates what I regard as cutting-edge perspectives on policy success (Bovens and ’t Hart, 1996; Bovens et al., 2001; McConnell, 2010), organizational success (Bovens, 2001; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007; Goodsell, 2011; Arild and Maor, 2015) and collaborative success (Ansell and Gash, 2008, 2012; Agranoff, 2011; Torfing et al., 2012), as well as from the broader governance literature (Kooiman, 2003; Bevir and Rhodes, 2010; Osborne, 2010; Jacobson et al., 2015). Yet these different perspectives do not constitute a robust theory that explains variations in governance performance. Many different, often untested hypotheses and frameworks shape the ‘theories in use’ (Argyris, 1993) of governance practitioners and the research agendas of scholars. This program will therefore systematize the diversity in the theories and put them to the test where possible.

Secondly, the program creatively combines data-gathering and analysis methods from both the social-constructivist and modernist-empiricist traditions. A key methodological starting point is the finding of Bovens et al. (2001) that there is no ‘just world’ of governance assessment in which good performance generates legitimacy, and success at time T can be easily replicated and perpetuated. There can be asymmetries and changes over time. Moreover, there is no shared normative (and informational) basis upon which different actors in governance processes assess their performance, legitimacy and endurance. The program actively develops new ways to collect the evaluation of diverse stakeholders over time of a given policy, agency, or collaboration. In particular, we will conduct vignette experiments to examine the beliefs of citizens, professionals and experts about what constitutes and causes success according to them. We will also conduct focus group evaluations in experiment settings to reveal the interpersonal effects shaping the assessment of success during a group deliberation.

Design of the research program

The overall design of the program is depicted below, consisting of five projects. Project 1 will set the stage conceptually and methodologically by bringing together the diverse notions of success and developing methodologies to capture the performance and legitimacy as constructed by multiple stakeholders. Projects 2, 3 and 4 examine how success is assessed and how it can be explained in public policies/programs, public agencies/organisations, public networks/collaborations. Project 5 compares and integrates the findings from the previous projects, and articulates theoretical and programmatic inferences in light of the agenda set in project 1, formulating next steps for practitioners and researchers alike. There is purposefully an overlap between the different projects, to enable adjustment of activities where necessary.

![Figure 1. Overall design of the research program](image-url)
Project 1: Constructing 'success' in governance: performance, legitimacy, endurance

This project provides both the theoretical foundation for the research program as a whole, as well as an innovative methodology for assessing governance arrangements. Firstly, we collate, compare and combine existing theories and research on (good) governance and on policy, organizational and collaborative success to create a common footing for the research team. Secondly, we will develop new methodologies to assess the social construction of performance and legitimacy in the community deliberation of the public, politicians and professionals. We will conduct vignette experiments among panels of citizens, public policy professionals and academic experts to examine their beliefs about success in governance and how it can be achieved, controlling for background factors, framing effects and the influence of group deliberation.

Project 2a: Assessing and explaining policy success: Behavioral change challenges

This project focuses on general interest public policies that aim at inducing behavioral change in mass populations in relation to 'wicked problems'. Specifically, it compares the success of drink-driving and climate-adaptation programs in the Netherlands and the UK over the course of a decade. The cases are situated in two different policy domains, with different policy traditions, configurations of organized interests, knowledge bases and intervention repertoires. Examining two types of policy endeavour in two countries allows us to partly control for and partly gauge the impact of institutional and cultural factors.

Project 2b: Assessing and explaining policy success: Reform challenges

This project focuses on explaining the difference between major general interest public policy reforms that endure and become institutionalized after their initial adoption, and those that are reversed, watered-down or otherwise rendered ineffectual. This study uses data on policy and institutional endurance as the key success measure. It builds upon the path-breaking U.S.-based study of Patashnik (2008) comparing cases of sustained and abandoned/reversed reforms, to gain a more precise insight into the mechanisms that account for different levels of policy endurance. A comprehensive inventory of reforms adopted in the Netherlands between 1980 and 2000 in four policy areas (health policy; financial regulation; housing policy; and public utilities) will be compiled, tracking their longevity through to 2015. Four pair-wise comparisons of successful vs failed reforms in policy area will be constructed. In-depth process-tracing of each case will be performed, and fuzzy set QCA methodology will be employed on all eight cases to test for the prevalence of explanatory conditions gleaned from both the literature (including Patashnik and Bovens et al, 2001) and from stakeholder interviews.

Project 3: Assessing and explaining agency success

Public agency performance and legitimacy is notoriously difficult to assess as they routinely have to juggle multiple values and competing priorities. Analysts build their frameworks for assessing the performance of public agencies explicitly around the tensions that this generates (Talbot, 2008). Project 4 comprises an in-depth, partly historical and partly ethnographic multi-case study of highly reputed public agencies. Creatively combining distinct explanatory frameworks offered by Weick and Sutcliffe (2007), Boin and Christensen (2008), Goodsell (2011) and Arild and Maor (2015), intensive archival and fieldwork on four successful public agencies (identified through Delphi methodology) will be performed to penetrate the role of institutional architecture, context, leadership, management and communication. Doing so creates an exciting new agenda for public organization theory.

Project 4: Assessing and explaining collaborative success

In the final line of inquiry, we look at successful forms of collaborative forms of governance in which government actors work alongside both one another and a range of societal actors in networks designed to tackle complex social problems and/or to deliver public services in complex settings (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2004; Ansell and Gash, 2012; Agranoff, 2012; Torfing et al, 2012). This form of governance requires politicians and public servants traditionally embedded in vertical systems of authority and accountability to think and act ‘horizontally’ in terms of interdependence, exchange, complementarity and coproduction. In a nested design we study 6 whole-of-government and 6 whole-of-society networks, applying Torfing et al (2012) 18-criteria set, gauging both participant and stakeholder opinions and narratives. To ascertain network endurance, we select networks that began about three years before the start of the field study and track their evolution for another 3-4 years over the course of the study. This allows for a 7-year period of scrutiny, during which it is reasonable to assume variability in endurance among the n=12 population of interactive/collaborative initiatives.
Project 5 Towards a theory of governance success
The final project synthesizes the results of studies 1-4, exposes them to both academic and practitioner vetting through a series of workshops, and extracts any underlying principles of metagovernance that are demonstrably at work across the various governance arrangements studied in the previous projects.

Feasibility of the research program
The success of this research program hangs on a deep understanding of the current literature, strong relationships with practitioners, and constant interplay between the different projects. The program structure therefore emphasizes a large, hands-on role for the Principal Investigator and a tight-knit research team.

- The PI is highly committed to the program, devoting 50% of his time throughout the five years
- A small, tightly-knit group of one PI, two postdocs and two PhD’s will allow for frequent feedback, flexible and cooperative development during the program, starting with the group work in project 1
- The PI has hands-on experience in the design and management of the type of research program as proposed here (cross-sectorial, cross-national, ethnographic, organizational, experimental research)
- PI has a wide network of high-level public service contacts in multiple countries to guarantee the necessary participation and access from practitioners and agencies

Summary of the nature and impact of the research program
Launching the systematic study of governance success will require a great deal of time, thought, and work. We will have to build on the many theories and findings already available, but also break new ground. I do believe that these investments are worth it, because of the potential gains for the discipline as a whole.

- Move beyond simplistic ‘best-practice’ and ‘performance indicators’ snapshot accounts of successful governance by looking at performance, legitimacy and endurance of policies, agencies and networks
- Develop a systematic understanding of the social mechanisms by which governance success is being assessed and create the methodological tools to capture these mechanisms
- Use these insights to theorize about metagovernance principles and practices that underpin successful governance in a turbulent network society
- Inspire other researchers to incorporate the scientific study of success in their work

References
Argyris, C. (1993), On Organizational Learning, Maiden: Blackwell Business


Section b: Curriculum vitae

PERSONAL DETAILS
Name ‘t Hart, Paul
Nationality Dutch and Australian
Date of Birth 9 May 1963, The Hague, The Netherlands
Website URL http://www.uu.nl/leg/staff/PtHart/0

CURRENT POSITIONS
2002-present Professor of Public Administration, Utrecht School of Governance, Utrecht University (variously sized appointment; reduced to 10% between 2005-2010 during stay in Australia)
2011-present Associate Dean, Netherlands School of Public Administration (0.2 fte)

PREVIOUS POSITIONS
2005-2010 Professor of Political Science, Australian National University
2002-2005 Associate Dean, Netherlands School of Public Administration (0.2 fte)
2002-2005 Adjunct professor of Public Management, Swedish National Defence College, Stockholm, Sweden (0.2 fte)
1987-2002 PhD Researcher/Postdoctoral Researcher/Assistant Professor/Full Professor (as of September 1998), Department of Public Administration, Leiden University
1986-1987 PhD Researcher, Erasmus University Rotterdam

AWARDS & GRANTS (grants of >100,000 euro only are included)
2014 Elected member of Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
2014 Netherlands Science Organization ‘Top’ grant (co-applicant, funds 3 PhD fellowships)
2013 Netherlands Science Organization ‘Talent’ grant (PI, funds 1 PhD fellowship)
2011 Sam Richardson Prize for best article in the Australian Journal of Public Administration, Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA)
2007-2013 PI/co-applicant on three Australian Research Council ‘Discovery’ grants (combined budget >1M A$)
2007 Herbert Simon Award of the American Political Science Association for the best book in the field of Public Administration
2006 Hugo Raab Award for publication of the year of the Swedish Defence College, Stockholm
1998-2002 Netherlands Science Organization ‘Aandachtsgebied’ grant (PI, 4 yr: 1 postdoc, 4 PhD fellowships)
1997  Erik H. Erikson Award for Early Career Achievement, International Society for Political Psychology

1995; 1996  Visiting Scholar, Stockholm Centre for Organizational Research (SCORE), Stockholm University, Sweden

1991  Visitor, Nuffield College Oxford, UK

1991-1994  Senior Faculty, Member Research and Training Group on Political Psychology, funded by the National Science Foundation, Ohio State University, USA

1991  G.A. van Poelje Award for best research monograph, Dutch Society for Public Administration

1990-1995  Fulltime Postdoctoral Research Fellowship, Royal Dutch Academy of Sciences

1990,  Visiting Researcher, Canberra College of Advanced Education, Australia

1989  Blozo Award for policy-oriented research in Sports and Leisure, Ministry of Sports, Flanders, Belgium

In addition: numerous smaller grants/subsidies for the organization of conferences, research meetings from wide range of Dutch, Swedish and Australian academic and government bodies.

Total grant/subsidy sum to date: approximately 3.5M euro
(POST)GRADUATE SUPERVISION

- First supervisor on 15 completed PhD theses (5 at Leiden University, 4 at Utrecht University, 1 at Erasmus University, 5 at Australian National University)
- Primary supervisor of approximately 70 Master theses (65 at Leiden University, including two national award-winning theses, 5 at Utrecht University);
- Primary supervisor of 5 Executive MPA theses, Netherlands School of Public Administration and 3 Executive MPA theses, Australia New Zealand School of Government (2008-2010); 5 Master theses, Utrecht School of Governance (2012-present)

TEACHING ACTIVITIES (selection)

Utrecht University:

Australian National University:

Netherlands School of Public Administration:

Australian New Zealand School of Government:
Convenor, Leading Public Sector Change course, EMPA Program (2007 – present), Convenor, Towards Strategic Leadership program (2009-present), Convenor, Leadership in Times of Crisis executive workshop (2010-present)

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Founding member / scientific director of Leiden University Crisis Research Center (1986-2000)
- Secretary to the Dutch Society for Political Psychology and Political Socialization (1987-1990)
- Leiden University Fund International Program Committee (1996-1999)
- Research Committee, Faculty of Social Sciences, Leiden University (1996-2001)
- Management Team, Department of Public Administration, Leiden University (1998-2001; Head of Department, 2000-2001)
- Executive Board, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University
- Postgraduate students Ombudsman, Utrecht School of Governance, Utrecht University (2012-present)
- Chair, Netherlands Society for Public Administration (current role)

PUBLIC SERVICE (10-year highlights)

2009 Expert witness, Royal Commission on Victorian Bushfires, Victoria, Australia
2007 Visitation Committee, Scientific Council for Government Policy, the Netherlands
2005 Independent Investigation into the Management of the failed North-South Metro Line Project, City of Amsterdam
## Appendix: Ongoing and Submitted Grants by the PI

### Ongoing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Funding source</th>
<th>Amount (Euros)</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Role of the PI</th>
<th>Relation to current ERC proposal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welfare Improvement Through Nudging Knowledge</td>
<td>Netherlands Science Organization</td>
<td>637.500</td>
<td>2014-2018</td>
<td>Member of research team and supervisor of 1 of 3 PhD students funded by the grant</td>
<td>‘TOP’ subsidy for interdisciplinary research partnerships. No formal relationship. Materially, the project has relevance to current proposal in that it focuses on increasing the likelihood of policy success through improving policy design/effectiveness that makes use of behavioral science/economics insights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Submitted

None
Section c: Ten year track-record

IMPACT STATEMENT

My main lines of research between 2005-2015 have been on the nature, challenges, evaluation and impact of political and public service leadership; governmental crisis and emergency management; and public accountability. I have continued to be research-active in my earlier foci of interest: political psychology, public policy analysis, and executive government, particularly relationships between bureaucrats and politicians.

I am considered a pioneer of the interdisciplinary field of crisis management studies. Much of my earlier work is in this area. My co-authored, prize-winning 2005 Cambridge University Press monograph on crisis leadership has sold over 6500 copies, has been translated into Chinese and Spanish, is used world-wide as both an academic and executive teaching resource, will be republished in a fully revised version in 2016, and has been cited 390 times to date.

My pre-2005 work on policy failure/evaluation (which forms the basis of the current research proposal) has continued to attract significant citations (300 cites for the 3 main books published between 1994 and 2002) in the past 10 years. Since 2008, my work on leadership alone has yielded nine published and in-press monographs and edited volumes with major publishers (incl. 4xOxford UP; 3xPalgrave), as well as dozens of refereed journal articles and book chapters.

On the strength of these contributions to the discipline, I have been a keynote speaker at dozens of academic and practitioner conferences, an executive educator (from early career to CEO levels), and advisor to numerous governments in the Netherlands, Australia and Sweden.

In terms of launching careers of others: two of my master and one of my PhD students have won national thesis award prizes; two of my former research assistants/PhD-students have become prize-winning and grant-earning full professors (Arjen Boin, Leiden; Marc Hertogh, Groningen); six more have tenure at universities in the Netherlands, Sweden and Australia; one has become a cabinet minister in the current Dutch government (Sander Dekker).

The year 2014 has been a career best, with election to the Royal Netherlands of Arts and Sciences (the second-ever scholar in my discipline to be granted membership) and landmark publications 9 and 10 (see below); the culmination of a 15-year research program on political/public sector leadership.

PUBLISHED OUTPUT OVERALL

(Co-)author of: 79 refereed journal articles; 18 monographs; 102 book chapters in edited volumes. (Co-)editor of 17 edited volumes of collaborative/comparative research. Furthermore (co-)author of dozens of conference papers, book reviews, essays, op ed articles in newspapers, and research/consultancy reports.

IMPACT OVERALL
Google Scholar citations (at 25 April 2015): 3820 (2091 since 2010); h-index: 32; i-10 index: 64
TOP TEN PUBLICATIONS, 2005-2010

Note: Perhaps counter to convention I do include in this list some edited, refereed volumes with top university presses which I regard as landmark contributions, to which I have devoted work comparable to that for a monograph, and in which I typically have authored 3 or more chapters. Also, I co-author the bulk of my work, virtually always going by alphabetical order in the author sequence to avoid fruitless discussions about ‘relative contributions’, ‘senior author’, etc.


2. Article - Crisis exploitation: Political and policy impacts of framing contests, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 16(1) 2009, 81-106 (with A. Boin, A. McConnell). Articulates an innovative theory of the role of impression management by both incumbents and oppositions/critics to (re)frame public perceptions of why a crisis has occurred, who is responsible and what should be done now. 5-yr IF: 1.80 (8/46 in Public Administration). 149 cites.


8. **Collection** - *The Real World of EU Accountability: What Deficit?* Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010 (co-ed. with M. Bovens and D. Curtin, co-author of 2 chapters). Harvest of 4-year team effort containing the first consolidated social-scientific assessment of the extent to which various actors/institutions in EU governance are held accountable for their actions. 34 cites.


**EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

Co-editor of *Political Psychology* (2011-2015), Impact Factor: 1.771 ISI Journal Citation Reports © Ranking: 2013: 16/157 (Political Science); 20/61 (Psychology Social). Editorial board member of 8 journals (6 ISI-ranked), including *Cooperation and Conflict, Journal of European Public Policy, European Political Science Review, Australian Journal of Political Science* and *Public Administration*.

**INVITED ADDRESSES/CONFERENCE KEYNOTES (5-year, selection)**