Studying Successful Governance

Moving forward

What emerged from our discussions 1: Feedback for the SPG program

- General support for the impetus/intent/focus on 'success', but need to 'demonstrate' value-add over or relation to similar concepts and research lines such as reputation

- Make choices about operationalization of success and get on with it (acknowledge, but don't be paralyzed by, the complexities)

- Don't create set of research silos, create a programmatic matrix (or find other ways to explore commonalities, links between policy, org, collab, local public value streams in the program)

- Address the counterfactuals problem head on when you select cases, design comparisons, and consider experimental methods

What emerged from the discussions 2: generic observations

- ***Move away from 'big'/heroic/digital notion of success***

  - Achievement (good stuff happening) vs avoidance (bad stuff not happening)

  - Governance as happiness factory vs as necessary evil/nuisance, 'taker', enforcer distributor of pain

  - Man-on-the-moon one-off projects vs mundane, ongaing service delivery

  - Temporal dimension: Static vs dynamic success assessment

  - Elaborate small wins notion

What emerged from the discussions 2: generic observations

- *Move away from naive, 'feel-good' thinking about of success*

    - Need for reflexive and critical scrutiny of government/governance as 'engineering'

    - Success at T1 might actively breed vulnerability/failure at T2 (positive feedback loops, rigidifcation, complacence)

    - Success not only achieved by deliberate, rational, transparent, democratic methods, but also by subterfuge, doing nothing, luck, delay, calculated disappointment, grubby deals)

Paths forward (I): Emergent ideas

- Collaborative QCA / Social Network Analysis project on agecy success

- Crowd-sourced creation of structured and focused large n set of success case studies (as common pool resource for researchers – open access via SPG website; CPI collaboration?)

- In parallel: Actively solicit, cultivate and publish on-line practitioner narratives of success (ibid)

Paths forward (II): SPG-driven ambitions

- Great Policy Successes volume

- Great Aussie/Kiwi Policy Successes volume (with Mike Mintrom)

- The Successful State volume

- Book series

Great Policy Successes – case study template

Why is this case included in this volume? What, in other words, is its fundamental 'claim to success'?

What was the social, political and institutional context in which the policy (program, project, initiative) was developed?

What specific challenges was it seeking to tackle, what if any specific aims did it seek to achieve?

Who were the policy's main drivers, sponsors, entrepreneurs, and how did they operate to create and maintain momentum for the policy?

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

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

How did the implementation process – 'what happens after a bill becomes a law' (Bardach, 1977) – unfold, and what (f)actors shaped it most?

How did the impression management process – the public and political framing of the rationale, operation and effects of the policy post its political adoption – unfold, and what (f)actors shaped it most?

How at the time of writing do the public value 'scorecard' (Moore, 2013) and reputational 'balance sheet' (Maor, 2014) look like?

What, overall, can policy analysts and policy actors (of different ilk) learn from this instance of policy success?

The Successful State, volume overview