

Leading for public sector success in the VUCA age

Paul 't Hart

**Utrecht University
Netherlands School of Public Administration
Australia New Zealand School of Government**



Succes (I)

Agency institutionalisation cycle



The anatomy of successful public agencies

(Goodsell, 2011)

	<i>Prime qualities</i>	<i>Essential elaborations</i>	<i>Temporal aspects</i>
<i>A purposive aura:</i>	A central mission purpose permeates the agency	The societal need met by the mission is seen as urgent	Has a distinctive reputation based on achievement
<i>Internal commitment:</i>	Agency personnel are intrinsically motivated	Agency culture institutionalizes the belief system	Agency history is known and celebrated
<i>Sustaining features:</i>	Beliefs are open to contestation and opposition	Agency enjoys qualified policy autonomy to permit appropriate adaptation	Agency renewal and learning is ongoing

Institution-building: Leadership Practices

(Boin and Christensen, 2008)

- 1: Orient the organisation towards a core purpose
- 2: Facilitate trial-and-error processes in the pursuit of effective practices.
- 3: Closely monitor the process by which norms emerge
- 4: Play an active role when it comes to the embedding of accepted norms within an organization.
- 5: Continuously adapt the organization without compromising its identity.

Example: Amsterdam Child Protection

Success (II): High-Reliability Organising

HRO = Enhanced capacity for sustained performance in complex, dynamic environments through early problem detection & intelligent improvisation to contain emerging problems



High-reliability organizing...

(Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007)

....Prevents problems through disciplined attention & rich feedback streams

- ◆ Pre-occupation with failure
- ◆ Reluctance to simplify interpretations
- ◆ Sensitivity to operations

.....Keeps incidents small through flexible & smart response

- ◆ Capacity for resilience
- ◆ Expertise above rank in operational decision-making

HRO: on the march?

- ◆ From nuclear and petrochemical plants, aircraft carriers....
- ◆ to cockpits, air traffic control systems and power grids....
- ◆ to hospital ER's/IC's,..... to C3I in policing / emergency services?
- ◆ to science labs and cybersecurity protection...
- ◆ to real-time human services frontlines & high-stakes regulatory oversight?

HRO: Leadership Practices

(Weick and Sutcliffe, 2007)

- ◆ Integrate 'reliability' into mission and quality/performance indicators
- ◆ Create a culture of embracing error (mistake-makers, mistake-callers)
- ◆ Create a culture of alertness through continuous self-monitoring
- ◆ Resist temptation to micro-manage operations; empower the front-line to exercise professional judgment
- ◆ Prevent complacency and groupthink by creating space for difference and disagreement

Success (III): Collaborative Governance



Hart voor de samenleving, hard tegen ondermijning
Samen tegen georganiseerde criminaliteit



Regionaal Informatie en Expertise Centrum (RIEC)
RIEC Zeeland West-Brabant en
RIEC Oost-Brabant



*"Een ambtelijke fusieorganisatie
levert meer voordelen dan nadelen op"*



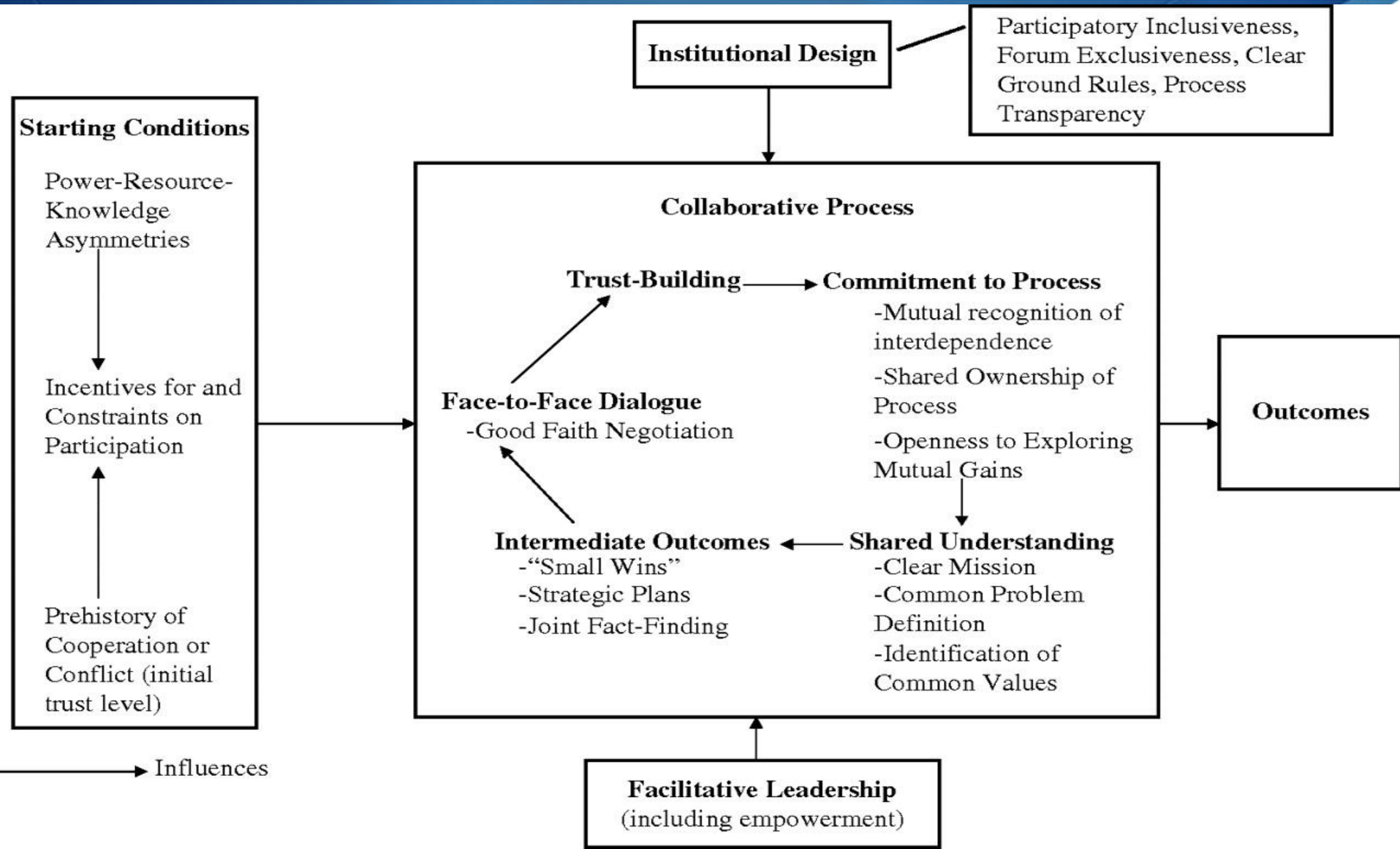
Deltaprogramma 2017

Werk aan de delta

Opgaven verbinden, samen op koers

LEES DEZE PUBLIKATI

Making Collaboration Work



Collaboration: 'facilitative' leadership

The work	The role
Boundary-spanning: forging links; exploring interdependencies; creating goodwill	AMBASSADOR
(Re)framing: challenging conventions; systems thinking; mobilizing new knowledge	CATALYST
Seduction: convening, protecting & maintaining collaborative forums	STEWARD
Process management: orchestrating & channeling multilateral dialogue	MEDIATOR
Consolidation: capacity-building, incentivizing continuation	GOVERNOR

Enter: the VUCA age

- ◆ **Volatility:** liquid societies, 4th industrial revolution, return of geopolitics
- ◆ **Uncertainty:** about 'operating environment', about 'rules of the game', about 'what works'
- ◆ **Complexity:** 'wicked problems', interactivity, tightly coupled systems
- ◆ **Ambiguity:** of values, preferences, meaning-making

The changing PS operating environment

Age of modernity

Age of VUCA

- ◆ Parties and program politics
- ◆ Power of analysis, numbers, coalition-building
- ◆ Robust institutions providing input legitimacy
- ◆ Interest groups and lobbies
- ◆ Citizen: voter, client, subject
- ◆ National government
- ◆ Hierarchies & Markets

- ◆ Personalities and symbolic politics
- ◆ Power of drama, emotions and immediacy
- ◆ Challenged institutions needing to 'deliver'
- ◆ Web communities, crowds, self-governance cooperatives
- ◆ Citizen: co-creator, monitor
- ◆ Multi-level governance
- ◆ Hybrids & Networks

Coping with VUCA: PS capacities required

- ◆ *Responsiveness*: to citizens, partners
- ◆ *Reliability*: effective public service provision
 - ◆ *Reform*: capacity to change and innovate
 - ◆ *Resilience*: improvising and bouncing back
- ◆ *Reputation*: preserving institutional legitimacy
 - ◆ *Reason*: stewardship of systemic values
 - ◆ *Reflexivity*: double-loop learning

Beacons of hope

- ◆ The rise of **public value management & new public governance**
- ◆ The rise of the **behavioral state**: from EBP to BIT's
- ◆ The rise of **design thinking** and **experimentalist governance**
- ◆ The rise of **innovation from below**: municipalities & regions as 'labs'
- ◆ The good news: Denmark is 'on the ball' in all domains