



University of Aruba



Universiteit Utrecht

Public Value Creation by Civil Society Organizations

*Insights from Social, Health, and
Cultural CSOs in Aruba and Bonaire*

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An Evolving Kingdom: Understanding the context

After two waves of constitutional reform (1986 & 2010) and now four decades later

Changing governance arrangements

- Ongoing debates on autonomy, accountability, and democratic deficit
- Unfulfilled ambitions regarding Kingdom cohesion and cooperation

Growing vulnerabilities

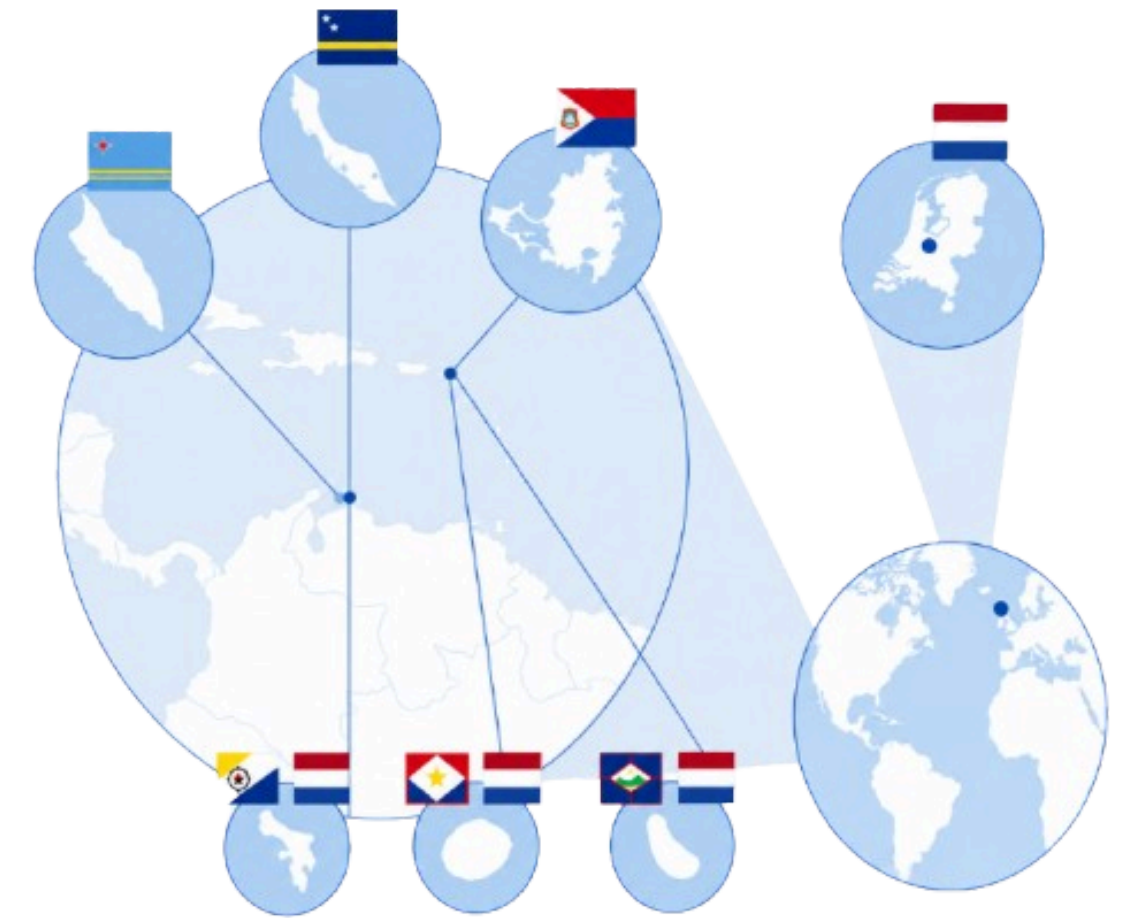
- Exposure to external shocks (COVID-19, natural disasters, geo-politics)
- Persistent dependence on external resources and expertise

Changing societal needs

- Ageing populations and increasing care demands
- Housing pressures and affordability challenges
- More complex social and mental-health needs

Increasing governance complexity

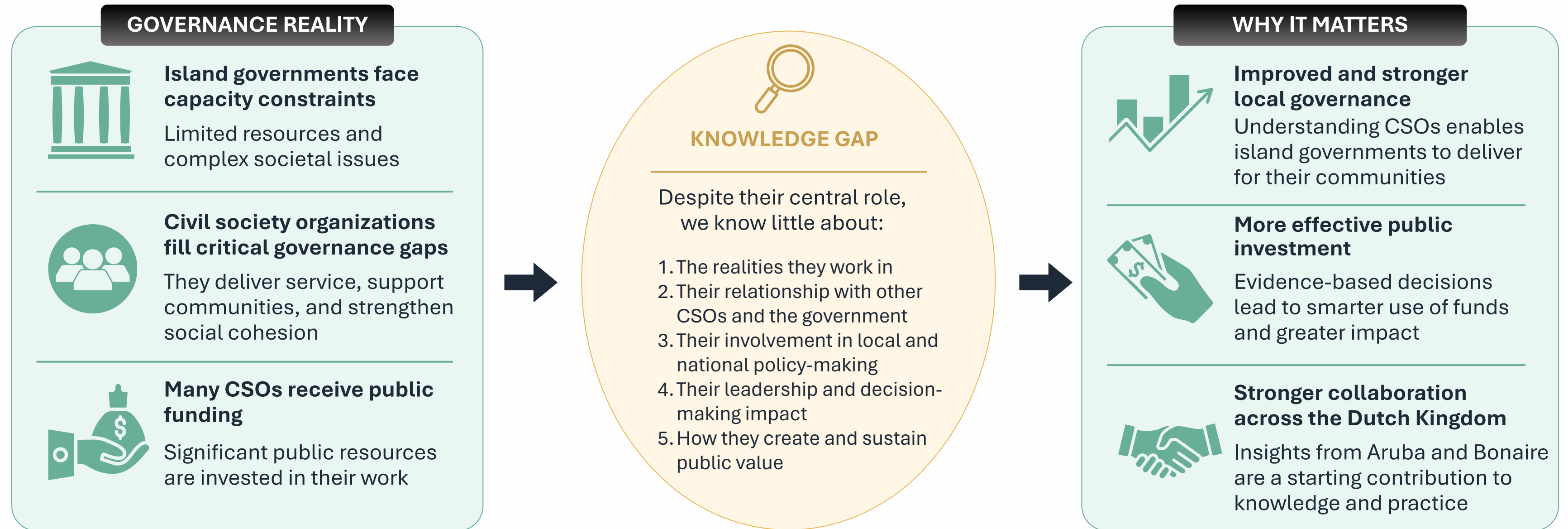
- Multi-level governance arrangements
- Expanding policy responsibilities
- Coordination across Kingdom, national, and local actors
- Balancing local priorities with external governance frameworks



Source: Kingdom Agenda for Cooperation and Reform (2014); Staatscommissie Demografische Ontwikkelingen Caribisch Nederland 2050 (Gerichte Groei, 2024); CBS Caribbean Netherlands.

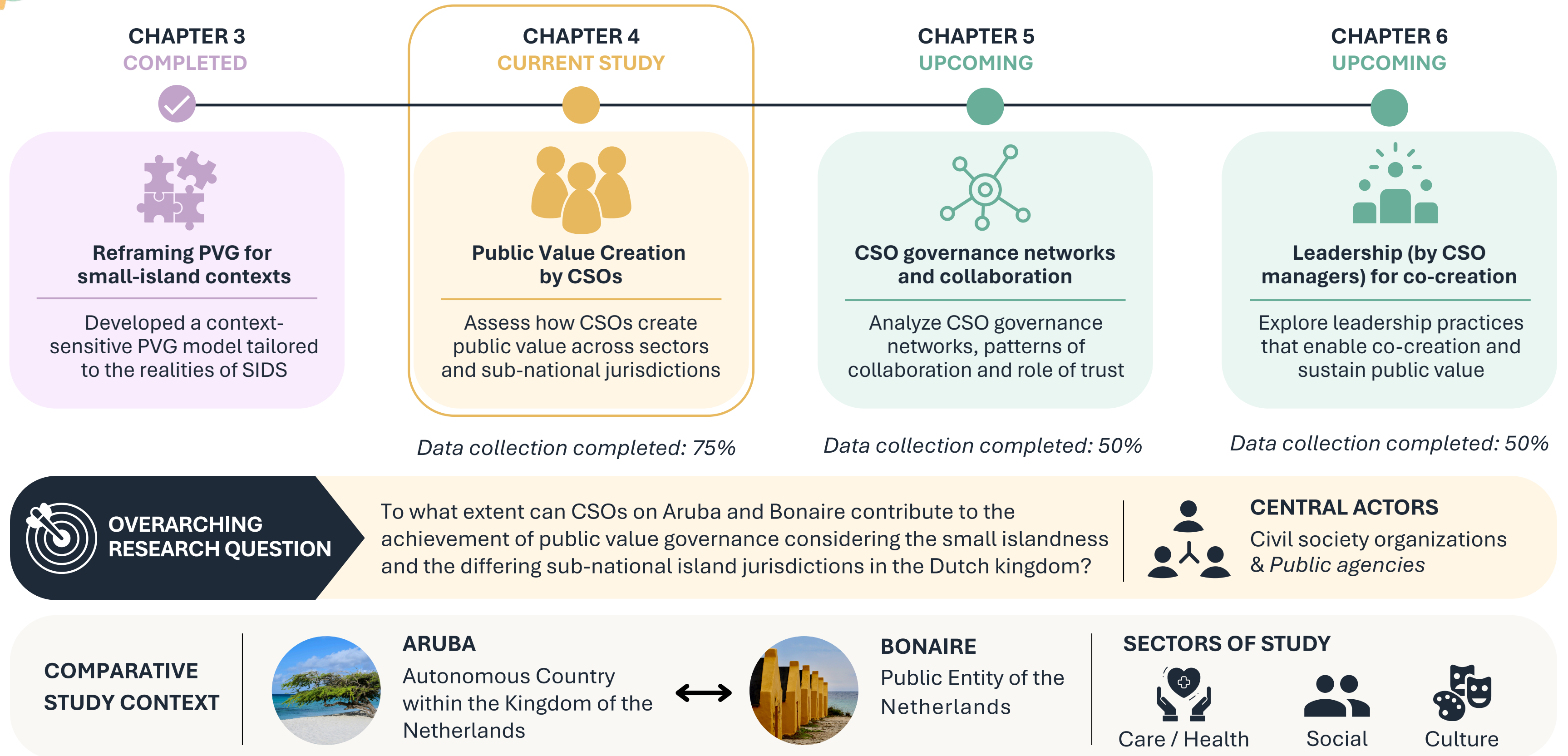
Why Study Public Value Governance in the Dutch Caribbean?

Civil society organizations are essential to governance and well-being in small-island states





Creating Value *from The Ground Up*: A Roadmap



Today: We focus on Chapter 4 - Public Value Creation by CSOs

Public Value Governance Through a Small-Island Lens

What Chapter 3 revealed

Mainstream PVG	Small-Island
Stable institutions	Constitutional diversity
Clear authorizing environments	Fragmented authority
Formal governance structures	Informal relationships
Professionalized capacity	Resource constraints
State-centered governance	Multi-actor governance

Existing Public Value Governance theories provide valuable insights but insufficiently account for the realities of small-island governance.

Reframing Public Value Governance

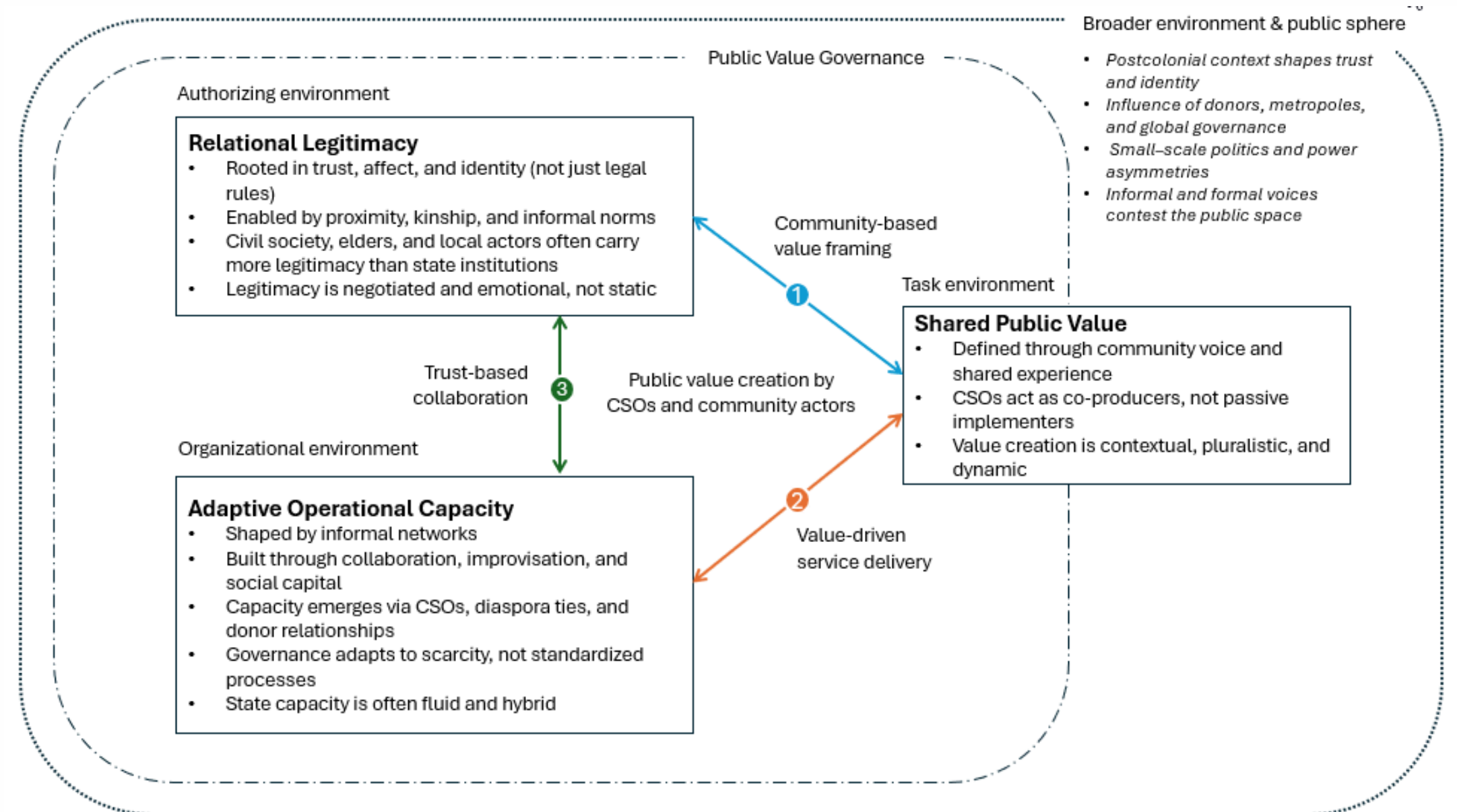
What Chapter 3 revealed

PVG Strategic Triangle (adapted)

1. Shared Public Value
2. Adaptive Operational Capacity
3. Relational Legitimacy

Three Relational Mechanisms (new)

1. Community-Based Value Framing
2. Value-Driven Service Delivery
3. Trust-Based Collaboration



Note. Authors' own elaboration, adapted from Moore (1995) and Thabit, S., Sancino, A., & Mora, L. (2024).

Research Question

How do civil society organizations create public value in small-island contexts, and how does this vary across the subnational jurisdictions in the Kingdom of the Netherlands?

Data collection & Analysis (2025-2026)

Data sources:

1. approximately **100** semi-structured interviews with CSOs and other stakeholders across the 3 sectors and 2 islands
2. six focus group meetings across the 3 sectors and 2 islands
3. Other supportive data sources:
 - documentation and notes
 - field observations
 - data from other research projects I am part of

90% done

*upcoming
fall 2026*

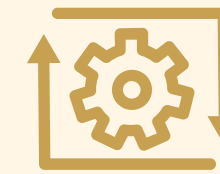
Analysis approach:

- coding of all interview transcripts, documents, notes (focus groups, observations, other data entry), and applying thematic analysis through the NVivo software
- focus groups served as a means to present preliminary findings and for participants to respond to the results while providing further insights and depth

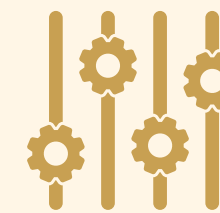
Preliminary Insights from Ongoing Fieldwork

- Results represent 12% of the total data collected so far
- Islands: Aruba and Bonaire
- Sectors: Healthcare/Care, Social, and Cultural
- Type of organizations: NGOs, GOs, and Hybrid organizations

PRELIMINARY RESULTS SECTIONS



Sectoral Findings



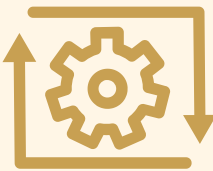
Cross-Sectoral Comparison



Cross-Island Comparison



Emerging Theoretical Implications



Care Sector

Dominant Strategic Triangle Element

Adaptive Operational Capacity

Dominant Public Value Creation Mechanism

Value-Driven Service Delivery

Shared Public Values

- Ageing with dignity
- Independence and self-reliance
- Wellbeing and quality of life
- Care accessibility
- Community support

Governance Role

- Coordinating care actors across fragmented systems
- Identifying emerging care needs before policy responses
- Bridging communities, providers, families, and government

Governance Tension

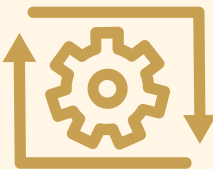
- Growing demand versus organizational capacity

Islandness Conditions

- Resource scarcity
- Informality
- Multi-level governance
- Preliminary Interpretation



Public value creation in the care sector is strongly associated with maintaining service continuity despite increasing demand and limited human resources.



Social Sector

Dominant Strategic Triangle Element

Adaptive Operational Capacity

Dominant Public Value Creation Mechanism

Value-Driven Service Delivery

Shared Public Values

- Social inclusion
- Reintegration
- Human dignity
- Safety and stability
- Equal opportunities

Governance Role

- Connecting fragmented institutions
- Supporting citizens through complex systems
- Coordinating responses across policy domains

Governance Tension

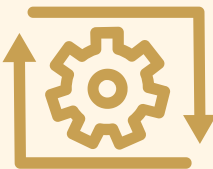
- Integrated social challenges versus fragmented governance structures

Islandness Conditions

- Resource scarcity
- Informality
- Housing constraints
- Multi-level governance



Public value creation in the social sector (focus on youth / women) depends heavily on organizational flexibility and the ability to continuously respond to evolving social needs.



Cultural Sector

Dominant Strategic Triangle Element

Relational Authorizing Environment

Dominant Public Value Creation Mechanism

Value-Driven Service Delivery

Shared Public Values

- Cultural identity
- Cultural participation
- Heritage preservation
- Community development
- Accessibility

Governance Role

- Advocating for community identity
- Translating local priorities into policy language
- Connecting communities with funding and governance systems

Governance Tension

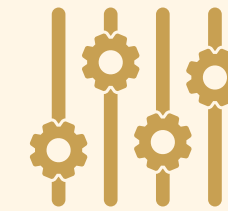
- Community identity versus fragmented policy ownership

Islandness Conditions

- Multi-level governance
- Resource scarcity
- Overlapping roles



Public value creation in the cultural sector depends on the ability to connect local cultural priorities with external governance and funding structures.



What Public Values Are Being Pursued?

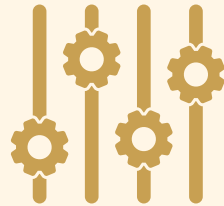
Key Insight

Public value is defined less through policy outputs (which goes against public funding systems like *output subsidie*) and more through community wellbeing, participation, belonging, resilience, and social cohesion.

Governance Question

Who defines public value: communities, organizations, funders, or governments?

Public value is framed less in terms of governmental outputs and more in terms of community wellbeing, inclusion, resilience, and social participation.



Cross-Sector Comparison: Strategic Triangle

Key Finding

Adaptive Operational Capacity emerged as the strongest dimension across sectors.

Why this matters

In mainstream Public Value Governance literature, public value creation is often associated with strong authorizing environments and stable governance arrangements.

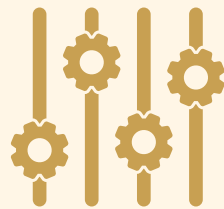
In Aruba and Bonaire, organizations spoke far more frequently about adaptation than about authorizing structures.

New takeaway

Small-island public value creation appears to depend more heavily on organizational adaptation than mainstream PVG theory would predict.

Strategic Triangle Element	Care & Health	Social	Culture
Shared Public Value	High	High	High
Adaptive Operational Capacity	Very High	Very High	High
Relational Authorizing Environment	High	Medium-High	Very High

Public value creation appears to depend primarily on organizational adaptation, while authorizing environments vary by sector.



Cross-Sector Comparison: PVC Mechanisms

Community-Based Value Framing

Strongest in: Care & Health and Social Services

- Direct engagement with beneficiaries
- Needs identified through lived experience
- Informal consultation and feedback

Value-Driven Service Delivery

Strongest mechanism across sectors

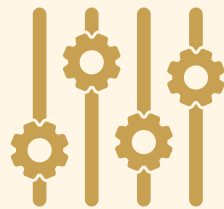
- Needs translated into action
- Responsive and adaptive services
- Primary pathway to public value

Trust-Based Collaboration

Present but uneven

- Built on personal relationships
- Informal networks facilitate action
- Less institutionalized than expected

Mechanism	Care & Health	Social	Culture
Community-Based Value Framing	High	High	Medium
Value-Driven Service Delivery	Very High	Very High	High
Trust-Based Collaboration	Medium	Medium-High	Medium



Cross-Sectoral
Comparison

What Role Does Islandness Play?

Governance Implications

Advantages:

- Strong social ties
- Rapid communication
- Easier mobilization

Challenges:

- Resource scarcity
- Overlapping roles
- Multi-level governance complexity

Takeaway

Islandness is not merely context; it actively shapes governance processes.

Islandness Condition	Care & Health	Social Services	Culture
Resource Scarcity	Very High	Very High	High
Multi-Level Governance	High	High	Very High
Informality	High	Very High	Medium
Overlapping Roles	Medium	Medium	High
Political Proximity	Medium	Medium	Low
Political Polarization	Low	Low	Low

“Islandness” shapes both the constraints organizations face and the mechanisms through which public value is created.



Aruba and Bonaire: Similar Challenges, Different Governance Contexts

Observable Differences

Aruba	Bonaire
Autonomous country within the Kingdom	Public Entity of the Netherlands
One governance level	Two governance levels
Greater local autonomy	Shared authority with Dutch ministries
Local policy authority	Stronger external policy influence
Direct local accountability	Multiple accountability structures

Shared Challenges

- Resource scarcity
- Workforce shortages
- Capacity limitations
- Small-scale governance dynamics

Key Difference

Organizations in Bonaire reported spending more time navigating governance arrangements, accountability structures, and externally developed policy frameworks.

Preliminary Validation of the Reframed PVG Model

- ✓ Shared Public Value
- ✓ Adaptive Operational Capacity
- ✓ Relational Legitimacy

Three tensions in (island-based) PVG

1. Capacity and demand.
2. Community needs and fragmented governance structures.
3. Local priorities and external governance environments.

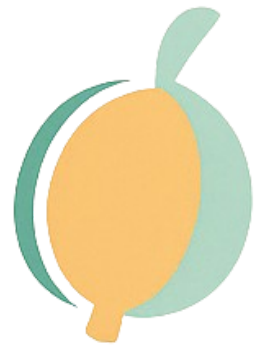
Public value emerges not despite these tensions, but often through organizations' ability to navigate them. At the same time, these preliminary findings provide initial support for the reframed Public Value Governance framework.



Emerging Theoretical Implications

Governance Role of CSOs
Governance Coordinators
Governance Connectors
Community Advocates
Public Value Interpreters
Institutional Adaptors

If public value is increasingly created by CSOs *from the ground up*, what institutional arrangements, governance structures, and policy processes are needed to ensure that civil society organizations help shape governance decisions rather than compensate for governance limitations?



Creating Value *from* The Ground Up

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