Next Public Leadership

Senior Civil Service Leadership in Times of Change

A Vision Document at the request of the Office for the Senior Civil Service
by: Nikol Hopman, in cooperation with Caspar van den Berg
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Introduction

Leaders have two jobs: Handling today’s issues and getting ready for the future. (Rosabeth Moss Kanter)

At the request of the Director-General of the Office for the Senior Civil Service, the Leiden Leadership Centre of Leiden University has explored the current state of public leadership. The goal of our research was to offer building blocks for reflection and inspiration, in order to help realise a future-proof vision of leadership for the senior civil servants in the national government. This report offers a bird’s eye-view of the different conceptualisations of leadership and sketches the evolution of our ideas about leadership through time. Next to this panoramic view, we provide several more detailed pictures of the here and now in various contexts. We, thus, zoom in and out between the broad landscape of ideas on leadership and the details of specific current examples. Our understanding of public leadership is fluid and changes over time. The metaphor of the kaleidoscope applies: the perspective you take, determines what you see.

The research report is organised as follows. Chapter 1 provides a conceptual framework for understanding public leadership. I offer a sketch of our thinking about leadership through time. Next, in Chapter 2, we provide an overview of the ongoing changes in the organisation of the national government as well as of relevant societal trends. After all, ideas about public leadership, particularly among the senior civil servants, do not develop in a vacuum, but are both influenced by and an influence on the societal context. We focus particularly on the interaction between politics and leadership. In a constantly changing environment, both in- and outside of the national government, our conception of the role for senior civil servants also constantly evolves.

These first two chapters yield four building blocks in total. Chapter 3 explains, using comparative analysis, how these building blocks can be applied to practice. We describe and analyse leadership in a variety of specific contexts. I first discuss in more detail the conceptualisations of leadership that exist within the civil service, both within the Office for the Senior Civil Service and within the various departments. Second, we will analyse three examples from abroad: how is Senior Civil Service leadership understood and envisioned in the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Australia? Third, three benchmarks of leadership in the corporate sector are described. These cases illustrate how changes in the environment or in an organisation can affect how leadership is conceptualised. Chapter 4 concludes with a number of observations and recommendations regarding the future of Senior Civil Service leadership in the national government.

Our motto is that ‘leadership is a journey’ en ‘the map is not the terrain.’ This report, thus, does not offer a blueprint and you will not find the recipe for good leadership. It is not intended to serve as a final destination, but rather as a starting point and a source of inspiration. The analysis and the building blocks are intended to contribute to a fruitful exchange of perspectives and ideas, so that a future-proof and attractive vision for civil service leadership in the national government may be realised. The focus herein is on the Top Management Group, i.e. the most senior civil servants.

We wish you a pleasant journey!
I. A Conceptual Framework for Public Leadership

As a dancer you can’t see the patterns of the dance. To discern the patterns you have to get to the balcony. 
(Ronald Heifetz)

Each time needs its own leaders and leadership. In this chapter we use relevant literature on leadership to provide you with a bird’s eye view. We give an overview of the different theories and academic concepts and we then offer, as a conceptual tool, two building blocks on which one can build a solid vision for Senior Civil Service leadership.

1.1 Concepts of Leadership: An Historical Overview

Thinking about leadership began with a focus on the individual, the hero, the big leader. This strand of thought arose largely after the Second World War, but was to some degree already seen much earlier among the Greeks, Romans, and in Eastern civilisations. This strand of literature concentrates mainly on the ‘great man,’ who was usually indeed a man and normally also a military leader. Prominent examples of so-called great men are Alexander the Great, Napoleon and Churchill. The theory building around this type of view on leadership is generally called ‘great man theory’ (Carlyle, Stogdill, 1948). The assumption is that leaders are born: you either have it or you don’t. This type of research initially focused primarily on what the innate characteristics of leaders are, so this approach to understanding leadership has also come to be known as the traits approach. The types of traits discussed in this literature include, among others, intelligence (and analytical ability), self-confidence, determination, integrity and social skills (extraverted and communicative). In addition, physical and social traits have been thought to be of importance. Indeed, research shows that leaders (still) tend to be male, white, tall and from the upper social classes.

Nevertheless, traits are difficult to measure and, even more importantly, they seem to suggest little about the chances for successful leadership in practice. So research after the Second World War soon turned to what capabilities leaders (need to) have. This strand of research, in other words, concentrates on leadership skills. The central question in this body of literature has been as follows: which skills and competencies make a leader effective? (Katz, 1955). As with the traits approach, the leader as a person is also central to this approach. An important difference, however, is that skills can be acquired and developed. Leadership, in other words, can be cultivated. A whole range of desirable and required skills, competences and profiles have been discussed. ‘Knowledge’ is in this body of literature also considered as a skill (or competence). The development of personal leadership according to the seven (and later eight) characteristics of personal effectiveness as described by S. Covey is one of the most important contributions in this tradition (1989). Also interesting is the broader perspective that S.M.R. Covey, S. Covey’s son, adopted almost twenty years later. He sees leadership not just at the level of the individual, but also at the level of the organisation and society at large (2006). He emphasizes both the leader’s ‘character’ (attitude and talent) and ‘competences’ (knowledge, skill and style), and also gives central importance to trust, integrity and ‘congruence’ (credibility).
Even with the skills approach, we have hardly exhausted the intellectual landscape on leadership. Another strand of research concentrates on leadership styles and behaviour: the focus here is on what leaders do. In the behaviourist tradition, there is an important distinction between two types of leadership styles: one style which concentrates primarily on the task and one which concentrates primarily on the person (Blake&Mouton, 1964/1978).

In the literature on leadership styles, a distinction is also made between Theory X and Theory Y, two different views leaders can take on human nature, and which impacts how they view their relation to subordinates. Leaders that hold on to Theory X, assume that subordinates have to be stimulated by external incentives to overcome a natural tendency towards idleness and indifference. This is why control mechanisms and sanctions are necessary. Leaders that hold a Theory Y perspective of human nature believe that subordinates are intrinsically motivated and enjoy taking personal responsibility for their tasks. In this case, the style of the leader will be oriented towards facilitation and guidance. A leader’s view on human nature is, thus, determinant for the style of leadership and her treatment of subordinates. Leaders, of course, hold these views independent from how their subordinates actually behave.

Insight into all the aforementioned personal qualities of leaders (i.e., traits, skills and styles) still does not appear to suggest much about the chances of success for leaders in practice. What is it exactly that makes leadership effective in different types of situations? The starting point of the situational approach is that different situations will require different leadership styles (Hershey&Blanchard, 1969). Sometimes situations may require a directive leadership style, while at other times they may require an empowering leadership approach. Both the actual capacities and attitudes of subordinates are explicitly considered in the leader’s choice of styles (in contrast to the approach sketched above): what are they capable of and what do they need?

Even broader than the situational approach is the contingency theory of leadership (Fiedler, 1964, 1974). Three variables are distinguished: the relationship between the leader and subordinates; the structure of the task; and the position of power. It is important to emphasize that leadership here is still understood as what a leader does.

A further elaboration on the importance of the relationship between the leader and subordinates is leader member exchange theory (LMX). It assumes that a leader has a personal and independent relationship with each subordinate, which varies according to what works best given the difficulty of the task, and the motivation and capacities of the particular subordinate (Graen, 1976; Uhl Bien, 1995).

Related to leadership are the notions of power and authority, and our understanding of these notions is also subject to change. Important for our understanding here is Weber’s work. He describes authority as a special form of power, namely as power that is legitimate. With this kind of power, subjects willingly and/or on the basis of their interests follow a leader. The legitimation of power can be based on various sources. Below we provide an overview of the types of authority and their sources of legitimacy, as distinguished by Weber.
Type of authority | Source of legitimacy
---|---
Traditional authority | The leader is accepted because this authority structure has always been in place (tradition, custom)
Charismatic authority | The leader is accepted on the basis of exceptional, appealing qualities (the leader and his/her charisma)
Legal-rational authority | The leader is accepted because she is legally authorised to exercise authority
Functional authority | The leader is accepted on the basis of her functional competence (when the leader has proven her professionalism/expertise in the function)

Table 1. Source: Van Braam, 1986

In practice these types of authority are, of course, not mutually exclusive, and authority can be exercised on the basis of a combination of these sources of legitimacy. Over time, there has been a shift in the relative importance of these different sources of legitimacy. In pre-industrial societies, traditional authority, based on lineage and/or divine ordination, had an important role. The rationalisation of Western societies that came with industrial development, urbanisation and the emancipation of the masses, however, reduced the importance of traditional authority. This demystification was compensated for by a rise in the importance of legal-rational authority, in particular an increase in functional authority.

Building on Weber, Van Braam provides a conceptual scheme regarding leadership focus, type of leadership, and accompanying styles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership focus</th>
<th>Type of Leadership</th>
<th>Accompanying style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source of authority</td>
<td>Charismatic leadership</td>
<td>Largely personal and driven by the exceptional qualities of the leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bureaucratic leadership</td>
<td>Largely formal and impersonal, based on rationality and legality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making style</td>
<td>Autocratic leadership</td>
<td>Largely personal, individualistic, and unpredictable, with little concern for internal organisation, extending information to subordinates and including the lower echelons of authority in decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Democratic leadership</td>
<td>Largely based on cooperation, voice and joint authority over subordinates, predictable and humane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agility</td>
<td>Static leadership</td>
<td>Little inclined to taking new initiatives and making changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dynamic leadership</td>
<td>Largely personal, change and innovation-oriented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Freely from: Van Braam, 1986
Another approach to the concept of power looks more broadly at the sources of power and influence. It makes a distinction between five types of power, which are as follows in order of increasing inequality: subordinates identify with the leader (referent power); they trust her expertise (expert power); they recognise the formal status and legal position (legitimate power); they conform in order to attain certain benefits (reward power); and in the most oppressive form, they are coerced by the leader (coercive power).

Since the 1960s and 1970s, we have seen that authorities have increasingly come under public scrutiny. Whereas previously the authority of elites, professionals and institutions was commonly accepted, such authority is now constantly questioned. In modern society, authority has come to depend on the satisfaction of demanding citizens who are continually asking: ‘What have you done for us lately?’ (‘t Hart, 2012, p. 24).

Charismatic authority is a type of authority that can support leadership in all times and contexts. But here we also see fluctuations in its importance through time: whereas the idea of authority based on office and function has increasingly come under pressure in Western societies since the 1960s and 1970s, charismatic authority has become much more important. There is an increasing societal focus on the authenticity of leaders. Public leadership nowadays requires genuineness and credibility, and authority should be consistently earned and granted on this basis, time and again. The personal qualities of the leader, rather than her formal position, have, thus, once again become important. Whether the leader is a ‘Great Man’ in the traditional sense is not so important, rather what is important are his relationships with others.

Groundbreaking in the thinking about charisma and leadership was the idea of transformational leadership by McGregor Burns (1978). With transformational leadership there is not a one-way relationship between a leader and her subordinates (a ‘transactional relationship’), but rather a two-way relationship that emphasizes the transformation and development of the subordinates and the shared responsibility of the leaders and subordinates in bringing about fundamental changes. The concept of leadership here is not so much about leaders reaching individual goals, but more about the furthering of collective, communal goals by leaders and followers alike.

After Burns’ seminal work, we see an increased focus on the idea of leadership as a relationship. In this line of thought, the idea of servant leadership is very important (Greenleaf, 2004). With servant-leadership, the relationship between the leader and subordinates is practically reversed: the leader should serve those who are lead. ‘To lead people is to walk behind them’ (Lao Tzu, see also: ‘quiet leadership,’ Mintzberg, 2004).

The emphasis in research on leadership has, thus, shifted more and more from just the leaders to also the followers (Kellerman; Lipman Blumen). In addition, attention has turned to the idea of leadership as a relationship (S. Ospina&Uhl-Bien, 2013). The focus herein is on collective leadership. The relational aspect of leadership is denoted by a variety of interchangeable terms in the (English) literature, including collective, shared, distributed, and collaborative leadership.

In recent years, there has been a growing realisation that our understanding of the success of leadership is still lacking, even with our increased focus on the followers. ‘It is not possible to analyse leaders in the absence of followers or contexts’ (Grint, 2010). The importance of context, the environment in which leadership manifests, has thus also obtained a more prominent position. Often
a link is made here to the increasing interconnectedness of our world, and hitherto the complexity of modern puzzles (complexity theory, Uhl Bien) and the existence of ‘wicked problems’ (e.g., Weick 2002, Grint 2007/10). Wilber states that ‘all meaning is context bound’ (2000).

In various disciplines, there is attention for what leadership means in a complex and dynamic world (‘t Hart speaks of ‘turbulence’), and for how to deal with uncertainties and not-knowing. One important area is that of ‘learning organizations’ (Senge) and ‘adaptive leadership’ (Heifetz). The importance of observing and being sensitive to and capable of identifying developments (‘sensing’ and ‘presencing’) is strongly emphasized in various publications (Scharmer, Heifetz, Kahane). A term that is often used is that of ‘emergent’ leadership (Scharmer, 2007). It is also interesting here to note the idea of ‘invisible’ leadership (Hickman&Sorensson, 2014) and the idea that the common purpose is the leader. A new development is the growing attention for leadership in networks and even for understanding networks as leaders, inspired by the rise of new internet and ICT technologies (Baker, 2014) and the enormous growth of social media as a source of information and communication offers real-time possibilities for influence and mobilisation on a hitherto unknown scale.

### 1.2 Towards a Conceptual Framework for Public Leadership

*The question of what is leadership is unanswerable because it is not possible to analyze leaders in the absence of followers or contexts. (...) It is therefore not how many competencies you can tick off on your CV that makes you a successful leader, for these are inevitable decontextualized. (...) Competencies then are often essentially related to an individual, yet leadership is necessarily a relational phenomenon.*

(Grint, 2010)

There are many ways of looking at leadership, and we see wide variety of definitions both in theory and practice. More important than providing yet another ‘true’ definition of leadership, however, is to realise that many different conceptualisations and understandings of leadership are in circulation. And the metaphor of the kaleidoscope is apt here: the perspective you take, determines what you see. On the basis of our analysis of the literature on leadership and inspired by Grint (2010, 2012), we distinguish four clusters of concepts regarding leadership: leadership as a personal quality, leadership as a position, leadership as a process and leadership as a guiding purpose. Below we elaborate on these four conceptualisations.

The first way to understand leadership is to look at the individual, or the leader as a person (the ‘who’). This type of leadership is also known as personal or informal leadership. The focus is on charisma and authenticity, and on inspiration and the natural exertion of authority. The Traits approach fits into this conceptualisation: leadership as an innate, personal quality. But also the Skills approach conceives of a leader as a person, with the underlying conviction that one can acquire leadership skills through education and training, and this approach emphasizes the cultivation of leadership.

A different way of understanding leadership is by looking at the formal position (or the ‘where’): the idea of leadership is then coupled to where someone is placed within an organisation (the individual
as an official). Leadership is equivalent to supervision. In Weber’s terms, the conceptualisation of leadership here combines the ideas of legal-rational and functional authority.

A third conceptualisation which has received more emphasis in recent years focuses on the process (the ‘how’): the roles, rules, procedures and formal responsibilities. Of importance here is the institutional infrastructure: the organisation and the larger system. The leader can from this perspective also be considered as a director.

The fourth conceptualisation that we have identified concentrates on the desired impact and the greater purpose of leadership, of which the leader is (in part) the interpreter. Consider, for example, the idea of ‘leadership for a common purpose’ (McGregor Burns), or ‘leadership for the common good’ (Crosby, 2005). The purpose gives direction and guidance (the what and the why). Some, as we have mentioned above, take this idea one step further and see the purpose itself as the (invisible) leader (Sorensson, 2013).

We have summarised the four clusters of concepts in the scheme below (Hopman, inspired by Grint 2010, 2012).

BUILDING BLOCK 1
We have signalled a number of shifts over time regarding our thinking about and understanding of leadership. One such shift in the latter half of the twentieth century, as concluded by Bolden and his colleagues (2011), is that ‘[i]n leadership theory (...) the focus shifts from leaders to leadership.’ Until halfway through the twentieth century, the focus was primarily on leaders, on persons and positions (the ‘who’: leadership is what the leader does/should do) and the leadership vocabulary concentrated on traits, competencies and skills. In addition, there has been an increased focus on leadership in relation to others and in relation to the specific context: the process (the ‘what and how’) with an emphasis on styles and procedures. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, there has also been a (renewed) emphasis on ‘leadership for what’: the shared goals and communal direction.

Related to this last shift, we also see the discussion turning from individual leadership (person, position) to forms of collective leadership (relational, collected, shared, distributed). ‘Leadership in today’s world requires insight from more than one individual. We must rely constantly on others’ insight even when we are in a position of authority (Baker, 2014, p. 15).’ This turn is related to the increasing awareness of the interconnectedness and complexity of our societal problems. These complex and unrecognisable problems are often called ‘wicked problems.’ ‘Wicked problems require the transfer of authority from individual to collective,’ notes Grint (2012). And Baker (2014) states that ‘[l]eadership becomes a shared dance of responsibility.’

On the basis of the above discussion, we distinguish various perspectives on leadership in the public domain (Hopman, inspired by Wilber’s ‘A Brief History of Everything,’ 2000).

**BUILDING BLOCK 2**

**Public Leadership Perspectives**

![Diagram of Public Leadership Perspectives](image)

- **Internal orientation (organisation)**
  - Team Leadership
  - Organising in chains
  - Management Development
  - Cooperation, partnership

- **External orientation (Context)**
  - Enabling
  - Linking, sense-making, emergence
  - Citizen initiatives
  - Sensitivity, adaptability, agility, presence

- **From inside to outside**
- **Inside with outside**
- **Outside with inside**
- **From outside to inside**

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*Source: [Hopman](https://www.hopman.nl)*
We have now provided two building blocks for shaping a vision on public leadership: a conceptual framework and a categorization of the various perspectives. These building blocks offer us a framework to look at different forms and models of leadership in a structured and cohesive way, and to exchange our thoughts on them. The idea is not that one conceptualisation or perspective is better than the others. It is also not the case that one conceptualisation or perspective needs to exclude the others. Instead, looking at leadership in this way can offer us insights into overlaps and possible blind spots.

In sum, in the literature and in our thinking about leadership, we see a number of developments over time. In terms of the analytical framework sketched above, the following developments are most notable.

First, focus has shifted from the leader as a person (Traits, Skills), to leadership as a position and what leaders do (skills, competences), to the process. Finally, we have recently seen more attention for the intended public value and the common purpose (‘leadership for what’).

Second, we have seen a shift in focus from individual leadership (Great Man, heroic) to a collective, shared understanding of leadership. To this end, there are various interchangeable concepts in the English literature: ‘collective,’ ‘collaborative,’ ‘shared’ or ‘distributed leadership.’ A good example of this type of collective leadership is to visualise it as a swarm of flying birds, which are jointly staying in a ‘V-shape,’ while the head position, often the most difficult due to the wind, is rotated.

Third, we see a trend from internally oriented leadership to externally oriented leadership over time. This is related to the increased awareness of the importance of the external environment in which the leader operates and the insight that contextual variables are also, in part, determinants of the success of leadership. It is important to realise that these have not been all or nothing shifts. That conclusion would be an injustice to practice, which is rarely an either-or matter. Instead, these conceptualisations and perspectives co-exist, but there have merely been shifts in focus and dominance.
II. Senior Civil Service Leadership through Time: Trends and Changing Roles

2.1 Societal Trends and Government Changes

In this section, we look at developments in Senior Civil Service leadership in the context of broader societal developments and changes in governmental organisation. But first a short intermezzo illustrating the current mood on Senior Civil Service leadership.

Senior Civil Service leadership nowadays operates in turbulent times and the art of the chameleon is well-suited in this regard. In the context of a changing environment and constantly shifting political-administrative power constellations, you will have to lead your administrative unit through transition. As a leader in the public domain, you are the crucial link between various spheres of activities. You are charged with implementing structural changes, often under time pressure and on the basis of incomplete information in a context of uncertainty and conflicting interests and values.

It is 25 years ago that the Berlin Wall fell. The end of the Cold War brought the start of a new era. One of optimism and economic growth, but also one in which an orderly bipolar world (East-West) had been replaced with a more complex multipolar world, one with multiple centres of power, various armed conflicts and the break-up of Yugoslavia that was followed by a bloody civil war on European soil. At this moment, there are again severe tensions between Russia and the West because of the armed conflict in the Ukraine, and the combatants of the terrorist movement IS pose an acute threat to safety in Europe and the world. Order and predictability in international relations certainly seems a thing of the past.

The invention of the internet and the world wide access to it that was achieved by the end of the 1990s, was the start of a new era of unlimited possibilities in communication, information flows, and connectivity. We find ourselves in the twenty-first century in an information age where new ICT-inventions and innovations follow each other in rapid succession, and are undermining traditional communication and organisation structures. The emergence of social media has made it possible to be globally connected in real time, and previously unheard of information flows are now realisable. The network society, thus, has a solid basis and the importance of informal ties has greatly increased. There are virtual communities and dynamic alliances, and individuals can exercise great influence on the social issue agenda. Small-scale initiatives can quickly achieve substantial reach, and the framing of policy themes has, also within the government, come into its own as a profession.

From the Second World War until the 1970s, both the number of tasks allocated to government and the government itself grew steadily. It is in this period that the profession of policy official comes into its own, whereas before we predominantly had administrators. Also the profiles of Senior Civil Service leaders changed: from having more generalist and broadly legal backgrounds, to having more specialised and professionalised backgrounds. Senior Civil Servants often had careers within one particular department and generally climbed the hierarchical ladder gradually. They would often feel strongly connected to the department in question.
These changes meant an increase in administrative expertise on substantive dossiers, but they also stimulated compartmentalisation in the national government.

Depillarisation began around 1970. In first instance this led to an expansion in public administration, as the newly acquired tasks in the welfare state were further expanded. Public administration in general and the national government in particular became overburdened by this expansion in their tasks and came under financial pressure. At the end of the 1980s, the idea of new public management (NPM) was introduced in the Netherlands: the government was to be run as a business and where possible tasks should be relegated to the market. Public administration from then on was increasingly focused on purposefulness and efficiency, and it was in this period which we saw the introduction of an output-orientation, performance measurements and management methods that were taken directly from the private sector. The focus in public administration also shifted to the idea of external service provision. At the end of the 1990s, however, emphasis was placed on the ‘uniqueness of government,’ integrity and service to the public interest. This was at least in part a response to the excessive remuneration and far-reaching corporatisation in the provision of public services.

The introduction of NPM to the Netherlands meant that the overburdening of the (national) government at the end of the 1980s was addressed by an expansion of the private sector, by privatisation and by deregulation. Many executive tasks in health care, education and housing were transferred to third parties, removing them from direct democratic control.

In addition, organisations that had received democratic legitimisation through pillarisation (education, health care, etc.) transformed into more management-driven facilitating or independent organisations, so that a new type of quasi-public sector arose.

Since 2008, the cost-reduction perspective with regards to the design, organisation and functioning of public administration has again become dominant in the Netherlands (as well as in several surrounding countries, such as the United Kingdom and Germany). In this environment, civil society organisations and ideas about self-governance with a greater involvement for citizens have again gained a central position in public service delivery. This view on the operation of society is often referred to as the ‘participation society’ or the ‘energetic society,’ and sometimes also the ‘do-democracy.’ Collective tasks are delegated to companies and quasi-public organisations (outsourcing).

This type of state, which works together with but also relegates a lot of tasks to societal partners and society itself, is often described as the ‘enabling state.’ Another commonly used term for this phenomenon is that of ‘new public governance.’ The idea of the enabling state assumes that government can persuade and incentivise citizens and companies to realise policy goals, whereas the active welfare state predominantly trusts its own administrative apparatus in offering public services and in regulating social and economic sectors. In short, the enabling state is supposed to create the foundations for the optimal functioning of the market economy and civil society. Hence, the idea of enabling here does not just mean letting go and providing room for others, but rather it means government taking an active stance to make the ‘energetic society’ possible, by creating and supporting initiatives (‘get the engines of society started’).
In the scheme below, we provide a historical summary of the main leadership models, societal developments and organisational theories (Hopman&Van den Berg; ref. Grint, 2010). The conceptualisation and perspective on leadership changes over time. In the scheme below, we indicate these shifts in terms of our conceptual framework.

2.2 Public Leadership in a National Government in Times of Change

The administration science literature offers us a framework to discuss trends in government organisation and in society at large. On the basis of this literature, we distinguish five dimensions, along which political and administrative choices have been and can be made. These choices are influenced by changes in society and the policy environment, fiscal circumstances and political-ideological motives. By turning several or all five of the knobs on these dimensions, we can create new arrangements and see to what extent these dimensions are independent of each other, or to what extent they amplify each other and thus act more as communicative tools. In the figure below, the five dimensions, or ‘axes of change,’ are displayed in the form of a mixing panel.
BUILDING BLOCK 3:

Strategic Choice Dimensions in the National Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Domain vs. Private Domain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nationalisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centralisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task Division among Administrative Layers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unity/Centralisation and Uniformity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(De-)coupling of Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welfare State</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Administrative - Individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role Conception for Public Officials</td>
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</table>

Below we elaborate on each of these five dimensions.

First, strategic choices in the government can concern the **dividing line between public and private**. One way is by privatisation, where the tasks and organisations that were previously managed by the central government are transferred to parties in the private sector, or by its opposite phenomenon collectivisation, where tasks and organisations that were previously managed by private sector parties are transferred to the domain of government. In addition, the government can enlarge her intervening role in economic and social exchanges (**regulation**), or decrease that role by eliminating rules or increasing their flexibility (**deregulation**).

Second, strategic choices can concern the **territorial division of tasks among administrative layers**. On the one side, tasks, responsibilities and tools can be shifted upwards, such as with **European integration and harmonisation**, but also to other international organisations. On the other side, tasks, responsibilities and prerogatives can be shifted towards more local administrations: **decentralisation** towards the provinces and municipalities.

Third, choices can be made about the **functional division of tasks**, or: **(de)coupling of tasks**. In this context, we often speak of **functional decentralisation** when tasks and responsibilities within the same administrative level are placed further away from the political-administrative centre, for instance by creating quangos or agencies. In addition, with the design of new administrative units one can give them control over a single task or domain (single issue, e.g., water boards or disaster security regions), or one can create administrative units that are responsible for a wide variety of tasks and domains (e.g., provinces, municipalities).
Fourth, changes can concern the relationship between government and society, or the administration and the citizen (or groups of citizens). The individual can first take the role of a subject in relation to the state. In this case, the individual is subordinate to the state, and the government can unitarily delegate tasks or forbid certain activities (e.g., with respect to levying taxes, in its judicial arm or in crisis situations). The individual can also stand in relation to the government as a citizen. With this type of relationship, the individual has both rights and duties with regard to the government. These rights can concern, for example, security, representation and equal treatment, while these duties can, for instance, concern democratic participation and compliance with laws and rules. In the second half of the twentieth century, we also saw the development of the relation of the individual to the government as that of a client, such as when she receives welfare payments in case of unemployment. Throughout the 1980s, the role of the individual, in line with the idea of ‘the government as a corporation’ (NPM), was increasingly seen as that of a customer of government. The individual is in this type of relationship a consumer of the products and services which the government produces in response to demand and/or tries to offer in a service-like fashion. An important difference between the government and a corporation that remains, however, is that as a customer of a corporation one can also make the choice to take one’s business elsewhere, to the competitor, or to stop with receiving a particular service altogether. In the case of the government, the individual usually does not have these options. Finally, there is also the relation between the state and the collective of individuals as a civil society. In this type of relationship all the individuals form a network of organisations and connections that collectively operates in the private domain as a counterweight to the government (Van der Meer, 2009).

Finally, strategic choices can concern political-administrative relations. We can identify various types of political-administrative relations (Nieuwenkamp, 2001; Bekker, 2009). Politicians and administrators are sometimes seen as a joint force, while sometimes they are seen as strictly separate organisational spheres. Another type of strategic choice is whether to see the relationship as one of subordination (the primacy of politics), or more as one of equality (administrative professionalism).

What do these trends and reform options imply for the current practices within the Senior Civil Service? This is predominantly a question for you, the reader, and we invite you to reflect on the various trends with your colleagues and partner organisations on the basis of the five ‘axes of change’ that we have distinguished. With that invitation it is important to keep in mind that these trends are not unambiguous in practice, and can vary both within the breadth and variety of the national government and outside of it. The perspective you adopt will determine what you see. Also here the metaphor of the kaleidoscope applies. For example, the Ministry of Justice & Security, given the threat of (inter)national terrorism, is currently experiencing a very different dynamic than the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, which is at the moment primarily concerned with demographic developments, cost management and decentralisation. The context is, therefore, important in meeting the leadership challenge.

On the basis of the academic literature and media reporting, we summarise a few more general trends from roughly 1990 until now below. During the heydays of NPM the motto was to ‘lead government like a corporation.’ In recent years, we have seen more emphasis on the specific public character of the government and that decisions about privatisation have been reconsidered in some sectors. Interesting is that in some cases this has not led to more government (again), but to citizen
initiatives taking over public tasks. The movements on the public domain – private domain and government – society axes seem complementary. On the centralisation and decentralisation dimension, we have seen a large shift in responsibilities to local and provincial governments with the decentralisation that occurred in January 2015 for public services regarding employment, health care and youth care (3D). In recent years, there has been a strong tendency towards uniformity within the national government, under the motto of ‘one national government.’ This means a shift has occurred on the (de)coupling of tasks axis: from fragmentation, sectoral organisation and the uniqueness of the various departments to uniformity. This movement is also visible with the foundation of the Directorate-General for State Organisation and Management (DG OBR) to support the government-wide implementation of policies and the setting up a variety of Shared Service Centres.

In this context it is interesting to note the recent observation of senior civil servant and professor Uijlenbroek (oration p. 19, 2015): ‘From a historical perspective, it is easy to understand why a ministry was seen as an entity and why it is governed by a single head at the top of the hierarchy. The increasing interconnectedness of societal issues, the correlation between executive and administrative tasks of the ministries and the government’s centrally organised management, mean that the national government is more and more seen as a unitary actor which should function that way. The “ministerial” entity is increasingly less important compared to the national government entity.’

With regards to the political-administrative relations dimension, we note a possibly greater emphasis on the primacy of politics (‘Oekaze Kok’), in comparison with the greater space for an independent administrative stance at the time of NPM. It is, however, difficult to generalise here. The political-administrative relations vary per ministry and appear to depend on the style preferences of the minister and the personal chemistry between the minister and the secretary-general. It seems that the current fragmentation of the political landscape generally seems to have spurred ministers into reigning tightly over their departments. The constant pressure to respond to incidents in (social) media also spurs the need for control. Yet, there are ministers who take a different attitude. Some indicate that they think it is time to release the handbrake, pointing at the anticipating and in their eyes somewhat too careful actions of their senior civil servants.

Also interesting is an Essay by ‘t Hart (2014), which, on the basis of an analysis of various societal developments, imparts on the political and administrative spheres a range of tasks, in three layers, that are required for administrative professionalism. His starting point is the ‘glory days of the Dutch model,’ with which ‘t Hart means the Dutch system at the time of pillarised consensus politics. This means that his analysis is primarily conducted from a Dutch perspective. The first series of tasks that ‘t Hart mentions, stem from the period of pillarisation: the classical administrative tasks. Over this falls a second layer which, in reaction to the imperfections of the Dutch pillarisation model, expands the classical tasks with additional demands that are the result of societal developments, different expectations by citizens, international developments and the information revolution. Finally, ‘t Hart gives a third series of tasks to deal with ‘the current dynamic world’ and the accompanying ‘turbulent developments.’
Below is an overview of the three types of tasks that are necessary according to ‘t Hart for administrative professionalism (‘t Hart, 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classical administrative tasks</th>
<th>Multi-level governance tasks</th>
<th>Tasks for the turbulent, enabling network society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Loyal and effective service</td>
<td>5. Maintain (also) an external orientation</td>
<td>10. Learn to cope with agenda turbulence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Serve the ‘administrative back office’</td>
<td>6. Foster internal coherence</td>
<td>11. ... electoral and party-political turbulence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bundle expertise and execution competence</td>
<td>7. Learn to deal with transparency and accountability</td>
<td>12. ... authority turbulence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cultivate Weberian virtues</td>
<td>8. Think internationally, operate multi-level</td>
<td>13. ... temporal turbulence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Aim to stay the first advisor of the administration</td>
<td>14. Balance between roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15. Govern interactively in a network society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 Changing Roles for Public Leadership

The above mentioned societal and administrative changes and developments have had a clear impact at both the macro-level (the scope, design and functioning of the public sector) and the micro-level (the type of work, the required expertise and the role conceptions among the Senior Civil Service). Below we focus on the micro-level changes. What role conception for the Senior Civil Service leadership is fitting for the world of today and the future, characterised as it is by interconnectedness (multi-level governance) and increasing complexity (enabling state)? To answer that question, it is useful to distinguish between the various role conceptions of the members of the Senior Civil Service (Hopman & Van den Berg; ref. Van der Meer, F.M.; Berg, van der, C.F., 2012).

Building block 4: Role conceptions for the Senior Civil Service in the National Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The senior civil servant as...</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Emphasis on...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The neutral subordinate</td>
<td>Follows the orders of his/her political superior and shapes the implementation of political decisions; Guiding principle: primacy of politics</td>
<td>Political advice; Administrative professionalism; Societal participation /partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The public entrepreneur / administrative professional</td>
<td>Follows the orders of his/her political superior and shapes the implementation of political decisions. AND, on an appeal to management autonomy and administrative expertise, assumes and is granted administrative freedom, and leads the administrative professionals in his/her organisation on the basis of this notion. Guiding principles: primacy of politics + administrative professionalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The proactive convener

Follows the orders of his/her political superior and shapes the implementation of political decisions. AND, on an appeal to management autonomy and administrative expertise, assumes and is granted administrative freedom, and leads the administrative professionals in his/her organisation on the basis of this notion. AND works, by an appeal to the wealth of practical experience available in the field, closely with external partners, both in policy formulation and implementation; guiding principles: **primacy of politics + administrative professionalism + participation in partnerships**

The next public leader (network leadership)

Is constantly connected to political, professional and societal developments; integrates his/her roles with respect to the following three areas: the political agenda and political priorities, the needs and opportunities within the organisation, and contextual demands. Perspectives on these three areas blend into an integrated (holistic) view. Optimally connected to what happens outside and inside the organisation and in the policy arena; part of changing collectives, like an uncertain fish in the water; an external antenna and highly developed intuition. Goes with the flow and enables a safe environment for adaptive and pro-active learning and development that is constantly focused on improvement, and prepared for all possible futures. Guiding principle: **public value creation (purpose), on the basis of the primacy of politics + administrative professionalism + participation in partnerships**

First, one can view the role of the senior civil servant as that of a neutral subordinate who merely follows the orders of her political supervisor without much individual contribution. The senior civil servant is in this perspective an instrument, a cog in the machine: obedient, uncritical, and her activities in the national service are free from personal norms and values.\textsuperscript{ix}

A second way to view the senior civil servant is as a public entrepreneur. According to this perspective, the senior civil servant is appointed on the basis of her knowledge and expertise, and thus has a large degree of independence from politics and society at large in shaping the public good.\textsuperscript{viii, ix} The emphasis in this perspective is on the administrative independence from politics in shaping the public good.

A third way in which to see the role of the senior civil servant is as that of an proactive convener. According to this understanding, the administrator is a broker in interests and policy options, operating between the relevant stakeholders. The focus is not on internal issues or internal cohesion, but rather on the policy problem at hand and the external partners with whom solutions must be found and implemented.

As the overview on the role conceptions for Senior Civil Service leadership (building block 4) shows, the primary orientations of the first three role conceptions point in a different direction, though they build on each other. The guiding principle for the ‘neutral subordinate’ is the primacy of politics; the guiding principle for the ‘public entrepreneur’ is, on top of the primacy of politics, administrative professionalism and leading the administrative organisation according to this notion; the guiding principle for the ‘proactive convener,’ on top of the primacy of politics and administrative professionalism, is the orientation towards participation and partnership. Given the current
challenges facing politics, government and society, it is important that these three orientations are truly integrated and reinforce each other.

The connection of these three roles we have distinguished to the tasks required for administrative professionalism (‘t Hart; 2014) provides the following insights. The senior civil servant as the neutral subordinate will be primarily competent in executing classical administrative tasks. The senior civil servant as public entrepreneur is most suited for issues concerning internal management and internal cohesion, but less so when it concerns the relationship to the political leadership and the external environment. The senior civil servant as proactive convener is most suited to the following tasks: adopting an external orientation; and operating internationally, intersectorally, and inter-administratively. This is the senior civil servant who facilitates her own organisation, politics and society on the basis of her professionalism.

What are the relevant elements for the role of the senior civil servant in the future? To what extent are the role conceptions noted above relevant to the future? In response to the increasing interconnectedness and interdependencies within society (networked society) and the increasing uncertainties in a turbulent environment, we have recently seen a move towards control and risk reduction. Senior Civil Service leadership seems, thus, to be looking for (old) certainties in new and uncertain times.

Complex problems are, however, not easy to understand nor ‘tame.’ Interesting in this regard is the distinction that Grint makes between three types of challenges and their required responses. When there are familiar, more or less well-understood problems, the response can be captured within a process: the response can be laid out within Standard Operating Procedures and the task of management is a careful crafting of the process and applying the right procedures. When there is a crisis situation with large risks that requires immediate action, then the desired response is ‘command and control,’ or ‘taking charge.’ Management is required to immediately have a solution ready. When there is a so-called ‘wicked problem,’ a devilish dilemma, an unrecognisable and incomprehended and possibly untameable problem, then there is no obvious procedure or solution that can be given. When the problem is a puzzle without a solution, or at least without a known solution, then the best response is to ask questions (see in this regard also the method of ‘appreciative inquiry’). Leadership in this case just means asking the right questions.

The senior civil servant of the future will be asked to be comfortable with uncertainty: able to let go and open to the unknown, that is, they need to ‘let go and let come’ (Scharmer). The international literature distinguishes a number of important qualities in this regard: sense-making and presencing, connection, resilience and agility. These qualities can only be maintained and successfully used in practice, however, when one has a good perspective on personal values, responsibilities, and boundaries. A senior civil servant can only be expected to make a positive contribution in an unpredictable internal and external environment when (a) he/she can act with authority and credibility, and (b) it is clear to him/her what he/she stands for in a professional, or substantial or technical sense.

A number of factors can contribute to the authority and credibility that the senior civil servant needs in order to act with firmness and agility. First, a certain knowledge of the subject matter is needed
(Weber calls this *Fachwissen*) and of the internal and external environment (Weber calls this *Dienstwissen*). In addition, societal credibility is important, as well as political cover.

The importance of knowledge for the senior civil servant has in this way changed over time. In the first half of the twentieth century, particularly judicial knowledge was important. As described above, however, the importance of specialised knowledge has increased in the last several decades. In the 1990s, the heydays of NPM, the knowledge and skills of Senior Civil Service leadership regarding process and procedure were deemed particularly important. Subject matter knowledge barely played a role (ref. ABD, 2004). This in contrast to the functional profiles that are now seen in various European countries. The importance of (substantive) knowledge, also at the Senior Civil Service level, has more and more come into the spotlight in recent years (ref. Van Zwol, 2014). Distinguishing between different types of knowledge is important here. Knowledge is often equated with *factual knowledge*: the ‘facts and figures,’ or the relevant information. This type of knowledge is of great importance in the negotiations that senior civil servants participate in, such as on collective labour agreements or at high-level negotiations in Brussels; it also important for strategic choices in policy. There is also substantive, *specialised knowledge*. This type of knowledge is important for translating current developments into policy choices and to judging the contributions of third parties, such as ICT experts and engineers. Another important type of knowledge is *experiential knowledge*. This allows for coming to careful judgments in situations, even in situations that are very disorderly. Finally, tacit knowledge is important, that is the unconscious, underlying knowledge which senior civil servants can draw upon in unexpected and new situations. Related to this is the importance of intuition.
III. Leadership Compared: Benchmarks and Inspiration

Our exploration of the concept of leadership and our analysis of the most important developments regarding Senior Civil Service leadership and the accompanying role conceptions has yielded four building blocks that can be used to create a vision on Senior Civil Service leadership. Using comparative analysis, we show in this chapter how these building blocks might be interpreted and applied in different contexts. First we look at the current state of leadership within the central government, both within the Office for the Senior Civil Service (in Dutch: ‘Algemene Bestuursdienst’ or ‘ABD’) and within the various departments. Second, we analyse Senior Civil Service leadership in three countries through an international comparison. Finally, we describe three examples of the conceptualisation of leadership from the private sector.

3.1 SCS Leadership in the National Government Compared

Below we first explore the profile sketches for civil service leadership within the ABD and the ‘Functiegebouw Rijk,’ a digital tool for exploring the various positions and career paths in the national government. Then we make an analysis of leadership within the various departments of the national government.

Conceptualisation of Leadership at the SCS Level

The profile sketch for the Senior Civil Service manager (‘ABD-manager’) intends to connect a number of common characteristics. This profile sketch is separate from the context of specific functions. It is stated that the ability to make the right choices and give direction to one’s organisation in areas of tension is characteristic of the ABD manager. A distinction is made in the profile sketch between three areas of tensions: the area of tension between inspiring leadership and substantive steering (position) in a political-administrative context; the area of tension between providing space and normalization (process), both with regards to one’s own subordinates and other departments, governments and civil organisations; and the area of tension between work pressure and personal development (person), both with regards to the ABD-manager himself/herself and his/her employees. Interestingly, the profile sketch indicates that the ABD-manager should be able to ‘make a group from individuals.’ Their responsibility to lead is, thus, not only directed towards each individual employee independently (LMX). In addition to this profile sketch, there is also a competency profile for the ABD manager, consisting of 5 primary tasks and 22 competencies. The management tasks are as follows: ‘act from the perspective of the organisation; come to well-considered (implementation) policies; set out the course; bring inspiring leadership; and continually explore and expand one’s own boundaries.’ In terms of the building blocks, we see that the ABD profile is primarily focused on the concepts of position, person and process. The focus is on the individual, for whom a competency profile has been created, and the emphasis is on looking from the inside (of one’s own organisation) to the outside.

The core profile for the Top Manager in the National Government Management Profile (‘Functiegebouw Rijk FGR’) states that he/she should bring hierarchal leadership and hold ultimate accountability for realising the goals of the organisational unit, and serve as a point of contact for the political/administrative leadership. A distinction is made between four result areas: the assignment
(principal) (political/administrative); the environment; management (work processes, personnel and finances); and renewal and improvement. For each result area, the tool mentions results, behavioural indicators and competencies. In total, six competencies are identified.

In a comparison of the ABD profile with the FGR's core profile, the following stands out. Of the six competencies that are listed in the FGR profile, five are also mentioned as competencies in the ABD profile. The FGR profile mentions acting innovatively. This competence does not come back in this form in the ABD profile. Nevertheless, this profile does mention the competencies of ‘showing initiative’ and ‘boldness.’ In comparison, the ABD profile involves 22 competencies in total.

What is also notable is that the ABD competence profile mentions various managerial tasks. Acting from the perspective of the organisation refers for example to striving for organisation-wide objectives. In terms of building blocks 1 and 2, this concerns leadership as a collective process. The assignment to ‘weigh environmental factors’ refers, in terms of the building blocks, to the following: process, outside to inside orientation; ‘leading’ refers to position and ‘exploring one’s own boundaries’ is focused on person and a from outside to inside orientation. De profile sketch of the ABD manager distinguishes three areas of tension. These are primarily geared towards the role of the leader, with an emphasis on leadership as a position, and to a certain extent as a process (first area of tension) and the leader as a person (third area of tension).

The FGR profile is primarily focused on the formal position (the leader as a supervisor). In comparison with the ABD profile, there is therefore less attention for the personal side. The FGR profile also concentrates on the leader’s own department/organisational unit, while the ABD profile looks at the broader, government-wide perspective.

**Conceptualisation of Leadership inside the Departments (sub-ABD Level)**

A vision for Senior Civil Service leadership in the national government cannot, of course, be formed independently from the experiences and developments inside the various departments. Leadership is currently on the agenda of multiple departments inside the national government. Below we describe the perspectives and conceptualisations with regards to leadership within selected departments on the sub-ABD level. We base our discussion on reports that were composed by colleagues at the ABD and the DGOBR regarding conversations with MD advisors and the HRM from various departments at the end of 2014. This is, therefore, only a description based on secondary sources.

On the basis of the reports of the conversations, we conclude that practically all departments in the national government employ the 4 (or 5) R-model. The R-model stands for the following: Direction (‘Richting’), Space (‘Ruimte’), Result (‘Resultaat’) and Accountability (‘Rekenschap’) and the fifth R stands for Relationship (‘Relatie’).¹

The 4 (or 5) R-model provides guidance in the implementation of a government-wide strategic personnel policy. Every department has its own way of implementing these broad guidelines in practice. The R-model is also used by various departments for management development and leadership development.

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¹ The R-model is a conceptual model that was constructed by a researcher at the VU University Amsterdam in assignment of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (DGOBR) and the ‘Arbeids- en Opleidingsfonds Rijk’ (the National Government’s Labour en Education Fund).
It is important to note here that the R-model has offered less direct guidelines than the SCP originally envisioned in 2002. Paul Schnabel, as director of SCP, introduced the R-model in his essay ‘Bedreven en gedreven, een heroriëntatie op de rol van de rijksoverheid in de samenleving’ (‘Expert and driven, a re-orientation of the role of the national government in society’). Schnabel intended to explain the changing role of the government with his 4-R model.

The R-model is concerned with the working relationship between manager and employee inside the departments. In a couple of departments, we see the implementation of the model accompanied by a concern for the personal development of managers and employers and by attention for leadership development. We also see the process side mentioned. In a few departments a link has been made with the societal task and the R-model, as a context for leadership development. The R-model is itself, however, specifically focused on the relationship between manager and subordinate. In terms of our conceptual framework, the R-model is thus concerned with leadership as a position and has a focus on the hierarchical relationship between supervisor and subordinate.

Reflection with regards to the concept of leadership and the model used at the departments offers us the following insights:

Leadership is predominantly understood as ‘supervising employees.’ The 4-R or 5-R model is used by most departments as an instrument for strategic personnel management. The 4/5-R model concerns the relationship between leader and subordinate from the perspective of position (leadership as supervision). Multiple departments emphasize as a separate theme how to supervise flexible employment. A number of departments make no distinction between leadership (development) for the top and middle levels, though most do. No mention is made in the conversational reports of the role of diversity in relation to leadership. It is also notable that intergenerational leadership (there are varying generations with various expectations and wishes inside an organisation) is not a theme. Several departments explicitly express the wish for a shared, interdepartmental vision on leadership.

In addition, we observed a number of ideas in the conversational reports of the departments in relation to the role of the context:

The network society and digitalisation come up as themes on multiple occasions in the conversational reports. With regards to organisation, a growing interdependence comes to the fore: the importance of chains, more cooperation with partners, and the shifting of responsibilities to other administrative layers (Europe, or municipalities).

Thinking about leadership inside the departments does not stand still and a vision for Senior Civil Service leadership will not be built from scratch. This much is clear from a number of interesting and appealing quotes provided in the conversational reports:

‘Society and government are changing and changing together. It is, therefore, a good idea from time to time to consider which type of leadership is fitting.’

‘It is more about cooperation, and to that end one has to let go of personal interest. Management has passed the I-era, it is not just about personal development anymore.’
'The vertical stays and the horizontal is increasingly important. (...) A dilemma is the new business-like character versus more horizontal.'

'You have to understand what is happening out there and be able to listen. Everyone has an opinion after all, it is a recognisable and sensitive subject. (...) a leader must be able to help with interpretation: what does the outside mean for the inside.'

'(...) taking advantage of networks and stimulating entrepreneurship. Many changes are expected in the way we work, much more across borders (...).'

'The senior civil servant especially has to be responsive, communicative and curious.'

A number of departments have developed their own visions on leadership, such as Defence, or are developing a vision, such as Foreign Affairs.

**Example: Ministry of Defence** has updated its own vision on leadership. The renewed vision on leadership provides guidance for supervisors to ‘stay on course in a changing environment.’ The starting point is that ‘leadership is tailor-made, not some trick that you can learn.’ The motto of Defence’s vision is ‘be, do and learn.’ The vision is visualised in the form of a ‘leadership compass,’ which distinguishes four character traits (be) and four roles (do). This should be accompanied by continued reflection and dialogue between the supervisor, the team and the context (learn).

**Example: Ministry of Foreign Affairs** recently formulated a new vision on leadership: ‘the ambition is a flexible network organisation, which everyone wants to cooperate with. (...) An organisation where thinking in terms of communal success is the norm. (...) in which goals and results are attained by working flexibly across organisational boundaries. Successful leadership in the complex context in which Foreign Affairs operates requires versatility and flexibility from supervisors (...) The rapid international developments, IT possibilities and developments in public administration demand (...) supervisors who are aware of their role, public task and added value, and who continue to be open to change.’

### 3.2 International Benchmarks: SCS Leadership in UK, Denmark and Australia

For inspiration, we have made an international comparative analysis below of the current state of Senior Civil Service leadership in three countries. The comparison concerns two European countries, Denmark, where the administrative culture is close to that in the Netherlands, and Great Britain, which offers a source of inspiration in the area of (Senior Civil Service) leadership. The ABD competency profiles that were created in 2004, for example, were inspired by the example of the UK’s Senior Civil Service. For a third example, we explore Australia, because this offers a fruitful comparison with the Netherlands regarding governmental reform and leadership.
3.2.1 SCS Leadership Frameworks Compared

In the **United Kingdom**, the Senior Civil Service long had a tradition of stability, independence and neutrality. Towards the end of the 1970s, however, a more dynamic organisation began arising, due to the privatisation, downsizing and reorganisation programmes of the Thatcher and Major governments, the increasing appointments of senior civil servants from outside the government and without experience in government, and the growing number of political and special advisers, particularly under Prime Minister Blair.

Traditionally, British senior civil servants have had a generalist slant, though the share of specialists has been increasing since the latter decades of the twentieth century to meet the growing demand for specialised knowledge and skills. British senior civil servants work in a clear hierarchical structure in which they are accountable to their minister and, in certain special cases, the relevant select committee of the House of Commons.

In **Denmark** the top of the civil service apparatus is also composed of career civil servants who, in line with Weberian principles, are appointed and promoted on the basis of merit (education, skills, experience). Just as in the United Kingdom, the senior civil servants are more generalists than specialists. Traditionally a judicial educational background was the most common, but in recent decades political scientists and economists have also become common. Even though mobility between the public and private sector at the senior level is not common, there are an increasing number of examples in recent years of leaders from the private sector that have entered the Senior Civil Service apparatus.

Expanding the number of women in Senior Civil Service positions has been high on the agenda just as in other Scandinavian countries. Data from the OECD show that the share of women in the Senior Civil Service is highest in countries like Sweden, Slovenia, Canada and New Zealand (about 40%), and lowest in Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland (less than 20%). In addition it is notable that women who do enter into senior management positions internationally are concentrated in particular ministries: education, culture and social affairs, as opposed to positions in the ministries of defence, justice, interior and foreign affairs. xii

As a former part of the British empire, **Australia** has a Senior Civil Service apparatus that is in large lines based on the same principles as the British one. NPM was embraced early in Australia (in the early 1980s). The federal government in Australia is relatively small, because many public tasks fall under the responsibility of the states and local governments. The promotion of diversity and inclusivity is one of the most important principles for the Australian government. This concerns both the relative number of men and women at the top, but a great deal of attention is also given to expanding the share of Australia’s indigenous population in the civil service.

The Australian government is well-aware that installing quota for women at the Senior Civil Service does not always address the underlying problems, namely the obstacles to equal chances. In Australia, they often speak in this context of the *Gendered Culture of Leadership*. The link with
leadership is here of great importance, as there is a subconscious bias in the work environment of associating leadership and supervision with men rather than women. The greater extent to which leadership qualities are formulated in terms of personal characteristics such as power, confidence and ambition rather than in terms of specific skills, the more the risk for subconscious bias towards men increases, so writes the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (2013).

3.2.2 SCS Leadership Concepts Compared

The United Kingdom has had a long tradition of generalists moving into the civil service from university, to then learn their new trade ‘on the job.’ The development of leadership qualities has been a part of the educational programmes of the British Senior Civil Service since the 1990s. Recent additions to the Senior Civil Service focus primarily on learning the basic concepts of leadership, and on reflecting on their own, intentional or unintentional, leadership styles. Senior civil servants with more experience follow advanced modules on leadership skills. These most advanced modules are the most interesting, because they are not just intended for the senior civil servants within the departments and agencies, but also for chief executives from the corporate sector. Together they work on developing various aspects of their leadership abilities: Some programmes are more focused on competencies, such as style-awareness, social skills, change management and general skills, while other modules are more related to the tasks required within the enabling state and the turbulence of the network society, such as environmental awareness, developing strategies in uncertainty and resilience in the face of unpredictability.

The teaching methods in these modules vary from lectures to reflection projects, and only participation is mandatory (there is no type of testing or evaluation). Since the start of the Civil Service Learning Unit in 2011, the modules for the Senior Civil Service have become shorter and more focused. A new leadership development programme, ‘Leading with Purpose,’ has been set up, for instance, to help more senior civil servants to grow into the top of the civil service. Civil servants who have already made it to the upper echelons of the civil service apparatus participate in two programmes, ‘Leading to Inspire,’ focused on how to be a leader and motivate one’s organisation, and ‘Leading to Transform,’ focused on the design and implementation of cost reduction policies. These programmes are provided by British universities, business schools and consultancies.

If we look at the most recent Civil Service Capabilities Plan, the development of leadership qualities is the number one priority, and it is also named as one of the main priorities in the so-called Civil Service 21 Initiative, which is focused on defining desirable leadership and its value for the future. It should be remarked that, despite the emphasis on the importance of leadership and administrative professionalism in many different documents, various commentators have suggested that when one looks critically at the substance of these new leadership programmes, there is a shift observable from a focus on (a) the senior civil servant as role model for the whole organisation, and increases in confidence and loyalty among senior civil servants, to (b) just achieving financial and policy results.

In Denmark, there has also been a clear focus on leadership within the educational programmes for the top of the civil service since the early 1990s. Despite the fact that the prevailing thought is still that the most important knowledge and skills are learned in practice (‘on the job’), completing
certain tracks to develop leadership qualities is increasingly recognised as an important part of promotion tracks. It is interesting that many senior civil servants participate in internationally-oriented educational programmes at foreign universities and business schools. Educational exchanges to, for instance, China and the United States are also often a part of leadership development efforts. The domestic educational tracks that senior civil servants follow are customised to meet the their needs, rather than fixed and uniform.

Inside the Danish Senior Civil Service, there is a broad understanding of leadership, in which the various types of tasks as distinguished by ‘t Hart (1.0, 2.0 and 3.0) are roughly of equal importance. An example of leadership development for addressing tasks 2.0 and 3.0 are the network activities within the ‘Forum for Top Executive Management,’ which has been operating since 2003. This programme consists of conferences at which senior civil servants, together with academics and leaders from the corporate sector, discuss current and future societal and policy-related trends, to stay abreast of societal, political and internal developments.

In Australia, there has been explicit attention for leadership development since 1999, and the ‘Senior Executive Leadership Capability Framework’ is the most important instrument. This framework specifies what leadership qualities are expected from senior civil servants and has become a guide in the recruitment, education and promotion of senior civil servants. Just as in most other countries, the original focus was mostly on developing competencies, such as an orientation on results, strategic thinking, the ability to cultivate productive working relationships, effective influence, and the ability to serve as a role model in terms of one’s work ethic and integrity. In 2002, the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSoG) was founded, which has since taken care of leadership development. In ANZSoG’s programmes we clearly see that leadership is understood as a precondition for effectively functioning in the turbulent network society. Most programmes are customised for very small groups of senior civil servants.

A final example of how Australia deals with leadership and leadership development is the Executive Fellows Program. It has as its goal to improve leadership qualities within the Senior Civil Service by placing more emphasis on management in cases where authority is disputed, where new generations are entering the internal and external environment, and where attention for intercultural differences is crucial.

3.2.3 SCS Leadership in Times of Change

If we look at these three benchmarks in terms of the underlying building blocks, then we can make the following observations.

With respect to building blocks 1 and 2, Australia is a good example. Whereas the focus in the 1980s was predominantly on management and personal leadership development (person and position), in the 1990s the focus also shifted to team leadership, organisational development and process orientation, to be followed by an increased focus on sensitivity, adaptive capacity and agility, and lastly to be followed by increased attention for connective leadership as a collective interpretation of leadership (purpose). The various types of perspectives on leadership did not necessarily follow one
another in Australia, but have been stacked on top of each other, so that a broad understanding of leadership has arisen within the public sector.

With regards to building block 3 (axes of change), the experiences of the United Kingdom and Denmark are illustrative. For both countries, we have noted the important changes over time per dimension (‘axis’) in the overview below.

Public domain vs. Private domain:
The United Kingdom was a front runner internationally with respect to privatisation, both in terms of time (one of the first) and scope. By the 1990s, the largest wave of privatisations had already passed. In large part because the privatisation enterprise only appeared to have limited success and out of fear for electoral reprisal for further privatisations such as of the British Postal Service. The Major government nevertheless did make intensive use of market-oriented mechanisms: more privatisation, contracting out, more market processes and also management became more business-like due to the use of targets.

In Denmark, just as in all other West-European countries, many state companies were privatised or granted more independence in the 1980s and 1990s (postal services, telecom, a life insurance company, Kastrup airport and the mines in Greenland). Still, the degree of privatisation was more limited than in the United Kingdom and Australia. This is obvious when one considers that about 32% of the working population in Denmark currently works for the public sector. This share has been relatively stable in the last twenty years. Most of the employees in the public sector work at the local level. The reluctance for privatisation was in part a conscious choice (the Danish understanding of the role of the state in society is more encompassing than in many other countries) and in part attributable to the strong role of trade unions. The public sector has, thus, been modernised, rather than shrunk. There are nevertheless private-public partnerships in the provision of public services.

Task division between administrative layers:
In Denmark, the number of regions and municipalities was drastically reduced in 2007 (from 271 to 98) and larger decentralised administrative units were created. At the same time the role for the provinces was reduced: a part of their work package was shifted to the central government (in the areas of environmental protection, culture and infrastructure) and a part was shifted to the municipal level. In the end, thousands of civil servants shifted between employers. In part this restructuring and decentralisation operation had a clear NPM character, because it allowed for including private parties more in the provision of public services.

In the United Kingdom, significant steps have been taken since 1997 in the direction of devolution: the transfer of central government power to sub-national administrative levels.

Decoupling of tasks:
In the United Kingdom, a great number of executive agencies have been created since the 1980s. The ministers are, therefore, responsible now for much smaller core departments and the core of the national civil service has been shrunk significantly.

In 1983, Denmark began with the functional separation of policy development and implementation tasks, and with the delegation of responsibilities to independent organisations.

Relationship administration-citizen:
Denmark began reforming its welfare state much earlier than many other countries. Already in the 1990s, the Danish implemented their flexicurity system, which gave much greater responsibility to job seekers and decreased government responsibilities for unemployment benefits and the stimulation of the labour market. The government has also increasingly been using private companies for offering social services, so that the government has begun playing a less active role. Research has shown that even though the Danish governments wants to take further steps towards the enabling state, the public is not interested in taking on more responsibilities, for instance in the areas of health care and labour.

In the United Kingdom, Cameron coined the concept of the Big Society with the intention of introducing a new approach to the relationship between the government and society: one in which citizens and companies take on more responsibilities and in which the government does not actively act as a service provider, but rather guides and facilitates. In the eyes of many, the Big Society has been a failure because the downsizing of the government has been accompanied
with financial cutbacks, rather than increased support for civil society.

**Position of the civil servant with respect to politics:**
In the wake of the reforms along the lines of NPM and the enabling state, the position for civil servants has also changed in Denmark. In the 1980s, civil servants were held more accountable for accomplishments, which had the consequence that they were pro-actively involved in the development of policy alternatives and in shaping coalitions around certain policy issues. At the moment, however, senior civil servants are working in a mixed system with elements of both hierarchical and performance-based management, which can create tension areas within organisations.

In the United Kingdom’s British Citizen Charter from 1991, it is stated that the Major government wanted to draw attention again to the value of public services and civil servants. But the standing of the civil servant was clearly subordinate to the idea that the individual should act as a consumer in relation to the government. The Charter speaks of a producer-consumer relationship, and emphasises strongly market-oriented mechanisms: more privatisation, contracting out, more market-competition, targets, the publication of results and the introduction of easier complaint procedures for citizens. Hence, though there was an increased focus on service provision, it was not from a perspective concerned with specialised public administration and the position of civil servants with respect to politics.

If we finally look from the perspective of the three combined role conceptions for Senior Civil Service leadership (building block 4)—the political advisor principal, administrative professionalism and the directing of the internal organisation and partnership with civil society—then both Denmark and the United Kingdom give an interesting picture. Both countries have, just as in the Netherlands, to a large extent a very neutral and apolitical administrative apparatus. In both countries only the special advisors to the Ministers are appointed on political grounds. In 2006, Denmark introduced the ‘Codes for Top Level Management.’ This code emphasises corporate values and mechanisms, including the need for a formal value statement and balanced score cards. This development is on the one side an example of the more corporate way of working in the context of New Public Management, and on the other side is an example of politics attempting to establish its primacy with regards to the Senior Civil Service through instruments that offer more possibilities for evidence-based rewards and accountability.

**Summarising:** First, the attitude towards leadership (still) largely focuses on the internal organisation. The publications, and the build-up and content of Leadership Development programmes are primarily focused on leadership competencies and skills, and leadership is understood as ‘that was the supervisor does’ (individual and internal orientation and leadership as a position). There is also some attention for the leader as a person, albeit to different degrees in different countries. Second, there is a renewed interest in political consultancy, particularly in the United Kingdom, with its discussion about political and special advisors as seen in The Governance of Britain and the Civil Service Act. Third, we definitely see that thinking and communicating about leadership has become more focused on the orientation towards civil society, but this is only seen to a limited extent in the content of leadership development programmes. The roles of the political advisor and the administrative professional still strongly dominate practice. Finally, we see that the three role orientations constantly arise in various forms, but that an integrated and overarching vision on Senior Civil Service leadership in which their mutual relations and interactions are articulated is missing in all three countries.

We note that translating trends and experiences in the area of leadership in terms of the four building blocks can give substantial insights. Analysis of the maintained concept of leadership, the
dominant perspective and the most important trends in organisation and society in relation to the
dominant role conceptions, enables the comparison of leadership in different contexts and times.

3.3 Leadership Benchmarks in the Private Sector: KPN, KLM and NUDGE

In the private sector we have seen the rise of a new conceptualisation of leadership in response to
changes in organisations and society at large. For inspiration, we describe the state of leadership in
three (Dutch) companies: KPN, KLM and NUDGE BV. With KPN, the focus is on the changing
environment in which it operates and the turbulent developments in the telecom sector. With KLM,
we look at the changes in the organisation and the way in which that has affected the understanding
of leadership. KPN and KLM are both established, large-scale multinationals. NUDGE is a new, small
network organisation with a horizontal structure, which maintains a very different approach to
leadership. We look at the following issues in our comparison: Which notions of leadership are
invoked? How is leadership incorporated into the organisation’s vision and mission? To what extent
does the conceptualisation of leadership change? And finally, to what extent does the company
translate this change into their leadership development efforts?

3.3.1 Leadership in a Changing Context: KPN

KPN is a market leader in the areas of telecom and IT services in the Netherlands, and offers a wide
range of services. KPN can take pride in a long history. The 2013 annual report pays substantial
attention to leadership development. Nine core competencies are identified for the most senior
levels.

KPN’s idea of leadership is strongly focused on the individual, personal qualities and commitment
are of central importance. And the company invests in these matters. The emphasis is on
management development (MD) and the internal promotion of high-potentials. The strengths of this
vision are that it fosters substantive knowledge and experience, and corporate commitment and
cohesion; the risks are that there is merely an internal orientation. Recently, KPN has updated its
leadership profile and there is a greater focus on external factors and from outside to inside thinking
and acting.

KPN offers its employees and supervisors a broad package of leadership development and coaching
programmes to keep improving the leadership abilities of senior management. To meet KPN’s goal of
fostering more diversity and to promote more women into the upper management layers of the
company, talented women have been offered a number of special workshops and mentor
programmes in recent years.

3.3.2 Leadership in an Organisation in Transition: KLM

KLM expresses the importance of leadership through its corporate mission and vision. The idea of
‘external leadership’ and the aim for a leading position in the transport sector are specifically
included in the company’s vision. There is a mention of so-called smart leadership, in which the
following ideas are central: innovation and entrepreneurship, the undertaking of successful alliances
and partnerships, and people as the cornerstone of the KLM brand and company.
KLM’s business environment is constantly in flux, and there are also constant changes in its relationship with Air France and inside its own organisation. With the arrival of budget air lines over ten years ago, the constellation of powers changed and competition became much more fierce. The financial position of KLM is currently under substantial pressure. In addition, there is increased cooperation with other airlines. KLM is, thus, more and more reliant on others. This requires a different way of managing its own primary processes. KLM is an organisation in transition. ‘Safety first’ is and will stay its mission. This in conjunction with customer service and profitability. As an airline company, KLM is a high reliability organisation: standard operating procedures (SOPs) lead the way and there is an established routine of risk avoidance (process). This requires at the same time a focus for learning from (near) mistakes and constantly being in tune with unexpected events and a keen eye for the environment and changes within it. Given the focus on safety, technical issues are of central importance, and there is biannual education in place in this regard. Recently, there has also been more emphasis on the human side and the ability for employees to understand each other well and be on the same bandwidth in ad hoc teams. Often this concerns teams on flights, where the members do not know each other but have to be able to trust one another. The communication is in this regard often at a distance (virtually or via telecom). It is important to foster the necessary social skills: careful listening, attention for the meaning behind words and the right explanation of information. There is also emphasis at KLM on creating a safe environment that invites the communication of mistakes. This is the focus of the programme ‘Human Factor’: next to technical competence, social skills are of central importance. KLM is an organisation with a macho culture, one where people a less keen to communicate mistakes or difficulties. To change this, the project ‘Just Culture’ has recently started. One leadership task for the KLM is to formulate and acknowledge the changed relationship between the hierarchically designed management and the demands on and wishes of professionals (pilots and ground personnel), who are increasingly dependent on external factors. An important quality of leadership is to be able to shift daily in the horizontal relations with increasingly different stakeholders.

In terms of our analytical framework, leadership inside KLM finds itself in a transition from having a predominantly internal orientation to (also) thinking and acting from outside to inside, and wherein increased mutual dependences require a shift in focus from the individual to the collective (team and partnerships). Thus, leadership here does not only mean that what supervisors do/should do (position). Leadership is instead seen as a desirable personal (and collective) quality in a more general sense (person).

KLM has founded its own Business Campus, which houses its educational programmes. In 2010, KLM started with an international leadership programme for talented employees. To improve leadership and problem solving skills, this programme concentrates on subjects such as customer relations, decisiveness under conditions of complexity, business administration and organisation science. KLM focuses on diversity, and it wants to improve diversity on all levels in the organisation.xv
3.3.3 Leadership in a Networked Society: NUDGE™

NUDGE BV is a very different type of organisation, a young start-up with the goal of ‘connecting people and organisations to realise initiatives from the ground up that contribute to positive and lasting changes in our society.’ The founder is a former manager from the corporate sector (Reed Elsevier Germany). His mission is to work towards the realisation of a sustainable society.

NUDGE is a network organisation, a platform with a flat structure, a small core of eighteen permanent staff members, a council of expert advisors and an action council (students and young professionals). NUDGE manages 177 projects, in which 200 organisations partake and 21,690 people are actively involved. ‘NUDGE is for everyone that wants to do something in the area of sustainability.’

NUDGE has the following mission: ‘By supporting bottom-up initiatives, we want to make it possible for anyone to spring into action. We keep our ears to the ground and couple the right people and organisations who aim to start projects and create impact together.’ NUDGE ensures that favours are connected to projects within the NUDGE community. The main goals of the organisation are as follows: change from the bottom-up; creating impact together; connecting organisations; challenging people; and investing in the leaders of tomorrow.

NUDGE’s vision on leadership is that fundamental changes are currently occurring in society and that this new world requires a new type of leadership. ‘The top-down model is no longer effective, leadership is much more about enabling what is needed.’ ‘The most important competence,’ according to Van Betten, ‘is doing what is at that moment necessary.’ This can vary from coordinating, to inspiring, to serving and sometimes to directing. There needs to be a constant shifting in roles, sometimes leading, sometimes following, taking and giving, it is about temporary leadership, dependent on what is at that moment at stake. ‘My role as manager is not to be the big man, but primarily to ensure trust within the team and that the qualities and role divisions within the team are balanced. To lead is to facilitate and to initiate and sometimes instead to follow,’ according to Van Betten. Essential is communication, open communication should be the central value in the organisational culture. ‘Actively sharing what you see, sharing what you’re doing, not afraid to ask questions.’ ‘Management comes from the bottom: the pyramid has, as it were, been turned over, bottom-up is the top.’ Leadership is a ‘guiding idea, a shared dream.’ This dream gives direction and a framework, within which everyone can accept their responsibility within the network. The articulation of the dream, to give it a face and to express it in words, that can be the role of the leader, but the trap remains that the manager stays too dominant in this regard and that the team takes too little space. ‘Nothing grows under a very large tree.’

Within the organisation, leadership development is not a separate point of attention and the angle is predominantly a ‘learning by doing’ one. It is important to note here that this is a small, flat organisation, where collective leadership, rather supervision has a central position. There is attention for diversity in team composition, in terms of men and women, and particularly in terms of the young and experienced. Leadership at NUDGE is characterised by horizontal leadership. The organisation is a network of nodes, and everyone assumes their role on the basis of ‘what is required and successful in a specific situation at that moment,’ according to Van Betten.
After reflecting on the practices within NUDGE, we would describe, in terms of our analytical framework, the conceptualisation of leadership within NUDGE as related to collective leadership with a strong external orientation. Their understanding of leadership relates to our concept of ‘purpose’ (a guiding aim, and to that end ‘doing what is necessary and works’). Persons, positions and processes are subordinate in this regard. Interestingly, we see different roles, individuals and collectives adopting the leadership role, according to circumstances and needs.

**Summarising:** If we look at the above three examples from the private sector with the terminology from primarily the first and second building blocks, changes outside of the organisation have been a catalyst for internal changes both at KPN and KLM, which has led to a greater external orientation (from outside to inside). The organisation’s external environment, and changes in that environment and the accompanying shifts in the organisation’s aims appear to influence leadership responsibilities in all three examples. Leadership development is (still) mainly focused on the (personal) development and education for managers to grow into more senior positions. Nevertheless, the emphasis with regards to the concept of leadership, has shifted both at KLM and KPN, as a response to the changing external environment and changing ideas regarding leadership responsibilities, from a strong emphasis on position and person (individual level) to also a more collective level. On the basis of changes in the external environment, there is now also an emphasis at KLM and KPN on horizontal management. With NUDGE, as a young network organisation, there is a totally different conception of leadership based on very different assumptions. In terms of our conceptual framework, NUDGE can be typified as being more focused on common goals and shared values, from a collective concept of leadership.
IV. Next Public leadership: Towards A Vision for SCS Leadership in the Twenty-First Century

4.1. Senior Civil Service Leadership for the Future

‘The Future Leadership Challenge is: moving from working in silos to eco-systems awareness, focus on the whole, stimulating and supporting networks to work in an integrated, inclusive way’ (Otto Scharmer, ILA 2014).

‘Dynamic interconnectedness is the future. Everything is connected in constantly shifting constellations. (...) the task is to scrutinise the complex relationships within quickly changing circumstances and to redirect our course while travelling.’ ‘The Netherlands is headed towards a period of self-organising transverse connections. (...) Transverse connections imply that we have to look at the whole, and from the viewpoint of our own strengths and a shared sense of direction to create a dynamic interconnectedness (...)’ (ref. Trendrede 2014).

As we have maintained above, every era demands its own leaders and the demands of leadership change through time. Senior Civil Service leadership cannot be decoupled from the spirit of the times, societal changes and expectations, political movements and priorities, and developments in (inter)national power relations. The intermezzo below illustrates what future oriented SCS Leadership means. ‘Next Public Leadership’ is about dealing with today’s challenges and leading towards tomorrow’s change.

What then does Next Public Leadership look like? The time of the chameleon, which has also not been too simple, is over. It is no longer enough just to be able to shift. You will be expected to move forward through a thick fog. But what exactly does it mean to lead in uncertainty about what is actually going on, with often changing alliances and coalitions, with the occasional confusion about the causes and implications of problems, and a large pressure to produce an answer and a response swiftly and confidently, and then to experience that things were different after all... To this end you will need all your senses and you cannot do it alone. Working and moving together is a precondition for moving forward. Your challenge is to identify a shared goal, and to articulate it in such a way so that it can provide direction, a communal direction not just for your own organisation or sector, but a more broadly-supported course. This requires an antenna for what is happening around you, and still more: a feeling for what might be about to happen. You are prepared for the possible and most probable futures. You draw connections, are reflective and constantly learning. Your grounding is the bigger picture and your dealings supersede partial interests. Your focus is on collective impact and you act in an integrative and inclusive way.

In the year 2015, you as senior civil servant are confronted with terrorist threats and international conflicts in a multipolar, fragmented world. The economy is under pressure, the Euro crisis has still not passed and anti-European sentiments are thriving, as seen for example with the UKIP in the United Kingdom. Also at the national and local level, faith in government is wavering. Polls indicate that citizens feel there is a democratic deficit. Social initiatives are more often occurring outside of the existing structures and institutions, through citizens’ initiatives and spontaneous participation.

It is justifiable to ask whether the twentieth century organisation of the government is still fitting for the tasks currently facing our society. The hierarchical organisational structure is based on the rational-analytical model of the industrial age, where separation and coordination have a central role and where effectiveness and efficiency are the guiding principles. In the network society of the twenty-first century, the government is just one of the relevant players. Interconnectedness and mutual interdependencies make horizontal organisation not only possible, but also necessary.
Connecting and sharing are central and in the world village it all revolves around value creation and agility.

The dawn of the twenty-first century has brought an era of change. The current situation is often described as a paradigm shift. The twentieth century structures are squeaking and cracking due to the challenges of the twenty-first century, the unprecedented information flows and far-reaching (technological) possibilities.

One of the main thinkers about these novel realities and new forms of leadership is Scharmer (emergent leadership). He identifies three disconnects in this new era: within government, within the private sector and within society.

First, Scharmer notes the discrepancy between a regulatory and controlling government (hierarchical management concept) in a horizontal playing field of interadministrative interconnectedness and mutual interdependencies.

Second, Scharmer observes a competing private sector (zero-sum game) in an increasingly smaller world of inter(national) interdependencies.

Third, Scharmer perceives individuals with conflicting and competing societal interests (survival of the fittest), who are all in the same boat and connected with each other in the network society (survival of the connected, ref. Baker 2014).

The three sectors now operate as separate worlds. The leaders within these worlds think and lead from their own frameworks and parts of the world. Leadership is therefore shaped by the boundaries of these competing and conflicting spheres.

A comparison with pillarisation in the Netherlands suggests itself. This structure of clearly demarcated spheres worked well in the ordered, authority-abiding, stable society in the reconstruction period after the Second World War (‘t Hart, 2014 calls this the ‘golden age’ of the Dutch model). But that stable society no longer exists....

Making predictions is always difficult, particularly when it concerns the future. Nevertheless, we will dare to venture into sketching what future developments will mean for Next Public Leadership in the twenty-first century. What does all this mean for you, or, in other words, ‘what’s next?’ In conclusion, we offer a few recommendations for the senior service leadership of today and tomorrow on the basis of our conceptual framework.
4.2. In Conclusion: Notions of Next Public Leadership

“If you are not comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty, I think, that makes you a poor leader as there’s a tendency to search for the absolute resolution of the problem. Understanding that there might not be one best solution, is quite important’ (Keith Grint, 2010).

“The leaders of tomorrow will (...) react to all the parameters surrounding them, responding flexibly to chances and threats, moving with the wind, flowing with the waves and yet still be the first to reach the finish line. Whomever can handle that complexity literally has gold in their hands’ (Trendrede, 2013).

On the basis of our analysis of the relevant trends in society and governmental organisation, the theoretical insights in the area of public leadership, and the comparison with leadership in other countries and the private sector, we offered four building blocks on which to build a future-proof vision for Next Public Leadership for Senior Civil Servants. These building blocks are a conceptual framework for the various conceptualisations and perspectives concerning leadership and provide an overview of the types of changes seen in the government and the accompanying role conceptions for Senior Civil Servants in the national government.

Our research impresses a number of observations and conclusions, which we list below. It is interesting to think about these ideas and how to apply them to our understanding of Senior Civil Service leadership in practice. Do you see any connections to your own dossiers and responsibilities? And what does this mean for you in day to day practice?

1. **Rapidness**: First of all, we see an increasing rapidness in the changes in- and outside of government. Time is a scarce good, and haste and urgency seem to be the new norm. There is substantial pressure to be available and active 24/7 and in ‘real-time.’ The political realm expects from you an immediate answer and preferably a response to any situation, accompanied by advice and solid reasoning is also most desired. A nice piece of wisdom by Confucius serves as a counterbalance: ‘To go fast, sometimes you have to go slow.’ It is wise to keep an eye on the bigger picture and to leave room for reflection.

2. **Panta Rhei**: Second and in relation to the first point, it seems that change is constant and that ‘back to business as usual’ will stay the exception rather than the rule. This means that you are asked to offer **comfort in times of change, unpredictability and uncertainty**. To confidently deal with change and to be comfortable with uncertainty, that is the assignment.

3. **Knowledge is interpretation**: Third, the importance of ‘knowledge’ is (once again) firmly on the Senior Civil Service agenda. It is useful in this regard to distinguish different types of knowledge needs. One important need is cognitive credibility: Weber’s ‘Fachwissen’ (substantial) and ‘Dienstwissen’ (procedural). However, in this new age, knowledge is more than the facts and figures, which are after all easy to find on the internet via open access and Wikipedia. It is about selecting, interpreting and explaining the relevant facts and presumptions, connections and contexts out of the enormous information vault of ‘Big Data’, by which we are overwhelmed every day.

4. **On course in the mist**: Fourth, we perceive an increasing degree of vagueness, interconnectedness and interdependence. The 2011 ‘trendrede’ (trend oration) vividly discusses ‘societal mist.’ The tasks facing society increasingly concern ‘wicked problems,’
which are difficult understand, let alone tame, and there is no one and single-best solution. And we find this difficult. Teisman (2013) aptly expresses our natural preference for overview and for being in control: ‘Complexity is the norm, simplicity the desire.’ Whomever wants to capture our unruly reality in an accessible structure, runs the risks of providing pseudo solutions that only work on a patient piece of paper. One way out is ‘adaptive leadership’ (Heifetz): with complexity, the key is asking the right questions and sometimes suspending a judgement, an answer or a ‘solution.’ Furthermore, it requires being satisfied with the best possible solution or most feasible approach at a particular moment in time. Leadership in complexity sometimes means you have to resist the pressure and choose (for the time being) to do nothing and to let go. Scharmer speaks of ‘let go and let come.’

5. **Strong together:** Fifth, we believe that in these times it pays to embrace the unknown and to recognise and create opportunities quickly. Accompanying qualities that can be identified in this regard are as follows: being aware of what comes up (‘sensing’) and being agile and flexible. You need to adapt pro-actively and be open to whatever can arise at any moment in time. A person cannot do that alone. Public leadership in the future is a collective quality, not so much an assignment for the heroic individual, but rather one that must be addressed together with others.

6. **Building on trust:** Sixth, and an extension of the previous point, we observe that trust will be an important theme in the future. Trust is a precondition for the connections that are central to the network society. This is no less the case in regard to the responsibilities of Next Public leadership. Trust is here not a given, but must be earned time and again, in different roles and changing contexts. In the context of the national government, of concern is the trust between administration and citizen, the trust between various administrative layers and the trust between various parts of the national government. Also relevant is the trust of politicians in (senior) civil servants and vice versa. As a senior civil servant, it also important that you have self-confidence and self-awareness. Trust suggests safety and the room to dare to experiment and to be allowed and able to learn from it. This requires risk-tolerance. Not a simple message in the current culture of accountability.

7. Finally we observe an increased sense of the importance of explanation, sense making and meaning. In the recent literature, ‘identity building’ is noted as one of the priorities of leadership (Bolden, 2011). The (national) government will increasingly often only be one of the players in a value network. ‘By bringing people together and asking them about it, we learn how to keep adding value. Without wanting to be the steering centre’ (Coumou, 2014). Important for Senior Civil Service leadership of the future is to maintain the balance between ‘agility’, being adaptive and able to move with the times on the one hand and being true to principles and acting consistently on the other hand. The senior civil servant acts as an example and embodies public values. SCS leadership is a value-based leadership.

In sum, Next Public Leadership could be compass-directed, value-based and vision-driven network-leadership. An interesting thought from the recent literature on leadership is the idea that ‘the network is the leader(s)’ (Baker, 2014), which presumes horizontal, or ‘peer to peer’ steering, inspired by the new (technological) possibilities for receiving and sharing information. In this network, it is all about connecting through nodes. And these nodes can function interchangeably and take on the leadership role dependent on the leadership task, the environment and the moment.
We could also speak of ‘leadership-in-the-moment’: understanding and doing what is needed and possible, at a certain moment in time, in a certain situation (Hopman, ILA 2014). This is not a replacement, but rather a supplement to the traditional notions of leadership, namely ‘leadership-in-charge,’ which concerns a leader, who, often in a vertical relationship, is ‘in command and control’, and ‘leadership-up-front,’ which concerns a leader that is visible and acts as a figurehead and an example (Grint, 2010).

4.3 An Action Agenda for Next Public Leadership

Public leaders have to be strong on vision, weak on boundaries (Erwin Schwella, 2007).

In conclusion, we would like to make a number of suggestions and recommendations on the basis of our analysis and findings, as inspiration for the portfolio of the Office for the Senior Civil Service and as a source of inspiration for a broader strategic dialogue with the departments and other governments about what Next Public Leadership could and should look like in face of the twenty-first century’s challenges.

I. Next Public leadership in the future is a collective quality: The Senior Civil Service of the national government does not operate in isolation. ‘Interdependence must be seen as a core competency (...),’ according to Baker (2014). This has consequences for recruitment and selection, and for the education and development of senior civil servants. What is required are not ‘machos’, but ‘mates’.

II. The task is key. Recruitment and selection will require precision work. It is not so much about one general profile of generic competencies but much more about self-knowledge, learning capacity, previous experience, flexibility, resilience and energy, that fit in concrete situations. Context matters!

III. Adaptive leadership is the future; dealing well with complexity requires constantly asking question (‘appreciative inquiry’), a willingness to let go and experiment, in a safe environment, in close connection to one’s own tasks and practice. Stimulate curiosity and reflect on values and sense making. The focus is on learning and developing for the future, not just on leader-development, personal development and individual skills, but primarily on leadership development.

IV. Various perspectives, values and qualities are needed to understand complex challenges, formulate them into a shared vision and address them successfully; select, therefore, for diversity in a broad sense. Next Public Leadership is about pro-actively searching out and bringing together differences in backgrounds, gender, disciplines, cultures and generations. It is interesting to note that the new generation sees working and networking as the sharing of a knowledge and life visions. Leadership for the ‘next generation of leaders’ means inspiring on substance, creating space for learning and collective impact (ref. ‘Learning Leadership Lab’, Grint/Hopman/Murphy 2012).
V. Next Public leadership is a network-leadership, which stands or falls with the strength of connections. Initiate and organise nodes of leadership, learning, dialogue and congregation. Create a Platform for Next Public Leadership, to get to know each other, to share and to learn to work together on new approaches. Connective leadership is to be practised. It’s all about learning and experiencing together, with colleagues inside the national government, other layers of governments and internationally.

Epilogue

In the introduction I already noted that ‘leadership is a journey.’ We have come to the end of this publication, but that does not mean that the journey has ended. We wish you, the reader, inspiration, wisdom and inventiveness in your further search for Next Public Leadership. After all, ‘leadership is a journey and the journey itself is home.’

We welcome your thoughts and feedback. Please contact us at leadership@faga.leidenuniv.nl.

Thank you, Nikol Hopman

The Hague, April 2015.
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Leiden Leadership Centre (LLC): Learning Leadership in Complex Contexts

Leadership faces an ever more interdependent and demanding environment. Globalisation, technological innovations and rapidly changing patterns of power and authority impact on the understanding of leadership and its roles. The Leiden Leadership Centre of Leiden University in The Hague (LLC) aspires to make a significant global, national and local contribution to excellence in and quality of leadership. The LLC strives to add value to leadership theory and professional practice through leadership research, leadership education and leadership development.

The LLC aims to enhance a better understanding of leadership in complex contexts and to facilitate (future) leaders to learn and act with impact in the face of contextual challenges. A connective, adaptive and learning leadership is called for.

The LLC operates in a networked environment and co-operate with partners across different disciplines, sectors, countries and continents. It works on leadership in partnership with academics and experts from practice, and at the cutting edge of theory and practice (leadership@fgga.leidennuniv.nl).
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Notes

⁵ Of course, these different relationships and roles for the government and the individual usually co-exist, dependent on the government domain. But a certain government or regime can also change in a general sense the relationship between government and the individual.
⁶ For a discussion of the consequences at the macro-level, see Van den Berg et al., 2015.
⁷ This perspective is sometimes mistakenly equated to the formal-legal conception of Weberian bureaucracy. The ideal type administrator was a rule and law abiding professional advisor or executor. Senior civil servants, on grounds of their expertise, were to possess a large degree of autonomy within the defined function. The hierarchy ensured that arbitrary intervention from higher up could be prevented.
⁸ There are various examples, such as SG Mulder, PG Doctors van Leeuwen and SG Van Wijnbergen (‘t Hart et al., 2002; Van der Meer 2004, see also ‘t Hart 2014). The aforementioned by the way had to leave the field after political-administrative conflicts.
⁹ With New Public Management the motto is ‘let managers manage’ (Toonen 2001). Political leaders do not interfere and do not want to interfere with management. In this way more power is shifted to administrative senior management.
¹¹ Source: reports of the conversations between employees of the ABD and the DGbGR with MD advisors and the HRM of various departments in the fall of 2014.
¹² It is interesting to note that the Netherlands is the country with the lowest score with regards to the number of women at the top of the administrative apparatus. Looking at the overall share across departments and across policy issues, the Netherlands actually performs well.
¹³ This analysis is based on public documents and their website, complemented with information from MD about strategy, career paths and MD-policy.
¹⁴ This analysis is based on public documents and their website, complemented with information from conversations, the ‘Human Factor’ project and corporate policy on personnel management and diversity.
¹⁵ KLM is, among others, an active member of the network for ‘workplace pride.’ For more information, see http://workplacepride.org.
¹⁶ The analysis is based on the website www.nudge.nl, complemented by an interview with the director Jan van Betten.
¹⁷ Building blocks 3 and 4 are specifically focused on the organisation of the government and its environment, and on the roles of senior civil servants, so that a comparison with the private sector is less relevant.
¹⁹ See also a new model www.rijksalliantiegroep.nl (2014): from vertical/primacy of politics to horizontal/primacy of partners.