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## **The 'Publicness-puzzle' in public leadership A theoretical exploration of leadership in public organizations**

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### **Abstract**

*Following a contingency approach we argue that the content and style of administrative leadership depends on characteristics of the public context. The purpose of the paper is to develop hypotheses on the relationships between several dimensions of publicness and the content and style of leadership, by reviewing academic literature on public leadership. To build our argument we first conceptualize leadership and distinguish several theories, definitions, and styles of leadership based on four different basic conceptions of what leadership is: 1. Leadership as traits; 2. Leadership as behavior; 3. Leadership as managing of meaning; 4. Leadership as interaction processes. Then, Bozeman's model of publicness is described as well as the effects of publicness on organizational environments, organizational goals, organizational structures and managerial values. As a final step we develop hypotheses that relate leadership to publicness and identify possible contradictory demands administrative leadership has to deal with. We conclude by outlining a research agenda on administrative leadership.*

**Keywords:** administrative leadership, public organizations, publicness, public leadership, contingency approach

## 1. Introduction

The words 'leader' and 'leadership' have been popularized. For example, the term 'leader' results in about 1,080 million hits on Google and the term 'leadership' in about 510 million hits. Leadership is also a much-studied topic in the academic world (see for example Bass & Bass, 2008 for an overview). In these studies, the importance of leadership for organizations is often emphasized. Van Wart (2003: 214) argues that *'effective leadership provides higher-quality and more efficient goods and services; it provides a sense of cohesiveness, personal development, and higher levels of satisfaction among those conducting work'*.

A well-known argument in the academic literature is that the content and style of leadership depends on the context of leadership (Fiedler, 1967; Rainey & Bozeman, 2000). The contingency approach of leadership assumes that characteristics of leadership depend on organizational characteristics and contexts (Fiedler, 1967). Since public and private organizations deal with a dissimilar context a contingency approach of leadership assumes that leadership in public organizations differs from leadership in private organizations (for example: Perry & Kraemer, 1983; Perry & Rainey, 1988). The presence of checks and balances, complexity of goals, and formalized structures are some characteristics of the public context (Rainey & Bozeman, 2000), which may affect leadership.

However straightforward as it seems, public management research has not paid a lot of attention to analyze leadership in a specific public context (Bass & Bass, 2008). Of course there are relevant studies of differences in leadership in both public and private contexts (for example: Kellerman & Webster, 2001; Park & Rainey, 2008; Terry, 2002), but *'leadership theory has generally received little attention in public management research'* (Hansen & Villadsen: 2010: 247). Van Wart (2003: 214) also notes that *'although many types of leadership in the public sector have been discussed extensively, such as leadership by those in policy positions and working in community settings, administrative leadership within organizations has received scant attention and would benefit from a research agenda linking explicit and well-articulated models with concrete data in public sector settings'*. Furthermore, Kellerman and Webster (2001: 508) argued that *'the body of work on public leadership in particular is rather meager, at least as generated by contemporary academicians'*.

Hart & Uhr (2008) distinguish three forms of leadership in a public context: administrative leadership, political leadership and civic leadership.<sup>1</sup> Following Van Wart (2003) we focus on administrative leadership in this paper, also because *'the most characteristic dilemma for administrative leadership is the need to serve and the expectation to lead'* (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 5).

In order to relate administrative leadership to its context, we use the concept of 'publicness' (Boyne, 2002). Publicness *'creates differences in how the basic functions of*

*management are carried out' in public and private sectors'* (Boyne, 2002: 100) and establishes a relation with the organizational environments, organizational goals, organizational structures and the values of managers (Boyne, 2002; Rainey & Bozeman, 2000). Publicness can help us to make clear what the specificities of administrative leadership are and how these are related to specific aspects of the public context (Fernandez, 2005; Hansen & Villadsen, 2010; Park & Rainey, 2008). Therefore, the aim of this paper is to make clear how publicness and leadership are related in public organizations, and to formulate a research agenda by reviewing the academic literature on public leadership. The central question in this paper will be:

*How are leadership and publicness related in public organizations?*

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2 we explore our contingency approach of administrative leadership. The next section discusses the specific public context (section 3). What makes an organization public? Which indicators determine the degree of 'publicness'? Subsequently, these indicators of publicness are related to different theories of leadership in section 4. In this step, we develop hypotheses that relate leadership to publicness and that identify possible inconsistencies. In the last section, some conclusions are drawn and a research agenda will be presented (section 5).

## **2. A contingency approach of administrative leadership**

### *2.1 A definition of leadership*

In recent years, numerous definitions, theories and styles of leadership have been developed (Bass & Bass, 2008). However, in the relevant academic literature no clear consensus exists about what exactly leadership is. One of the main reasons for the field to be so diffused is the coexistence of an extensive number of definitions of leadership. Some researchers rely on narrow definitions for ease of communication: *'leadership is the act of getting other people to do what they would not otherwise willingly do'* (Bennis, 1959: 131). Or leadership is defined within the context of a specific research interests: *'the investigation of power relationships'* (French & Raven, 1959). In the 1960s the common idea was that leadership is some combination of task- and people-oriented behaviors (Blake & Mouton, 1964) and *'moves others to a shared direction'* (Bass & Bass, 2008: 15). In the 1970s, the influence of leadership was seen *'as discretionary and as varying from one member to another'* (Bass & Bass, 2008: 15). In the 1980s, leadership *'was considered as inspiring others to take some purposeful action'* (Bass & Bass, 2008: 15). More recently, a meeting in 1994 with 84 social scientists from 56 countries resulted in the following definition of leadership: *'leadership is the ability to influence, motivate, and enable others to contribute to the effectiveness and success of the organizations of which they are members'* (House et al., 2004). Thus, we can find different definitions of leadership in the academic literature.

A possible reason for all these different definitions of leadership can be the fact that leadership is often confused with headship or management (Bass & Bass, 2008: 23). This distinction is important, because it is important to know which person may be a head or manager, and which person is a leader of his or her department. Bass and Bass (2008: 23) illustrate this distinction well: *'the head or manager who is not a leader will plan, but won't envisage an attractive future for the department. The head or manager who is not a leader will organize and structure the department, but won't enable its members to improve their performance. The head or manager will control what happens in the department but won't empower employees to make decisions'*. So, *'leadership includes the many ways it is exerted by leaders and heads or managers, and the various sources of power that make it work'* (Bass, 1960: in Bass, & Bass, 2008: 23). Therefore, heads or managers can lead as a result of their status (Bass & Bass, 2008: 23). However, it is still possible for leaders to achieve organizational goals without these status (Bass & Bass, 2008: 24).

Following Hart and Uhr (2008) we define leadership as a *'particular set of activities and interactions that people in position and power as well as other people engage in'* (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 3). In this definition, leadership makes no sense for just one single person, but can be exercised by different individuals on different levels in an organization. Based on our definition of leadership and in order to see administrative leadership as something distinctive, leadership is conceptualized here in terms of a number of *'distinctive functions that need to be performed in order for a polity to govern itself effectively and democratically, but which are not performed spontaneously by a polity's public institutions, organizations and routines'* (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 3).

A contingency approach to leadership explicitly assumes that leadership takes different styles in different situations (Fiedler, 1967). Moreover, this may imply that leaders have the ability to use different leadership styles. Depending on specific characteristics or contingencies, leaders can change their style of leadership. For example, a specific characteristic of leadership is the expertise or traits of leaders and followers (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). A specific contingency for leadership is the relationship between leaders and their followers (Grean et al, 1982) and the relative complexity of the task (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). The 'benevolence' of the environment is an example of a contingency of the organization (Fiedler, 1964).

The 'path-goal theory' of House (1971) and the 'Situational Leadership Model' of Hersey and Blanchard (1982) are the most well-known theories in the contingency approach. The path-goal theory argues that *'the force on a individual to engage in a specific behaviour is a function of (1) his expectations that the behaviour will result in a specific outcome and (2) the sum of the valences, that is, personal utilities or satisfactions, that he derives from the outcome'* (House, 1971: 322). The 'Situational Leadership Model' of Hersey and Blanchard (1982) rests on two fundamental concepts: leadership style and the individual or group's maturity level. The fundamental principle of this theory is that there is no single

'best' style of leadership, but leaders have to adapt their leadership style to *'the capacity to set high but attainable goals, willingness and ability to take responsibility for the task, and relevant education and/or experience of an individual or a group for the task'* (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982: 124).

Based on academic literature, we can relate the contingency approach of leadership to different concepts of leadership: *'the theories most commonly used tend to concentrate on the leader as a person, on the behaviour of the leader, on the effects of the leader, and on the interaction process between the leader and the led'* (Bass & Bass, 2008: 15). This can be illustrated by the next figure:

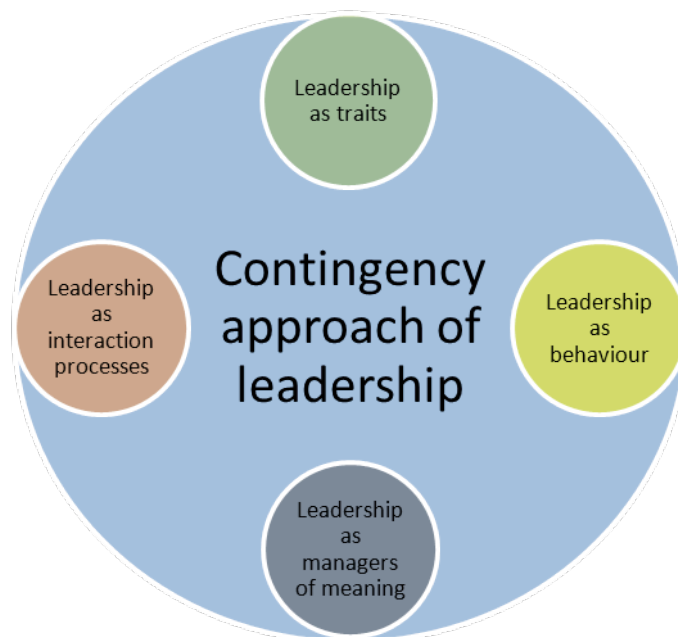


Figure 1: A contingency approach of leadership, based on academic literature

## 2.2 Leadership as traits

The first category of leadership theories are the so-called 'trait theories' (Stogdill, 1974) or 'Great Man Theories' (McCall & Lombardo, 1983). These theories argue that leaders are not been made, but that leaders are born. Specific attention is paid on possible explanations of who leaders actually are, so-called traits. This category of definitions indicates that *'the leader has the combination of traits necessary to induce others to accomplish a task'* (Tead, 1929, in: Bass & Bass, 2008: 16).

In leadership studies, numerous traits are mentioned (Kouzes & Posner, 2003), often by studying successful leaders. Many researchers believe that there are five core traits, the so-called 'Big Five Traits to Leadership' (Goldberg, 1981): neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. These five categories are usually described as follows (McCrea & Costa, 1987):

1. Neuroticism: individuals high in this trait tend to experience emotional instability;

2. Extraversion: this trait includes characteristics such as excitability, assertiveness and expressiveness;
3. Openness: characteristics such as imagination and insight, and a broad range of interests;
4. Conscientiousness: Include high levels of thoughtfulness, with good impulse control and goal-directed behaviours;
5. Agreeableness: this trait includes trust, altruism, kindness and affection;

Based on a contingency approach of leadership, an important question is which traits fit with a particular context. For example, we can possibly argue that a highly complex and unstable context results in the assumption that the trait openness is important for leadership. In conclusion, a contingency approach of leadership makes clear that a specific context calls for specific and appropriate traits.

### 2.3 Leadership as behaviour

In the 'behavioural theories' of leadership the focus is shifted from 'who leaders are' (characteristics and traits) to 'what leaders do' (attitude and behaviour). This approach defines leadership as '*the particular behaviours in which a leader engages in the course of directing and coordinating the work of group members*' (Bass & Bass, 2008: 17).

Leadership as behaviour focuses on the style and method of leadership to increase the success of leadership, resulting in more attention on the individual level to issues such as relationships between people, output and performance (Fiedler, 1967). So, motivation plays a crucial role. We can situate McGregor's 'Theory X and Y' (1960) into this focus. This theory indicates that any form of leadership is based on certain arguments of the leader about the motivation of subordinates. Theory X assumes that employees are lazy, incompetent and unsympathetic. Moreover, employees are not taking responsibility. So, in this view employees must be managed and controlled in a direct way by the leader. Therefore, theory X fits with a 'task orientation': leadership focuses on achieving work goals, and organizing structures and rules. Theory Y assumes that employees have an intrinsic motivation to perform. Employees are active, intelligent, interested, trustworthy and competent. Employees want to participate and do not like continuous controlling. Hence, theory Y fits with a 'people orientation': leadership emphasizes on interpersonal relationships and considerations.

When we link the contingency approach to leadership as behaviour, a relevant question is which style of leadership fits with a particular context. Or stated otherwise, certain characteristics of a specific context calls for a more 'task orientated' (theory X) style of leadership, while other characteristics of a particular context demands for a more 'people orientated' (theory Y) of leadership. So, the relation between the contingency approach and leadership as behaviour shows that a specific context gives rise to a particular style of leadership.

## 2.4 Leadership as managing of meaning

The third common theme that we can link to the contingency approach is leadership as managing of meaning. This theme defines leadership as *'leaders provide understanding and meaning for situations that followers find confusing, ambiguous, unclear, vague, indistinct, or uncertain'* (Bass & Bass, 2008: 17) and *'as someone who defines organizational reality through the articulation of a vision which is a reflection of how he or she defines an organization's mission and the values which will support it'* (Bryman, 1996: 280). Thus, the focus of leadership as managing of meaning is to collectively 'get things done', taking into account different interests. This category is well illustrated by the work of Burns (1978) and Bass (1981) on 'transformational leadership' and the work of Bass (1981) on 'transactional leadership'.

Transformational leadership is *'a model for others in the organization, provides a plausible vision of the organization and is able to pay attention to individuals' specificities'* (Denis et al., 2007: 448). Transformational leadership enlarges the interests and values of employees (Burns, 1978). Moreover, leaders involve employees and relevant stakeholders as much as possible in interchanging a vision. Transactional leaders *'give followers the something they want in exchange for something the leaders want'* (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987: 649). Based on this definition, we can say that interaction takes mainly place on formal relationships, such as power.

From a contingency approach, it is assumed that certain characteristics of a context call for a fitting style of leadership to involve employees and relevant stakeholders. For example, a hierarchal context with strong external pressure fits probably with a more transactional leadership style (task-oriented and risk-averse style), while a context with clear coordination mechanism and less external pressure fits likely with a more transformational leadership style (interests and values of employees). Thus, a contingency approach assumes that certain characteristics of a context results in a more transformational or more transactional leadership style.

## 2.5 Leadership as interaction processes

Taking different definitions of leadership as interaction processes together, Bass & Bass (2008: 19) argue that *'the concept of influence recognized the fact that individuals differ in the extent to which their behaviour affect the activities of the group'*. The relevant literature often used a more or less dichotomy in leadership styles, namely a horizontal and a vertical dimension. A horizontal dimension of leadership *'implies [that] reciprocal relationship between the leaders and the followers, but one that is not necessarily characterized by domination, control, or induction of compliance by the leader'* (Bass & Bass, 2008: 19). Thus, the pursuit of mutual goals is an important element. But, interaction processes can also include a vertical dimension. Then we are talking about power: *'leadership as a particular type of power relationship characterized by a group member's perception that another group member has the right to prescribe behaviour*

*patterns for the former regarding his or her activity as a member of a particular group'* (Janda, 1960: 351).

When we relate the contingency approach to leadership as interaction processes, we can argue that the characteristics of the context determine which style of interaction processes is preferred: a more horizontal or a more vertical interaction process. For example, a context with dominant stakeholders, based on formal power, fits more with a vertical leadership style of interaction process, while a context with less dominant stakeholders and more autonomy fits more with a horizontal style of interaction process. In conclusion, the relation between the contingency approach and leadership as interaction processes demonstrates that a particular context results in a specific leadership style of interaction processes.

### **3. A specific contingency: the public context**

In this paper we argue that the content and style of administrative leadership depends on its context. This section therefore discusses the context of administrative leadership. What are the specific characteristics of this context?

#### *3.1 An introduction to publicness*

The distinction between the public and private sectors became much-studied in the 1980s and 1990s (Barker, 1982; Hood, 1986). Administrative reform, associated with new Public Management (NPM), speeded up this trend by '*exporting public tasks to the private sector in the guises of contracting out, privatization, and hiving off; setting up autonomous agencies distanced from politics; and importing private sector management to the public sector'* (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 337). As a result, following Antonsen and Jorgensen (1997: 338), '*there was growing empirical and theoretical interest in 'the publicness puzzle''*. Thus, a relevant question is what the difference is between public and private organizations? But also, what makes some public organizations more public than others?

Similarities and differences between the public and private sectors are often analysed in the academic literature (Boyne, 2002). These debates demonstrate that the 'public-private distinction' is multi-dimensional (Benn & Gaus, 1983; Perry & Rainey, 1988). This multi-dimensionality shows that public and private vary along at four dimensions or rationalities (Snellen, 1987). Snellen distinguished the following four rationalities: law, economics, science and politics. These domains contain closed systems of criteria and have their own identity and rationality (Snellen, 1987).

Differentiating between public and private organizations, based on the above four different domains and rationalities, is related to specific public and private rationalities (Perry & Rainey, 1988; Van Wart, 1998). Therefore, we can make a distinction between public and private rationalities. The most common public rationalities are all four: law, economics, science and politics. Moreover, these four rationalities are trying to supplant each other in



public organizations and this 'struggle' results in domain conflicts (Snellen, 1989). The most common private rationality is located in the economic domain whereby the individual and own interests play an important role.

There are two approaches to discuss public and private differences in rationalities: the core and dimensional approach (Bozeman & Bretschneider, 1994). The core approach assumes that *'essential differences between public and private organizations and that those differences are elegantly captured in a simple distinction based on legal type (government owned vs. privately owned)* (Bozeman & Bretschneider, 1994: 200). Thus, the legal status (government owned vs. privately owned) is the key to distinguishing between the two. The advantage of this approach is that legal status is a simple criterion and, therefore, organizations can be relatively easily classified as public or private (Bozeman & Bretschneider, 1994). Another advantage is that there is empirical research evidence to use this simple criterion to classify (Rainey, 1996).

Secondly, the dimensional approach assumes *'that publicness is not a single, discrete attribute; rather, organizations (whether government, business, non-profit, or hybrid) are more or less public depending on the extent externally imposed political authority affects them* (Bozeman & Bretschneider, 1994: 202).

In this paper, we choose the dimensional approach. Bozeman (1987) argued that no organization is wholly public or private, because organizations can vary in the pursuit of public and / or private domains and rationalities. Hence, *'the boundary between the two is too blurred and the public sector acquires private sector characteristics at a rapid rate'* (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 338). Moreover, the core approach is not theoretical, but only descriptive (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 338). As Bozeman and Bretschneider state (1994: 201): *'mainstream public organization research tends to be long on empiricism and short on theoretical explanation'*. Furthermore, we know that pure public and pure private organizations do not exist (Bozeman & Bretschneider, 1994: 338). The advantage of the dimensional approach is that it makes it possible to deal with not only pure types, but in fact with all organizations.

Thus, this paper adopts the dimensional approach *'that some government organizations are 'more public' than others, that some business organizations are 'more private' than others', and that it is possible for specific business organizations to be 'more public' in some respects than specific government organizations'* (Bozeman & Bretschneider, 1994: 202). So, the concept of publicness is a multidimensional scale. We first elaborate on the concept of publicness. Then, we underline and explain its relevance for the examination of leadership in public organizations.

In this section, the concept of publicness will be further theorized. These theories and insights are derived from a variety of academic sources that contain claims concerning the distinctiveness of public organizations (Allison, 1979; Bozeman, 1987; Perry & Porter, 1982; Perry & Rainey, 1988).

### 3.2 Publicness and the organizational environment

The environment of High-Publicness Organizations (HPs) can be characterized by several aspects or dimensions (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997; Boyne, 2002). A first aspect of the environment that distinguishes between high and low publicness organizations is the aspect of complexity. Public organizations have to handle with a variety of stakeholders (Boyne, 2002: 100). Metcalfe (1993: 174) argues that *'governments operates through networks of interdependent organizations rather than through independent organizations with simply pursue their own objectives'*. Therefore, our assumption is that HPs have a more complex environment than LPs.

The second aspect is permeability. HPs are more open systems than LPs (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 342). Thus, external events and external actors influences HPs relatively *'easier'* than LPs. Empirical evidence shows that *'HPs are influenced by users, the parent ministry, politicians, professional organizational, the media, the public, the employees' trade unions, and other public organizations, whereas the LPs are influenced mainly by users and, to a lesser extent, political administrative actors'* (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 342). Therefore, we agree with the assumption that *'external stakeholders influence HPs more than Low-Publicness Organizations (LPs)'* (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 342).

The next aspect is instability. The presence of the political cycle in HPs results in a continuous process of pressure of and change in policy. The political cycle means that *'there is constant pressure to achieve quick results – results that can help the agency receive a larger share in the next round of appropriations; results that may be possible only so long as congressional allies remain entrenched; results that can help re-elect a president'* (Bozeman, 1987: 20). Therefore, our assumption is that HPs have to deal with more instability than LPs.

The last aspect is the absence of competitive pressures. HPs are confronted with relative less competition in order to execute public services than LPs (Boyne, 2002: 100). Therefore, we can argue that HPs enjoy a more dominant position in the market than LPs (Boyne, 2002: 100).

### 3.3 Publicness and organizational goals

Farnham and Horton (1996: 31) argue that private organizations have a single goal of profit: *'it is success – or failure – in the market which is ultimately the measure of effective private business management, nothing else'*. However, the goals of HPs are multiple (Boyne, 2002: 101). This means that goals of HPs cannot be defined in terms of profit, but they are much more focused to satisfy multiple stakeholders (Boyne, 2002: 101). Based on these assumptions, we argue that organizational goals of LPs are more inclined to stress short-term results (the single goal of profit) and that goals of HPs are more focused on the long-term.

Relevant academic literature argues that the organisational goals of HPs are often determined by the *'political cycle'*, while organisational goals of LPs are much more

determined by the managers themselves (Boyne, 2002: 101). *'The consequence for public managers is that performance targets are inherently unclear, and that private sector techniques such as management by objectives are likely to be inappropriate'* (Boyne, 2002: 101). Therefore, our assumption is that goals of HPs are more vague than LPs. We also know that external events and actors influences HPs relatively 'easier' than LPs, because HPs are more open systems than LPs (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 342). So, HPs have to deal with more external stakeholders than LPs. Therefore, we expect that organisational goals of HPs are more contradictory than LPs in order to satisfy the diversity of stakeholders. In this context, Rainey and Bozeman (2000: 452) said *'that the assertions that public agencies have particularly vague, hard-to-measure, multiple and conflicting goals are so nearly universal among scholars and observes [...]'*.

#### 3.4 Publicness and organizational structures

The 'bureaucracy theory' of Max Weber (Weber et al., 1946) is an important starting point for thinking about organizational structures of public organizations. Weber argues that several aspects can characterize the most efficient organizational structure (Weber et al., 1946). Thus, most important aspect in the 'bureaucracy theory' of Weber is the organizational structure. Weber (et al., 1946) demonstrates that four aspects are the most important for the 'ideal bureaucracy', namely the hierarchy, formal rules, differentiation and control. We can say that the 'bureaucracy theory' of Weber has been the starting point for contemporary studies into organizational structures of public organizations.

The internal characteristics of public organizations are viewed as distinctive in the following main ways. The first element is *'that co-ordination is more important and more bureaucratic in the HPs'* than in LPs (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 346). Thus co-ordination processes in HPs can be more characterized by formal processes than in LPs. Secondly, following Antonsen & Jorgensen, empirical evidence shows that *'there is a greater incidence of formal, lateral meetings; rules and procedures in general; direct control by top management; and product specification'* (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 346). Based on this quote and in line with Antonsen and Jorgensen (1997: 346), we can argue that formal rules and a high degree of management control are more important elements for the organizational structure in HPs than in LPs. As a result of the high degree of management control in HPs, we can also argue that the concept of hierarchy plays a more important role in HPs than in LPs. Therefore, Antonsen and Jorgensen (1997: 346) notifies that *'HPs adopt a wider range of control measures and are more bureaucratic when co-ordinating. In other words they have a strong internal vertical orientation'*. Based on Antonsen & Jorgensen (1997: 346), we can say that HPs are more characterized by lower managerial autonomy and are more hierarchic than LPs. To illustrate this assumption, Boyne (2002: 101) argues that *'managers in public organizations have less freedom to react as they see fit to the circumstances that they face'*.

Finally, as a result of the more bureaucratic process of co-ordination in HPs than in LPs, we can say that HPs have a slower rate of change than LPs (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997). A possible reason for the slow rate of change is *'the animosity of the HPs to the political-administrative actors, who are the architects and protagonists of 'modernizing the public sector'* (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 347). In other words, the slower rate of change in HPs than in LPs is a consequence of the high number of actors that HPs have to deal with.

### 3.5 *Publicness and managers*

First, performance paying incentives, financial bonuses and other similar instruments are less dominant in HPs than in LPs (Boyne, 2002: 101). Therefore, Boyne said (2002: 101) that public managers are less materialistic in HPs than in LPs. Secondly, academic literature argues that public managers have specific motivation to serve the public, a so-called *'public service ethos'* (Pratchett & Wingfield, 1996). *'The assumption in this argument is that public employment is associated with an especially strong concern by professionals to promote public welfare'* (Boyne, 2002: 102).

In the previous section, we claimed that HPs are characterized by lower managerial autonomy and are more hierarchic than the LPs. Therefore, we agree with Antonsen & Jorgensen that they *'expect managers in HPs to be subject to more constraints because of their complex environment, extensive ministerial control and heterogeneous tasks'* (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 348). Thus, our assumption is that managers in HPs are subject to stronger external pressures, and have less autonomy than managers in LPs. This difference is important, because the stronger external pressure and less autonomy have a great impact on solving organizational problems in HPs (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 349). Given these factors, and the more long-term, vague and contradictory organizational goals of HPs than LPs, Antonsen & Jorgensen (1997: 349) expect that *'HPs also emphasize the need for getting more resources and for budgetary flexibility'*. The need for more resources in HPs can be explained by, for example, the assumption that public managers in HPs have to hire more external staff, given the specific characteristics of organizational goals of HPs.

### 3.6 *Conclusion*

To summarize, the search for theoretical insights of publicness have resulted in four key elements, associated with assumptions:

Element of publicness	Assumption
Organizational environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. HPs have a more complex environment than LPs;</li> <li>2. External stakeholders influence HPs more than LPs;</li> <li>3. HPs have to deal with more instability than LPs;</li> <li>4. HPs enjoy a more dominant position in the market than LPs.</li> </ol>
Organizational goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The goals of HPs are more inclined to stress long-term results than LPs;</li> <li>2. Goals of HPs are more vague than LPs;</li> <li>3. HPs have more contradictory goals than LPs.</li> </ol>
Organizational structures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Co-ordination is more important and more bureaucratic in HPs than in LPs;</li> <li>2. HPs are characterized by lower managerial autonomy and are more hierarchic than the LPs;</li> <li>3. The HPs have a slower rate of change than LPs.</li> </ol>
Managers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Managers in HPs are subject to stronger external pressures, and have less autonomy, than managers in LPs;</li> <li>2. HPs desire more resources and budgetary flexibility to solve organizational problems than LPs.</li> </ol>

Table 1: Theorizing publicness

In the next section, we will relate the concepts of leadership and publicness to each other and we also develop hypotheses, based on these relations.

#### 4. How leadership and publicness are linked

##### 4.1 *An introduction to leadership in public organizations*

In the 40s and 50s of the last century, the first studies with a special focus on leadership in the public sector appeared (Van Wart, 2003: 219). Since then, more and more widespread and 'serious' academic research into leadership in the public sector has arisen (Van Wart, 2003: 219). Since the 1980s, research on leadership in the public sector has got structural attention in the scientific literature and the number of academic publications about leadership in the public sector has increased (Van Wart, 2003: 219-220). Thus, there are indeed scientific publications about leadership in the public sector, but to our knowledge leadership has not been analyzed in relation with the degree of publicness of organizations. And especially what characteristics of HPs and LPs mean for leadership. Much literature lingers in some vague expectations about leadership in public organizations. Hence, the next paragraphs will further explore the relation between leadership and publicness in public organizations.

#### 4.2 Leadership and publicness in HPs and LPs

The following tables present the different elements of leadership and publicness in HPs and LPs, and how these elements can be related to each other.

	<b>1. Publicness and the organizational environment</b>	<b>2. Publicness and organizational goals</b>	<b>3. Publicness and organizational structures</b>	<b>4. Publicness and managers</b>
<b>1. Leadership as traits</b>	Extraversion and openness are more important in HPs than in LPs	Extraversion is more important in HPs than in LPs	Extraversion and openness are less important in HPs than in LPs	Openness is more important in HPs than in LPs
<b>2. Leadership as behaviour</b>	A people-oriented style is more important in HPs than in LPs		A task-oriented style is more important in HPs than in LPs	
<b>3. Leadership as managers of meaning</b>	Involving and enlarging the interests and values of employees and stakeholders is more important in HPs than in LPs		Formal relations and risk-aversion are more important in HPs than in LPs	
<b>4. Leadership as interaction processes</b>	The pursuit of mutual goals is more important in HPs than in LPs		Having (formal) power is more important in HPs than in LPs	

Table 2: The four concepts of leadership related to the four elements of publicness in HPs and LPs

In the next sections, we will further support the above relations between the concepts of leadership and the elements of publicness in HPs and LPs.

#### 4.3 Leadership as traits in HPs and LPs

It can be assumed that public leadership needs the trait extraversion more in HPs than in LPs in case of the organizational environment, because public leadership has to tackle more complexities and instabilities of the environment in HPs than in LPs. HPs also enjoy a more dominant position in the market with relative stronger external stakeholders than LPs. Therefore, these factors require the trait openness more for public leadership in HPs than in LPs in order to interact with stakeholders. Based on the characteristics of organizational goals (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 342) and the same reasoning as for the organizational environment, we can argue that achieving organizational goals of HPs is more 'difficult' than achieving organizational goals of LPs. Therefore, it is more important in HPs than in LPs to be assertive and expressive to make it possible to deal with long-term, relative vague and contradictory organizational goals. Hence, public leadership requires the trait extraversion more in HPs than in LPs. When we look at the organizational structure of HPs and LPs, we can say that in HPs is much more defined in rules and procedures than in LPs (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 346). For example, co-ordination is

not specific depending on human relations (openness) or extraversion in HPs, because organizational processes, like co-ordination, are formalized in rules. Thus, extraversion and openness play a less important role for leadership in HPs than in LPs. Besides, we cannot link other traits to organizational structures. Furthermore, managers in HPs are subject to stronger external pressure than in LPs (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 349). Based on the same arguments as for the organizational environment, these characteristics make it more important for public leadership in HPs to have the trait openness than in LPs, because this trait make it possible to interact with the strong external pressure of stakeholders in HPs.

Thus, an important outcome is that the necessary traits for leadership in HPs and in LPs depend on the specific demands of the elements of publicness.

#### *4.4 Leadership as behaviour in HPs and LPs*

Based on the characteristics of the organizational environment of HPs and LPs (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997; Boyne, 2002), we can argue that HPs have a relative more 'difficult' organizational environment through the complexity and instability than LPs. Therefore, public leadership in HPs has to use a more people-oriented style of leadership in HPs than in LPs, because this style claims that employees are active, intelligent and competent (McGregor, 1960). So, the focus of this style on intelligence and competencies makes it 'easier' to deal with the more 'difficult' organizational environment of HPs. Also the characteristics of the organizational goals of HPs and LPs consequences in a more important role for a people-oriented style (theory Y) of leadership in HPs than in LPs. Employees in HPs have to deal with more vague and contradictory organizational goals than in LPs. These characteristics fit with the assumption that it is more important for employees in HPs to be intelligent and competent than in LPs. However, it is important for public leadership to use a more task-oriented style (theory X) in HPs than in LPs in case of organizational structures, because co-ordination and formalized processes plays a more important role in HPs than in LPs. There is a less important role for a people-oriented, or informal, style in HPs through the highly formalized organizational structure in HPs (McGregor, 1960). Furthermore, characteristics of managers in HPs (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 348-349) result in less freedom and flexibility for managers than in LPs. Thus, extrinsic elements are more important for managers in HPs than in LPs through the formalized processes in HPs. Therefore, managers in HPs should use a more task-oriented style (theory X) of leadership than in LPs (McGregor, 1960), because this style focuses more on extrinsic aspects than a people-oriented style.

So, there appears to be a tension for leadership as behaviour in HPs and LPs. Leadership in HPs has to use a more people-oriented style in case of the organizational environment and organizational goals than in LPs, and a more task-oriented style in HPs in case of organizational structures and managers than in LPs. This tension can be explained by

looking at the different characteristics and elements of publicness in HPs and LPs, because these elements seem to result in contradictory demands on the leadership styles as behaviour in HPs and LPs.

#### 4.5 *Leadership as management of meaning in HPs and LPs*

Given the specific characteristics of the organizational environment of HPs, (e.g. more complex than LPs, stronger external stakeholders and more unstable than LPs), it is more important for leadership in HPs than in LPs to involve stakeholders and employees to interchange a vision in order to create support. Hence, public leadership has to use a more transformational style in HPs than in LPs, because this style explicitly enlarges the interests and values of stakeholders and employees (Burns, 1978). Thus, a broader focus on a transformational style of public leadership in HPs fits more with the specific organizational environment of HPs than LPs. Furthermore, achieving more long-term, vague and contradictory organizational goals of HPs than LPs (Bass, 1981), it is more necessary for public leadership in HPs than in LPs to co-ordinate with stakeholders and employees in order to create support for achieving clear organizational goals. So, it is more important for public leadership in HPs than in LPs to involve and enlarge the interest of stakeholders and employees. Thus, leadership in HPs has to use a more transformational style than in LPs, because this style puts explicitly attention to the interests and values of stakeholders and employees. However, characteristics of the organizational structures in HPs, more need to co-ordinate and more hierarchical than LPs, give rise to a style of leadership based on monitoring and formal reporting. Monitoring and formal reporting may result in risk-averse and formal behaviour of employees. Therefore, public leadership in HPs has to use a more transactional style of leadership than in LPs, because this style argues that formal relationships and a risk-averse style are important for employees (Bass, 1981; Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987: 649). Moreover, characteristics of managers in HPs, such as stronger external pressures and less autonomy than LPs, are about (the lack of) influence or power. These characteristics preferred more a transactional style, because this style puts also attention to formal relationships, such as power (Bass, 1981). Therefore, the expectation is that leadership has to use more a transactional style of public leadership in HPs than in LPs in case of managers.

Thus, again we have to deal with contradictory styles of leadership. Public leadership in HPs has to use a more transformational style in terms of the organizational environment and organizational goals than in LPs, and a more transactional style in HPs than in LPs in case of organizational structures and managers. Also here, elements of publicness can explain this inconsistency style of leadership as management of meaning in HPs and LPs.



#### 4.6 *Leadership as interaction processes in HPs and LPs*

We already know that HPs have a more complex and unstable environment than LPs and that external stakeholders influence HPs more than LPs (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997; Boyne, 2002). Especially, the more influential role of external stakeholders for HPs means that these stakeholders affect HPs more than LPs. Therefore, public leadership in HPs has to use a more horizontal interaction process than in LPs, because a key element of this style is to affect each other (Bass & Bass, 2008: 19). Furthermore, we also know that organizational goals of HPs are more long-term focused, vague and contradictory than organizational goals of LPs. As a result, it is more important for public leadership in HPs than in LPs to co-ordinate with stakeholders and employees in order to create clear, and support for, organizational goals. Therefore, it is more important for leadership in HPs to influence cognitions and attributions of public organizations. This can be realized by using a horizontal interaction process because horizontal interaction processes *'implies [that] reciprocal relationship between the leaders and the followers, but one that is not necessarily characterized by domination, control, or induction of compliance by the leader'* (Bass & Bass, 2008: 19). However, characteristics like lower managerial autonomy and stronger hierarchic structures of organizational structures in HPs than in LPs are about (a balance of) power and much less about (the possibility of) affect each other. Vertical interaction processes are also about power: *'leadership as a particular type of power relationship'* (Janda, 1960: 351). Therefore, public leadership in HPs has to use more vertical interaction processes than in LPs in order to deal with strong hierarchic structures in HPs. Moreover, managers in HPs are subject to stronger external pressures than managers in LPs and have less autonomy (Antonsen & Jorgensen, 1997: 348-349). Thus, a more important element for public leadership in HPs than in LPs is the presence or lack of power. This characteristics and observation preferred vertical interaction processes, because this style put explicit attention to the concept of power (Janda, 1960: 351). So, it is more important for managers in HPs to use vertical interaction processes than in LPs.

In conclusion, there is again a contrariety for styles of leadership as interaction processes in HPs and LPs. Leadership in HPs has to use more horizontal interaction processes than in LPs in case of the organizational environment and organizational goals, and more vertical interaction processes in HPs than in LPs in terms of organizational structures and managers. Contradictory characteristics and elements of publicness can also explain this inconsistent style of leadership HPs and LPs.

#### 4.7 *Conclusion*

In this section, we have related the four concepts of leadership to the four elements of publicness. These combinations result in ten hypotheses about leadership in public organizations.

Concepts of leadership	Hypothesis about leadership in HPs and LPs
Leadership as traits	<p><b>H1:</b> The traits extraversion and openness are more important for leadership in HPs than in LPs as a result of specific demands of the organizational environment;</p> <p><b>H2:</b> The trait extraversion is more important for leadership in HPs than in LPs as a result of specific demands of organizational goals;</p> <p><b>H3:</b> The traits extraversion and openness are less important for leadership in HPs than in LPs as a result of specific demands of organizational structures;</p> <p><b>H4:</b> The trait openness is more important for leadership in HPs than in LPs as a result of specific demands of managers.</p>
Leadership as behaviour	<p><b>H5:</b> A people-oriented style is more important for leadership in HPs than in LPs as a result of specific demands of the organizational environment and organizational goals;</p> <p><b>H6:</b> A task-oriented style is more important for leadership in HPs than in LPs as a result of specific demands of organizational structures and managers.</p>
Leadership as managers of meaning	<p><b>H7:</b> Involving and enlarging the interests and values of employees and stakeholders is more important for leadership in HPs than in LPs as a result of specific demands of the organizational environment and organizational goals;</p> <p><b>H8:</b> Formal relations and risk-aversion are more important for leadership in HPs than in LPs as a result of specific demands of organizational structures and managers.</p>
Leadership interaction processes	<p><b>H9:</b> The pursuit of mutual goals is more important for leadership in HPs than in LPs as a result of specific demands of the organizational environment and organizational goals;</p> <p><b>H10:</b> Having (formal) power is more important for leadership in HPs than in LPs as a result of specific demands of organizational structures and managers.</p>

Table 3: Hypotheses about public leadership in HPs and LPs

When we overlook all these hypotheses, it might be interesting that, for example, leadership in HPs use a more transactional style than in LPs as result of high publicness organizational structures and that leadership use a more transformational style in HPs than in LPs as result of a high publicness organizational environment. Thus, this means that public leadership styles may vary, depending on the salience of different elements and degrees of publicness!

## 5. Conclusion and research agenda

Whereas the literature about leaders and leadership is enormous, the specifics of leadership in public organizations are a relative underexplored field in the academic literature. The limited literature about leadership in public organizations distinguishes three forms of leadership in a public context: administrative leadership, political leadership and civic leadership (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 3-9). In this paper, we have focused on administrative leadership following Van Wart (2003). To our knowledge administrative leadership has not been analyzed in relation with the degree of publicness of

organizations. The concept of 'publicness' makes it possible to relate administrative leadership to the specificities of public organizations (Boyne, 2002; Rainey & Bozeman, 2000), because publicness '*creates differences in how the basic functions of management are carried out in public and private sectors*' (Boyne 2002: 100). Therefore, the central research question in this paper is 'how leadership and publicness are related in public organizations?'

A first conclusion is that this exercise resulted in ten hypotheses about the relation between different leadership styles and characteristics on the one hand and various elements of publicness on the other as presented in table three.

Secondly, these hypotheses made clear that public leaders are confronted with contradictory demands, depending on the relevance of certain elements of publicness. This conclusion is in line with an important assumption of this paper that the style of leadership depends on the context of leadership (Fiedler, 1967; Rainey & Bozeman, 2000). These contradictories show that different styles of leadership, depending on elements of publicness, are necessary for leaders in a public context. Hence, leadership is conceptualized in this paper as a contingency approach: leadership uses different styles in different situations (Fiedler, 1967). Moreover, this conclusion is also in line with specific public rationalities (Perry & Rainey, 1988; Van Wart, 1998). Public organizations have to deal with four rationalities (law, economics, science and politics) and these rationalities are trying to supplant each other. Following Snellen (1989), this 'battle' results in contradictions and conflicts.

Lastly, the method used in this paper results in the ability to relate other concepts than leadership to publicness in public organizations. The quality of public services, innovation or change management are some interesting concepts. Especially innovation is an interesting concept, because innovation has become an important criterion for public organizations in recent years.

The above conclusions about the proposed theoretical approach of leadership in public organizations results in outlining an agenda for future research. We present our research agenda based on a quantitative and qualitative research line.

From a quantitative point of view, it is relevant to empirically test the ten hypotheses about public leadership in HPs and LPs by using a survey among public leaders in organizations which vary in their degree of publicness across the different dimensions. Moreover, it is interesting to make a distinction in organizational levels (e.g. a strategic, tactic and operational level) within public organizations, because the degree of publicness possible depends on the organizational level. The survey may be used firstly to validate existing measurements of leadership styles and characteristics in the public context. Secondly, the hypotheses are tested and specified. If leadership style or other characteristics of leadership are more affected by some elements of publicness than other, we could further theorize on the relevance of certain aspects of working in a public environment as a leader. A qualitative research line would be focused on how public

leaders deal with possible conflicting demands of different styles of public leadership in HPs and LPs.

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<sup>1</sup> Distinctive challenges of administrative leadership include the following. 'Firstly, administrative leadership has to serve the government and the democratic process. Next,

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*it is essential for administrative leadership to craft, sustain and adapt public organizations. Lastly, administrative leadership must deliver public value'* (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 5-7)

Political leadership *'tends to be exercised around a number of strategic, recurrent challenges facing societies and their governments'* (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 3). First of all, political leadership is focused on handling with other stakeholders (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 3-5). Secondly, political leadership is about how problems can be defined and, subsequently, how these problems need to be addressed (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 3-5). Thirdly, political leadership is also about the question *'who determines what'* (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 3-5). Lastly, political leadership is also trying at a constructive way to look at choices and policies of the government (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 3-5).

Civic leadership *'focuses on actors / roles outside the governmental system. It will be argued that civic leadership comes to life in explicit relation, and in opposition, to the power of governmental elites'* (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 8). There are three key challenges for civic leadership. Firstly, it is important for civic leadership to monitor and evaluate the actions of the government (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 8-9). Moreover, civic leadership has the task to follow critically the actions of the government (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 8-9). Lastly, civic leadership recognizes the responsibility to act and participate with the *'real'* government (Hart & Uhr, 2008: 8-9).