



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **Perspectives on cutback management in public organisations : what public managers do**

Schmidt, J.E.T.

### **Citation**

Schmidt, J. E. T. (2020, January 30). *Perspectives on cutback management in public organisations : what public managers do*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/83488>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/83488>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/83488> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Schmidt, J.E.T.

**Title:** Perspectives on cutback management in public organisations : what public managers do

**Issue Date:** 2020-01-30

Perspectives  
on cutback  
management  
in public  
organisations

*What public  
managers do*

ISBN: 978-94-6361-385-9

Cover & Layout: Optima Grafische Communicatie, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Printing: Optima Grafische Communicatie, Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Photo of the author by Studio Arash

© 2020 Eduard Schmidt

**Perspectives on cutback management in public organisations**  
What public managers do

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van  
de graad van Doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,  
op gezag van Rector Magnificus prof.mr. C.J.J.M. Stolker,  
volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties  
te verdedigen op donderdag 30 januari 2020  
klokke 16:15 uur

door  
Johann Eduard Theodor Schmidt  
geboren te Nieuwegein  
in 1989

**Promotors**

Prof. dr. S.M. Groeneveld (Leiden University)

Prof. dr. S. Van de Walle (KU Leuven)

**Doctorate committee**

Prof. dr. R.E. Ashworth (Cardiff University)

Prof. dr. W.J.M. Kickert (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

Prof. mr. dr. E.R. Muller (Leiden University)

Prof. dr. R. Raudla (Tallinn University of Technology)

Prof. dr. Z. van der Wal (Leiden University)

This dissertation was funded by the Dutch Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). Research Talent Grant project 'Explaining cutback management strategies in public sector organisations: change leadership in times of crisis' (project number 406-13-041)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

How can you give a proper acknowledgement to all who contributed to the process of writing this dissertation in just 400 words? Certainly not by wasting the first 39 words on questioning the purpose of limiting the acknowledgement section. So here we go!

First, I want to thank my supervisors, Sandra Groeneveld and Steven Van de Walle. From the moment that we started writing a grant application, I knew I was in good hands. Sandra, you have been a true inspiration to me. Thank you for your ongoing support, guidance, and encouragement on both a professional and personal level. I feel privileged to continue working together! Steven, thank you for your advice on this project and showing me how to finalize a paper. I enjoyed working more closely together for a couple of months in Leuven, and I genuinely appreciate all the times you came to The Hague to discuss my dissertation.

I would also like to thank the members of the Doctorate Committee and the opposition committee for evaluating my dissertation and discussing my research during my defense.

Second, many (former) colleagues contributed to this dissertation. Sometimes by reviewing work and improving papers, sometimes by having a beer or coffee. Wout/Pannema, Joris, Petra, Tanachia, Nadine, Mark, Linda, Jeroen, Ben, Jelmer, Johan, Natascha, Maarja, Fia, Alicia, Vincent, Dimiter, Caspar, Bert and many more, thank you for your help during the process. It is a prerogative to be surrounded by so many great colleagues!

A special thanks, to my paranymphs Machiel and Daniëlle. Daniëlle, I genuinely enjoy all our coffees and wines, discussing yet another new food trend. We still need to go on a trip to the Champagne region! Machiel, thank you for the discussions and laughs about work, football, politics, or whatever. I hope we continue to do so! Special thanks also to my officemates Marieke and Bernard, who tolerate my inspirational posters, terrible jokes, and cluttered desk.

Third, thanks to everyone in my *jaarclub*, *de leukste mensen*, *Blikverruimers*, *PNN*, and the *LSVb*. You have proved to be excellent (and much needed) distractions from my PhD.

Last but certainly not least, I thank my parents, my brothers and of course Lieselotte and Daniël. Dear Lotte, there is nothing in this world that makes me happier than being a family together with you and Daniël. Thank you for all your support and for being there.

With gratitude,

Eduard Schmidt

Utrecht, January 2020





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introducing a managerial perspective on cutback management</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1 The important role of public managers during cutbacks	13
1.2 What we know about cutback management and what is unknown	16
1.3 Studying public managers during cutbacks	17
1.4 Four perspectives on cutback management	20
1.5 Structure and outline of dissertation	23
<b>Chapter 2 Research setting, design, and methods</b>	<b>27</b>
Studying cutbacks and top civil servants in Dutch central government	
2.1 Introduction: crisis in Europe	29
2.2 Cutbacks in Dutch central government	31
2.3 The position and role of public managers within the Dutch government	33
2.4 Research design: studying cutbacks within government	35
2.5 Interviewing government elites	39
<b>Chapter 3 Managing upward</b>	<b>45</b>
A political-administrative perspective	
3.1 Introduction	47
3.2 Conceptual framework	48
3.3 Research setting	50
3.4 Methods	53
3.5 Findings	55
3.6 Discussion	61
3.7 Conclusion	63
<b>Chapter 4 Managing outward</b>	<b>65</b>
A strategic management perspective	
4.1 Introduction	67
4.2 Conceptual framework	68
4.3 Research Setting	71
4.4 Research design and methods	73
4.5 Findings	74
4.6 Discussion and theoretical implications	80
4.7 Conclusion	82

<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Managing downward</b>	<b>85</b>
	A leadership perspective	
5.1	Introduction	87
5.2	Conceptual framework	88
5.3	Data and methods	92
5.4	Findings	95
5.5	Discussion	101
5.6	Conclusion	104
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Public Managers</b>	<b>109</b>
	A values perspective	
6.1	Introduction	111
6.2	Conceptual framework	112
6.3	Methodology	116
6.4	Findings	118
6.5	Discussion	120
6.6	Conclusions and further research	122
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Conclusions and discussion</b>	<b>125</b>
7.1	A study on managerial behaviour during cutbacks	127
7.2	Managerial behaviour during cutbacks	129
7.3	Conclusions	131
7.4	Theoretical implications	134
7.5	Future studies on cutback management	138
7.6	Practical implications	141
<b>Bibliography</b>		<b>143</b>
<b>Appendices</b>		<b>159</b>
Appendix to chapter 1 and 2		161
Appendix to chapter 3		164
Appendix to chapter 4		166
Appendix to chapter 5		167
<b>Dutch summary</b>		<b>171</b>
<b>About the author</b>		<b>181</b>

