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Leadership behaviour repertoires in public organizations

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Chapter 2

Leadership behaviour repertoire: An exploratory study of the concept and its potential for understanding leadership in public organizations

Abstract

Rapidly accumulating literature on public leadership tends to zoom in on specific aspects of leaders' behaviour. Such a fragmented approach may overlook the most challenging aspect of effective leadership: combining diverse behaviours in relation to various stakeholders to match contextual needs. This article therefore argues for a comprehensive approach that recognizes the behavioural complexity of most contemporary leaders, particularly in ambiguous contexts. The concept of leadership behaviour repertoire facilitates this. The article conceptualizes the perspective of the leadership behaviour repertoire and illustrates in which ways leaders combine behavioural options from their repertoire using data from in-depth interviews with public leaders. Based on our findings, we propose integration of this perspective into the field's research agenda to make our understanding of leadership in public organizations more complete. Moreover, the repertoire perspective can challenge and advance theorizing of leadership in relation to its context and outcomes in a more comprehensive way.

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2.1 Introduction

Academic interest in leadership has been growing rapidly in the last few decades. Public management scholars, too, dedicate an increasing amount of attention to leadership in public organizations (Vandenabeele et al., 2014; Van Wart, 2013; Vogel & Masal, 2015). Research focused on the individual level of analysis, studying leadership behaviour of public managers at various organizational levels, has taken flight. Studying leadership at this individual level is valuable to grasp processes underlying policy making and implementation, taking shape in public organizations. A large share of research in this tradition focusses on “leadership in organizations” (Dubin, 1979; Hunt & Ropo, 1995), referring to leadership as supervising individual employees. Rich literature on transformational and transactional leadership, for example, primarily examines the downward supervisory relationship of managers motivating employees (Ospina, 2017; Vandenabeele et al., 2014; Vogel & Masal, 2015). “Leadership of organizations” (Dubin, 1979; Hunt & Ropo, 1995), on the other hand, looks at a leadership role in handling issues at the level of the organization or unit in relation to internal and external stakeholders. Middle managers typically are expected to perform a variety of roles simultaneously, yet the literature in public management tends to ignore this variety and to compartmentalize leadership into isolated roles.

In this article, we argue that research on leadership behaviour at the individual level in public organizations could be advanced by looking not only deeper into dyadic manager–employee leadership behaviour, but also by adopting a broader conceptualization spanning a more varied range of behaviours and their interactions with each other. Leaders probably do not perceive the roles as clearly distinct and separable in their daily activities as researchers often present them. In other words, we should understand the broader “repertoire” of behaviours that leaders have at their disposal, not only single elements within the repertoire. The behaviours that are studied in isolation are important, but when we ignore other types of behaviour that leaders are simultaneously engaged in, the danger is that we lose sight of the “big picture” of challenges that leaders face on a daily basis (Head, 2010).

We argue that combining various behaviours is the essence of leadership (see also Pedersen et al., 2019). The OECD (2001) indeed signalled that leaders need diverse competences to cope with complex challenges in the public sector, which recent country studies reiterated (Gerson, 2020). Leadership training programs

in the United Kingdom, United States, Germany, Sweden, Norway, and Mexico prepare leaders for a range of behaviours: from networking and collaborating, directing and managing internal processes, envisioning and facilitating change, to inspiring and creating commitment among employees (OECD, 2001). The relational character of leadership is explicitly addressed due to increasingly collaborative set-ups for public value creation: leaders need to work with a range of internal and external stakeholders across boundaries of countries, sectors, organizations, and professions, as well as throughout the hierarchy, from employees to top management (Gerson, 2020; OECD, 2001).

To extend our understanding of leadership and its relationship with organizational variables, we can benefit from examining repertoires of behaviours. A leadership behaviour repertoire can be described as a set of behavioural options at a leader's disposal to address a variety of issues in a suitable fashion (Denison et al., 1995). Yukl (2012) and recently Pedersen et al. (2019) and Kramer et al. (2019) also acknowledge that looking at single behavioural types provides only partial comprehension of leadership. Leaders often have to combine various types of action because they are faced with multiple tasks and objectives, and they need to balance competing demands on scarce resources (Quinn, 1984). Therefore, the effectiveness of leadership depends on the variety of leadership behaviours instead of a particular type (Denison et al., 1995; Havermans et al., 2015). Taking the perspective of leadership behaviour repertoires can assist in understanding leadership in its complexity, complementing ongoing efforts in the field.

Looking at leadership behaviour repertoires is particularly relevant in contexts that are characterized by ambiguity. Ambiguity creates a need for leadership (Moore, 1995), yet poses challenges for many public leaders in balancing multiple needs from their environment. This means that leaders are challenged to adopt behavioural strategies to match these contingencies. This is typical for public organizations: the different values, conflicting goals, and competing interests of a range of stakeholders at stake in public organizations confront leaders with simultaneous demands, which are often vague and/or potentially conflicting (Davis & Stazyk, 2015; Hood, 1991; Moore, 1995). Moreover, the saliency of issues changes. The variety of interpretations of what is to be done makes the leadership context ambiguous and puts leaders in a position of equivocal decision-making (Christensen et al., 2018; Chun & Rainey, 2005; Feldman, 1989). In addition, leaders in public organizations operate in an environment with increasingly complex organizational structures and ambiguous authority relationships. Formal authority is often

fragmented and distributed among several organizational members, which means that leaders are often not fully allowed to make decisions (Getha-Taylor et al., 2011; Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2011; Gronn, 2002; Shamir, 1999). Consequently, this dispersion of power creates leadership interdependencies and requires that leaders involve various other stakeholders to accomplish their objectives (Gronn, 2002). It can therefore be expected that leaders within such contexts need to combine many different leadership behaviours from their repertoire and do so in various directions to stimulate collaboration: influencing and facilitating subordinates, peers, superiors, and external stakeholders—multiple at a time (Moore, 1995; 't Hart, 2014; van den Bekerom et al., 2016). This context of ambiguity induces leadership that is best approached through a repertoire perspective.

This study therefore presents the following question: *How can leadership in an ambiguous context be conceptualized as a behaviour repertoire?* To allow a comprehensive understanding, leadership is defined as “the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.” (Yukl, 2008, p. 8). This definition is adopted, because framing leadership as a process highlights that leadership is a continuous effort that encompasses a wide range of activities. Indeed, from the organizational science and generic leadership literature we can conclude that leadership behaviour is diverse, and leaders have to engage in a variety of behaviours to be effective (Behrendt et al., 2017; Denison et al., 1995; Yukl, 2012). This comprises behaviours that are frequently distinguished as “leadership” and “management.” While those are often seen as distinct, both types are important and complement each other (Bedeian & Hunt, 2006), and following Yukl (2012), it can be all seen as leadership behaviour. Managers, as formal leaders, are often expected to perform both (Head, 2010). Furthermore, incorporating the relational character highlights that leadership takes shape in interaction with a variety of stakeholders. Besides the typical focus on subordinates in research on individual leaders’ behaviour, the broader public management literature teaches that superiors, peers, or external actors are included in the process of leadership. This accommodates Moore’s (1995) perspective that public managers work in different directions—downwards, upwards, sideways, and outwards (van den Bekerom et al., 2016).

This article conceptualizes a repertoire perspective on leadership behaviour and illustrates its relevance with accounts of leadership behaviour repertoire uses based on in-depth interviews with public leaders. Conceptualizing is an essential

building block for theory development: developing concepts that are aligned with the empirical world facilitates realistic empirical research and elaboration of theories. We thereby aim to contribute to public management research on leadership by suggesting how integration of a repertoire perspective can advance the field's current research agenda and our understanding of leadership in its complexity. A qualitative approach is adopted to integrate the situational context of leaders in our understanding of leadership. Accounting for context is relevant, because characteristics of the context in which leaders behave affect leadership (e.g., George, Van de Walle et al., 2019; Nielsen & Cleal, 2011; Porter & McLaughlin, 2006; Schmidt & Groeneveld, 2021; Stoker et al., 2019). Building on contingency theory's premise that "one size does not fit all," studying leadership by the same person in different situations is particularly facilitated by adopting a repertoire perspective (cf. Pedersen et al., 2019). Elaborating empirically how leaders combine diverse options from their repertoire, varying between situations, highlights the complexity of leadership and the need for further research to adopt a conceptualization of leadership behaviour as repertoire.

The article proceeds with a discussion of previous research on leadership in the public management literature to build the study's conceptual framework. Next, the empirical setting and methodological choices will be elaborated. The subsequent section shows various uses of a leadership behaviour repertoire highlighted by the ambiguous context. The article concludes with a discussion on the potential contribution of the repertoire perspective, emphasizing its theoretical and methodological implications. Building on current lines of research, we argue that the field's research agenda would benefit from adopting a repertoire perspective, since this more comprehensive conceptualization can stimulate theoretical and empirical work connected to the bigger picture of leadership challenges. Thereby it can challenge and advance our understanding of leadership and its relationships with other organizational phenomena.

2.2 The leadership behaviour repertoire: A conceptual framework

In an ambiguous context, competing demands present a variety of challenges for leadership that require leaders to use different types of leadership behaviour suitable for a variety of purposes. Recently, Pedersen et al. (2019) show that managers engage in a range of different behaviours. Their study provides support for studying leadership from a more holistic perspective that acknowledges the behavioural complexity of public managers. These authors also argue that a more complex conceptualization has been missing despite efforts to develop typologies of management and leadership. A similar effort by Kramer et al. (2019), who focused on leadership in interorganizational collaboration, confirms this call for a more comprehensive perspective. Therefore, we conceptualize leadership as a leadership behaviour repertoire. Building on the work of Quinn (1984) and Denison et al. (1995), a leadership behaviour repertoire can be seen as a set of behavioural options that can be matched to the circumstances at hand. This concept embraces the idea that leadership is complex and is characterized by a diversity of behaviours used in combination.

Research on leadership in the public management literature contains a variety of elements relevant for a repertoire conceptualization of leadership, scattered in separate research traditions. These traditions define and conceptualize leadership distinctively. Two distinctions underlie this separation. A first distinction concerns the operationalization of leadership: the literature shows variety in focusing either on styles, behaviours, or relations. These operationalizations are not mutually exclusive, yet prior research tends to maintain a more narrow focus. A second distinction concerns the level of abstraction and aggregation. One part of relevant literature discusses empirical constructs focused on individuals, while another share involves a broader governance mode concept, centred on networks. We discuss three prominent lines of public management research that contribute valuable elements of leadership behaviour repertoires and point out their positions on the two distinctions discussed.

Firstly, research on leadership of individual leaders in (public) organizations tends to concentrate on leadership styles, in particular transactional, transformational, and charismatic leadership (Lord et al., 2017; Ospina, 2017; van Knippenberg & Sitkin 2013; Vogel & Masal, 2015; Yukl, 2012). These studies focus on the downward dyadic relationship between manager and employee, in which

leaders motivate employees to perform well (e.g., Jensen et al., 2019; Vermeeren et al., 2014). This tradition has an empirical individual-centred approach. Its measurement involves motivating behaviours, but the main focus is put on leaders' style of conduct instead of the actions themselves. Examining styles tells us something about how leaders implement their actions without taking the range of behaviours into account. Although the Full-Range Leadership Theory and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (e.g., Antonakis et al., 2003) form an attempt at a more encompassing approach of leadership styles, it is still limited to the supervisor–employee relationship.

Secondly, internal and external management (O'Toole & Meier, 1999; Pedersen et al., 2019) and managerial networking (Torenvlied et al., 2013; van den Bekerom et al., 2016) is relevant here, although these studies speak in terms of management rather than leadership. This research tradition highlights that leadership encompasses multiple relationships with a range of stakeholders, inside and outside the organization. Again, this tradition has an individual, empirical focus. Whereas measurement of internal management includes specification of concrete behaviours, measurement of external management and networking often only involves the frequency of interactions with various stakeholders in different directions. This measurement then lacks specification of types of leadership behaviours used within such stakeholder relationships.

Finally, collaborative governance research involves collective or distributed leadership. This tradition has a strong focus on collaboration and relationships with a wide range of actors, reflecting that managing networked structures instead of single organizations takes centre stage (Bryson et al., 2015; Crosby et al., 2017). In contrast to the other two lines of enquiry, this type of research is concerned with collective leadership as a governance concept: leadership is treated as the product of the dynamics of many individuals' actions and does not concern leadership behaviour of individual leaders (e.g., Ospina, 2017). In a recent study, Cristofoli et al. (2019) combine the individual and network focus, by investigating managers' network behaviours to assess network effectiveness. While this and similar studies add on to the external management and networking literature (and are equally not speaking of leadership), leadership largely remains a governance concept in this tradition.

The public management leadership literature is thus empirically rich yet fragmented across various traditions, and not aligned (see also Ospina, 2017). Research in the tradition that shares our focus on the individual level of leaders'

behaviour generally operationalizes leadership rather narrowly focused on motivating behaviours in the downwards, dyadic relationship between manager and employees. While this research could benefit from the variety of insights from other traditions, they are rarely integrated. As a result of the fragmentation and disconnection, a comprehensive view that shows how leaders use the diversity of behaviours and combine various behaviours remains absent. Yet, effective leadership comes about when leaders employ the variety of their leadership behaviour repertoire (Denison et al., 1995; Havermans et al., 2015; Hooijberg, 1996). Approaching leadership with a repertoire perspective can overcome this.

The leadership behaviour repertoire is a collection of behavioural options available to a leader to pick and choose from to find a way to act suitable in light of the circumstances. The repertoire embodies the variety of roles (Denison et al., 1995) leaders fulfil that can be enacted by a range of behaviours in relation to a range of actors in different directions. The behavioural options then comprise combinations of behaviours differing in orientation (task, relations, change, external environment; Yukl, 2012) and directions of action (upwards and downwards in the hierarchy to superiors and subordinates, sideways to those in comparable positions, and outwards to external stakeholders (Moore, 1995; van den Bekerom et al., 2016)). Leaders have leeway to make various combinations: combinations can be more extensive or more simple, and there is no fixed combination between behaviour types and relations in which they are used. The repertoire signifies that leaders have options to adapt to changing situations.

In sum, a repertoire conceptualization sees leadership behaviour comprehensively in terms of behaviours and relationships and captures interactions between various behavioural options. Leadership repertoires are not just a sum of its separate elements. The need for an integrated view of leadership behaviour through a repertoire perspective will be illustrated below and discussed in the research agenda.

2.3 Research setting

To illustrate how leaders use the leadership behaviour repertoire, an empirical setting characterized by contextual ambiguity provides a highlighting opportunity. When ambiguity in the context of leaders is omnipresent, leaders are likely forced to employ and combine diverse behaviours, because no clear guidance (clear priorities between interests, regulations, formal authority) is available to them to accomplish goals directly. While such ambiguity can be found throughout the public sector, it is particularly pronounced within universities. Therefore, universities were selected as a typical case (Gerring, 2006), in line with the tradition in organizational studies (Askling & Stensaker, 2002; Cohen & March, 1974; March & Olsen, 1979). Contextual ambiguity is particularly pronounced within universities, for two reasons.

Firstly, ambiguity is an ever-present phenomenon at universities, since universities work on multiple goals at the same time, involving research, education, and outreach tasks. Thereby they have to deal with a range of stakeholders with different interests, such as employees from multiple faculties and departments, students, and external stakeholders such as ministries or partner organizations (Bryman & Lilley, 2009; Enders, 2012; Rainey & Jung, 2015). March and Olsen (1979), in their highly cited study on ambiguity and choice in organizations, illustrate their argument by the empirical study of universities based on the observation that educational institutions are prone to ambiguity: “goals that are unclear, technologies that are imperfectly understood, histories that are difficult to interpret, and participants who wander in and out” (p. 8). This forms a point where ambiguity for leaders can emerge, since this creates room for various interpretations of priorities and desirable courses of action. It is then likely to generate variety in leadership behaviour— both in terms of what is done and the complexity of this behaviour.

Additionally, the complexity of universities’ organizational structures enhances the need to combine a range of leadership behaviours and work in multiple directions. Universities operate a system of shared governance, which means that the decision-making authority of leaders in universities is often limited and shared between different formal positions while professionals enjoy much autonomy (Bolden et al., 2009; Pearce et al., 2018; Seeber et al., 2015). This adds structural complexity, which may affect what leaders can do in terms of leadership behaviour. As a result, it is expected there is a marked need to use a variety of leadership behaviours from their repertoire.

2.4 Methods

Data collection

Data have been collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with leaders. Interviews provide rich data that can show how leaders combine various roles and behaviours in different circumstances. The interviews focused on what leaders do in ambiguous situations, with topics covering how leaders perceive their leadership roles, what tensions they experience, and how they fill in their role and address such challenges (see topic list in Appendix A). Since the perception of the environment and one's role within it can be highly important for one's behaviour (James & Jones, 1974; Weick et al., 2005), eliciting these perceptions while allowing participants to elaborate freely is valuable. Interviews lasted between 50 and 90 minutes and were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The focus is on leaders in positions of formal authority, which means people who have a managerial position. Although leadership behaviour is not necessarily limited to be performed by only those in formal leadership positions, we focus on leaders as those people within organizations with such positions, because these people have extensive leadership tasks incorporated in their position—enacting leadership is expected of them. Formal leaders in universities in middle management positions are increasingly tasked with responsibilities related to strategy, accountability, and innovation as a result of shifted modes of governance. These tasks create expectations and requirements for such position holders to show leadership behaviour (Beerkens & van der Hoek, 2022; Pearce et al., 2018). It should be noted, however, that this does not have to exclude forms of shared or distributed leadership. Such forms of leadership are present in this study, since it also includes leaders “leading leaders” and leaders with tasks delegated within a board who do not necessarily have the accompanying formal authority (Gronn, 2002; Ospina, 2017; 't Hart, 2014). Participants have positions as (vice) deans; directors; faculty, department, and institute board members; and chairs or coordinators of research groups and teaching programs. All participants are active academics who fulfil a managerial position for a specific term, not professional administrators.

Data collection took place from December 2017 through February 2018 at three comprehensive, research-intensive universities in the Netherlands. Within each university, participants were recruited from the faculties hosting social sciences and natural sciences. Potential participants were identified through university websites and indexed according to faculty, organizational unit, type of position, and

gender. Since this study has an exploratory character, participants were invited to create a sample including a balanced variation on these characteristics and thereby variation in types of experiences. Therefore, an equal number of men and women in similar types of positions in both social and natural sciences were invited. Since the number of women in formal leadership positions in the natural sciences was comparatively small, oversampling them was required. If a participant agreed to participate, no direct colleagues from the same department or board were selected. Invitations and one reminder email were sent by email, generating an invitation acceptance of 19 out of 37. Those who declined the invitation did so with the argument of lack of time. We have no indication of bias in who accepted the invitation, as an equal number of men and women declined to participate or did not respond to the invitation. Table 2.1 provides an overview of participants sorted by discipline, gender, and the level of their leadership position within the university.

Table 2.1. Interview participants per discipline, gender, and level of leadership position within university ($n = 19$)

		Social sciences		Natural sciences		Total	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Level	Faculty	2	1	1	1	3	2
	Department	2	5	6	1	8	6
	Total	4	6	7	2	11	8

Analysis

Data were analysed using the method of Thematic Analysis, based on Boyatzis' (1998) approach. A hybrid approach was used to accommodate both inductively elaborating the variety of leadership behaviours and using sensitizing concepts of roles in the leadership behaviour repertoire (Denison et al., 1995) and of direction of leadership behaviour (Moore, 1995; van den Bekerom et al., 2016). Denison and colleagues (1995) distinguish a comprehensive set of leadership roles and accompanying behaviours: innovator, broker, producer, director, coordinator, monitor, facilitator, and mentor (see Table 2.2 for brief descriptions per role). Whereas some roles involve more task-oriented behaviours, other roles concern externally oriented networking or relations-oriented coaching behaviours (Yukl, 2012). Since it is flexible in accommodating various directions in which the leadership behaviours are exercised, a connection to Moore's (1995) and van den Bekerom and colleagues' (2016) distinction between

leading upwards, downwards, outwards, and sideways can be made. Therefore, this typology captures the various takes on leadership present in the public management literature and fits a repertoire perspective on leadership at the level of behaviour in an encompassing way.

Starting with open coding, an inventory of leadership behaviours was established by extracting key themes close to the wording used by participants. Co-occurring behaviours were grouped into categories of similar actions. This resulted in 13 categories of leadership behaviours. Axial coding linked these categories to the leadership roles as described by Denison et al. (1995). The behaviour categories then give more detailed substance to the role categories, and role categories can be seen as clusters of behaviours with a similar purpose. Five behaviour categories seemed to fit several leadership role categories, which were then split up into more specific categories matching the description of the role categories. During the axial coding, there appeared no substantive distinction between behaviour types matching the coordinator and producer roles, which were therefore merged. This resulted in a total of seven leadership roles encompassing 18 types of leadership behaviours. This coding scheme is presented in Table 2.2.

The coded data have been examined using coding stripes and matrix queries to seek patterns of co-occurrence of leadership behaviours and directions in which the behaviours were exercised. The units of analysis in this process were the situations discussed by the participants, in which they experienced ambiguity and were showing leadership behaviour. All analyses of the coded transcripts are performed in NVivo. This pattern-seeking has led to a categorization of leadership behaviour repertoire uses that varied in their complexity, as the next section will discuss.

Table 2.2. Leadership roles (derived from Denison et al., 1995) and behaviours (derived from interviews)

Role	Description	Behaviour categories	Description
Innovator	The innovator is creative and envisions, encourages, and facilitates change.	Taking initiative Envisioning direction	Actions that leaders take that concern enacting an innovation. Can be found when examples of new programmes or a merger of units are discussed. Actions of leaders aimed at preparing and planning for the longer term. Can be found in passages about strategy or the bigger lines.
Broker	The broker is politically astute, acquires resources and maintains the unit's external legitimacy through the development, scanning, and maintenance of a network of external contacts.	Representing interests External analysing	Actions of leaders focusing on promoting the interests of people or units within the organization. Also to have an effect on decisions taken by someone else or another level within the organization. When interviewee discusses standing for her/his people or when offering suggestions or pushing for a decision or plan. Actions of leaders that involve observation of environmental trends for example. Differs from seeking input, which involves more interaction and communication, whereas analysing is observant.
		Cooperating	Actions of leaders that have to do with achieving common objectives. When interviewee discusses teaming up with peers.
		Giving input	Actions of leaders to spread information and ideas and getting involved in decision-making. Can be found where getting involved, staying in contact, and talking to people, are discussed.
		Managing boundaries	Actions that leaders engage in to deal with or work around organizational boundaries, mainly regarding cooperation with other units or organizations.

Table 2.2. Leadership roles (derived from Denison et al., 1995) and behaviours (derived from interviews) (*continued*)

Role	Description	Behaviour categories	Description
Director	The director engages in goal setting and role clarification, sets objectives, and establishes clear expectations.	Setting direction Setting scope conditions Explaining	Actions of leaders aimed at making decisions and taking a stance, for example to end a project/process. Actions that leaders engage in to set, deal with or work around boundaries in the form of scope conditions or limitations. It is about drawing, passing on and protecting lines. Actions of leaders to explain plans, information and ideas. Can be found where staying in contact, talking to people, explaining plans, and getting involved are discussed.
Coordinator	The coordinator maintains structure, does the scheduling, coordinating, and problem solving, and sees that rules and standards are met.	Keeping business running Solving problems	Actions of leaders that have to do with steering processes and managing personnel. These concern the daily managing tasks instead of strategic decision-making. Actions of leaders as trouble shooters and mediators. Can be found in fragments about conflicts, crises, or anger for example.
Monitor	The monitor collects and distributes information, checks on performance, and provides a sense of continuity and stability.	Internal analysing Seeking information	Actions of leaders that involve observation of internal affairs, for instance about employee well-being or unit performance. Differs from seeking information, which involves more interaction and communication, whereas analysing is observant. Actions of leaders to gather information to know what's going on. Can be found when leaders discuss talking to people inside and outside their organization.

Table 2.2. Leadership roles (derived from Denison et al., 1995) and behaviours (derived from interviews) (*continued*)

Role	Description	Behaviour categories	Description
Facilitator	The facilitator encourages the expression of opinions, seeks consensus, and negotiates compromise.	Building community	Actions that build commitment of others in a process and a sense of 'sharedness'. Can show when interviewee gives example of making plans together. Not the same as asking for input (though they regularly occur together), but really working on ownership and cohesion.
Mentor	The mentor is aware of individual needs, listens actively, is fair, supports legitimate requests, and attempts to facilitate the development of individuals.	Seeking input Coaching Motivating	Actions of leaders to gather ideas. Can be found when leaders discuss talking to people inside and outside their organization. Actions that leaders take in the supervisory relation with their employees. Can show when interviewee discusses things like mentoring or keeping an eye on the human side. Actions of leaders to encourage people to participate or perform. Discussed in fragments about getting people to do something.

2.5 Leadership behaviour repertoire uses: Empirical illustrations

Based on the interview data, different uses of the leadership behaviour repertoire were uncovered, which are illustrated below. To illicit these accounts, participants were asked to tell about situations in which they were confronted with multiple simultaneous demands that produced tension and how they acted then. In response, participants described a rich variety of leadership behaviours, showing a repertoire consisting of a range of behavioural options. Throughout the interviews, participants reported on combining several behaviours to address issues they are facing. Thereby they often need to balance several objectives, create synergies, or work in parallel on multiple issues. Participants described different types of behaviour repertoire uses, that vary in terms of the number of behaviours used and the number of directions in which they operate. The variety of leadership behaviour repertoire uses can be categorized in four quadrants, which is displayed in Table 2.3. Important to emphasize is that leadership behaviour repertoire uses concern behaviour modalities, approaches in dealing with leadership situations, rather than traits or characteristics of people. Leaders use those behaviour modalities differently between situations.

The discussion below builds up in terms of leadership complexity (see also Table 2.3): first simpler uses of the repertoire are discussed, followed by uses that involve more different types of behaviour and more different directions.

Table 2.3. Variation of leadership behaviour repertoire

<p>Simple repertoire uses <i>Issue leadership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few behaviour types • Few directions 	<p>Moderately complex repertoire uses <i>Boundary spanner leadership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few behaviour types • Many directions
<p>Moderately complex repertoire uses <i>Jack-of-all-trades leadership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many behaviour types • Few directions 	<p>Complex repertoire uses <i>All-round leadership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many behaviour types • Many directions

Simple leadership behaviour repertoire uses: Few behaviours, few directions

Leaders do not always use a substantial part of their leadership behaviour repertoire. Only a few types of behaviour directed to a single type of actor can form a leader's response to occurring needs. Leaders discussed situations in which they dealt with a single type of actor such as their employees or were engaged in issues that involved a single task. Such examples match with how public leadership behaviour is often studied, in research with the common focus on the supervisor-employee dyadic relationship. Instances of this kind can be found concerning motivating and coaching employees or managing conflict between employees. Though these examples as shown below can be classified as simple repertoire uses, it should be noted that more often than not more than one type of behaviour was used. This illustrates that delineating leadership behaviour in a more limited conceptualization may be too simple and may not be congruent with leaders' practice.

For example, a participant described how he had facilitated reintegration of employees who suffered from burn-out (interview 13). He describes using behaviours of the mentor and monitor roles in downward direction: signalling and discussing burn-out of an employee to acknowledge the existence of a problem, giving the employee autonomy to come up with his/her own plan to improve the situation, discussing the plan and directing towards solutions or assistance if necessary, and monitoring and discussing progress. Another example originates with an educational director. In a mentor role, she keeps an eye to the human behind the employee, facilitating him or her to make choices about the number of hours s/he wants to work when family situations change, but at the same time ensuring that all courses can be taught and sufficient staff capacity remains, using behaviours fitting a coordinator role (interview 14). These examples show that leaders keep the interests of employees in mind while simultaneously also considering the implications for an institute and continuity of teaching programs. Yet despite concurring demands on the leader, a relatively simple repertoire use is shown.

Another type of example that appeared several times concerns the broker role in upward direction. For instance, a head of the department discussed that part of his job is to shield off his staff from new rules and administrative burden as much as possible. In the case of new digital systems being introduced by the university, he raised his voice and objections repeatedly towards the faculty and higher levels within the university. As part of this, he also participated in a review committee,

gathering experiences and problems with these systems from all parts of the university, to advise the university board to change the systems and reduce the burden on employees (interview 2).

Moderately complex leadership behaviour repertoire uses: Few behaviours, various directions

Other times, participants described situations featuring more comprehensive uses of the leadership behaviour repertoire. Leaders focus on a few behaviours fitting one role, but thereby engage a range of actors in various directions. This type of instance shows similarities with the network perspective from the literature. Examples regularly feature behaviours of a communicating and connecting kind but can take on more task-oriented behaviours in more complex contexts.

A vice-dean talked about a process to create a shared story about the newly developed strategy. The leadership behaviours mainly fall within the facilitator role, but were directed downwards, outwards, and partially also upwards. In this case, earlier efforts to engage various parts of the organization in the development of the new strategy had not been accomplished that the outcome resonated broadly and generated excitement for the future envisioned together for the strategy. She therefore organized different types of meetings with staff as well as students to discuss the important values and how the new faculty strategy would contribute to advancing these values. Seeking input, bringing perspectives together, and giving the various stakeholders a voice in creating a story brought about that a lively discussion and a sense of community around this story emerged as a basis for acting upon the strategy sustainably (interview 3).

Other illustrations of this quadrant feature participants who are active in collaborations across organizational boundaries - both internal boundaries within the university and outward boundaries. An example comes from a research group leader who also acts as chair of a university-wide multidisciplinary network. In her work for this network, she talks about using leadership behaviours fitting the broker role in upward, sideward, and downward directions. As chair of this network, this participant works on setting up collaborative teaching modules as well as integrating the network's focal theme within existing programs at all faculties. This means that she is engaged a lot in talking to deans, department and education directors, and peers throughout the university to explain the relevance of incorporating the theme within university teaching, asking them to participate and allocate resources within their programs to develop such education, and coordinating between participating

programs and teachers on the work floor. Bargaining is part of this process, as well as establishing commitment from the university board to leverage it in those negotiations. Keeping in touch and following up with all stakeholders in the various directions, representing interests, cooperating, and spotting opportunities all fit this broker role, but takes different shapes dependent on which type of actors in which direction she engages with (interview 16).

Moderately complex leadership behaviour repertoire uses: Various behaviours, few directions

A similar yet different version of the more comprehensive repertoire use is found when leaders combine a variety of behaviours of multiple roles, but only use them in one direction. Such behaviour repertoire uses share with much of the literature that leadership is exercised in relation to a single type of stakeholder. It differs, however, by involving a combination of diverse behaviours, that emphasizes that leaders draw on multiple roles in these relationships.

An illustration is given by a head of department, whose department went through turbulent times and faced declining revenues and austerity measures from the faculty. She described her leadership in keeping the department afloat in terms of various behaviours matching the director, facilitator, and broker roles directed downwards at the staff working in the department. Initially, she had to get the change process in motion, which meant that she stressed the urgency of the problem and the need to take action for survival. Moreover, she stepped in to mediate and resolve conflict to get resistant staff members on board. This required organizing numerous meetings, having conversations with people separately, explaining the situation, and convincing the staff to make changes to the program. Besides giving input, she sought perspectives and ideas of the staff to solve the problems, giving them the opportunity to reshape the program along their expertise and thereby also create ownership of the community. Still, as head of the department, she made the conditions clear in order to reach the goal of solving the financial problems. Throughout the process, she worked on building social cohesion, trust, and a sense of collective ownership of the department, not only through participatory decision-making but also by organizing social activities and creating physical signs of community (a picture wall, for instance) (interview 19).

A further example of this type of repertoire use is provided by an educational director, who discusses how he works on getting the teaching program staffed and ensures educational quality. To plan all courses and allocate staff, he uses a

model that specifies how many hours are available to fulfil tasks. In this way, he provides transparency to his colleagues. When a teacher complains about their tasks and the time available, and that it would not be fair, he can use the model to show what needs to be done in a year and how all colleagues contribute to that. Besides his coordinator and monitor role behaviours, he also draws on mentor role behaviours, to make sure that supporting arrangements are in place for new teachers, for instance, training and assistance, and asking what tasks people would like to do and how he can help them. Building shared ownership by involving staff in discussions and asking them for plans to improve educational quality characterize his facilitator role (interview 7).

Complex leadership behaviour repertoire uses: Various behaviours, various directions

Lastly, complex combinations of leadership behaviour repertoire options are commonly used. Leaders made use of multiple behaviours and engaged with actors in various directions. Cases that involve strategy and organizational change are commonly at the heart of such examples. All participants shared the conviction and experience that strategies, plans for change, and important decisions should not be made by a leader alone, but instead should be developed together with their staff. This is important within the complex ambiguous contexts of many public organizations, because leaders lead professionals who have strong intrinsic motivation and a high level of expertise, while at the same time, many leaders still participate—like their staff—in the primary process like a “*primus inter pares*.”

Exemplary for a complex leadership behaviour repertoire use is a head of department who elaborated on a process of formulating a new strategy for his department. He combined the innovator, broker, facilitator, and director roles and thereby worked downwards and upwards. Taking initiative, seeking and giving input, setting boundary conditions, delegating tasks and giving autonomy to his staff within these limits, overseeing but not directing the process, creating engagement, representing interests to the faculty board and financial department, and setting direction by making the final decisions based on input from the bottom-up process were combined in this process. New plans were being developed, while at the same time he started preparing for implementation. This example also illustrates the relational character of leadership spanning multiple organizational levels and working with actors in multiple directions. The participant facilitated employees within his institute to create bottom-up plans and influenced them by

providing boundary conditions, while at the same time, influencing stakeholders higher up in the organization to be able to implement the new plans without delay or difficulties (interview 18).

Another illustrative case is provided by an educational director, who initiated, developed, and realized a new international Bachelor program. She combined innovator, facilitator, monitor, and director role behaviours in various directions: downwards, sideways, and outwards. Based on her analysis of developments in the educational environment, staff composition, and potential for future thriving, this educational director took the initiative to start talking about creating a new program. Together with coordinating and policy staff, she made sure the financial conditions would allow this initiative and she started seeking input from teaching staff in various rounds and through diverse channels. The process was intentionally participatory and efforts were made to ensure transparent communication with staff members. In this way, shared ownership and support for the program were created to make it a success. Additionally, in the logistical developments, she has sought help and cooperation with colleagues of other disciplines within the university, to learn from each other and unite their interests (interview 10).

2.6 Towards a research agenda

The illustrated uses of the leadership behaviour repertoire give rise to questions how this perspective can contribute to ongoing theorizing and research. This section outlines research directions that seem particularly fruitful to continue when conceptualizing leadership behaviour as a repertoire. Moreover, several methodological suggestions to make progress along those substantive lines are discussed.

Leadership behaviour repertoire uses in relation to context

In line with most leadership research, we have found between-person variation: between participants, the emphasis on certain types of behaviour differs. Whereas some participants seem to put their role as director more central, others more often act as facilitators or brokers. Nevertheless, all participants take on multiple roles and work in various directions, which makes clear that characterizing a leader by their most prominent style is too simplistic. Possibly of more theoretical importance then is the within-person variation. The same participant can show different uses of the repertoire in varying situations. Several interviewees explicitly

state that using the same “recipe” in all situations is not helpful, that instead, it is necessary to have sensitivity to contextual variation and use various approaches adapted to the situation. Such within-person variation of leadership behaviour implies that an adaptation process is ongoing and underlines the importance of looking at leadership integrally and contextually.

Increasing our understanding of how leadership itself takes shape is all the more important, because characteristics of the context in which leaders operate present challenges—not the least in public organizations. Leaders need to balance multiple needs from their environment while being constrained by the complex hierarchical structures that divide formal authority between leaders in different positions (Getha-Taylor et al., 2011; Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2011). Simultaneously, leadership is of growing importance in the pursuit of organizational goals (Shamir, 1999). So far, however, this question is largely overlooked (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006; cf. Schmidt & Groeneveld, 2021; cf. Stoker et al., 2019). Though it is debated to what extent the public sector is special, it is widely acknowledged that various aspects of publicness and the political context impact on organizational structures and processes amongst which leadership takes shape (Pollitt, 2013; ‘t Hart, 2014). Adopting a repertoire conceptualization of leadership behaviour and continuing within-person focused research can further stimulate systematic investigation of the impact of context factors on leadership.

Moving the focus from leadership of persons to leadership in situations helps disentangling leadership’s complexity while integrating context in our understanding of leadership. Thereby we build on and set a step beyond recent work of Pedersen et al. (2019) and Kramer et al. (2019). Leaders could be thought of as being sensitive to contextual variations between situations and consequently, that such context sensitivity translates into context-sensitive behaviour: when a leader perceives the situation to be different, the behaviour deemed appropriate would co-vary.¹ A repertoire conceptualization can help to make this visible. It can then be argued that such context sensitivity is connected to a behavioural response based on contextual adaptation (Hooijberg, 1996; van der Hoek, Beerkens et al., 2021). It is worthwhile to investigate the relationship between contextual needs and a leader’s individual skills, capacity, and preferences and what that means for how the repertoire is used. Follow-up studies should conceptualize and operationalize context variables specifically to avoid vague and irrelevant explanations and make situational variation meaningful.

Leadership repertoire uses in relation to outcomes

Another step can be made by investigating how leadership behaviour seen from this repertoire perspective relates to other organizational phenomena. In the existing literature, many studies show the effects of isolated parts of leadership on performance and employee attitudes (see Vogel & Masal, 2015). From a repertoire perspective, leaders can substitute and compensate their behaviours, and they prioritize their roles and behaviours differently (possibly) depending on the context. As van der Hoek, Beerkens et al. (2021) show, for example, leaders are likely to consolidate their behaviours when ambiguity increases. We have observed various shapes that the repertoire can take, but it would be worthwhile to investigate, too, whether those shapes have different impacts on outcome variables and under which conditions those relationships exist.

It has been found that leaders can use various approaches to be effective (Pedersen et al., 2019) and leadership is most effective when leaders draw on the variety of options of the repertoire (Denison et al., 1995; Havermans et al., 2015; Hooijberg, 1996). Using the repertoire's full range of options makes that leaders can match the diversity of issues they are addressing with suitable action, as the opportunities to create a fit between demands and response increase. Also in research on ambidexterity of leaders, it was found that effectiveness to fulfil various requirements was enhanced when leaders draw on a range of different behaviours (Mom et al., 2015). Moreover, as Smith's (2014) study shows, the pattern of behaviour and decisions over a longer stretch of time may have more important consequences for organizational outcomes than single actions and decisions. A repertoire conceptualization of leadership facilitates that combinations of behaviour with their combined impact are highlighted and can be evaluated.

Operationalization of the leadership behaviour repertoire

Our analysis has focused on the variety within leadership behaviour repertoire uses. Nevertheless, variety is only one perspective on this complexity. Not only which behaviours are used and in which directions, but a temporal lens to study repertoires can also add supplementary insights. Firstly, timing of the use of the repertoire's elements can vary. Leaders can undertake various actions in parallel, while at other times the different actions are more sequential. Moreover, the moment when leaders decide to start, stop or change their approach can differ. Also delaying or waiting involve this temporal factor. Our interview participants gave examples that indicate variation in timing. Another way in which we can learn

more about the leadership behaviour repertoire is by considering the duration and intensity of behaviours. Whereas leaders may spend only a single instance of short time on some activities, others may require full attention for either a longer or shorter time, or may be always ongoing in a monitoring fashion.

Several authors have called for attention for temporal factors such as timing, pace, rhythm, cycles, ordering, and trends in the study of organizational behaviour (e.g., Ancona et al., 2001; Castillo & Trinh, 2018; Johns, 2006) and public management (Oberfield, 2014a; O'Toole & Meier, 1999; Pollitt, 2008), though still very few empirical studies in public management have explicitly addressed this issue (e.g., Oberfield, 2014a, 2014b). By taking up a repertoire perspective to conceptualize leadership, more nuanced differences connected to subtle time variables could be illuminated.

Internal dynamics of the leadership behaviour repertoire

Besides further developing the operationalization of the leadership behaviour repertoire, the internal dynamics of the repertoire can be unpacked. Not only the elements of the repertoire themselves and how we look at them, but also how they are combined and balanced can be disentangled for deeper insights. Understanding why leaders use their repertoire as they do, how they combine and balance the various elements, and why so, helps to untangle the intricacies of the complexity of the leadership behaviour repertoire. As referred to before, the internal dynamics may cause differential effects than when a single type of leadership is examined.

One relevant aspect concerns the extent to which leaders are on the one hand intentional, strategic, and proactive in choosing their leadership behaviour, or reactive and habitual on the other hand (Boyne & Walker, 2004; Crant, 2000; Miles & Snow, 1978). Based on some indications in our data, variation exists in this respect. Sometimes leaders take a proactive approach and choose behaviours strategically to advance their goals. Building on findings by Havermans et al. (2015), intentional switching and combining of various leadership behaviours can be expected. Other times, leadership behaviour becomes a matter of reactively responding to what is thrown at a leader and defaulting to preferred styles.

Explanatory factors at the level of the leader may be relevant to consider. One way to understand such differences concerning the combinations leaders make, relates to the breadth of repertoire options available to them. In case leaders are aware of a large number of behavioural strategies they could adopt and have the skills to use them, this may lead to more varied repertoire uses and more variation

between situations. On the other hand, having knowledge and skills of only a few behavioural options, leaders may be more inclined to use the same and a limited repertoire. How this relates to length of tenure in a position or experience in leadership roles more generally could be examined. A second explanation could be found in how leaders perceive their room for manoeuvre. Feeling in control or in the position to frame issues may help to make such conscious strategic combinations. Feeling overwhelmed by the sheer amount of demands or in a position of putting out fires, however, may put leaders under pressure to forgo proactive strategic behaviour.

Methodological recommendations

To pursue these substantive avenues for continued study, a number of methodological suggestions can be made that seem particularly suitable when using a repertoire conceptualization of leadership behaviour.

Experimental methods are strongly encouraged and increasingly used in the field (e.g., Blom-Hansen et al., 2015; Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015). Experimental designs can be used to assess the extent to which leaders adapt their leadership behaviour to context. The controlled design can systematically build on insights from rich literature about the public sector context as well as from research in the contingency tradition. By manipulating contextual variation in experimental tasks or vignettes (Atzmüller & Steiner, 2010; Barter & Renold, 1999; Bellé & Cantarelli, 2018; Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2019), the specific effect of context on leadership behaviour can be tested. A repertoire conceptualization may then reveal differentiation in how context factors influence leadership behaviour. Since experimental conditions can be designed by the researcher, numerous potentially relevant contextual dimensions discussed in public management research can be investigated on their effects on leadership behaviour repertoire uses. If participants are confronted with multiple manipulations each, within-person variation and adaptation can be examined (van der Hoek, Beerkens et al., 2021).

Another strategy to study leadership repertoires is using event sampling methods (Bolger et al., 2003; Kelemen et al., 2020; Ohly et al., 2010). These methods are based on within-person variation over time, whereby study participants can be asked to report their leadership behaviour at various points in time or after specified events occur. In addition, they can be asked to provide information about the context and situation in which this leadership behaviour was used as well as about results. Both quantitative multilevel designs and qualitative diary

studies could each contribute new insights: hypothesized patterns can be assessed or perceptions of and considerations in various situations can be disentangled. Therefore, event sampling methods can be used to test whether leaders adapt their leadership behaviour to changing situations. Secondly, this method offers opportunities to learn more about timing of changes in the repertoire use and reasons for doing so.

Finally, ethnographic methods such as shadowing and participant observation are suitable to study subtle differences in meaning-giving and leadership behaviour repertoire use (Alvesson, 1996; Geertz, 1973; Weick et al., 2005). Observing leaders in various types of situations and asking questions related to those observations can give better insights in leaders' interpretations of the context and their considerations when responding to a situation. In this way, the interaction between situational context and personal preferences and skills related to their repertoire can be studied. The balancing of different behavioural strategies by leaders can then be illuminated. This could add to develop the operationalization of the leadership repertoire as well as the understanding of its internal dynamics. Moreover, such methods are particularly useful to connect leaders' own intentions of their leadership behaviour to the perceptions of those around them to whom this behaviour is directed. Since self-other disagreement is common in the study of leadership behaviour (Vogel & Kroll, 2019), combining self-reported accounts with accounts of others can stimulate the repertoire's validity if confirmed.

2.7 Conclusion

We see more of leadership when we look at the leadership behaviour repertoire used in situations. Coaching, motivating, planning, solving problems should not be seen as stand-alone behaviours of a leader; instead, such actions are taken at the backdrop of and are impacted by the overall task of leading an organization, which involves many more leadership behaviours. This regularly evokes a more complex leadership repertoire use. Furthermore, the structures that divide authority of leaders and thereby make them interdependent, bring along that leadership behaviour does not only comprise supervising employees or leading downwards, but that 360-degree action is frequently required. The relational character of leadership is omnipresent in such complex environments. Leaders have to work in different directions and need to switch their strategies and combine various types of leadership behaviour to be able to influence and facilitate.

There are always trade-offs when defining a good concept, parsimony and depth being one of them in this case, and the utility for theory is the most important criterion when choosing the best concept (Gerring, 1999). In-depth studies on specific leadership elements have provided valuable evidence on the nature of certain behaviours, and their effects on various organizational outcomes. As a limitation, they ignore a symbiotic relationship between different behaviours. While more comprehensive, the repertoire approach has its own challenges, though. Due to its comprehensiveness, delineation of the concept as well as its operationalization and use in empirical studies is more complex.

The fragmentation of research in different, largely non-communicating parts of the literature may be developing a blind spot for the study of leadership behaviour of individuals in public organizations: though it may describe the real world well in relatively simple situations, it prevents studying leadership behaviour in a manner that covers the comprehensiveness of leadership in more complex situations common in public organizations. This study provides support for the importance of an integral approach that examines the combination of various leadership behaviours at the individual level in public management, because the ambiguous context of many public leaders forces them to draw on a broad repertoire of behaviours. Learning how leaders vary, combine, and balance their behavioural strategies is then essential, as it can provide further insights into obstacles and openings of effective leadership. The identified directions could be a guide for future research in this endeavour.

Notes

1. The premise of context sensitivity underlies research on contingency theory (e.g., Aldrich, 1979; Donaldson, 2001; Fiedler, 1967; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Perrow, 1970) and situational leadership (e.g., Graef, 1997; Thompson & Vecchio, 2009; Yukl, 2008), though such studies generally focus on organizational structure or effectiveness as dependent on leadership or organizations' external environment. Situational leadership theory (Graef, 1997; Thompson & Vecchio, 2009; Yukl, 2008) sees leadership itself as dependent on context, but specifically focuses on employees' task maturity rather than a broader view of organizational context factors and narrows leadership to motivating subordinates.