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Leadership behaviour repertoires in public organizations

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Chapter 6

Conclusions and discussion

6.1 A study of leadership behaviour repertoires in public organizations

Leadership in today's public organizations is an important and challenging affair. Over the years, multiple ideas about management in the public sector have been introduced and supplemented again by others. As a result, public organizations are characterized by various overlapping structures and modes of organizing. How leadership is embedded in organizations has also been affected by these developments. Moving away from the straightforwardness of the hierarchy towards 'boundaryless' and post-bureaucratic forms of organizing has brought about a partial decoupling of leadership from formal positions in the hierarchy. Organizational members throughout organizations, with but also without managerial positions, are expected to engage in leadership behaviour. The parallel structures create ambiguity and complexity in the organization of leadership, which provides room for manoeuvre as well as challenges. In this light, it is imperative to look at leadership behaviour and how it takes shape.

Amid these developments in organizing in the public sector, new questions about leadership emerge that the existing literature cannot answer yet. Although the field has a rich literature on leadership, several gaps were identified: there has been only scarce attention for leadership as dependent variable; most research has used a limited conceptualization of leadership behaviour (usually as motivating individual subordinates); and studies have focused almost exclusively on leadership by formal managers. This dissertation has attempted to address these issues and provides some pieces to the puzzle to understand leadership behaviour in public organizations better. Drawing on four empirical studies presented in the previous chapters, this dissertation set out to answer a central research question:

How do leadership behaviour repertoires take shape in public organizations?

Based on the presented studies, a threefold answer can be given. Firstly, leadership as behaviour can be understood as a repertoire, that spans a variety of behaviour types and directions in which they can be used. Secondly, the use of leadership behaviour repertoires takes shape in relation to the context in which it is used. Thirdly, engaging in leadership behaviour is not exclusive for organizational members in formal leadership positions. These conclusions are elaborated below.

6.2 Conclusions

Leadership behaviour as repertoire

In the first place, it can be concluded that it is important to look at behaviour of individual organizational members to understand the process of leadership better and that this behaviour is best conceived as a repertoire. Conceptualizing leadership behaviour as a repertoire means a comprehensive view of leadership that expresses the range of behavioural options that organizational members engaging in leadership can draw on. Chapter 2 has shown that formal leaders use a range of different behaviours, sometimes more and sometimes fewer different types in combination, to address the challenges and demands facing them. This involves behaviours ranging from networking and collaborating, directing and managing internal processes, envisioning and facilitating change, to inspiring, creating commitment, and attending to individual needs. Moreover, they do this in a 360-degree fashion: formal leaders do not only act in downward direction in relation to their subordinate employees; they also work to influence their peers across the organization (sideways), their superiors higher in the hierarchy (upwards), and external relations/partners outside their own organization (outwards). This results in a view of leadership that varies in complexity of repertoire use: how many different behaviour types and in how many directions towards other actors they use their repertoire is variable over time and between situations and issues at stake. In this way, the repertoire perspective matches what leadership behaviour looks like in practice to deal with intertwined issues and challenges, which therefore has advantages in studying leadership. This also answers the first sub-question (*How can leadership in an ambiguous context be conceptualized as a behaviour repertoire?*).

Focused on the behaviour type dimension of the repertoire, the utility of this conceptualization in studying leadership is further demonstrated in Chapter 3. The repertoire perspective has made visible that (formal) leaders behave

differently across situations, by showing that the breath of the used behaviours from the repertoire varies. The significant within-person variation in behaviour demonstrates that characterizing leadership of organizational members in terms of their overall style is too simplistic. It also shows that (formal) leaders take multiple issues into account in how they cope with demands put on them, which highlights that leadership involves more than supervising employees. Moreover, in Chapter 4, the repertoire conceptualization facilitated a test of variation between organizational members with and without formal leadership positions that allowed for more variation to come to light. The two groups did not engage in all types of behaviour from the repertoire in the same way when bureaucratic conditions were accounted for. Use of some types of behaviour appears to be more sensitive to circumstances than others. This means that a repertoire conceptualization can generate more nuanced results when studying leadership as dependent variable. It therefore proved to be useful to shed light on leadership as a comprehensive phenomenon to be able to deal with the diversity of demands and challenges involved in managing a group, unit, or organization.

Leadership behaviour repertoire use depends on context

The second conclusion that can be drawn from this dissertation is that leadership behaviour takes shape in relation to the context in which it is performed. While it seems evident that behaviour is situational, academic researchers nor practitioners tend to pay explicit attention to this. Factors in the situational and organizational context can explain how leadership behaviour repertoires are used, answering the sub-question *To what extent can aspects of the public organization context explain the use of leadership behaviour repertoires?* In two explanatory studies presented in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, it was found that leadership behaviour and use of the repertoire changes in relation to context. The two chapters draw on different types of evidence to test various explanations. In Chapter 3, it was found that individuals adapt their leadership behaviour to match the demands present in different situations they encounter. Ambiguity constrains the variety of leadership behaviours used: higher levels of ambiguity, visible in more different competing demands, seem to offer more leeway to prioritize and focus on fewer issues and consequently, to narrow the range of the repertoire used, whereas more pressure to do it all is experienced with simultaneously competing core issues. When faced with different dilemmas, the same person uses her repertoire in a different way. The experimental evidence offers support for this situation-based adaptation of

leadership behaviour to context and shows the importance of accounting for factors that are highly variable throughout the day.

On the basis of the analysis of cross-sectional data in Chapter 4, it can also be concluded that the use of leadership behaviour repertoires takes shape dependent on the organizational context. The analyses showed that environmental complexity seems to require leadership, as it stimulates activity on all types of leadership behaviour. This applies to organizational members with and without formal leadership positions alike. Also the bureaucratic structure of public organizations affects behaviour, but in different ways for the two groups. Perceived formalization appeared to be associated with lower activity on innovating and brokering behaviours, but more strongly for non-managerial employees than for managers. Both groups used coordinating and monitoring behaviours more frequently by as they perceived more formalization, but this effect was stronger for managers. Regarding behaviours oriented to group dynamics and individual needs, the greater activity of formal managers became more pronounced when the division of authority and responsibilities was perceived to be stronger. Taking these findings together, it leads to the conclusion that the organizational context can both empower and hinder organizational members to use their leadership behaviour repertoire. Since developments in organizing in the public sector have substantial impact on dilemmas, structures, and environments, this conclusion means that it is necessary to not only look at the effects of leadership, but also warrants attention for the context in which leadership behaviour is performed.

Leadership is not exclusive for formal managers

The third conclusion of this dissertation is that we should not treat leadership as a synonym for formal managerial positions in the organizational hierarchy. This research shows that organizational members, regardless of their formal position in the hierarchy, can contribute to leadership in public organizations. Whereas position-based leadership expectations exist for formal managers (Mintzberg, 1979), non-managerial employees without such institutionalized expectations are also actively engaging in organizational leadership. Still, distinctions between these groups are observed in this research and it can be concluded that formal authority and position matter. From Chapter 3 it can be learned that having formal authority over resources, personnel, and policy decisions provides more latitude for a more varied repertoire use, while lacking such authority resulted in the use of fewer types of behaviour. In line with these findings, Chapter 4 showed that

organizational members with formal leadership positions are more active on all types of leadership behaviour compared to those without such positions. Formal managers are also held back less by bureaucratic barriers. Together, these studies show that structures impact opportunities for behaviour, since organizational members with formal authority and formal positions of leadership generally have more options to perform leadership behaviour.

Yet, these studies also show that lacking such authority or position does not prevent employees from engaging in leadership. Despite comparatively less activity, non-managerial employees prove to be a potential resource in organizational leadership. Why they engage in leadership can be explained by the centrality of their leadership identity and past managerial experience. In Chapter 5, evidence from a survey in four public sectors shows that employees with a more central leadership identity, relative to their occupational identity, are more actively engaged in all types of leadership behaviour than employees whose leadership identities are relatively less central. Past experience in managerial positions is part of the explanation for differences in how central the leadership identity is. This demonstrates that leadership is not exclusive for formal managers, as identification with a leadership role is not solely embedded in positions. Although position matters, individual experiences and attitudes also matter. Despite their lack of formal leadership positions, it can be concluded that identity theory is helpful to understand leadership of non-managerial employees better – also the answer to the third sub-question (*To what extent can the use of leadership behaviour repertoires by non-managerial employees in public organizations be explained by leadership identity and formal leadership experience?*).

6.3 Discussion

What do these conclusions mean for how we understand leadership amid the sketched trends in public sector organizing? And which questions remain or are raised by these conclusions? The discussion below addresses implications for research and practice, including recommendations for further research.

Theoretical implications

On a theoretical level, this dissertation has implications for research on leadership in public organizations characterized by multiple overlapping forms of organizing.

It was found that a more comprehensive view of leadership, conceptualized as a repertoire, is useful in studying leadership in public organizations. It offers means to reveal variation as well as generate a more complete view of what practising leadership involves. Consequently, such insights could generate more nuance in explanations. Besides relevance for studying leadership as dependent variable, this could possibly benefit research that treats leadership as explanation for other phenomena. By distinguishing between types of behaviour and considering this variety in coherence, more subtle effects could be found. For instance, if leadership behaviour aimed at creating a vision and setting goals to realize that ambition is not complemented by actions to involve stakeholders, pay attention to individual needs, and keep an eye on processes and progress, other organizational members may not feel committed to the vision and performance could slow. Taking a repertoire perspective could illuminate the effects of behaviours in coherence. This could also be of use to shine a new light on unexpected or contradictory findings.

While this research has looked at leadership from an *intraorganizational* perspective, a step further would be an *interorganizational* application of the repertoire conceptualization to study leadership behaviour of individuals. Collaborative, boundary-crossing arrangements have become a common element of organizing in the public sector with implications for the individual level of analysis. Different streams of public management research have an interest in these developments, such as researchers of organizational behaviour in post-bureaucratic structures (e.g., Bernardis, 2021; Groeneveld & Kuipers, 2014; van der Voet & Steijn, 2021), distributed leadership (e.g., Currie et al., 2009; Fitzgerald et al., 2013; Zeier et al., 2021), and collaborative governance scholars (e.g., Bryson et al., 2015; Cristofoli et al., 2019; Crosby & Bryson, 2005, 2010; Crosby et al., 2017; Sørensen et al., 2017). While studies in these various traditions examine leadership, they focus on different types of questions related to different conceptualizations of leadership and levels of analysis. Besides, these streams are generally misaligned and not speaking to each other, which was also signalled in Chapter 2. The repertoire conceptualization holds potential to connect research traditions by providing a lens to study the behaviour of individuals within collaborative and cross-boundary settings.

The findings in this dissertation also show that the use of leadership behaviour repertoires takes various shapes – between individuals as well as for the same individual between different situations. While the majority of research on leadership behaviour takes an approach that keeps such variety hidden behind the overall style, this project provides support for the notion that combinations of various behaviours

in patterns over time are of particular importance. Based on her research on managing strategic paradoxes, Smith (2014) argues that not the individual decisions, or acts of leadership behaviour, make the difference, but that the pattern of combined decisions, or uses of the leadership behaviour repertoire, is most important. Shedding light on variation and adding more nuance in patterns of leadership behaviour can be facilitated by the repertoire conceptualization. Variation in the repertoire, combined with a within-person approach, could also be adopted to study such questions. Here it can contribute to advancing further theorizing and research.

In light of the complex organizational structures comprised of multiple overlapping and parallel forms of organizing that are characteristic of many public organizations, the conclusion that this context impacts opportunities for behaviour is important. Whereas in the survey, context factors related to organizational structure and environmental complexity were studied as individuals' perceptions about their organization in general, the vignette experiment focused on situational variation in context. The conclusion that leadership behaviour varies along with contextual variation emphasizes the value of disaggregating perceptions of context. Taking a more situational approach to studying context variables in relation to leadership behaviour is also supported by research on uncertainty related to rules in organizations. Bernards et al. (2021) found that rules are perceived quite variably throughout a week. Besides more attention for variation in leadership behaviour, future research should also zoom in on the variability of organizational context throughout the day or week to get to better grips with the mechanisms through which context influences leadership behaviour.

Throughout this dissertation, context was treated in line with Johns' (2006) conceptualization. This means that context factors were considered to be external factors that have an influence in the direction of leadership behaviour. The research thus focused on agency within structure, a choice based on the puzzle informing the main research question of this dissertation. However, it can be argued that an influence in the other direction is possible and that agency can shape and perpetuate structures (e.g., Wallace & Tomlinson, 2010). In the interviews conducted for the studies presented in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, participants talked about examples that indeed reflect this dynamic of leadership trying to adapt structures to accomplish their goals. Yet, the interactive process of agency and structure that mutually impact each other was not accounted for in the hypothesis testing, which focused on explaining how leadership behaviour itself takes shape. In light of this dissertation's findings that structure can enable or complicate the use of

leadership behaviour repertoires, it would be relevant to study how leadership behaviour repertoire use and structures dynamically shape each other. This could help us better understand leadership in organizations with increasingly common complex and parallel structures.

This research also has implications for the public management literature on leadership as a distributed phenomenon. Amid the sketched developments in organizing, participation of a broader range of organizational members in leadership is expected. In contrast to the standing literature that almost exclusively studied leadership by formal managers (Ospina, 2017; Vogel & Masal, 2015), this research has paid explicit attention to a group in organizations that is increasingly important in this respect: employees without formal leadership positions. It was found that this group can be seen as a resource in organizational leadership, as they are engaged in leadership behaviour from across the repertoire. This shows the relevance of including non-managerial employees in research on leadership behaviour. Since collective and distributed conceptions of leadership gain more momentum in public management (e.g., Jakobsen et al., 2021; Kjeldsen, 2019; Kjeldsen & van der Voet, 2021; Ospina, 2017), it is time that this group is more often taken into account as leaders and not only as followers. The term leader still typically denotes a formal manager. At the start of this research, this was also the main focus, but this has shifted as a result of new insights.

Although the empirical studies focused on experiences and accounts of individuals, the insights derived from this research are relevant for the discussion of more distributed forms of leadership, since the behaviour of individuals lays at its base. Questions that remain concern the social dynamics of leadership in interpersonal processes at the group and organizational level (Bolden, 2011; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Gronn, 2002). Here it was found that leadership behaviour is used in a 360-degree fashion, in relation to a varied set of stakeholders. Moving beyond the individual accounts of these relationships, the relational dimension could be further examined by observing interactions and group processes directly and by studying perspectives of multiple actors involved in the same encounters. Understanding how leadership as distributed phenomenon takes shape, with a different unit of analysis at the group or organizational level, can then be moved forward.

Identity theory and concepts can be useful to further explore how non-managerial employees participate in organizational leadership. Follow-up research could build on this and the work of Grøn et al. (2021) to study the development and enactment of leadership identity of a broader range of organizational members.

Possible questions relate to how leadership training and organizational culture affect this as well as how it affects dynamics of distributed leadership. The role of implicit leadership theories (ILTs), which is upcoming as topic of interest in public management (e.g., Vogel & Werkmeister, 2021), can provide a useful lens in connecting these concepts at the individual and group level. ILTs concern people's ideas about what leadership is and who is a leader, informed by prototypes of typical leaders and leadership (Lord et al., 2020). Though ILTs reside at the individual level, they could be affected by group norms and organizational culture as well as organizing paradigms (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). As the traditional bureaucracy makes clear distinctions between hierarchical managers and non-managerial employees and designates leadership responsibilities and authority to those in formal management positions, a hierarchical view of leadership typically informs ILTs. It could be argued that other organizational members should have ILTs that are open to leadership by non-managerial employees if they are to recognize someone as a leader, to acknowledge their leadership identity, and ultimately, to follow them.

Methodological implications

Also methodologically, this dissertation offers contributions for the public management literature with implications for future research. In the first place, the combination of experimental and in-depth qualitative methods has proven to be useful in facilitating experimental realism. The vignette experiment presented in Chapter 3 shows this in two ways: it was developed on the basis of an “actual derived cases” approach (Shepherd & Zacharakis, 1999) and involved an interview procedure of data collection. To develop the vignettes, issues and situations discussed by multiple participants in the exploratory interview study in Chapter 2 served as inspiration. The experimental treatments therefore resembled realistic situations encountered by the study participants. The data collection procedure in an interview setting provided further confidence in the experiment's realism. When responding to the vignettes, participants recounted situations and cases in which they faced similar demands and how they acted in those instances. This indicates that participants recognized the treatments as realistic. Moreover, these accounts of past behaviour in similar situations strengthen confidence in the realism of participants' responses to the vignettes. Although vignettes are hypothetical and primarily elicit responses of intended behaviour (Jenkins et al., 2010), the connection to past behaviour in comparable cases triggered participants

to give concrete and detailed answers, which makes the responses realistic. In this way, a mixed-methods approach to vignette experiments offers a controlled, yet realistic methodology with enhanced internal and external validity. It therefore holds potential to study public management questions in a way that makes meaningful contributions to both theory and practice (Bertelli & Riccucci, 2022).

A second methodological contribution and implication concerns the use of within-person designs. In Chapter 3, participants in the vignette experiment responded to a set of scenarios to test behavioural adaptation between situations. By presenting multiple vignettes to the same participant, multiple data points were collected and variation in the same participant's responses could be assessed to examine a previously untested hypothesis. As the data showed significant variation in how participants would act across the various scenarios, this research demonstrates the theoretical advantage of this design. In contrast to survey experiments presenting each participant with a single vignette or a cross-sectional survey asking about general aggregated patterns, the within-person vignette experiment gives insight in how behaviour varies and changes between situations. It therefore offers a more nuanced view of participants' leadership behaviour and at the same offers the opportunity to test hypotheses of behavioural adaptation directly. These benefits could well translate to other public management questions that concern organizational behaviour as well as change management.

Thirdly, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 have demonstrated the complementary value of the more traditional survey design to understand leadership as a repertoire. A survey enables us to obtain data about the full repertoire of leadership behaviours for a large group of organizational members. A next step that is possible in a survey design would be to map the use of the repertoire on the group or organizational level. The patterns of activity and distribution of leadership roles throughout an organization could come to light through such research. Complementing existing qualitative in-depth research on distributed leadership (e.g., Currie et al., 2009; Fitzgerald et al., 2013), such survey-based mapping can help to learn more about distributed forms of leadership. This is particularly insightful, because distributed leadership assumes a communal pattern that can be more or less orchestrated or emergent (Gronn, 2002). How patterns of distributing leadership roles emerge and are enacted could be further studied with experimental designs that focus on groups as unit of analysis. Getting more insight in the social dynamics within groups would advance our understanding of leadership by a broader set of organizational members.

Practical implications

Finally, the conclusions present implications for professionals and public organizations. Appreciating leadership behaviour as a repertoire of options recognizes the realities of leadership in public organizations. Public professionals often have to juggle and balance various goals, ambitions, and plans that affect stakeholders and interests in different ways (Head, 2010). As the opening example of Francis also illustrated, this requires acting in many different ways in relation to multiple stakeholders throughout and outside one's organization. To create value for the public – through all sorts of collaborations or processes within a public organization – it is essential that a variety of leadership behaviours is combined. Seeing leadership as behaviour that can take on many shapes opens up thinking in terms of options for manoeuvring and helps to address the multiple challenges in public organizations.

Furthermore, the insights derived from this dissertation can help to use existing knowledge about the relationship between leadership and a range of outcomes more effectively. This is possible by raising new awareness of the role of context in shaping what organizational members can do and how they use their leadership behaviour repertoire. In particular, this research points at several factors of influence in many public organizations: ambiguity stemming from diversity of competing interests, bureaucratic characteristics like formalization and strict division of authority posing barriers, and complexity of the environment creating a need and opportunities for leadership. Keeping this in mind could help in arranging work processes and collaborations that facilitate organizational members to contribute to leadership. Creating such contextual awareness on the side of organizational members with and without formal leadership positions could help them to reflect on their own leadership behaviour and use their repertoire with more sensitivity to the context in which they operate.

To cultivate broad participation in leadership throughout organizations further, organizations should recognize and facilitate the leadership potential of not only managers, but also of non-managerial employees. This could be done by drawing on the potential for identification with leadership roles outside of formal management positions. Leadership development aimed at leadership capacity throughout the organization can create a culture in which it is normal to step in. Besides leadership training, this could involve discussing what leadership is and how everyone – not only higher-level managers – can play a role in it, to create a shared image of leadership as an inclusive and collective endeavour. Moreover, role

expectations involving leadership behaviour could be discussed in job applications, performance and development reviews. Integrating the repertoire perspective in leadership development could help organizational members in different positions and roles to find options how they can use the leadership behaviour repertoire.

6.4 Limitations

Careful theoretical and methodological considerations notwithstanding, several limitations of the research for this dissertation need to be acknowledged. Firstly, all studies in this dissertation relied on self-reports of leadership behaviour. Self-reports and intended behaviour measures are not likely to retrieve exactly what behaviour has been used without some error. Critique in the literature points at the conflation of concepts of perceived and actual leadership behaviour by using proxy measures instead of actual behavioural measures (Banks et al., 2021). In other words: critics argue that there is a risk that the data do not match the concepts. Moreover, a risk of self-serving bias exists when participants are asked to describe their own behaviour. Research has demonstrated a self–other rating discrepancy of leadership behaviour between supervisors and their subordinates, with the latter deemed to be more reliable or accurate than the self-ratings to explain outcomes (Jacobsen & Andersen, 2015; Kjeldsen & Andersen, 2021; Vogel & Kroll, 2019).

Despite the downsides of self-reported data on leadership behaviour, it was considered a suitable measurement considering the questions this dissertation addresses. Self-reported data are informed by other information, in particular concerning intentions behind enacted leadership behaviour. While others need to pick up on leadership behaviour to be influenced by it and, hence, other-ratings of leadership behaviour have clear benefits to explain outcomes, the question why organizational members use leadership behaviour the way they do is served well by self-ratings. Moreover, the studies in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 are based on in-depth interview data. This is particularly relevant to nuance the risk involved in the vignette experiment: while participants provided their intended behavioural response to the scenarios, they often elaborated their answer by referring to how they acted in a similar situation in their own organization. These detailed examples provide some confidence that research participants could provide meaningful data about their own leadership behaviour. To test the robustness of this dissertation's

findings, it is advised to triangulate different types of measures for leadership behaviour from multiple sources.

Furthermore, this dissertation related somewhat contrasting and unexpected findings regarding the influence of elements in the organizational structure on leadership behaviour, which could be connected to the use of objective vs. subjective measures. Formal authority as operationalized in the vignette's role descriptions (Chapter 3) as well as formal leadership position based on the sampling frame (Chapter 4) appear to influence how leadership behaviour is exercised. Since objective measures for these characteristics of organizational structure were used, the studies provide support for their influence on leadership behaviour. Perceived subjectively measured characteristics of bureaucratic structure (Chapter 4), however, seem to have less impact. Nevertheless, the (relatively weak) relationships that were found were in line with the findings related to the more objective measures: both suggest structural constraint on behaviour. Despite criticism of the utility of subjective measures of organizational context factors (e.g., Kaufmann & Feeney, 2012; Rainey et al., 1995), other authors point at the role that interpretation of one's environment plays in one's behaviour (e.g., James & Jones, 1974; Jung, 2014; Weick et al., 2005; Wright et al., 2012). A gap between an objective evaluation and people's subjective evaluation of it may be part of the explanation of unexpected results, such as the reversed direction of the relationship in Chapter 3. What was experienced as the most difficult situation (subjective) did not match the expectation of the operationalization in the vignette (objective). This shows the importance of perceptions for understanding behaviour. As Kaufmann and Feeney (2012) argue, understanding delicate phenomena may be best studied with a combination of objective and subjective measures. Follow-up research would benefit from a combination to detect mechanisms affecting perceptions and to illuminate variation of experiences within the same structure, for instance between units within the same organization or between organizations within the same sector.

In terms of generalizability, some reservations are in place. The selection of the university sector as empirical setting was based on a typical case logic because of its characteristic ambiguity and complexity. Since these features are common for 'boundaryless' and post-bureaucratic forms of organizing throughout the public sector, this would facilitate studying the identified questions about leadership behaviour. In support of this logic, patterns were comparable across sectors in the studies of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, in which the university sector was complemented by municipalities, police, and university medical centres.

Nevertheless, the data were collected in only one country, universities have also atypical characteristics, and differences within sectors were not included. Taking these sources of potential variation into account is necessary to determine the generalizability of the conclusions.

Moreover, several assumptions were made about the key developments of organizing in the public sector. Instead of measuring trends directly, they served as background that highlight the relevance of the question this dissertation addresses. To what extent changes in leadership are associated with changes in organizing such as bureaucratic structure or environmental complexity over time cannot be derived from this research. The cross-sectional design of the survey relied on individuals' perceptions of their organization at one point in time. Though this enabled analysing the relationship between these context factors and leadership behaviour as a correlation, it could not be concluded that the developments per se have an impact on how individuals use leadership behaviour repertoires nor could assessments of causality be made. Longitudinal designs may be used to examine this further.

In addition, leadership behaviour was studied at the individual level only and no direct analysis of distributed leadership at the collective level could be made (Bolden, 2011; Gronn, 2002; Ospina, 2017). Throughout the research, it was assumed that expectations of distributed leadership existed to some extent in organizations. Moreover, no organization wide view of patterns of individual behaviour could be generated from the data. The conclusions are therefore confined to the individual level of analysis, though they can inform theorizing about leadership as a distributed phenomenon. Collecting nested data, that enable connecting individuals to groups and/or particular organizations, could be strived for to assess if and how behaviour of individuals accumulate to a pattern of leadership distribution within organizations.

Lastly, no distinction could be made between different categories of non-managerial employees, which could include new types of managers without personnel responsibility. In the study presented in Chapter 3, the existence of non-managerial organizational members with some form of leadership position was accounted for to some extent, since the role descriptions of the vignettes also included a condition of program director without formal authority over policy decisions, personnel, and resources. In the survey of Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, however, such groups could not be distinguished and no information was collected about what respondents' positions entail. Sampling such new managers purposively should be pursued to examine and understand their activity, role, and potential in organizational leadership in more depth.

6.5 Final thoughts

This dissertation aimed to provide fresh attention for leadership in public organizations. Throughout all studies, this has been realized chiefly through broadening the perspective: on what leadership is by developing a more encompassing conceptualization of leadership behaviour and on who engages in leadership by examining leadership of a broader range of organizational members. The repertoire conceptualization of leadership behaviour reminds us that leadership behaviour takes on many forms and is used in a variety of directions in relation to multiple stakeholders. The findings point out that leadership is not something that only formal managers do. Still, the term ‘leader’ typically denotes a formal manager. This was also the main focus at the start of this research, which resonates in the language of the first chapters of this dissertation. As a result of new insights gained from data collection as well as from the literature, this has shifted to a more inclusive understanding and phrasing. Opening up research on leadership to a broader range of organizational members, who draw on a varied repertoire of leadership behaviours, could help the field to address questions that changing public organizations likely continue to face.

Although the repertoire perspective was developed for leadership behaviour, it could be relevant to consider other forms of organizational behaviour as a repertoire. Appreciating the options to manoeuvre and adapt ingrained in repertoire thinking could provide some freedom to experiment and find out what works for individuals and in which situations. Reflecting on the use of a behaviour repertoire can be enriched when the role of context is considered, as this research has shown that situational, organizational, and environmental characteristics matter for leadership behaviour. This dissertation reminds academics and practitioners of the value of context sensitivity towards leadership behaviour and the palette available to them to adapt – in researching and enacting it.