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Leadership beyond hierarchies, toward public value: exploring, explaining and enhancing leadership in public sector networks

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Introduction

In May 2024, a deeply upsetting incident drew national attention. A ten-year-old girl, severely injured, was rushed to the hospital. Her foster parents were suspected of causing the harm. The girl had been under supervision and placed in foster care over two years prior. A subsequent investigation by the Health and Youth Care Inspectorate revealed a devastating truth: the support and care she had received were grossly inadequate. Public sector agencies involved in her care did not share critical information, and the inspection assessed their collaboration as ‘inadequate.’

In February 2025, this concern over fragmented care resurfaced. Following a series of violent, sometimes fatal, incidents involving individuals with mental illness, three national inspectorates announced a joint investigation. One of these incidents involved the fatal stabbing of an 11-year-old girl in Nieuwegein on February 1st. The perpetrators were often receiving care or support through multiple mental health services or municipal programs. Therefore, the collaboration between these organizations has the inspections’ attention in their investigation.

These incidents emphasize the importance of effective collaboration between organizations, such as healthcare providers, municipalities, and law enforcement. However, such collaboration does not happen automatically—particularly in complex, high-risk contexts involving vulnerable citizens. It requires actors who take initiative, coordinate across organizational boundaries, and sustain a shared sense of responsibility in regards to complex cases. These cases not only illustrate the consequences of inadequate collaboration but also point out a broader challenge: how can leadership be enacted and sustained when authority is diffuse, organizational goals are misaligned, and formal command structures are absent? They highlight the theoretical puzzle at the heart of this dissertation: understanding leadership beyond hierarchies in complex public sector networks who aim to create public value and address complex societal problems.

1.1 Leadership in public sector interorganizational networks: opportunities in a new organizational landscape

In the past two decades, public organizations have become increasingly engaged in collaborative networks (Provan and Kenis 2008; Crosby and Bryson 2010). Networks are defined as collaborative entities in which three or more autonomous organizations collectively pursue a joint goal (Provan, Fish and Sydow 2007). In the public sector, these networks have emerged as a response to complex societal challenges, such as climate adaptation, the prevention of organized crime, and improvements in healthcare systems. This complexity stems not only from the scale and interconnectedness of major societal issues, but also from the cross-cutting problems faced by individual citizens, as the examples above illustrate. The growing popularity of networks is unsurprising: they facilitate the

pooling of resources, such as expertise and financial capacity. As a consequence, networks are able to attain “collaborative advantage” – the generation of public value beyond what individual organizations could achieve independently (Huxham and Vangen 2013). This advantage is especially relevant in networks targeting ‘wicked problems’ – complex societal challenges that require the expertise of a range of actors (Head and Alford 2015).

With the increasing prevalence of network-based governance, the role of leadership in these contexts has gained more academic attention. Leadership is demonstrably beneficial for networks and needed to further the common good (Kramer et al. 2019; Bryson, Crosby and Stone 2015). Unlike traditional hierarchical organizations, networks are horizontal partnerships which generally lack formalized leadership structures and conventional mechanisms for sanctioning and incentivization. Instead, leadership in the context of public sector networks relies on interpersonal behaviors, such as fostering motivation and engagement, securing stakeholder buy-in for shared goals, and mobilizing critical resources—including financial support and human capital—to facilitate collective action (Agranoff and McGuire 2001; Bryson, Crosby and Stone 2015; Morse 2010).

However, much of the existing literature on public sector networks conceptualizes leadership in a narrow way—focusing on individual actors such as ‘network managers’ (Kickert, Koppenjan and Klijn 1997), leadership as a means to advance the interests of individual organizations (Meier and O’Toole 2003), or identifying discrete leadership roles and tasks needed for effectiveness (Ansell and Gash 2012). Although these studies have contributed to a better understanding of what networks need to thrive, these perspectives tend to assume that leadership is strategically coordinated, and/or located in clearly identifiable roles. What remains underexplored is how leadership emerges and unfolds in practice, particularly under conditions of less hierarchical relations and shifting actor constellations—conditions that are characteristic of many public sector networks. In other words: we still know little about how leadership is enacted collectively, distributed across actors, or shaped by the context of the network itself.

This is problematic, for several reasons. Primarily, it limits our theoretical grasp of leadership dynamics in networks and hinders practitioners’ ability to recognize and foster leadership in the absence of formal authority or designated leadership roles. Secondly, as leadership may help to prevent or mitigate “collaborative inertia” – a tendency of collaborative activities to become conflict-ridden (Huxham and Vangen 2000) – it is

important to build an empirically grounded conceptualization of leadership in public sector networks.

1.2 Theoretical background: leadership in a networked public sector landscape

Understanding leadership in networks requires a careful examination of the evolving organizational landscape of the public sector. The development of this landscape reshapes how public services are organized and raises key questions about how leadership is understood and enacted.

The public sector organizational landscape: changing paradigms and practices

The structure of public sector organizations – and its academic inquiry – has undergone substantial transformation. Different approaches to public administration have shaped the way governments are organized and managed, each with distinct core values and institutional arrangements (Hood 1991). Understanding these shifts is essential for grasping how public organizations are structured and governed, and for understanding how interorganizational networks have become a common mode of coordination that requires a different perspective on leadership.

In the early 20th century, Max Weber's bureaucratic model was the dominant model for public administration. It emphasized a lawful government based on hierarchical structures, formal rules, and impersonal decision-making. Bureaucracy was seen as a means to ensure accountability, predictability, and rational governance (Weber 2015). By the late 20th century, critiques of bureaucratic inefficiencies led to the emergence of New Public Management (NPM), which prioritized efficiency, performance measurement, and market-based mechanisms (Torfin, Bogh Andersen and Greve 2020). Under NPM, public sector organizations were restructured to resemble private enterprises, with an emphasis on managerial autonomy—captured in the principle of 'let managers manage.' Decentralization, outsourcing, and competition were introduced as strategies to enhance public service delivery (Hood 1991).

More recently, the limitations of NPM – its inadequacy in addressing complex societal issues – lead to the rise of New Public Governance (NPG) and Public Value Management (PVM) (Osborne 2006, Moore 1995). These approaches emphasize responsiveness, flexibility, robustness, and collaboration, acknowledging that many societal challenges require cross-

sector collaboration. The focus has shifted towards governance structures in which multiple actors—government agencies, private entities, and civil society organizations—work together in networks to co-produce public value (Bryson and Crosby 2015).

While these paradigms developed sequentially, all paradigms of governance coexist in practice. Civil servants operate in an environment shaped by overlapping, sometimes conflicting norms and expectations. As Torfin et al. (2020, p. 166) argue, "it is imperative (...) to decipher and understand the logic of appropriate action that defines how to govern and be governed in the situation like the one in which they are placed." In other words, civil servants now find themselves in a complex environment in which they have to balance different public values, organizational goals and network goals (Cremers et al. 2024).

Integrating leadership and the public sector landscape: key questions

The transformation of (our conceptions of) public sector organizations is interconnected with the evolution of both leadership theory and practice. As hierarchical bureaucracies give way to more flexible and networked governance structures, traditional models of leadership that emphasize formal authority and command-and-control mechanisms seem increasingly inadequate. Instead, leadership in the public sector today requires a shift to a relational, process-oriented function that operates across organizational boundaries (Murphy et al. 2017; Crosby and Bryson 2010).

Across the literature, leadership in networks is conceptualized in various ways. Network management and collaborative governance studies often emphasize the need for a central actor to coordinate and steer the network (Kickert et al., 1997; Klijn, Steijn and Edelenbos 2010). Studies on collaborative governance highlight leadership as an important function, yet tends to limit its conceptualization to roles or functions, such as stewards, catalysts or sponsors (Ansell and Gash 2012; Bryson, Crosby and Stone 2015). In contrast, leadership theory, although primarily focused on organizational settings rather than network contexts, highlights how leadership can be enacted by multiple actors, even in the absence of formal authority (Denis et al., 2012; Pearce and Conger, 2003, Parkkinen 2024; Carstensen, Kjeldsen & Nielsen). This dissertation aims to build on and bridge these perspectives by analyzing leadership as a set of behaviors that emerge within interorganizational collaborations and contribute to collective network outcomes. In doing so, it positions leadership not merely as a structural function, but as a dynamic and relational process embedded in collaborative practice. While scholarship on leadership in public sector networks is growing, it often develops in relative isolation from the extensive leadership

literature in the management sciences. This dissertation explicitly draws on and connects these literatures—building on established leadership concepts such as distributed and shared leadership and taxonomies of leadership behavior—to advance a more integrated understanding of how leadership operates across organizational boundaries in the public domain.

Hence, this dissertation defines leadership 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 2006, p.8). In doing so, this dissertation builds on two assumptions that reflect the shift toward network collaboration. First, this dissertation treats leadership as a *process* in which multiple actors can participate. Rather than focusing solely on individual leaders, this perspective considers how leadership emerges through interaction among actors (Spillane 2006; Carson et al. 2007; Pearce and Conger 2003). This aligns with the context of networks, in which organizations operate on a theoretically equal footing (Klijn and Skelcher 2007; O’Toole Jr. 1997).

Second, this dissertation focuses on *behavior*; zooming in on what network participants do rather than their formal roles. This assumption departs from earlier approaches to leadership during the ‘great men era’ and the ‘trait approach’ that sought to identify particular traits or inherent qualities in individuals (Van Wart 2003). Later developments, including models of *leadership styles* such as transformational leadership, emphasized how leaders could inspire and motivate followers through vision, engagement, and individualized consideration (Burns, 1978; Bass & Avolio, 1993). While insightful, leadership styles typically reflect broader patterns or tendencies in how leaders interact with followers, and are often associated with formal leadership positions. By contrast, this dissertation adopts a *behavioral* perspective, which examines specific, observable actions that individuals undertake, regardless of their formal role or personality traits. This lens is particularly suitable for public sector networks, where formal authority and hierarchical control mechanisms are limited, and leadership must instead rely on engaging stakeholders, building relationships, and advancing shared goals (Klijn, 2005; Agranoff & McGuire, 2001; Bryson, Crosby & Stone, 2006). To operationalize this perspective, the dissertation draws on the behavioral taxonomy developed by Yukl (2012), which categorizes leadership behavior into task-oriented, relations-oriented, change-oriented, and externally oriented behaviors. This framework allows for comparison across cases while remaining sensitive to contextual variation in how leadership is enacted within networked governance settings.

1.3 Research questions

This dissertation aims to understand and explain leadership in the context of public sector networks, to explore its impact and to enable practitioners to develop leadership in these contexts. The central research question of this dissertation is therefore: *How does leadership enhance collaboration in public sector networks, and how can it be developed?*

In order to answer this question, this dissertation is structured into four interrelated studies.

The first study aims to develop a conceptual framework of leadership in interorganizational networks. It addresses a gap in the existing literature, which often remains fragmented across three strands: leadership theory, networking and network management, and collaborative governance. While leadership theory generally has focused on leadership within formal hierarchies, and network management has treated leadership as a function covered by network managers, they neither fully capture how leadership emerges in horizontal, interorganizational settings. Collaborative governance theory acknowledges the importance of leadership in these contexts, but lacks conceptual depth in how it is enacted across actors in a network. This dissertation addresses the gap by developing a relational, behavioral and empirical understanding of leadership as a dynamic, potentially shared process embedded in public sector networks. Chapter 1 therefore aims to bridge the gap between these three branches by developing a conceptual framework for studying leadership in networks. It expands on leadership theory by examining leadership as a process situated in networked settings, incorporates the idea of shared and distributed leadership into network management theory, and contributes to collaborative governance by identifying behaviors that advance collective goals. Thus, the aim of the first study is to answer the following research question: *How can leadership in pursuit of collective objectives in public sector interorganizational networks be conceptualized?*

Building on the conceptual groundwork of the first study, the second study investigates what enables or constrains leadership behavior in networks. Prior research suggests that organizational factors—such as structure, culture, or incentives—can significantly shape individual leadership behavior (Hammer and Turk, 1987). These factors may influence not only whether individuals are capable of enacting leadership, but also whether they are motivated to do so and whether they have the opportunity to engage in such behavior. This study explores how these dimensions affect the extent to which network participants contribute to leadership and how this, in turn, shapes the leadership process at the network

level. Therefore, the second study aims to answer the following research question: *How do organization-level factors shape network participants' ability to exhibit leadership behavior, and subsequently affect the leadership process in public sector interorganizational networks?*

Another critical question regarding leadership in networks, is how leadership behaviors contribute to the process of collaboration. Although previous studies have highlighted that leadership is, indeed, essential in networks, these studies often focus on specific functions of leadership such as mobilizing actors, facilitating dialogue, identifying common interests, reducing power imbalances between members (Ansell and Gash 2008); and securing resources (Crosby, 't Hart and Torfing, 2017). While these studies improve our understanding of what networks need to function, they tend to conceptualize leadership in functional or role-bound terms, rather than empirically examining *how particular leadership behaviors* affect collaboration. As a result, there is limited insight into the behavioral dimensions of leadership in networks—such as task-oriented, relational, change-oriented, and externally oriented behaviors (Yukl, 2012)—and how these behaviors relate to the collaborative process itself. The third study addresses this gap by conceptualizing and operationalizing collaborative processes and testing the associations between specific leadership behaviors and key dimensions of collaboration. It thus investigates the following research question: *How is leadership behavior associated with the process of collaboration in interorganizational networks?*

The final study turns to practice: how can leadership be developed in public sector networks? Most leadership development research focuses on formal leaders or high-potential individuals within single organizations (Drath et al., 2008). This study adopts a broader view, aiming to enhance leadership across all network participants. Using a Design Science approach, it develops and tests an intervention to strengthen leadership capacity in networked settings. Therefore, the research question of the fourth study is: *How can Design Science be applied to create an intervention that aims to enhance leadership development in networks?*

1.4 Methodology

Research on leadership in networks presents several methodological challenges, which must be carefully addressed in the research designs of this dissertation. These challenges are twofold: first, they relate to the study of leadership itself, and second, they concern the specific context of networks.

Regarding the study of leadership, various methodological issues have been identified. Scholars in leadership research have long advocated for greater scientific rigor in conceptualizing and measuring leadership (Conger 1998; Lowe and Gardner 200; Gardner et al. 2010; Parry et al. 2014). Across academic studies, leadership is defined, conceptualized, and measured in diverse ways. Some researchers focus on particular leadership styles, such as transformational versus transactional leadership or task-oriented versus relationship-oriented leadership (Burns 1978; Bass and Avolio 1993). This dissertation adopts a broader behavioral, rather than style-specific focused, approach to leadership. The added value of this approach lies in its focus on observable actions rather than traits or styles, which enhances the empirical observation of leadership as a phenomenon in complex, multi-actor settings such as public sector networks. However, the challenge lies in adequately capturing and interpreting leadership behaviors across diverse contexts and actor perspectives, where behaviors may be subtle and difficult to recognize for participants. Another risk involved in this process is that of self-reporting leadership behaviors which may not be experienced as such by other network members.

A second methodological challenge stems from the unique context of this study: networks. O'Toole Jr. (1997) argued that networks should be taken seriously in public administration research. A decade later, Robinson (2006) acknowledged progress in this area but called for methodological pluralism to further advance network research. This dissertation responds to that call by integrating insights from the literature on collaboration in teams. Recent research emphasizes the increasingly dynamic and ambiguous nature of teams, noting that they often experience high turnover and are required to address complex issues that demand diverse expertise under considerable time pressure. In this context, Edmondson and Harvey (2017) argue that it is more appropriate to speak of *teaming*—a fluid and adaptive process—rather than treating teams as fixed structures.

Drawing on the teams literature, this dissertation identifies parallels between teams and interorganizational networks. A central challenge common to both is the ambiguity and uncertainty surrounding membership (Huxham and Vangen, 2000; Voets, Koliba, and Keast, 2019; Kerrissey, Satterstrom, and Edmondson, 2020). These forms of ambiguity and uncertainty, that Kerrissey, Satterstrom and Edmondson (2020) refer to as 'entativity issues,' make it difficult for researchers to define team boundaries and capture interactions systematically over time. In such dynamic environments, teams may not be perceived—or even perceive themselves—as coherent entities, leading to uncertainty about who should be studied, when, and for how long. This can result in substantial missing data and

inconsistencies in data collection. This challenge is especially salient in networks, where participants operate on an informal basis, with infrequent meetings.

Another challenge related to studying networks is related to factors of difference. According to Kerrisey, Satterstrom, and Edmondson (2020), a high degree of variation among members of a team may cause variation in perspectives and interpretations among team members. These differences in perspectives among participants may complicate data analysis and aggregation. This is especially true within the context of networks, in which organizations and their representatives with a wide variety of skills, expertise and goals collaborate.

Altogether, these methodological hurdles emphasize the need for flexible, innovative research designs to capture the realities collaboration (Kerrisey, Satterstrom and Edmondson 2020). To navigate these challenges, this study employs a multi-method research design to facilitate triangulation. By combining multiple data sources and research methods, this dissertation aims to ensure a robust approach to data collection and analysis. First, to mitigate entativity issues and capture a wide range of perspectives in contexts with fluid membership, the studies rely heavily on semi-structured interviews with a broad cross-section of network participants. By interviewing as many members as possible across different organizations and roles, the research maximizes inclusiveness and helps identify patterns despite informal or unstable boundaries.

Second, to deal with the ambiguity in network boundaries over time, data collection is explicitly designed to reflect the evolving nature of participation—capturing both formal members and key informants who influence collaboration but may not attend regularly. Third, to account for the variation in perspectives and interpretations among diverse network members, the studies incorporate triangulation across data sources (e.g., interviews, surveys, focus groups). This approach supports the aggregation of differing viewpoints. Finally, the intervention-based study in Chapter 5 actively engages participants in reflecting on leadership together with their network partners, which helps validate findings across diverse perspectives.

The research design for each study is as follows. The first study, presented in Chapter 2, consists of a literature review combined with a multiple case study of three networks. Within these networks, semi-structured interviews were conducted with as many network members as possible from various organizations. The findings from the literature and

interviews informed the development of a conceptual model that captures leadership in networks. The second study, discussed in Chapter 3, involves semi-structured interviews with members of a nationally operating network, drawing on respondents from three network sub-units. The study in Chapter 4 adopts a mixed-methods approach, employing a survey distributed among members of a single network. A Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used to examine the relationships between different types of leadership and the quality of the collaborative process. These quantitative findings were further enriched through semi-structured interviews. Finally, the study in Chapter 5 follows an intervention-based Design Science framework. This study integrates a literature review, focus groups, a survey and group interviews to develop, test, and evaluate the leadership intervention developed in this study.

1.5 Relevance

This dissertation contributes to both academic scholarship and professional practice in the domain of public sector leadership in networks. It addresses a significant conceptual gap in how leadership is understood and enacted in interorganizational settings, and proposes actionable insights for strengthening collaborative capacity in practice.

1.5.1 Theoretical relevance

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to develop a broader and empirically grounded conceptualization of leadership in public sector networks, for which we build on four additional literatures; Leadership theory, network management theory, collaborative governance theory, and leadership development theory. Each provide their strengths, but also show some gaps, based on which this thesis will deliver four main contributions.

First, this dissertation advances collaborative governance theory, which has predominantly emphasized network steering from the viewpoint of meta-governance, and the roles of stewards, sponsors, or catalysts (Sorensen and Torfing 2009; Ansell and Gash, 2008; Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). While leadership is frequently recognized as a facilitating condition, it is often conceptualized in abstract or functional terms. This dissertation addresses this limitation by adopting a behavioral lens to investigate how specific leadership behaviors—task-oriented, relational, change-oriented, and externally oriented (Yukl, 2012)—support collaborative processes such as trust-building, joint learning, and shared decision-making (Huxham and Vangen, 2005). By examining these behaviors

empirically, it provides a better understanding of how leadership contributes to the quality of interorganizational collaboration.

Second, the dissertation contributes to network management theory by broadening its conceptual scope beyond the role of the individual network manager, broker, or boundary spanner (Kickert, Klijn, and Koppenjan, 1997; Edelenbos, Van Buuren, and Klijn, 2013; Van Meerkerk and Edelenbos, 2018). It adopts a distributed perspective, viewing leadership as a process enacted by multiple network participants who jointly steer collective action (Pearce and Conger, 2003). Across the empirical chapters, the dissertation shows how such leadership in networks is shaped by intra-organizational conditions—including accountability mechanisms, the political environment, and performance feedback—that influence how members enact leadership in networks. This perspective enriches network management theory by emphasizing the embeddedness of network participants and the contextual constraints under which they operate.

Third, the dissertation contributes to leadership theory by extending its analytical reach to the underexplored context of public sector networks. Mainstream leadership studies have largely focused on formal leaders operating within single organizations, under conditions of hierarchical authority (Fiedler, 1971; Bass and Avolio, 1993). In contrast, this dissertation explores leadership in horizontally structured networks of interdependent, yet autonomous organizations pursuing a shared goal (Provan and Kenis, 2008; Klijn and Koppenjan, 2016). It applies a well-established taxonomy of leadership behaviors (Yukl, 2012) – which has been established to understand leadership in individual organizations – to the distinct context of public sector networks and examines how leadership unfolds in the absence of formal command. This application not only demonstrates the applicability of existing leadership frameworks but also contributes to their refinement by highlighting how leadership manifests in multi-actor governance settings.

Finally, the dissertation expands the scope of leadership development literature, which has traditionally focused on formal leaders within single organizations (Drath et al., 2008; Day et al., 2014). To fully develop leadership in networks, however, it is required to understand the development of leadership *in* the context in which leadership takes place: public sector networks. Whereas current leadership development practices have been established to apply within organizational contexts, this dissertation aims to offer a leadership development intervention that is developed to apply *in* public sector networks. It therefore introduces a network-wide perspective on leadership development by designing, implementing,

and evaluating an intervention aimed at strengthening leadership capacity in network collaborations. Drawing on a Design Science approach (Johannesson and Perjons, 2014; Dresch et al., 2015), the intervention was co-created with practitioners and iteratively refined, offering both a methodological and theoretical contribution. It demonstrates how leadership development can be adapted to support distributed leadership in complex, interorganizational settings, and provides actionable insights for enhancing leadership in the public sector landscape of today, in which public actors collaborate with each other.

Together, these chapters provide a comprehensive framework for understanding leadership in public sector networks as a multi-level, dynamic, and practice-embedded phenomenon. The dissertation contributes to theoretical debates on distributed leadership, collaborative governance, and public management, while also offering actionable insights for leadership development in complex interorganizational settings.

1.5.2 Practical relevance

In addition, this dissertation provides various opportunities for practitioners. As public sector challenges increasingly require collaboration across organizational boundaries, the ability to recognize, enact, and support effective leadership in networked contexts has become essential. This dissertation provides actionable insights into how leadership functions in such settings, offering practitioners conceptual clarity and practical tools to strengthen their collaborative endeavors.

A key practical contribution lies in the identification and articulation of leadership behaviors that are effective in horizontal, non-hierarchical contexts. By shifting focus from formal roles to actual behaviors—as elaborated in Chapter 2—the dissertation enables professionals to better understand how leadership manifests in practice, regardless of one's formal position. This perspective is particularly valuable for network practitioners who might not have a formal leadership position, but want to explore their potential to participate in the process of leadership.

Moreover, the research underscores the influence of organizational context on leadership in networks. Chapter 3 offers a starting point for assessing how internal organizational factors—such as the political environment, accountability requirements and managerial support—shape an actor's ability to engage in collaborative leadership in networks. This allows both individuals and organizations to reflect critically on their readiness and capacity to contribute to interorganizational goals.

Further practical value is found in the behavioral analysis of the effects of leadership on facilitating collaboration, as conducted in Chapter 4. By empirically linking specific leadership behaviors to key dimensions of collaborative processes, the dissertation provides practitioners with concrete guidance on how to improve cooperation and outcomes within their networks.

Finally, the dissertation introduces a development-oriented intervention specifically designed for network settings. Chapter 5 presents an empirically grounded, co-created tool that supports the development of leadership capacity among network participants. This intervention fosters shared reflection and learning in networks, and helps network participants cultivate leadership.

In sum, this dissertation equips practitioners with a deeper understanding of leadership as a relational and behavioral phenomenon, applied to the realities of interorganizational collaboration. It supports efforts to build more effective public networks—ultimately contributing to the delivery of meaningful public value.

1.6 Outline dissertation

The remainder of this dissertation is structured as follows. **Chapter 2** provides a conceptualization of leadership in public sector networks, integrating existing leadership and network management studies through a multiple case study of three public sector networks. **Chapter 3** explores the antecedents of leadership in public sector networks. Specifically, this chapter demonstrates through a qualitative study how organization-level factors are associated with the behaviors network members exhibit in networks, and explains how this in turn affects the leadership process in networks. **Chapter 4** presents the findings of a mixed-methods study on the effects of leadership behaviors on collaborative processes in networks. Consequently, **Chapter 5** presents the development and qualitative evaluation of an intervention aimed at developing leadership in public sector networks. Lastly, **Chapter 6** presents the overall conclusions and discussion of this dissertation. The findings of the four empirical chapters are integrated in order to answer the main research question of this dissertation.

Table 1 Overview of studies included in this dissertation

Ch.	Research question	Research design and methodology	Contribution
2	How can leadership in pursuit of collective objectives in public sector interorganizational networks be conceptualized?	Literature review; multiple case study	Extends leadership theory to network settings by conceptualizing leadership as a contextual, distributed process.
3	How do organization-level factors shape network participants' ability to exhibit leadership behavior, and subsequently affect the leadership process in public sector interorganizational networks?	Single case study, 39 semi-structured interviews	Expands network management theory by linking organizational context to members' ability to exhibit leadership in networks.
4	How is leadership behavior associated with the process of collaboration in interorganizational networks?	Single case study, survey and 39 semi-structured interviews	Strengthens collaborative governance theory by operationalizing leadership behaviors and their effects on collaboration.
5	How can Design Science be applied to create an intervention that aims to enhance leadership development in networks?	Artefact development, focus groups, pilot testing, qualitative survey, group interviews	Contributes to leadership development literature with a practice-based intervention for leadership in networks.