

# Daring Decision-Making: a balance between Transactional and Transformational Leadership

*Peter Scholten<sup>1</sup>, Jurian Edelenbos, Wouter de Groot, Sander Meijerink and Geert Teisman*

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## Abstract

The governance of earth systems such as the water system is characterized by a great complexity. Within this context of complexity the role of individual leadership and the personal ways of dealing with the management of complex interaction processes in which people, ideas and strategies are brought together and interconnected is an important factor in the policy process.

The form this individual leadership can have is categorized into three styles of leadership. Styles of leadership that are mainly focused on the maintenance and accommodation of the policy making process are being labeled as *transactional*. On the other hand, *transformational* leadership is specifically focused on raising awareness about specific issues and convincing or motivating others to share the ideas on these issues.

We introduce the concept of *daring decision-making* as a third style of leadership that combines aspects from both abovementioned archetypes. Through comparative case study research we describe and analyze the activities of public leaders as well as the effects of these management activities on the process of complex decision-making. In the context of Dutch public management, which is largely driven by transactional processes, anything other than transactional behavior can be seen as a step out of the box and from our empirical results we can conclude that such behavior goes hand in hand with a bet on public or political support. It is because of this dependence on support that a daring style in public leadership is to some extent fragile. Sustaining such leadership behavior is highly dependable on a variety of factors both on a personal as well as a contextual scale.

Key words: public leadership, transformational, transactional, daring, water management, complexity, innovation

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# **Daring Decision-Making: a balance between Transactional and Transformational Leadership**

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## **1. introduction**

If we assume that earth systems are complex systems this raises the question of how governments deal with this complexity. It is intriguing to observe that the governance system that aims to guide and control complex earth systems is in itself rich in complexity. A variety of different organizations on various levels of government are involved in governance processes. This leads to the statement that a complex social system is trying to govern a complex physical system. Acknowledging this, an increasing number of studies describe policy making, service delivery or policy implementation in terms of networks and network development (Rhodes, 1997; Sorensen and Torving, 2007). In these governance networks the relations between public actors and other actors (private, non-profit organizations but also societal stakeholders) are characterized by a high degree of interdependency and by complex decision-making processes (Teisman, 2001; Edelenbos, 2005). Various parties interact on various levels with different goals and different backgrounds, using different rules and perceptions, in an ever changing world.

We take as our point of departure that in this situation of complexity, the integrative and energizing capacities of leadership becomes an important factor in the policy process (Huiteima and Meijerink, 2010). Contrasting to the procedural and bureaucratic governance approach which is largely aimed at directing and control, we claim that within the complexity of the governance system individual leadership aimed at interconnectedness and the synchronizing of people, ideas and structures can provide opportunities to catalyze and develop new ideas (Uhl-Bien, et al, 2007). We propose a leadership that is both willing and able to combine a largely procedural government context with a strategy of flexibility and synchronization in order to create room for alternative issues and conditions in which followers' behaviors can produce structure and innovation (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001). Thus, the public leadership we propose is closely related to the paradigm developed by Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) which frames leadership as a complex interactive dynamic from which adaptive outcomes, such as innovation, emerge.

Water management in the Netherlands provides good examples of complex earth system governance situations. After decades of regarding river management issues as safety

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issues that are subject of national management, the new river management paradigm in the Netherlands is focused on combining safety measures with economic potential and landscape enhancement in a regional development approach. This has strong consequences for the role of local riverine municipalities who have to incorporate new issues of sustainable river deltas into their regular policy process (Scholten, 2009).

In the daily practice of municipal administrations, the great majority of activities and routines are related to incremental policy processes. Orientations of leadership that are dedicated to this system are therefore most common and effective. Such styles of leadership are focused on the maintenance and accommodation of the policy making process and are being labeled as *transactional*. Transactional leadership, as opposed to *transformational* leadership, is about incremental decision-making (Lindblom, 1959). About making marginal, stepwise improvements, and how to reduce resistance for the implementation of decisions (Bass, 1985).

In a situation of the arrival of issues of consequence that are new, innovative or alternative to the existing incremental routines, a coupling of these external issues with the existing internal municipal process is required in order to effectively integrate such issues in the actual decision-making. The role of individual leadership in this process of coupling is regarded as essential. The strategies that are related to the combining or not combining of the transactional municipal process with these external issues can have various forms and is related to the leadership orientation of the individual municipal administrator.

In this article we focus on the role of individual municipal leadership in the context of the Dutch water management. We will attempt to gain an insight in the various strategies that are involved with specific leadership orientations on the aims and abilities to combine existing processes of transaction with bringing in alternative issues that require adjustment of these processes.

We depart from the ideal typical descriptions of *transactional* and *transformational* leadership. We will pay much attention to how these ideal types can be combined. The aim of the paper is to propose an ideal typical combination which we characterize as *daring leadership*. Through highlighting practical examples of leadership roles in the context of water management we will support the claim that daring leadership is existing in the reality of the complex governance system of Dutch water management. In how far the typology of daring leadership is applicable in other national or international contexts is unclear. Therefore we propose no external validity in our insights and conclusions yet we hope they might still provide colorful and useful examples of individual behavior in public decision-making for those interested in the understanding of the role of leadership in the policy process.

First we will describe the theoretical insights on transactional and transformational typologies that form the basis of our conceptualization of leadership. Then we will describe several cases of municipal leadership and their activities in combining external issues with the daily practice of policy making, concerning the water management project 'WaalWeelde'. Furthermore we will analyze these empirical findings in terms of the conceptualization of leadership based on the three ideal types, namely, transactional, transformational and daring leadership. We will end with some concluding remarks and possible hypotheses.

## 2. Leadership theory and conceptualization

Leadership can have various forms and orientations. In a behavioral approach of corporate management styles, Bass (1985) has developed a conceptualization of transformational leadership based on an archetypical distinction between transactional and transformational forms of leadership. This distinction is derived from Burns' (1978) classification of transactional and transformational political leadership. Burns' theory in turn seems influenced by Weber's (1947) model of bureaucratic, traditional and charismatic authority in explaining leader-follower relations.

Here we build on Bass' interpretations of the two leadership types and subsequently apply this theory to describe the dynamics of political leadership in local Dutch water management. Inspired by the theories of transactional and transformational typologies of leadership we conceptualize a form of leadership that draws from both repertoires and because of its specific elements characterize it as *daring leadership*.

### Leadership types and strategies of advocacy and brokerage

Transactional leadership is focused on marginal improvements, maintaining the quantity and quality of performance, how to substitute one goal for another, how to reduce resistance and how to implement decisions (Bass, 1985). This type of leadership is essentially focused on the maintenance of the process of policy making. Activities are accommodating to the current system and existing status quo.

Transformational leadership is specifically focused on raising awareness about certain issues and convincing or motivating others to share the ideas on these issues. This requires a leader with vision, self confidence and inner strength to argue successfully for what he or she thinks is right or good, not for what is popular or acceptable (Bass, 1985: 17). Apart from the strong association with proposals for change, this type of leadership seems to be more personal and value-driven. In terms of end and means, transformational leadership is generally more concerned about the ends in contrast to transactional leadership which is mostly concerned with the means.

The distinction in the concern for system maintenance (focusing on the means) on the one hand and the focus on pushing a proposal (focusing on the ends) on the other can also be found on the practical level in Kingdon's description of advocacy and brokerage strategies, used by policy entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs advocate their proposals but they also act as brokers, negotiating among people and making the critical couplings (Kingdon, 1995 p. 183).

Brokerage activities seem mostly related to transactional leadership while advocacy strategies form the greater part of transformational types of leadership. It is generally agreed upon that in practice mostly a combination of these types of strategies can be found. (Kingdon, 1995; Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Huitema and Meijerink, 2010). This is in congruence with the theory building of transactional and transformational leadership based on the Weberian triad of traditional, bureaucratic and charismatic leadership. Weber also pointed out that none of the three types occur in pure form and transitions and combinations can be observed (Weber, 1947 p. 333).

We will now further conceptualize these two typologies of leadership based on the described differences in motivation and focus, their use of specific advocacy or brokerage strategies as well as some distinctive other features. Based on these typologies, we propose a different form of leadership that is focused on the combining of innovative ideas with the existing patterns of policy making. This leadership type draws from the repertoires of both transactional and transformational leadership and through strategic combinations, comprises a new strategy which is considered to be successfully applicable in the current practice of water management in the Netherlands.

### **Transactional leadership**

In terms of motivations transactional leadership is, as we have already pointed out, characteristically focused on conducting a fair and correct democratic decision-making process. The focus of action here is very much on system maintenance. The manager is fully and solely concentrated on accommodating the interaction, i.e. the process of deliberation, cooperation and bargaining between actors. Process is leading, and substance follows from process (Edelenbos et al, 2009). This process orientation is visible in practice when the manager constantly has an eye for the position of stakeholders and is oriented on following the rules and regulations, official procedures of decision-making without stating a clear own personal agenda or goal. Without a personal agenda or policy goal and a focus on avoiding conflict this type of leadership only acts when public or political support is a given and secured fact.

The main repertoire of activities in transactional leadership consists of the maintenance and accommodation of the policy process and as such is very much comparable to the brokerage activities of Sabatier's policy broker (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Here, we label this brokerage as *accommodating* in contrast with an *entrepreneurial* and *advocacy* form of brokerage we will describe later on. The transactional leader develops and implements a smooth process of cooperation and continuous interaction with stakeholders in which hard conflicts or tough decisions are avoided by combining all the interests in a package deal. This interaction form often results in a compromise that addresses the various different opinions but risks a reinterpretation of the initial policy goals. In a process of wheeling and dealing and accommodation a plan is developed which is supported by the majority of involved actors (Edelenbos and Klijn, 2006). Transactional leaders want securities that the plan is backed up. Their actions are mostly focusing on creating internal support (within or between governmental organizations) and, to a lesser extent, external support (outside the organization with all kinds of stakeholder organizations). They want to control the policy process and therefore apply regulated openness for the environment to their project. The involvement of stakeholders is organized through strict procedures and rules of conduct.

The strategic components in transactional leadership are focused on exploring or tapping the ideas of others. Communication is much more a means to enable the process of decision-making through dialogue and mutual exchange of ideas and opinions, rather than a tool to convince others of one idea. Leadership usually starts in its early stages with an open dialogue. It is typical of process managers not to strive towards identifying the solution too quickly, as this can distract from their ability to understand all the

competing interests. Problem-solving occurs through a DDD communication strategy: Dialogue, Decide and Deliver (De Bruijn et al, 1998). A dialogue is initiated based on the original problem definition, key aspects of the ideal solution are actively debated and collaborative decision-making takes place before projects are implemented (Mandell, 2001).

**Table 1: Conceptualization of transactional leadership**

<b>Leadership typology</b>	<b>Transactional leadership</b>		
<i>Motivation</i>	Conducting good and fair interactions between different actors in the decision-making process		
<i>Focus of action</i>	System maintenance, reduce conflict, making sure things happen according to the system		
<i>Betting on support?</i>	No, creating commitment as soon in the process as possible.		
<i>Main repertoire of activities</i>	Accommodating brokerage		
<i>Interaction form</i>	Cooperation oriented / focused on conflict avoidance		
<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Communication strategy</i>  Dialogue Decide and Deliver	<i>Stakeholder involvement strategy</i>  Regulated Openness  The environment of different actors is involved, but through a process of strict rules and procedures	<i>Decision-making strategy</i>  Discussion, debate, accommodation and compromise

## **Transformational leadership**

Transformational leadership is specifically motivated to raise awareness about certain issues of consequence and convincing or motivating others to share the ideas on these issues. This requires a leader with vision, self confidence and inner strength to argue successfully for what he or she thinks is right or good, not for what is popular or acceptable (Bass, 1985: 17). Apart from the strong association with proposals for change, this type of leadership seems to be more personal and value-driven (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). In terms of ends and means, transformational leadership is generally more concerned about the ends in contrast to transactional leadership which is mostly concerned with the means, being the process, its rules and regulations (Bass, 1997) This orientation on substance, i.e. the content of the policy proposal, is visible when the manager constantly tries to convince others of his or her proposal and has no explicit attention for the ideas and proposals of others.

The focus of action in transformational leadership is on the pushing of a pet proposal and the convincing of others that this is the best or most preferable option in the light of addressing a specific issue of consequence. This approach is also labeled in literature as project management (Mantel, 2005). The transformational leader is pushing for these proposals because he or she considers them of great importance and not because they are popular. In doing so this type of leadership starts off in a situation that is unclear about whether there will be enough public or political support for the proposed plans. A bet on support is made and it is expected to gain support through the act of convincing others. Consequently, advocacy is the main repertoire in this case of leadership.

The transformational form of interaction is characterized as competitive. A preferred proposal is pushed forward and put to compete with possible other ideas or interests (Teisman, 2001). The manager sees the interaction process with others as a competition in which the stronger, and fitter, ideas will survive (are selected in) and the weak ones will die (are selected out). The manager operates from exclusion and avoids package deals because this makes things too (needlessly) complex (Edelenbos et al, 2009).

The strategies of transformational leadership are primarily concerned with promoting the proposed idea and trying to convince other parties that this is the necessary and best solution. The manager is focused on telling and selling the idea to the public/the environment of stakeholders. Such a communication style is based on a DAD strategy: Decide Announce and Defend. The desired solution is decided upon in a more or less unitary fashion, without consultation and deliberation. This decision is then announced to the environment and defended from opposing arguments or misgivings (Beierle and Cayford, 2002; Quah and Tan, 2002). Although this can be convincing, a transformational orientation might push for a proposed solution too hard, and risk ending up with a lack of public and political support.

**Table 2: conceptualization of transformational leadership**

<b>Leadership typology</b>	<b>Transformational leadership</b>		
<i>Motivation</i>	Bringing forward issues of consequence in the form of a strong and appealing idea or policy proposal		
<i>Focus of action</i>	Pushing a proposal, convincing others		
<i>Betting on support?</i>	Yes, stressing the substantial strength of the vision		
<i>Main repertoire of activities</i>	Advocacy		
<i>Interaction form</i>	Competition/ survival of the fittest idea		
<i>Strategies</i>	<i>Communication strategy</i>	<i>Stakeholder involvement strategy</i>	<i>Decision-making strategy</i>
	Decide Announce and Defend	Closed for stakeholders, only open for those actors who show sympathy for the vision	decisiveness with the possible problem of resistance and lack of support
	Tell and Sell the idea		Try to convince others

### **Daring leadership**

In addition to transactional and transformational leadership, we present daring decision-making not as a third and exclusive ideal type, but as an orientation on leadership that draws from both other repertoires in various ways.

The motivations for daring leadership are comparable to those in transformational leadership, namely the bringing forward of issues of consequence and the proposing of a solution strategy. Unlike transformational leadership this solution is not yet a proposal with fixed content but merely a direction or set of parameters. In this case the manager has an eye for an appealing idea and tries to mobilize the environment of stakeholders in this general line of thought. There is explicit iteration between process and content, but with a general idea of direction towards a policy goal (focal point). The communication strategy is through announce-dialogue-and-adjust. It is about mildly selling the idea, but being prepared to adjust to appealing ideas that arise from dialogue about the initial idea.

In terms of action, this leadership orientation uses an advertising but open concept in a deliberative process combined with an enthusiastic, motivating and mildly directing leadership attitude. Actions are focused on influencing and directing toward certain policy content whilst simultaneously an openness and adaptability in the process of decision-making is created. This mixture of efforts is found on different levels in the policy process. Apart from the advocacy strategies needed to persuade others to join and promote the proposed policy direction also a very specific form of brokerage is used. Instead of being solely occupied with the accommodation and maintenance of the policy process, as it is the case in Sabatier's policy broker, this form of brokerage is focused on

pushing forward a policy proposal in a process of cooperating or bargaining with other parties. This particular form of brokerage activities can be indicated as *entrepreneurial brokerage*. This leads us to a more subtle definition of the classification between advocacy and brokerage, based on the combination of transactional and transformational orientations from the described ideal types.

The delicate balance of openness in the process, creating an unclear outcome in a highly complex context, combined with tenacity and a catching enthusiasm to lead the process in the proposed direction, is a leap of faith. Especially when combined with entrepreneurial brokerage activities, bargaining in the light of an expected end result without being completely assured that this will be achieved, this type of leadership can be regarded as *betting on public and political support* in a situation where the outcome of the process is still unclear. Because this mixture of transactional and transformative orientations of leadership involves a certain daring we propose the term *daring leadership*. Daring leadership can be regarded as a flexible orientation of leadership, integrating elements from both transactional and transformational leadership conceptualizations into a more subtle and practically applicable repertoire, rather than dismissing either one of them.

Another distinguishing concept related to daring leadership, which can be found on two levels of interaction with others, is alternation. The first level of alternation is visible in the interaction with stakeholders. Unlike the isomorphic strategies of transactional cooperation and exploration or the transformational competition and selection, daring leadership alternates between both strategies. This alternation takes place both within and between the different levels of the policy process. Expressing a clear policy goal and accompanying direction would be combined with a process of exploration as to how the proposed concept can be brought further. In an alternation process of fixing achieved consensus on partial results with further exploration of the following steps, the decision-making is being shaped through a half-open-half-closed strategy.

The second level of alternation is the simultaneous use of different strategies in the relation with different parties at different levels of the policy process. A manager can be using a strategy of competition in the interaction with higher government parties, trying to create room for a proposal. Here both advocacy and entrepreneurial brokerage are used. At the same time the manager can conduct a very open and explorative decision-making process in the more local setting, attempting to achieve consensus between the various stakeholders.

**Table 3: Conceptualization of Daring leadership**

<b>Leadership typology</b>	<b>Daring leadership</b>		
<i>Motivation</i>	Bringing forward issues of consequence in the form of an advertising concept to activate and motivate people to put energy in getting an idea further developed		
<i>Focus of action</i>	Connecting issues of consequence with daily routine through combining flexibility and deliberative process with activities of influencing and directing toward a certain policy goal/change		
<i>Betting on support</i>	Yes, trying to align the environment to the plan		
<i>Main repertoire of activities</i>	Entrepreneurial brokerage and Advocacy		
<i>Interaction form</i>	Coopetition, balanced process of competition and cooperation		
<i>strategies</i>	<i>Communication strategy</i>	<i>Stakeholder involvement strategy</i>	<i>Decision-making strategy</i>
	Announce Dialogue and Adjust  Mildly selling the idea	Half open-half closed  a successive process of open and closed moments	Alternation  Alternating process of exploration, fixation of result (Consensus) and new exploration

### 3. Leadership in WaalWeelde: a case study of water system governance

In this part we describe several empirical cases of individual leadership and their various orientations on the aims and abilities to combine external issues with the daily practice of policy making in their municipalities. Our case concerns the project WaalWeelde. This project aims to create a sustainable approach for developing a floodplain area that combines safety measures with economic potential and enhancement of landscape quality. Regional municipalities are invited to cooperate with several local stakeholders in the creation of policy proposals that connect local needs and opportunities to (inter)national policy goals on river management. Such an approach is considered very new and alternative since the floodplain areas haven't been on the agenda of the local municipal policy making for several decades.

'Before the project WaalWeelde, the floodplains were a no go area, policy-wise. Not even after the great floods of 1995. Only in the last few years this has changed dramatically.'

## **Methods**

The empirical material has largely been gathered through a combination of participant-observation and qualitative semi-structured interviewing. Ten local municipal administrators and their direct staff have been followed in the two year period in which their confrontation with and correspondence to the project has been shaped

Eight of them were interviewed at the end of this period. Besides the administrators also several other informants have been consulted such as process facilitators, municipal administrative staff members, provincial officials, project coordinators and private parties that participated in or were related to the project. This resulted in a total of 18 qualitative interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, using the topics of motivation, focus of attention, betting on support, main repertoire of activities, interaction form and strategies (communication, stakeholder involvement and decision-making). Written records or transcripts from the interviews were made and although the interviews have subtle variations in focus, they all included questions about preferences for activities and perceptions of the role and function of leadership positions relating to transactional and transformational concepts. Documents that were reviewed included reports of meetings in WaalWeelde groups, municipal council reports, sketched plans and proposals, calculations and documents drafted by the organizing committee of WaalWeelde.

The several different leadership behaviors that were displayed in the confrontation with the project could be summarized in three categories. First, an overall description of the project during the first two years is given. Then we will focus on several more specific cases in the categorization.

### **WaalWeelde, an overview**

The Dutch government has decided to increase safety measures to prevent flooding and improve the quality of the landscape in the Dutch great river area. (PKB part 3, 2006) In order to resolve this several measures in the floodplain areas have been proposed. For the river Waal this boils down to an integral lowering of the existing groins in combination with several dyke relocations. These measures are considered to be an adequate answer for expected water levels until 2015 but have no positive impact on the landscape quality. Also, these measures are expected to be insufficient protection against expected water levels in 2050.

These demerits can be considered the main motivation to initiate the project WaalWeelde. Initiated in the fall of 2006 by scientists of the local university in an unofficial cooperation with the province of Gelderland, the project was able to receive the attention of a dozen municipal leaders. The project aimed to create a sustainable approach for developing a floodplain area that combines safety measures with economic potential and enhancement of landscape quality. Regional municipalities cooperated with several local stakeholders in the creation of policy proposals that connect local needs and opportunities to (inter)national policy goals on river management.

Roughly the period of two years consisted out of a beginning phase, a middle phase and the last phase at the end of the two year period in which the provincial

government decided to adopt WaalWeelde and make it part of the provincial policy agenda.

The project area was divided in three clusters (East, Middle and West) of neighboring riparian municipalities that form a transition-arena in which local leaders could work together with a wide range of different stakeholders and interest groups. The process in these arenas has been supported by external facilitators.

The administrators participating in the Western cluster engaged in many meetings to discuss several possibilities. During the initial phase uncertainty about other parties resulted in a reluctance to create and promote proposals. It was feared that in this phase other parties such as inhabitants of the region or interest groups will only frustrate the process.

In the following phase this reticence largely remained. Although proposals were introduced, little headway is made. Discussions focus mainly on broad perspectives, visions, boundaries and the relation between short term and long term possibilities. These discussions are also part of two participatory meetings. Eventually the desire for a top down steering on content as well as the providing of legitimacy is expressed.

In the last phase a consortium of private parties announces proposals for the floodplain area. Initial arrangements for public-private cooperation are being made.

The middle cluster knows a vibrant starting phase, despite several historical conflicts as well as present problems such as the development of a large industrial site in one municipality positioned directly opposite a small community of the neighboring municipality. Apart from several existing projects the administrators invite all interested parties to participate in the process of creating new proposals. Several meetings and participation rounds are organized but the interest of other parties is limited. Market parties are already engaged in the industrial proposal. Despite renewed relations between the neighboring administrations it is concluded that the differences in interest for the participating municipalities are too deep. The process of inter municipal cooperation is replaced by a more solitary approach.

The eastern cluster starts with a different approach compared to the other two clusters. Many projects concerning the river have already been developed in this region so there was little or no interest in monthly inter-municipal meetings. One municipality initiated a new and extensive proposal for its complete floodplain area and proposed linkages with the existing projects of neighboring municipalities. Instead of waiting for a more top down steering and legitimacy, a letter of intent has been signed by the neighboring municipalities and an integral proposal has been launched in anticipation on the possible adoption of the project and support for the plans from the provincial government.

### **Encounters with leadership**

As mentioned before, the regular practice of Dutch public management is strongly based on transactional behavior. Such is also the case in WaalWeelde. Confronted with the external issue announced in the project most administrators incorporated WaalWeelde into their normal transactional routine. In a more detailed description of individual leadership and the various orientations on the aims and abilities to combine external

issues with the daily practice of policy making in their municipalities we distinguish several different categories. In terms of leadership most examples are characterized by a certain transactional orientation while in some cases an encounter with daring leadership has been categorized. Typical transformational strategies were also observed, but not on the part of the administrators.

### *Transactional leadership as daily practice*

Transactional forms of leadership have been encountered most often in this case-study. Several differing motivations for this leadership orientation have been distinguished. Some transactional administrators that were encountered discussed new possibilities but were reluctant to connect the discussions from the WaalWeelde platform to their daily practice of policy making. Bringing ideas further into the decision-making process was considered to be unwise without an officially obtained legitimacy and a clearly defined framework from a higher political level. Administrators were literally waiting for a top-down providing of directions and legitimacy. One administrator conveyed this very strongly:

Provincial government and WaalWeelde, do something! Give us the directions and draw the boundaries within which we can carry out the plans.

Another consideration that also played a role in this reluctance to take action was the notion that floodplains were the area of national, and not municipal, policy. After decades of hegemony from the Ministry of Water and Public Works (Rijkswaterstaat), this notion is still heavily anchored in the perceptions of several municipal administrators.

As far as this project concerns measures of river safety, the state should come up with a plan.

The leadership orientation of these administrators was focused on accommodating processes that are directed from higher level and the step to alter this transactional routine and initiate a process in a bottom up direction, seeking connections at higher levels seemed impossible. Actions are focused on making sure the system of decision-making can run smoothly and proposals from a higher level are being transferred to the local municipality and consequently comments on the proposal are being transferred back without too much interference from the administrator. The leader accommodates the process in a traditional brokerage role. In his own words, an administrator strikingly articulated this role:

“An administrator must make sure that the country is administered”

For other transactional leaders participation in the project was limited to attending meetings and conferences in order to be informed of possible developments that could affect the status quo. The leadership orientation in this process is to consolidate and if necessary to accommodate a higher level decision:

“A municipal administration should always observe the long term planning. To make sure that nobody puts a marker on the wrong spot for instance. And have the ability to give a warning. In case

somebody requests a building permit, we can be able to tell them to wait because it may be decided to remove the premises completely in the near future.”

This orientation of accommodating and facilitating the decision-making process is also reflected in the relation with the municipal council:

“My role is to provide the various parties with the information needed for the public debate. And to provide the information in a way that is as transparent as possible. It is never the case that this administration is making decisions that are completely against the opinion of the council, because if you do that you’ll lose the job. So it is important to create a harmony in this process.”

Such a leadership orientation and the corresponding behavior that is shown here, is clearly focused on system maintenance. Brokerage activities are solely deployed in order to accommodate the process and keep the system running smoothly.

The primary behavior in the confrontation of daily practice with the emerging issues of water management in WaalWeelde is focused on consolidating the day to day affairs. Actions concerning these issues are not perceived to be a municipal responsibility.

One should put his energy into the things that really matter and not into things that are already happening. With such a thing as WaalWeelde scientists and engineers are working together and you should leave that alone. Let them do their thing. The river is still at the same place as where it was a hundred years ago and so all you do is keep an eye on it.

Apart from that the possibility to come up with your own ideas and proposals and push them using advocacy strategies while taking a bet on public support is considered unwise.

If you keep advertising to do things the way you want to do them, you will be cast out. Nobody will want you to hold this position. If you go walk in front of the rest, you’ll end up lost and alone.

### *Encounters with daring leadership behavior*

In the project WaalWeelde we encountered two cases in which daring leadership behavior has been displayed. In the first case we observed a changing pattern of leadership orientation and corresponding behavior. The municipal administrator initially embraced the project and developed several ideas, exploring possibilities to connect the issue of new floodplain management with spatial development issues within the municipal practice.

As a result of decisions made on the national level, this municipality faced drastic spatial measures in the form of dyke relocation on their territory. This procedure would have a great impact on the community. Instead of accommodating this higher level decision, the administrator tried to use WaalWeelde as a possible platform to come up with alternatives. These alternatives comprised of two very small dyke relocations which would only marginally affect the community, compared to the large relocation proposed by the government. But shortly after the first ideas were on the drawing board, the administrator backed out and refused to bring the plans out in the open and initiate a decision-making process in his municipality. Starting out with a daring motivation of

bringing forward new proposals, a shift back to a more transactional orientation was made as soon as the proposals were to be revealed to other parties.

I have been developing some of my own ideas, but that was theoretical. I will not bring this into the open. What would happen to me politically? I come up with an idea for two relocations while on the other side of the river new buildings will arise in the floodplain. That is unexplainable to the community. This is a political pitfall.

On the other side of the river right in front of this community another municipality is planning a large industrial site in the floodplains. This plan has been developed long before the inception of WaalWeelde and had a favorable position considering the plans of the provincial government to concentrate industrial areas. It was directly integrated in the project WaalWeelde. Although the design is specifically focused on accommodating high water levels and from a broad perspective it is understandable to concentrate industry in this specific location, it seems unexplainable to the local community living right across the river from it. In his role as representative of the community, the administrator in this case can not afford to simultaneously come up with proposals to remove buildings in his own community in favor of space for the river while on the other side plans for building in the river bed are being made. So he returns to a more transactional role representing the short-term interests of his community and preserving the status quo rather than motivate them to embrace change. The bet on support that he was initially willing to make is perceived to be no longer an option. Therefore this administrator puts responsibility back in the hands of higher level government.

“I am pulling out. I have initiated ideas and they are now in the hands of the provincial government. Let them do something with it. And if some private developers would be interested then maybe I’ll be willing to cooperate but it would be best if this would be imposed on our local politics by a higher level.”

In the second case the local administrator had a different orientation on the combining of existing processes of transaction with the new issues of water management. Instead of incorporating the issue into the regular transactional behavior, he chose to emphasize the need to address these issues and put them on the municipal agenda in the form of a proposal. In his actions to push this proposal, the administrator drew from both transactional and transformational repertoires in a fashion that resembles the description of daring leadership.

He was the first in a total of 14 participating municipalities to come up with a complete spatial design that integrates economic, nature and safety functions. The local administrator considers the project of great value for both his own as well as the neighboring communities. Long term goals concerning safety issues are being coupled with short term issues such as the expanding suburban area which is expected to be accompanied with a growing need for recreational and natural environments. In this sense the proposal is being connected with the local situation and daily practice of policy making.

The proposal that was created involves a lot of local actors and many complexities. Several market parties are involved ranging from land owners to project developers and the local electricity supplier that owns several dumpsites in the area that would need to be removed. Apart from this there are several other stakeholders and of

course various levels of government involved. The administrator recognizes this complexity and describes his role in relation to these parties as a driving force:

“Push it and drive it forward! Because I believe in this plan and if I believe in it then others will follow. If I don’t do that then nobody would act. The municipal administration has to be the driving force. And we also invest in it. What we have done so far will cost the community a hundred thousand euros. Nobody will do that for us. I believe that the municipality should deliver this in order to make this floodplain a beautiful place. If the administrator believes it then the rest will follow.”

Here, a motivation to activate other parties and motivate them to follow the proposed policy direction is displayed.

In the interaction with other parties and stakeholders in the process the seeking of subsequent moments of consensus is considered to be vital. In order to achieve this all parties are actively invited to join the process of developing plans toward the proposed policy direction.

“Not everybody has the same ideas or interests but if you confront this during the process you’ll get a better outcome than when different ideas are developed independently and eventually are confronted at the end of the process. If you disagree then the best possible solution at that moment must be found and from there you can continue. This is what you constantly have to repeat. In this way you’ll get a plan that can count on everyone’s support.”

In the process of developing the proposal together with the several stakeholders a strong advocacy role is being used in combination with an advertising concept. This role is also important in the relation with the municipal council. The enthusiastic and convincing attitude is expected to generate the necessary support:

I can explain very well why we all want this. And why it is such a very good development in our floodplains. Well, with such enthusiasm on my part I expect to be supported.

In his role as activator and convincing motivator this leader draws from the repertoire of transformational leadership. At the same time, apart from the advocacy strategies also brokerage activities are being developed. But, unlike the accommodating and maintenance function that brokerage has in transactional orientation on leadership, these brokerage activities are focused on making essential couplings and pushing the pet proposal. Such brokerage strategies can be described as *entrepreneurial brokerage*.

In order to strengthen the proposed plans, couplings are made with neighboring municipalities and their specific situations. A synergetic combination with the existing plans in Nijmegen is made and the own proposal is being suggested as an alternative for the unpopular governmental plans of a dyke-relocation on the other side of the river. With such an exchange the administrator hopes to reroute the planned financial stream aimed at realizing the relocation, into his own plans. Furthermore he has been able to make these couplings more official in the form of a mutual agreement of cooperation between the municipalities in the region. The signed document has given more political weight to the proposed plans which resulted in an aroused interest of the provincial government.

Apart from making these essential couplings a specific other aspect of entrepreneurial brokerage, the pushing of the proposed plans, is being addressed. A good

example of this is found in the relation with the national Ministry of Water and Public Works (Rijkswaterstaat). The ministry obstructs a development of housing in the floodplain area because of the strict rules and regulations that are being followed even though these rules are very generic and do not apply to the specific situation. The development was initiated by a private company but has been incorporated in the municipal proposal. In order to open up this jammed up process, the administrator uses a daring bargaining strategy. The ministry needs his cooperation for the implementing of policies concerning the maintenance of highways and bridges in the municipal area, but he refuses to respond unless the ministry is open to discussion and exploration of solutions for the housing problem. Such a strategy can be regarded as a bet on the eventual support of the Ministry.

A comparable bet is made from a financial point of view:

“When you are the first to take the lead you sometimes might find that other governmental parties give you the money needed to find out whether your proposed plan is feasible. If you never take the lead you always end up last in line and all the others will have used up the available resources. Then you’ll have to make do with whatever others are willing to offer. So I think if you have a good plan and you like it, it is best to be in front and show yourself.”

In this role the administrator takes responsibility for the bet and the accompanying risk. He expects WaalWeelde to be incorporated into higher level political decision-making, resulting in financial support from the provincial government to proceed with the plan. Nevertheless, the investment that needs to be made based on this assumption has to be generated by the local community:

“We have invested over a hundred thousand euros, which is a lot of money for a small municipality. But that is a decision of the administration. If you see opportunities, you invest in them.”

The same decision needs to be made concerning personnel capacity. It requires a certain leadership orientation in order to shift capacity from one priority to the other.

Anticipating the incorporation of his proposal in the provincial policy plans, this administrator follows an opposite strategy compared to the leadership in our first category where no initial action is taken in attendance of political support and legitimization by the provincial government.

The leadership orientation of this administrator is very connective in the complexity of different parties, stakes and multiple insecurities. Instead of waiting and accommodating, he uses the complexity in order to create cooperative connections and find mutual and innovative solutions. Considering the investment of both financial and human resources in a project of which the outcome remains uncertain, this behavior can be characterized as daring.

#### *Transformational behavior in WaalWeelde: a different position*

Purely transformational behavior didn’t occur amongst the political leaders in the WaalWeelde case. Therefore it is not a part of our categorization of municipal administrators. Such a specific behavior however has been observed in the case of the initiating team which constructed the WaalWeelde formula and eventually was able to ‘sell’ it to the various leaders in the project area. One individual in this team turned out to

be a strong policy entrepreneur who was able to convince the necessary parties to participate in the project and to gain the financial means needed to develop it and push it further.

Despite the fact that the issue of river safety and landscape quality had been part of a national-scale process of decision-making that lasted seven years and resulted in integral plans for this policy field that were largely the responsibility of the national ministry, the policy entrepreneur found a way to convince the local decision-makers to participate in the project WaalWeelde. In doing so he reopened a political discussion that had only recently been closed.

With an isomorphic strategy of using strong advocacy techniques he was able to convince the local administrators that developments on their municipal agenda could be realized within the context of WaalWeelde. In doing so he coupled the issue at hand with the municipal daily practice, even if others considered this to be problematic or unrealistic. In the advice that was given to administrators about how to communicate such issues to their local population, the characteristic advocacy style is clearly represented:

“If you talk about retention areas for water most inhabitants will oppose such issues but when terms such as space, innovation and impulses for the area are being used, a completely different story emerges.”

This overwhelming positive attitude seemed to attract many of the administrators to at least find out what exactly would be happening and find out whether this could serve their interests.

As soon as the project was initiated and the most reluctant administrators finally where convinced to join, the entrepreneur withdrew from the daily organization and assumed a more advisory role in the background of WaalWeelde.

#### **4. Analysis**

In our case study we found that that various different orientations on the aims and abilities to combine external issues with the daily practice of policy making exist. These differences are influenced by multiple factors ranging from internal motivations to political contexts in which an individual administrator is situated. In this section we will elaborate further on the different types of leadership that were encountered in the case-study, using the conceptualizations of transactional, transformational and daring leadership.

##### *Transactional leadership*

In the category of transactional orientations on leadership different factors or combinations of factors seem to play a role. As a result we can distinguish between two types of transactional behavior.

In the case of the first type of this group an interface between the daily practice and the external issue is formed, yet the actual responsibility for decision-making is perceived to be someone else's role. As a result the orientation and motivation in this

specific situation is on accommodation of the policy process. Corresponding with the focus of action on system maintenance, accommodating brokerage is the main repertoire of activities. The administrators in this category see their interface role as necessarily accommodating a process of decision-making in which proposals are mandated or initiated from a higher political level. In this case the provincial government. Simultaneously bottom-up reactions and activities from the municipal council or stakeholders and citizens in the area are also being facilitated. In this sense the administrator plays the role of managing the dynamics of the decision-making process between top-down and bottom-up directions, without personally interfering. In this interaction the administrator tries to avoid conflict while passing on and managing the various positions of the different parties. In this moving back and forth of proposals from a higher level on the one side and bottom-up reactions to these proposals on the other, a continuing exploration oftentimes resulting in a compromise can be expected.

The administrators are not uninterested in proposals for the floodplain area but do not consider themselves to be responsible for this policy area and therefore can not be the legitimate initiators of plans. So they actively seek the legitimization and political support from higher level government. In that sense, the administrators in this group can be characterized as an active interface between the daily municipal practice and emerging external issues.

This is in contrast to the second type that was found in this group, who has no interest or intentions in proposals for the floodplains, and is solely oriented on accommodating the democratic decision-making procedures whenever this is necessary whilst general behavior is focused on preserving the status quo. If push comes to shove a process of decision-making initiated by higher level government proposals would be accommodated, but no active role in forming an interface with emerging external issues is taken on. Therefore this transactional leadership behavior can be characterized as a passive interface.

The characteristics of passive and active transactional leadership are very much comparable. The main repertoire of activities and corresponding focus of action of passive transactional leadership is also on system maintenance and facilitating the process and can be labeled as accommodating brokerage.

In transactional leadership no bet on support is made since no pet proposals are launched nor are premature steps in a new policy direction taken. Public leaders literally wait for political support from higher level government agencies, before bringing a possible proposal into the municipal decision-making process, or they are uninterested in such proposals and will only accommodate when this is required either from a top down or a bottom up influence.

### *Daring leadership*

The orientation from our former description is an opposite stance, compared to the administrators in this category whose main motivation is to bring forward an issue of consequence and introduce a proposal that invites others to join and further develop the idea. In doing this the external issue of consequence is being connected to the daily practice.

As it is shown in our second example of daring leadership, a proposal is being advocated but simultaneously, there is room for dialogue and adjustment. This results in a process of alternation. Although the content of the proposal is not fixed, the direction is clearly focused and in a deliberative process some influencing is being done in order to push the proposal toward a policy goal. This is colorfully illustrated in the example of seeking consensus. Phases of openness in which the various viewpoints and interests are being discussed are succeeded by moments of closedness in which a preliminary result, based on consensus is fixed in order to push the process to the next level.

In order to advertise the proposal an appealing and advertising concept has been made and a specific combination of advocacy and brokerage strategies drawn from both transactional and transformational repertoires is used in order to push it further. Conspicuous in this case are the specific brokerage activities that we have labeled entrepreneurial brokerage. By using a combination of brokering skills from transactional orientations and advocating skills from transformational orientations, the several parties involved are being connected to the proposal. This is done in a cooperative sense when the proposal is being linked to other parties' interests, but also through negotiation when cooperation is being bargained for in the relation with the Ministry. This latter form indicates an interaction form that can be labeled as cooptation, a balancing between cooperation and competition. This bargaining also contains a risk and here the administrator takes a bet on the eventual support of the ministry.

Another bet is being made concerning the municipal context. As it has been pointed out in the empirical descriptions, both financial and personnel investments need to be made in order to push the proposal and develop it further. These steps toward the new policy direction are made even before some level of certainty about implementation possibilities or the needed support for that matter has been gained. In this case a bet on both political and public support from the municipal community is made.

Whether a public administrator will or will not risk such betting behavior is possibly depending on personal character but, as we have seen in our first example, seems to depend also largely on contextual factors. In this example the administrator showed an interest in creating proposals but before he could develop any form of behavior in terms of daring or transformational strategies, he felt compelled to return to a transactional position due to the fact that his municipality needed to be represented in the struggle against the industrial developments in their neighboring floodplains. These two positions were perceived to be an impossible combination.

### *Transformational leadership*

Leadership behavior that is solely based on transformational characteristics was remarkably not found in the cases of municipal administrators. It did however occur in the inceptive phase of the project in which one specific individual in the initializing team was largely responsible for the convincing of all administrators to join the project.

This was done through strong advocacy of the idea that many chances for a combination of landscape enhancement with river safety and economic potential could be found in the floodplains. With this repertoire the idea was pushed forward and in all encounters with other parties a strategy of telling and selling was used. Participants were

convinced that whatever idea or ambition they had, it could be made submissive to the general plan and as such given opportunities to be achieved.

A bet on support was made in the sense that if eventually the group of administrators willing to join would be too small, the project would fail. But this being the only consequence shows the specific position of this non-elected leadership. Public leadership in the case of elected officials operating in a largely transactional context can be considered a much more fragile position. This might be a possible explanation for the fact that in WaalWeelde no public leader, engaged in the transfer of bringing an idea into the formal practice of decision-making and as such make the essential coupling between the transition arena and the domain of formal decision-making, has been using a single transformational strategy. In this specific case, the creation of a transition arena such as WaalWeelde can be done by convincing the various parties needed and get them together. No essential public or political support is needed. But in order to make the next step and bring an innovative idea from the transition arena toward implementation in the real world, public and political support is indispensable.

### *Overview*

Generally we see that in the largely transactional context of the Dutch public sector, most reactions of individual administrators to the issue of WaalWeelde can be characterized as corresponding transactional behavior. Only two out of ten public officials displayed behavior corresponding to the daring typology.

A remarkable result from our empirical study is the absence of transformational behavior in the cases of public leadership. From these results we might conclude that transformational styles of leadership are a very unreliable strategy in the case of public officials due to the lack of connectedness these strategies have with the largely transactional context in which public leaders are situated. The pushing of a proposal through a strategy of convincing without too much eye for other parties, stakeholders and the processes of decision-making is a strategy that will produce little results in cases of public management. Such a strategy seems more suited for different contexts in which the leadership position is less dependent on the support of other parties.

In the case of public leadership both political and public support are indispensable. Daring leadership strikes a balance between a transactional focus on the system with its conditions for the decision-making process and a transformational focus occupied with pushing a proposal for change. In the context of Dutch water management this type of leadership seems most suitable to integrate issues of consequence with the daily practice of decision-making.

Apart from the daring needed to initiate such activities the sustaining of this behavior can be rather difficult. In the balance between transactional responsibilities and the possibilities to strive for societal innovations many factors seem to be influencing the equation. Firstly, personal characteristics have shown to be important. Competence, enthusiasm, perseverance and a willingness to take the bet on support are but a few of the necessary personal skills. But also the context in which an individual operates has proven equally important. As it is shown in our first example of daring behavior, a conflict with the undeniable transactional responsibilities of a public administrator emerged due to contextual factors. As a result the daring behavior could not be sustained. Apparently in

such a context daring types of leadership but also transformational activities are characterized by certain vulnerability.

## **5. Conclusion**

Our interest in this article is in styles of individual public leadership and the existence and use of these styles in the daily policy practice of Dutch water management. The practice of Dutch water management forms a context of complexity in which we believe individual leadership can play a prominent role.

In this current context of policy making, which is largely aimed at maintaining existing processes of transaction and based on repertoires of stability, guidance and control, the role of individual leadership can be a key element in the emergence of innovation. Individual leadership, which is less procedural and can bring about the openness and flexibility to bring in alternative issues, can shape conditions in which these issues can be developed and coupled with the existing transactional context of policy making. The personal orientations and strategies of individual leaders on dealing with the management of these complex interaction processes are therefore an important factor in the policy process.

We have explored various cases of public leadership in which we focused on elected officials and their various strategies that are involved with specific leadership orientations on the aims and abilities to combine existing processes of transaction with bringing in alternative issues that require adjustment of these processes.

From our empirical results we can conclude that much leadership behavior in our cases can be characterized as transactional. Transformational styles were not observed in the cases of public leadership and seem unsuitable in the largely transactional context of the Dutch public management. In order to strike a balance between both types and as such create the possibility to combine a transactional practice with emerging issues of consequence such as the water management issue in the Netherlands, the typology of daring leadership is considered to be most suitable.

Daring leadership is characterized by its ability to combine repertoires from both transactional and transformational leadership.

We have discovered that brokerage strategies can be found not only in transactional but also in daring leadership. In the first it is used as an accommodating tool in the act of system maintenance and in the latter as a connecting but also bargaining tool in the process of pushing a proposal in the entrepreneurial sense.

Such entrepreneurial behavior has been described using our analytical typologies of daring and transformational leadership. In the context of Dutch public management, which is largely driven by transactional processes, anything other than transactional behavior can be seen as a step out of the box and from our empirical results we can conclude that such behavior goes hand in hand with a bet on public or political support. It is because of this dependence on support that a daring style in public leadership is to some extent fragile. Sustaining such leadership behavior is highly dependable on a variety of factors both on a personal as well as a contextual scale.

Although the typology seems useful in the describing of leadership types in the specific context of Dutch water management, little can be said about its external validity.

Despite this we believe it might offer a basis for the further understanding of the role of individual leadership within the complexity of decision-making processes.

We suggest future research to build on the typology described here and in other theories of leadership and deepen these concepts through connecting them with experiences from daily practice in order to gain more insight in the motivational factors and conditions for different types of leadership.

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